4 Ways to Turn an Internship into a Job

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Internships provide valuable work experience and resume highlights, but they are increasingly leading to job opportunities upon graduation, so students need to make sure they are making the right impression as an intern.

A 2012 study by Internships.com reports that 53% of employers surveyed said they expected to hire more interns in 2013 than they did in 2012.

An internship or temp position can give students and grads a chance to try a company on for size to see if the working environment, office culture and industry are a good fit overall, says Kim Whiteside, manager of the Career Services Center at Bellevue University.

“Does the job description match what I’m being asked to do? Does the company culture align with my values? Am I being properly trained? Are other employees happy to be here? Do I feel good coming to work each day?” she says. “The answers to these questions will go a long way toward helping an intern know whether the company is a place where he or she can thrive.”

For interns and temps who want to create a permanent position at a company, here are four expert tips for building their network and transitioning into a full time job.

Tip No. 1: Carry Out All Tasks with a Positive Attitude

Although interns can be faced with menial tasks like restocking paper or filing documents, experts say having a positive attitude concerning any type of job duty is key to making a lasting impression.

“Your attitude and ability to complete those tasks well is what’s going to show your boss that you can add value to that organization and put you in a good place for some permanent work there if that’s what you’re looking for,” says Tim Peyton, senior director of Learning Solutions at McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Tip No. 2: Be Proactive with Responsibilities

Being able to complete tasks in a quality and timely fashion showcases efficiency, but students need to take it a step further and proactively ask about additional responsibilities, suggests Peyton.

“There’s nothing worse than having an employee who finishes something and then waits around for something else to do,” he says. “Go that supervisor and ask for more to do--most supervisors are very overburdened and have a lot to do and very much appreciate when someone comes to them and says, ‘I can do more.’”
But Dan Black, director of campus recruiting at Ernst & Young, warns against rushing through work just to ask for more.

“You’ve got to make sure what you’re working on, you’re doing it 110%,” he says. “Don’t go back and ask for more with job two when [with] job one, you maybe did that a little bit lackluster or sloppily.”

**Tip No. 3: Network with Colleagues**

Getting acquainted with colleagues in other departments can help interns learn about different roles and responsibilities in addition to creating a rapport with people who could potentially move up into a hiring position someday.

Whiteside suggests showing a genuine interest in co-workers by going out to lunch with the staff and asking thoughtful questions to learn more about the company.

“Company staff can provide you with insights on how to be successful within that company—insights that you may not have been able to discover on your own,” she says. “Networking also gives others a chance to know you better and helps to create the peer support system which is a vital component of professional success.”

Fostering professional relationships within the company is a great way to build on an existing network, but being too pushy can turn others off, warns Amanda Pekoe, founder of theatrical marketing and advertising agency The Pekoe Group.

“It’s better …not to be afraid of bringing your personality or your unique point of view to the work, but it’s not ultimately important to become best friends with every single person in the company,” she says.

**Tip No. 4: Become Invaluable**

Interns can demonstrate their value and workplace savvy by submitting quality work, asking insightful questions and being respectful towards their superior’s preferences and habits.

“You’re building a rapport and really understanding their work preferences the same way that a good supervisor will try and understand a subordinate’s preferences,” Black says. “If they like the face to face [interaction], go meet them face to face even if you have to walk up a few flights of stairs.”

The experts say interns can certainly ask questions as they arise, but should try to resolve issues on their own if possible, says Whiteside.

“Be visible, but not in the manager’s face all the time [and adhere to] one of the oldest pieces of business advice ever: ‘never go to your manager with problems, always go with possible solutions to a problem you’re faced with.”

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