How to Finish Your Summer Internship the Right Way

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Even though stealing beer and sliding down an emergency shoot sounds like a fun way to leave your job, it’s not the right way to do so--especially if that job is an internship.

Internships are launching pads for your careers. They provide valuable training and experience, as well as put you in front of real professionals in your field of choice. Why waste all the time you’ve spent as an intern by leaving on the bad note? Here’s how to do it right.

Don't wait until the last minute to talk with your supervisor

Even though your internship coordinator knows that you were only a temporary employee, sometimes an upcoming departure can creep up on him. Schedule a time to meet at least a week before the program ends, and request a review. Seeking a performance review will display maturity and professionalism, as well as teach you about your professional self: your strengths and weaknesses, things to highlight and things to improve, etc.

Help them go on without you

If you’ve been working on a big, long-term project as part of your internship, offer to help train your successor. Even if you won’t overlap with him or her, put together a document of all the information he or she will need to know to pick up the project where you left off. This transition help will be very valuable to your employer. Your supervisor will remember your thoughtfulness--pushing your name to the top of the list if a position opens up.

Ask for recommendations/references

A shining recommendation or reference can be very helpful in your job search. But you should only ask for one if you know it will be stellar. If you were a fabulous intern, got a spectacular performance review and developed a strong relationship with your supervisor, then ask for a recommendation when you meet with him. However, if you didn't get to know your supervisor very well--whatever your performance review--do not ask for a recommendation. Without a real relationship with you, he won't be able to write a shining rec.
Prepare to stay in contact

If you were doing your job as an intern, you should have developed relationships with a number of co-workers--from fellow interns to the CEO. Even if these relationships were only superficial, they could become more. Be sure to ask for contact information (personal, if possible) for everyone you worked with and give them your own info--and that includes email, phone number and real address. With this swap, you'll be able to get in touch after you leave. You never know who will be the key resource to your job search.

Say thank you

It's important to thank everyone at the company for the experience you've had. Personally thank everyone who's been involved in your program, either in person or in a hand-written note. If your human resources department has an email list for all staff, that's a good opportunity to thank everyone and put yourself on the radar of people you may not have gotten to know very well. But be sure that the general thank you email is in addition to personal thank you's, not instead of.

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