

Internship Intelligence

Maximizing the Benefits





Making the Most of Your Internship

You landed an internship! Congratulations! After all your hard work, you have earned this opportunity, full stop! Now, before you actually start the job, it is time to start thinking about how you can make the most of the experience. Hint: be proactive, about *everything*, even if you have been offered a virtual internship.

How To Be The Consummate Professional

Knowing how to conduct oneself in a professional setting might seem straightforward, but it is truly the most critical element to success in an internship.

The Nitty Gritty

- Dress the part.
- Be on time for your workday. Be on time for every meeting.
- However friendly a corporate culture may be, do not cross lines during the workday or after it. This includes pursuing romantic relationships in the workplace or overconsuming alcohol at social gatherings after work, even if they are not specifically work-related.
- Keep an organized workspace. Every behavior is an opportunity to make a positive (or negative) impression.
- Prioritize follow-through and demonstrate dependability.
- Read any corporate materials like codes of conduct and organizational policy documents. Know what is generally expected of you before anyone has to tell you.
- In the spirit of cooperation, mentally prepare to face some grunt work.

A Day At The Office

- Make it a point to introduce yourself to as many people as possible, even beyond the scope of your job. Share your name and department with folks you encounter in the elevator, in the lunchroom, and around the water cooler.
- Set goals with your supervisor as early into your internship as possible. Ask them to share expectations of what you accomplish.
- Keep busy. Don't make personal calls or text friends during the workday. Don't use the internet for personal use in your workspace. If you don't have enough work to do, let your manager know.
- If time permits, ask to sit in on meetings and follow up with your manager on ways you might contribute to projects and tasks.
- If you are responsible for leading a meeting, stick to the proposed schedule. Be prepared with an agenda and at the end of the meeting repeat the key next steps and who will be completing them.
- If for any reason you are unable to meet a deadline, communicate with your manager before the due date. People make mistakes! Accept responsibility for your errors and propose solutions.

Think Ahead

- If you are experiencing a lull, be proactive about how your time might be best spent. Think about what the organization could benefit from and what might provide a great learning opportunity for you.



- If there is someone you would like to get to know better, ask them if they have 15 minutes to tell you more about their professional trajectory and current responsibilities. If they agree to the invitation, treat them to coffee.
- Keep a journal of all projects with details on your role in completing them. These are the tasks and experiences that will be added to your resume and portfolio.
- Seek growth opportunities when possible. Keeping a diary of how you spend time might reveal a path toward increased responsibility.

Note About Virtual Internships

Being able to interact in an office setting certainly has its appeal, but a [virtual internship](#) still has plenty of benefits.

- If an internship is a paid opportunity, that will not change in a virtual setting.
- You may have the chance to take advantage of flexible work hours.
- School credit will not be jeopardized if a company decides remote is the safest option.

Building Bridges

You have almost completed your internship! You put in the time and made the most of the opportunity. The actual internship may be nearly over, but there are a handful of strategies to leverage the experience even after the fact.

How To Maximize Your Internship Over The Long Term

The longer-term goal of an internship is to make a favorable impression on a prospective employer and/or to make connections that will lead to employment elsewhere. It is also an incredible opportunity to expose yourself to valuable new experiences that might guide the direction of your career. Here are a few ways to reap the benefits months, if not years, down the road.

At The Finish Line

- Ask your internship supervisor for an exit interview. Get into the mindset that feedback—both constructive and positive—holds a lot of value. Be open to it.
- An exit interview is also a chance to share your experience with your manager. Maintain a strict level of professionalism.
- Ask if your supervisor is comfortable providing a favorable reference when you eventually seek full-time employment.
- Follow up with a hard copy [thank you note](#). Electronic correspondences are the standard. An actual letter is more memorable.
- Circle back to your career services center and share the experience with an advisor there. Ask for advice and express your ideas about possible next steps.
- If you were exposed to new skills that you would like to strengthen, look into college classes or professional development courses that will develop these new interests.

When The Internship Is Over

- Stay in touch!
- Update your resume and profile on professional mediums to reflect this recent internship experience.
- Share relevant news with your internship supervisor about yourself and your accomplishments via email or through professional channels like LinkedIn.
- Follow the company on social media and professional networks.
- Share your reaction to news about the company through email and by posting and commenting on professional platforms. This lets them know you are paying attention and still interested in working at the company.
- If you see an interesting job posted at the company, email your contact before applying. Your previous manager might be able to give insight that helps you tailor a cover letter and resume. They might also put in a good word with the hiring manager.
- Also, keep in touch with former colleagues that you connected well with.
- In-person time together goes a long way to establish a bond that might lead to a job one day. Propose lunch or a coffee.
- Build your professional network by connecting on LinkedIn with anyone you worked with or established a relationship with at the company.
- Maintain a consistent presence on professional networks by commenting on posts and posting interesting articles and content.