



Making the Most of Your Internship

Boston College Career Center

<http://careercenter.bc.edu>

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Once you are set to begin your internship, what else do you need to know? How can you maximize your experience? Here are a few tips on how to make your internship the best it can be.

Preparation

Goals and Expectations ~ Begin your internship with a clear set of goals and expectations in mind. Ideally, you should aim for a solid understanding of your role before you accept the position.

- What skills would you like to acquire during this internship? What knowledge do you hope to gain? What types of projects will you be expected to work on? What type of training and feedback will you receive, and how often?
- On your first day, try to sit down with your supervisor to clarify mutual goals and expectations.

Background Knowledge ~ Research your organization's mission and how it fits within its industry.

- The more knowledge you possess going into the experience, the more quickly you will be able to acclimate to the environment and put into new knowledge into perspective.

While you're there...

Professionalism ~ Demonstrate standards of professionalism throughout your internship experience.

- Ascertain the appropriate workplace attire, and be consistent with punctuality and meeting your deadlines.

Attitude ~ Maintaining a positive attitude is key to a successful internship experience.

- Be enthusiastic and do your best on every task you are assigned, even if at first it seems rather mundane and not as challenging as you might like. Demonstrating a cheerful and energetic attitude toward all of your work will also prove impressive to your supervisors and potentially lead to more challenging tasks.
- Simply observing and soaking up your organization's environment is an incredibly effective way to learn. Ask your supervisor if you might sit in on a few inter-departmental meetings, and seek out other opportunities to observe various members of your organization in action.

Initiative ~ Be a proactive intern.

- There may be times when your supervisor does not have anything pressing for you to do. In such cases, offer to expand on a small project you have already been assigned, or suggest another project that you think might benefit the organization.
- In the case of especially slow work days, tactfully check with other co-workers around your department to see if you can lend a hand.

Be an active learner ~ Plan on learning as much as you can during your time with your organization.

- Be inquisitive: ask questions and generally cultivate your curiosity about the organization and industry. Demonstrate your interest by seeking to learn as much as possible about the role of your department in the organization as a whole, and how your company figures into the industry at large.
- Keeping up with industry news during the course of your internship is also a good strategy for building knowledge about the field, and making sense of the environment within which you are working.

Network ~ Take the time to introduce yourself and be friendly with colleagues and co-workers.

- Invite your supervisor and fellow interns and staff members to join you for lunch periodically.
- Be curious about the people you work with, and ask questions about their specialty areas, interests, motivations for entering the field, and how they started out. You might indeed find a mentor willing to share experiences, perspectives, and offer career advice.
- Search the Boston College Career Network - <http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/careers/networking/> - by employer name for BC alumni employed within your organization. Email them and ask if you could stop by and introduce yourself, or even invite them to a conversation over lunch. Once you have managed to schedule a meeting, consult the Career Center handout on Networking with Alumni for some sample questions and discussion topics.

Be flexible ~ Recognize that it takes time to adjust to every new environment, and so give yourself time to get oriented to the pace and rhythm of your workplace and colleagues.

- Remember to keep an open mind during the course of your internship, and to try to take something positive from every experience.
- In case you encounter difficulties, feel free to contact the BC Career Center with any questions or concerns.

Reflect ~ Check in with your supervisor periodically.

- Review progress on your tasks and projects, receive feedback on your performance, and even to share your own insights and learning.
- On your own, reflect regularly on your experience by keeping a journal or notebook of your experiences, tasks, and observations.

Follow Up

On your last day be sure to thank your supervisor and co-workers and ask for their business cards.

- Follow up immediately in the next few days with an email thank-you or a hand-written card in the mail.
- Stay in touch afterwards to maintain networking connections and good rapport for possible references and letters of recommendation.
- Remember that many organizations hire permanent employees from their intern pool.