

More simple tips for internship success

July 19, 2013

By: Nancy Griesemer, www.examiner.com

Internships can help students discover passions and future career paths.

Savvy high school students are learning what undergrads already know about internship opportunities—they enhance resumes, help develop job skills, and can be the source of all-important recommendations for the future.

And perhaps most importantly, internships can help students discover passions and career paths.

Internship assignments can be as short as a few days or can last an entire summer. Some come with stipends, but most are unpaid and provide other kinds of “experiential” rewards such as ideas for science fair projects or opportunities to learn marketable skills.

Wherever you land this summer, make sure your time is well spent by keeping in mind these “internship success” tips:

Dress the part. If you want to be taken seriously, work on developing a “professional” image by dressing appropriately. How you look suggests level of maturity and how ready you are to assume responsibility.

Arrive early and stay late. You’ll make a positive impression if you’re ready to work a few minutes early and don’t make a rush for the door at the end of the day. It’s all about attitude. If you convey that the work is important to you, you’ll gain the respect of others.

Do your homework. Try to get up to speed on the mission of the organization or the status of ongoing projects before starting your internship. If one exists, scan the website and do a little research. Knowing what’s going on before you walk in the door will put you steps ahead of other interns and might earn you better assignments.

Check the iPhone at the door. Your friends can wait. Sneaking a peek at text messages or succumbing to the distraction of a buzzing Blackberry will lose you points among co-workers. Wait for agreed-upon breaks to post updates or respond to messages. Better yet, wait until the end of the day and do it on your own time.

Ask questions and take notes. The best way to learn and get things right the first time is to listen carefully and take notes. Make sure you have a notepad ready to capture important details. And be aware that note-taking suggests to others that you’re unwilling to run the risk of forgetting something important.

Be friendly and upbeat. Make it a point to keep energy levels high, acknowledge people, and be friendly. View each assignment as a learning opportunity and never communicate boredom or displeasure by look or comment.

Network and develop relationships. Don't be shy about interacting with your supervisor/mentor as well as co-workers and other interns. Volunteer for projects and assignments. Your curiosity and enthusiasm for the work will be remembered long after you leave.

Improve skills. Whether it's writing, speaking, editing, or anything specifically job-related such as learning new software or a programming language, consciously work to upgrade skills. These talents will not only support college aspirations but may also make you more employable in the future.

Stand out through the quality of your work. It sounds obvious, but do a good job and be on time with assignments, even if it means putting in a little extra time and effort.

Be careful with social media. How your co-workers view your social media posts will have a huge impact on how they view you as a person. Don't be fooled into thinking that just because people aren't "connected" with you, they won't see your posts or photos—this stuff lasts forever and can sometimes be found in strange or unexpected places.

Ask for a recommendation. When your internship is over, ask your mentor, supervisor or someone with whom you worked closely for a letter of recommendation. And then be sure to keep in touch. You never know when that extra reference or recommendation might come in handy.

Express appreciation. Don't forget to follow-up with a handwritten note of thanks to your supervisor or anyone else in the organization who helped make your experience valuable.

Note that most of these tips are applicable to all kinds of "employment" situations. Whether you're flipping hamburgers or providing a community service, take pride in what you do and how you do it! The contacts you make this summer can be the beginning of a network that will last a lifetime.