

10 Tips

for a successful internship program

1. Survey your company, asking departments if they want interns, what skill sets, and how many interns they need. Some departments find interns useful and others find them a nuisance. Avoid creating ill feelings among departments that might feel slighted if they never get an intern to help out.
2. Assign interns to areas that may need a full-time employee in the near future, using the internship to “test the waters” with candidates that you might hire. Be sure to ask employees in those areas for their evaluations on each intern’s performance.
3. Consider rotating interns to cover areas left vacant as employees take summer vacations. Suggest that the departing employee give the intern an orientation on what to do to reduce the workload on the remaining staff. Although the intern may only be able to perform some of the duties, the department will appreciate the additional help.
4. Appoint one junior employee to be in charge of interns as Intern Manager and point of contact and to mentor and monitor intern performance, freeing senior employees for more cost-effective assignments. The junior employee also increases the intern’s comfort level since the intern will enjoy working with a younger employee closer to his or her own age.
5. Allow your Intern Manager ample time in his/her schedule to coordinate each intern’s schedule with the appropriate departmental manager. Arrange for the intern to spend a certain amount of time either daily or weekly with the Intern Manager to review progress. Establish a clear chain of command, ensuring that your employees know if they have any concerns about the departmental intern, they can get help from the Intern Manager.
6. Prepare a description of internship duties and email it to the incoming intern for review, answering any questions ahead of time to prevent confusion. Make sure the intern has an Intern Packet with appropriate materials before the start date. The Intern Packet should contain company policy information as well as forms to track intern activity.
7. Send a broadcast email to your employee distribution list that announces the intern, gives a sentence or two about him/her, and asks staff to extend a warm welcome. On the day that the intern starts, the Intern Manager should take the intern on a tour and introduce the new member to individual staff.
8. Arrange for the Intern Manager to meet with the intern on Day #1 and discuss expectations and outcomes on both sides. Set the intern up to succeed by starting with small projects and graduating to more complicated and lengthy assignments.
9. Ensure that the intern has a desk and proper supplies so he/she can begin productive work immediately. A more senior intern—if available—or the most junior staff member may want to have a short meeting with the new intern to talk about office procedures or to explain the computer system or any unfamiliar technology systems. Utilize current interns to train incoming interns, reducing staff time with interns and facilitating employees to fulfill work objectives.
10. Reward an unpaid intern in other ways. If your company has a cafeteria, give the intern a pass that enables him/her to eat for free on working days. Take the intern to a professional meeting as your guest, paying for his/her lunch and introducing him to other professionals. Give a gift certificate at the end of the internship as well as write a letter of recommendation. Interns are your best source of future interns, and students share information about their experiences. Make sure everyone wants to intern at your company, so you have a wide selection of excellent applicants.

Source: Internships.com