14 Best Practices for Internship Experiences

***For Employers, Host Organizations***

*Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers:*

[*https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/15-best-practices-for-internship-programs/*](https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/15-best-practices-for-internship-programs/)

**Best Practice #1: Provide Interns With Real Work Assignments.\***

Providing interns with real work is number one to ensuring your program’s success. Interns should be doing work that is related to their field of interest, that is challenging, this is recognized by the organization as valuable, and that fills the entire work term. \**Note: The best practices presented here assumes the organization’s goal is to convert interns to full-time hires.*

**Best Practice #2: Hold Orientations For All Involved.**

It’s important that everyone has the same understanding, orientations ensure that everyone starts with the same expectations and role definitions.

**Best Practice #3: Provide Interns With A Handbook and/or Website.**

Whether in paper booklet format, or presented as a special section on your website, a handbook serves as a guide for students, answering frequently asked questions and communicating the “rules” in a warm and welcoming way.

**Best Practice #4: Provide Housing and Relocation Assistance.**

Few employers can afford to provide fully paid housing for interns, but you’ll find that you get a lot of appreciation if you offer any kind of assistance toward housing expenses. For those relocating to the job site, the prospect of finding affordable, short-term housing can be daunting.

If you can pay for all or some of your interns’ housing, be sure to design and stick to a clear policy detailing who is eligible. This will eliminate any perceptions of unequal treatment. In addition, be aware that employer-paid or employer-subsidized housing is considered a taxable benefit. Check with your internal tax department on exceptions to this.

**Best Practice #5: Offer Scholarships.**

Pairing a scholarship with your internship is a great way to recruit for your internship positions, and this is especially true if you are having difficulty attracting a particular type of student or student with specific skill set to your organization. Attaching a scholarship can increase your pool of candidates with the desired qualifications.

**Best Practice #6: Offer Flex-time and/or Other Work Arrangements.**

Students mention flex-time as one of their most-desired features in a job. A flexible time schedule during their internship eases their transition to the workplace. If you think about how students spend the day on campus (varied schedule each day, with varied activities such as work, class, social time), you can understand that 8AM to 5PM Monday through Friday is a bit of an adjustment for them. A flexible schedule can make them feel less chained by an unchanging routine. Other work arrangements that have been found successful with students including keeping them on as part-time, remote employees after they go back to school.

**Best Practice #7: Have a Site Supervisor.**

Having a dedicated supervisor for your intern is the best way to ensure that it runs smoothly and stays focused on your criteria for success.

**Best Practice #8: Encourage Team Involvement.**

Involve your team and multiple departments, they can help to orient the interns to your company culture. This will allow for a smooth transition for all parties involved.

**Best Practice #9: Invite Career Center Staff and Faculty to Visit Interns on Site.**

In general, career center staff and faculty members have relatively few opportunities to visit employer work sites to see firsthand the types of experiences that their students are getting. By inviting them to your site, you will build a better working relationship with these groups, which can lead to more student referrals, enhanced campus visibility, and increased flexibility on their parts when your business needs dictate it.

**Best Practice #10: Hold New-Hire Panels.**

New-hire panels are one of the best ways to showcase an organization to interns as a great place to work. These are panels of five or six people who were hired as new grads within the last three years. They act as panelists in a meeting of interns, giving a brief summary of their background and then answering questions from the intern audience. Your interns get insight about your organization from your new hires – people who they perceive are like themselves and who they consequently view as credible sources of information.

Topics to consider: *Why did you choose this employer over others? What was your first year like? How is being a full-time employee here different from being an intern? Do you recommend getting a graduate degree? In the same field, or an MBA? Is it better to go straight to graduate school after the bachelor’s or better to work fulltime?*

**Best Practice #11: Bring In Speakers From Your Company’s Executive Ranks.**

One of the greatest advantages to students in having internships is the access they get to accomplished professionals in their field. Consequently, speakers from the executive ranks are very popular with students – it’s a great career development and role modeling experience.

**Best Practice #12: Offer Training/Encourage Outside Learning.**

Providing students with access to in-house training, both in work-skills-related areas, such as a computer languages, and in general skills area, such as time management – is a tangible way to show student you are interested in their development.

**Best Practice #13: Conduct Focus Groups.**

Conducting focus groups and feedback sessions with interns is a great way to see your organization as the students see it. Focus groups in particular can yield information about what your competitors are doing that students find appealing.

**Best Practice #14: Showcase Intern Work through Presentations/Expo.**

Students work very hard at completing their work and are generally proud of their accomplishments. Setting up a venue for them to do presentations (formal presentations or in a showcase) not only allows them to demonstrate their achievements, but it also showcases the internship program to all employees.