

“Where did *they* come from?” The impact of internships.

When we see PR standouts, we don’t think about where they started. How did they get to where they are?



Internships provide students with the connections and experience they need to step into the workforce after graduation. Photo by LinkedIn Sales Navigator/Pexels

Picture a PR student gearing up for her first internship this summer. She’s taken classes on research, media design and copywriting, so clearly, she knows what she’s talking about. She’s even done some social media work for her uncle’s company. Any New York agency would be crazy to pass up her application, right?

Most up-and-coming PR interns think this same way. They’re ready to fully contribute to their hand-selected employer and change the world one idea at a time. However, fast forward a couple months. They’re not in on the brainstorming sessions; they’re organizing files and writing emails.

Interns won’t revolutionize a company, but they won’t fade into oblivion either. They learn and grow into the world of public relations, while discovering certain essentials that will eventually propel them into their professional careers. Every media professional starts that way – as a wide-eyed intern.

THE POWER OF CONNECTIONS

Former member of the Utah House of Representatives Derek Brown currently teaches media law and ethics at Brigham Young University as an adjunct professor. He also works with Michael Best Strategies, a consulting company specializing in government relations, public affairs and crisis management.

His early internships clerking with the attorney general and the Utah Supreme Court office gave him the start his career needed. He realized his love and talent for public service and the legal system early on in these internships. Each opportunity also provided him with practical experience and training not found in a classroom. But the greatest result of Brown's internship was the connections he made with the people around him.

"Internships give students the chance to leave the academic people and get with people who are actually out doing what they want to do," Brown says.

Students meet people at all levels of the field that can often connect the students to job opportunities both within and outside the company.

Brown's connections at the attorney general's office referred him to the clerk position at the Utah Supreme Court. This pattern of connections and referrals brought him to U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch's office and eventually to Senator Mike Lee's chief-of-staff position.

Companies are often looking to hire new employees from their current group of interns. In fact, a [2012 survey](#) from The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) shows that 60 percent of paid college interns continue as full-time employees hired on once they finish their internships.

"It's the 80/20 principle," Brown continues. "An internship's significance is found in the people you meet more than the skills or knowledge you have. Who you know will get your career much farther than what you know."

CONFIDENCE

Corrine Beaumont, founder of a global non-profit organization, only completed one official internship just after graduating high school. She joined a start-up web design company, one of the very first in the area, learning how to create digital images and set up web pages.

She worked in close contact with the three founders, a set of triplets – one of whom won numerous awards for being an independent businesswoman. With such a close-up view of the siblings' work, Beaumont received not only technical training but also the confidence that she could succeed as these three had.

Beaumont says, “Seeing other people do it gave me the confidence to start and run my own business.”

She did freelance design work throughout college, gaining more experience and skills as a designer and entrepreneur. Eventually she created the “12 Signs of Breast Cancer” infographics using pictures of lemons that have changed the conversation of breast cancer education in conservative, third-world countries. Following the “Know Your Lemons” campaign in 2016-7, she finally left her job as a design and media professor in England to focus solely on her new charity organization Worldwide Breast Cancer, all while raising a daughter on her own.

“Internships do just as much for students as college does,” says Beaumont. “I learned what’s actually in the world, how to make my own niche in it and the capability I have to do it.”

CONCLUSION

Most internships won’t include glamorous and highly visible work. Most interns won’t change the world, an industry or even a company during their three to six months there. But they do make the essential connections and gain confidence for their futures as Brown and Beaumont did.

Where did all the influential professionals come from? From the very desks students are sitting in now. If students work hard and really connect with the people around them, they will rise up to bring about the change the world needs. Their success could match and go even beyond what the world has seen before.

About the author

Britney Fronk is a current PR student at Brigham Young University. She works as a social media and alumni relations specialist in the BYU Marriott School of Business and dreams of working on the Olympic Committee or for a Broadway musical. Her hobbies include learning new skills and traveling to New York City.