



Internship Best Practices

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COMPANY-FOCUSED BEST PRACTICES

Recruiting

- Maintain an ongoing recruitment presence and relationship with colleges.
- Maintain the organization's website link to its internship program information.
- Create an internship position description that includes qualifications, skills, knowledge, hours, and pay.

Hiring

- Hire based on predetermined organizational criteria, i.e. align interns with specific operational and learning objectives.
- Create an arrangement that indicates start and end dates, designated supervisor, scope of assignment or project, objectives, estimated total hours, measures for evaluation, and compensation, if any.
- Determine incentive package, including pay, travel and relocation reimbursement. Unpaid internships must comply with Department of Labor guidelines.

Organizational

- Gain management buy-in for internships; internships should be designed to provide the intern with an educational experience providing greater insight into their career options.
- Make interns feel as if they are part of the team. Allow them access to meetings, events, and staff social activities; be sure staff is willing to make time for interns.
- Ideal internship opportunities allow the intern the experience to rotate through different departments.

Work Assignments

- Assign meaningful work.
- Clearly describe the criteria and expectations for each assigned project.
- Explain how each assigned project—even menial tasks—support the employer's objectives.
- Assign interns their own projects that can be completed during the internship (increases intern's vested interest and satisfaction).
- Expose the intern to varied tasks and departments; increase complexity as internship continues.
- Provide opportunities for interns to develop soft skills in a business environment.

Supervision

- Assign interns to experienced supervisors who understand the objectives of the internship program.
- If the company has multiple interns, assign group projects so they can enhance team building skills.
- Implement mentoring. A permanent employee can learn mentoring/coaching by supervising an intern, or senior interns can train junior interns, saving staff time and giving senior interns experience in delegation and management.

Feedback and Evaluation

- At the beginning of the internship, ask interns what they hope to get out of the experience; at the end of the internship, conduct an exit interview to learn if their expectations were met and what went well and what did not.
- Give—and request—regular feedback throughout the internship. Evaluate the intern's work regularly in comparison to stated goals.
- Provide regular feedback to the academic liaison, if applicable.

COLLEGE-FOCUSED BEST PRACTICES

Designing Internships

- Integrate internships into the formal learning experience.
- Give interns a voice in setting up the internship.
- Take the time to develop a program that provides the student with an opportunity to learn specific knowledge.
- Have written policies and procedures, for example student, advisor, and professor roles, formalized application process, and selection criteria.
- Incorporate results of student satisfaction surveys of previous internships when designing internship programs.
- Work with the sponsoring organization to identify mentors.
- Emphasize that both universities and sponsoring organizations are responsible for internship effectiveness.

Preparing Students

- Prepare students for internships by focusing on required functional knowledge and soft skills.
- Encourage interns to be proactive, positive team players.
- Manage interns' expectations (new interns' expectations may be much higher than what an internship can deliver).
- Note that students often believe that internships are more valuable than their regular courses and are helpful in shaping their future career path and improving their job opportunities.
- Intern advisors should take a personal interest in each intern and internship project.

Feedback and Evaluation

- At the beginning of the internship, ask students what they hope to get out of the experience; at the end of the internship, conduct a review with the student to learn if their expectations were met and what went well and what did not.
- Give—and request—regular feedback throughout the internship. Evaluate the student's work regularly in comparison to stated goals.
- Provide feedback to the employer, if appropriate. Supervision

STUDENT-FOCUSED BEST PRACTICES

Finding an Internship

- Set clear goals. What do you want to do? What do you want to learn?
- Check your college career center, internship program office, academic department as well as networking events, and job fairs.
- Check online internship resources (for example, internweb.com, internship programs.com, and other job search databases).
- Research businesses you might want to work for.
- Network with friends, relatives, and teachers.

Application Process

- Explore multiple internship opportunities.
- Follow any applicable instructions and use the forms provided.
- Provide a current and relevant cover letter and resume.
- Apply by the deadline.
- Follow up with a note, phone call, or e-mail message.
- Review all application materials with academic advisor.

The Interview

- Dress should be business professional.
- Review and practice tips for successful interviewing.
- Research the company before the interview and develop several questions based on your research to ask during the interview.
- Send a follow-up thank you letter to the interviewer.

Accepting the Position

- Apply for any applicable college credit opportunities.
- Ask any questions you have about the working environment.
- Be certain you understand what is expected of you. Reach an agreement with the employer specifying start and end dates, hours, job responsibilities, measures for evaluation, and salary.

On the Job

- Follow instructions and finish assignments on time. Seek clarification when necessary.
- Ask questions to learn and expand your knowledge.
- Network—connect with as many people in as many different positions as possible, ask them about their jobs, attend meetings, and participate in company social events.
- Seek additional responsibilities.
- Give and request feedback throughout the internship.
- Accept criticism and instruction graciously and adjust your behavior accordingly.
- Be willing and eager to learn.
- Be a proactive, positive team player.
- Understand what you can expect from the internship; be realistic.
- Maintain contact with internship advisors.

Feedback and Evaluation

- At the beginning of the internship, discuss the employer's expectations with the employer and your academic liaison; at the end of the internship, provide feedback when asked to express what went well and what did not.

ASSOCIATION-FOCUSED BEST PRACTICES

Identifying and Structuring Internship Opportunities

- Build a pipeline of internship opportunities by engaging members' employers or by engaging other employers directly.
- Encourage employers to structure formal internship opportunities that allow students to work on meaningful, challenging projects that benefit both the intern and the employer.
- Understand the Fair Labor Standards Act and the requirements for paid/unpaid internships and whether these regulations apply.

Marketing and Promoting Internship Opportunities

- Publish internship opportunities on your association's website.
- Provide a high-level overview of the industry and the internship opportunities that are available including a description of job duties and other requirements and an application form

Selection and Close Out

- Ensure the appropriate resources are in place to manage the overall internship process.
- Gather feedback on the internship process and experience from selected interns and employers and share findings.

Feedback and Evaluation

- At the beginning of the internship, ask interns what they hope to get out of the experience; at the end of the internship, conduct an exit interview to learn if their expectations were met and what went well and what did not.
- Give—and request—regular feedback throughout the internship. Evaluate the intern's work regularly in comparison to stated goals.
- Provide regular feedback to the academic liaison, if applicable.

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