

TURN YOUR INTERNSHIP INTO A JOB

Internships are an essential part of the college experience, providing you the opportunity to test-drive a career field, make contacts, build marketable skills and figure out your likes and dislikes within specific industries. Graduates without work experience will stand little chance of securing a job after graduation research suggests. Work experience is now just as important as a college degree. You already know this. What you need to know is how to turn your internship between your junior and senior year into a job offer before you graduate. Here's how.

First thing: An internship is a job. And if you did your research, you landed an internship where you are required to do substantial and valuable work.

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

If you are serious about turning your internship into a full-time position, develop a plan at the beginning of your search.

- **Let employers know you are interested in a full-time position.** You can present the idea during the first interview by asking, "What percent or how many of the employees started out as an intern?" The answer lets you know if the employer is serious about its internship program.
- **Assess the culture.** Culture is hard to pin down but you need to determine early on if you are a good fit for the organization. Not a good fit. Consider not taking the internship. ➡

Now that you landed the internship, create a plan to...

- **Learn the business.** Don't limit yourself to the tasks you are given. Take the time to learn how the business runs as a whole so you can identify additional ways you can help.
- **Gain new skills.** Work with your supervisor and discuss specific skills you hope to gain.
- **Get feedback.** Schedule meetings with your supervisor throughout the internship to receive feedback. ➡
- **Meet decision-makers.** It's important you meet people outside of the department and learn what they are doing. Make yourself known to HR department.

ACT LIKE A FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE

Be confident in your abilities. Be sure to participate in all internship and company activities. Let people get to know you and your work.

- **Soak up everything you can.** When you are new, you will be overwhelmed at first. Information is coming at you fast and from all directions. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know." Ask questions. Learn from everyone. Most of all, be curious.
- **Don't expect a lot of hand-holding.** You will need to be proactive in developing relationships and seeking out help from peers and colleagues.
- **Show initiative.** Ask colleagues and your boss what you can do. Don't wait for them to come to you. Instead go to them and show you are willing to do whatever it takes.
- **Pay attention to office etiquette.** Internships are summer-long interviews. Everything you do and say is being evaluated by others in the organization. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is not understanding that there are certain codes and rules to abide by in the workplace. If you're not careful, you may even lose opportunities because others are put off by your lack of professionalism.
- **Keep track.** Keep a record of your milestones and tasks you completed. This will serve as both proof of the value you've added to the company, and all this data and the success stories will help your resumé.
- **Be a team player.** Form collaborative partnerships with the department members and the other interns. Be a giver not a taker. ➡

PLAN YOUR EXIT STRATEGY

Leave a good impression at the end of your internship. If you like working there, talk to everyone at the company and let them know.

- **Give a final presentation.** Find time to give a department-wide presentation of the work you've been doing. If there are other interns in the office, be sure to include them.
- **Smoothly transition off all your projects.** If projects you've worked on are not complete, make sure you document what you did and debrief a full-time member of the team.
- **Send a proper goodbye email.** On your last day, it's best practice to send an email to the people you worked with during the internship. Let them know why you're leaving (e.g., you're going back to school) and how to reach you. Thank specific individuals you worked closely with or those who offered you mentorship.
- **Exit interview.** As you near the end of your internship, schedule a meeting with your supervisor to talk about your performance and possibilities of continuing your employment at the company. Bring your list of accomplishments, and show them exactly how you've proven yourself valuable.
- **Stay in touch.** Connect with everyone you've worked through LinkedIn, and make sure to send them a quick email from time-to-time to keep yourself top of mind. ➡
- **Reflect on your experience.** What did you learn? Is this a good fit for you?