



Skill Development

Succeeding as an Intern

Internships are a key opportunity to explore career possibilities, gain hands-on experience, and meet people in your field of interest. What you get out of an internship depends, at least in part, on what you put into it.

Schedule a career coaching appointment on Handshake to dive deeper into your questions about succeeding as an intern!

Applicable Career Communities:



Maximizing the Internship Experience

- 1. Take Initiative:** Do not wait for someone to ask you if you want to do something. Take any and all opportunities to volunteer for new assignments or projects. Be enthusiastic about learning new material. Seek opportunities to build a new skill set. Find what you are interested in and ask to be a part of it. Challenge yourself to get out of your “comfort zone”.
- 2. Be Professional:** Your dress, timeliness, attitude, communication and preparation will impact your success in the internship. By acting professionally, you show your supervisor and others you take the role seriously.
- 3. Ask Questions:** Employers are not expecting you to come in knowing everything. Continually ask questions to show your eagerness to learn.
- 4. Be Creative:** Offer your perspective and ideas. When introducing an idea, good phrasing is, “I have an idea for your consideration.”
- 5. Form Relationships:** Take advantage of being on the “inside” of an organization. Arrange informational interviews with staff who work in areas that are of interest to you. The more individuals you are able to meet within the organization, the better your prospects for making contact with someone who can assist you when you begin searching for full-time employment. Collect business cards and e-mail addresses, send thank you letters, and keep in touch with everyone you meet. See the tip sheet *Informational Interviewing* for guidance on structuring chats with the people you meet during your internship.
- 6. Be Adventurous:** Talk to your supervisor about gaining exposure to opportunities in different areas. Investigate a career area you’ve never considered. You may find a career path that is more to your liking! One method for doing this is to shadow employees working in the organization’s various divisions/departments.

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- 7. Learn about the Employer:** Work place culture is different across organizations. Use the opportunity to get to know the culture. Engage in conversations with coworkers on what they like about their work. Ask your supervisor what you will be evaluated on, take time to get to know the top decision makers, and ask to attend meetings in which you normally are not included.
- 8. Develop Core Workplace Skills:** During your internship you will have the opportunity to develop core workplace skills that can be applied in any future professional setting. Set goals with your supervisor on how to strengthen or gain these skills throughout your time with them. As you complete tasks or projects, take time to reflect on the skills you used and takeaways you learned throughout the process. At the end of the internship, make sure to provide examples of these skills or competencies on your resume. For more assistance, use the [Are You Career Ready?](#) Tip Sheet to help guide you.
- 9. Common Employer Expectations:**
 - Pay attention to and abide by the rules – if you do not understand something, ask questions.
 - Be prepared to work the agreed upon number of hours
 - If you are going to be absent or late, notify your supervisor
 - Have knowledge about and adhere to the dress code
 - Orally and verbally communicate effectively
 - Avoid office gossip
 - Treat everyone with respect
 - Be professional at all office events on site or off
- 10. Promoting Yourself for Future Employment:** The ball is in your court as an intern to promote and market yourself. By doing all of the above, you are setting yourself up for success. By building lasting connections and showing you are the kind of worker they would want to hire, the likelihood you will be offered a full-time position in the future is increased.
- 11. Remember:** Make the most of every day, stay positive, build relationships, accept constructive feedback, and work hard to keep improving your skills.

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