

Ground Rules for Successful Internships

1. Internships must be a paid position

Over the years we have found that unpaid internships are not as successful as paid internships.

The primary reason is one of commitment or lack thereof. It is difficult to hold someone accountable for performance and results if they are working for free.

Conversely, if you are not paying me, I sometimes feel that anything I do is a favor.

Consequently, we require that all internships must be paid ones.

2. Assign a manager/supervisor

An employee of the company must be assigned as a supervisor to the intern. In order to hold the intern accountable for results they should report to one person. They can work for multiple individuals within the organization, but they must have a point person.

The supervisor should make sure that they have plenty of projects in front of them, that they are keeping busy and that the quality of the work is acceptable.

3. Project based work

The work assigned to the intern should be project based versus a part of the organization's daily work flow. You need to keep in mind that the intern will leave. Consequently, you don't want to rely on that person on a daily basis.

4. To do list

You should develop a "to do list" over the course of the year of projects to be accomplished over the internship period.

The projects should be finite. A beginning and ending date that spans the internship period. If you have a large project that goes longer, just break it down into phases.

Finally, the projects should be meaningful to the organization. (No copying or filing papers.) The talents that the intern brings to the table are meaningful. Don't waste their time or the company's time doing work that doesn't contribute to everyone's success.

If you follow these four rules, both the Company and the intern should have a rewarding experience that leaves both parties with a sense of accomplishment.