

Know Before You Go: How to Make the Most of Your Internship

Seek to Answer These Questions

- What is the key mission of the organization?
- What is the organization's history?
- Who are its competitors?
- Who are its clients?
- What's the organization's source of funding?
- What is the primary role your "department" fulfills?
- How does your role fit into the organization?
- What is the organization's culture?
- Are there formal lines of authority?
- How accessible are the "top bosses," i.e. the president or CEO?

Tips for Making a Good Impression: Establish Credibility

- Remember that your internship is like a three month interview—treat it as such.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Check your spelling and grammar on all correspondence.
- Turn in all timecards and other administrative materials promptly.
- Show respect for others regardless of position or status.
- Attend all scheduled meetings even if optional.
- Come prepared for work—even if others seem to be slacking.
- Come groomed and dressed appropriately.
- Attend social occasions to develop network contacts.
- Learn co-workers' names and titles.
- Record professional jargon and begin to use it in conversations.
- If you don't know something you think you need to know—FIND OUT!

Know Your Supervisor's Expectations

Try to address the following questions and issues regarding your supervisor's expectations near the beginning of your internship:

- What method of communication is preferred?
- Does your supervisor want details or summary?
- How often do you meet with your supervisor?
- Do they want formal scheduled meetings or just drop into the office?
- Is there another employee that you can ask questions or get direction from?
- Dress code preference?
- Is the work schedule flexible or rigid, including lunches and breaks?
- Are work deadlines flexible or fixed?
- What is permissible when interacting with others outside your department?

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Do NOT Participate in the Following

- Criticism of people, policies, or procedures.
- Working on your school work or other personal work.
- Violating safety procedures—even if others do.
- Spending so much time “networking” that you don’t get your work done.
- Using school work as an excuse to be late or unprepared—most employers don’t care.
- Leaving sensitive documents exposed on your desk.
- Taking work home without permission.

Tips to Create a More Substantial Internship

- ASK for opportunities!
- Attend meetings, conferences, and sales events.
- Shadow other employees (on your own time if necessary).
- Participate in training programs or use resource materials.
- Take on additional tasks.
- If you see something you would like to learn, ask!

Tips for Future Resume Development

- Future employers like to see specifics on resumes. It helps them make better hiring decisions.
- Collect data—examples: number of clients served, products sold, direct contact hours, number of brochures created and distributed, and types of clients served.
- Record types of software/hardware/other tools used—add these to your skills list.
- Record training provided.
- Add lines to your resume as you go through your internship—it is very easy to forget projects that were successfully completed.
- Which sounds more impressive? “Provided excellent customer service” **OR** “provided excellent customer service to over 200 customers per day resulting in a 96% satisfaction rating.”

For additional information read *Internships for Dummies* by Craig P. Donovan and Jim Garnett.

Contact Linda Ashworth, LRAshworth@unwsp.edu if you have any questions.