

How to Create Your Own Internship Opportunity

If some of organizations/contacts you have identified do not have a current posting, you can approach them. You may choose to send a brief cover letter, or make a phone call, to request an informational interview. An informational interview is an opportunity to discuss what they do and learn more about where they may need assistance. Explain your specific interests and propose the idea of meeting briefly to discuss the possibility of doing an internship.

Send the contact an email, or call them, and be prepared to address these questions:

- Why are you contacting this organization? (Explain why you are interested in the work they do.)
- Who are you? (You are a student at university X, with background in Y, interested in Z.)
- Why does this organization interest you? (Express your enthusiasm and passion for their work.)
- What is the next step? (Arrange a brief informational meeting via phone or in person in the next X days/weeks.)

Before your meeting, think carefully about what you hope to learn. Create open-ended questions to stimulate discussion that will allow you to discover opportunities to help them. Example questions could include:

1. Industry Questions: What are some of the challenges you face in this industry? How do you keep up with industry news?
2. Organization Questions: What are some projects that have been on the backburner? What would you do if you had more time, or support, to further the organization's goals?
3. Personal Questions: What would you delegate if you could? What are your priorities for the next 3 months?

During the meeting, you should act and dress professionally. Show up on time. Bring your resume and any forms you might need for the internship in case you need them.

- Take the lead in the conversation and ask your prepared questions. Take notes on areas in which you may be able to help.
- Emphasize your passion, commitment, and willingness to take on new projects. Even if they haven't hosted an intern before, they will be more inclined to take you on and fulfill the employer responsibilities if you are enthusiastic and excited.
- Be assertive about telling employers what you are able to do, without being arrogant, and emphasize that you are willing to learn what you don't know.

- If the organization isn't quite what you had in mind, you can still use the opportunity to network and learn about the industry and job functions. Ask about referrals and appropriate professional organizations to expand your network of contacts.

After the meeting, always send a thank you note within 24 hours. Steps to take after the meeting include the following:

1. If you've identified several potential internship sites, do (or redo) a gap analysis to determine which make the most sense.
2. Develop an internship proposal based on their needs. Emphasize your passion, commitment, and willingness to take on new projects. Even if they haven't hosted an intern before, they will be more inclined to take you on and fulfill the employer responsibilities if you are enthusiastic and excited.
3. Be assertive about telling employers what you are able to do without being arrogant, and emphasize that you are willing to learn what you don't know.