

The Internship Journey

Presented by the SJSU Career Center

Succeeding in Your Internship/Co-op

Getting your foot in the door by landing the internship or co-op is only half of the challenge in turning your career dreams into a reality. The more vital half is to build a reputation during this career experience that might culminate in receiving a full-time job offer.

10 tips on Succeeding in Your Internship...and making powerful career moves

1. Exhibit a Can-Do Attitude.

Attitude speaks loud and clear and makes a lasting impression, so make sure that yours is one of your greatest assets. Take on any task assigned—no matter how small—with enthusiasm. Take the initiative to acquire new skills. Accept criticism graciously and maintain a sense of humor.

2. Learn the Unwritten Rules.

Get to know your co-workers early in your internship. They will help you figure out quickly the culture in which you will be working. You will need to adapt, observe, learn, and process a large volume of information. Watch closely how things get done, ask questions, and pay attention to how people interact with each other.

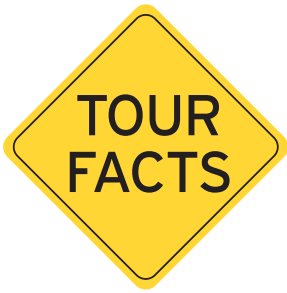
3. Take Your Assignments Seriously.

Build a reputation for being dependable, diligent, and accurate. You may encounter a great deal of ambiguity in the work environment, so ask questions and seek direction when in doubt and do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Learn from your errors and move on to your next task. From there, your responsibilities and the expectations of others are likely to grow.

4. Meet Deadlines.

Always assume the responsibility to ask when an assignment is due. This will help you understand your supervisor's priorities and manage your time accordingly. Alert your boss in advance if you will be unable to meet expectations. This shows respect and professional maturity.



5. Set Realistic Goals and Expectations.

Establish correlations between your learning goals and the daily work you are asked to perform; maintain a journal of your activities and accomplishments in order to monitor your progress; request regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance. Reinforce the fact that you mean business.

6. Communicate Respectfully.

Assume that everyone else knows more than you do. However, don't be afraid to present useful ideas that may save time or money or solve problems. Just make sure that your style does not come across as "cocky." Employers value assertiveness but not aggressiveness. Find out the proper way to address individuals, including customers, and maintain a pleasant, respectful demeanor with every person, regardless of his or her rank.

7. Be Flexible.

Accept a wide variety of tasks, even those that may not relate directly to your assignments or those that may seem like grunt work. Your willingness to go the extra mile, especially during "crunch time," will pave the way to assuming greater responsibilities.

8. Be a Team Player.

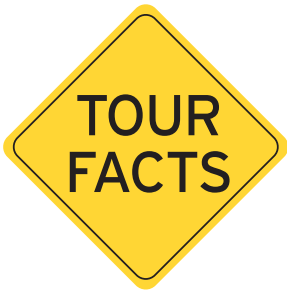
Learn how your assignment fits into the grand scheme of things and keep a keen eye on getting the job done. In today's work environment, success is often defined as your ability to get along and interact with others. You're a winner only if your team wins.

9. Find a Mentor.

Identify at least one individual to serve as your mentor or professional guardian. It should be someone who is willing to take a personal interest in your career development and success. Begin to network wisely, and get "plugged in" by associating with seasoned employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives, and insights. Get noticed—many more people will have a role in determining your future than you might realize.

10. Have Fun!

Last but not least, enjoy learning, sharpening your skills, and developing professionally and personally. Participate in work-related social functions and become an active member in your work community.



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Selection Criteria for Finding a Good Quality Internship

(This criteria is the minimum needed for ensuring this internship provides a quality experience)

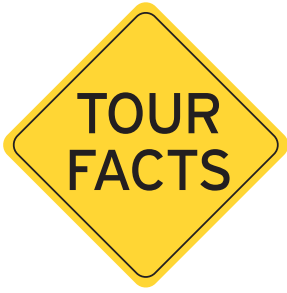
1. Assignment is at a pre-professional level of work and clearly related to your academic major or field of interest.
2. Organization acknowledges and supports your learning goals, providing an opportunity to develop the skills you need.
3. Proper supervision is given by a professional in the field.
4. Length of the assignment is clearly defined and is not listed as “on-going”.
5. Mechanism is in place for proper evaluation/feedback of your performance at the end of the assignment.

Additional Selection Criteria for Exceptional Quality Internship

(This additional criterion may signal this is an exceptional quality internship opportunity)

1. The position is with a well-known established internship program with committed resources for extra learning opportunities such as professional training, networking social events, company presentations, etc.
2. Intern is given exposure to several different functions of the organization during the assignment and may be given increased levels of responsibility.
3. There is a defining outcome (plan, project, product, or report) that will be due and evaluated at the end of your assignment. A formal presentation of your work at the end of the assignment is a good indicator.
4. Employer indicates the internship program is an established hiring channel for their career positions.

*For more information, contact a Career Center Tour Guide
at 408-924-6031 or www.careercenter.sjsu.edu*



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Qualities Employers Look for in an Intern

- Enthusiasm, Enthusiasm, ENTHUSIASM
- Good communication skills
- Related technical and/or business skills
- Strong work ethic
- Genuine interest in the Internship opportunity
- Good attitude and ability to take on new challenges

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Definitions of Internship and Internship-related terms

Internship

This is typically it is a full-time, summer job that allows a student to gain experience in their field of study. They can be paid or unpaid and are usually a one-time opportunity done over a period of three months.

Co-op

This is very similar to an internship with a longer duration. Typically a co-op will last six months and be more highly structured in nature. In most cases a co-op is a paid position and some are tied to a specific academic program or class (i.e. Engineering Co-op Class).

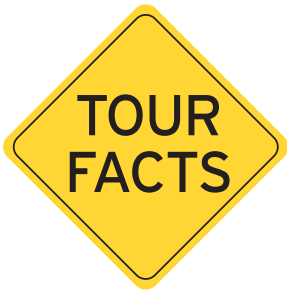
Externship and Shadow Programs

These programs provide experiences that allow you to spend between a day and several weeks observing a professional on the job. You gain an overview of various career fields and get a taste of the specifics in the day of a particular professional.

Field Experience/Service Learning/Volunteer Work

These are generally unpaid work or service experiences in the human services or nonprofit sector that run parallel to your regular class schedule. Some programs offer academic credit for such experiences. Contact your academic advisor to find out more.

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Criteria for Creating an Internship Proposal

1. Learning objectives for the intern are agreed upon and written down
2. Benefits to be gained by the Employer are defined
3. Intern work content is clearly defined
4. Supervision requirement is identified with expectation of periodic performance feedback and final project evaluation
5. Length of commitment to intern assignment is stated
6. Work schedule hours are agreed upon
7. Compensation arrangement is agreed upon (salary / stipend / unpaid)
8. Option for academic credit is addressed

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Benefits of the Internship Experience

- Gain practical work experience in your major
- Develop and expand your technical and career-related skills
- Build stronger interpersonal and communication skills
- Make valuable professional contacts and build a network of professional contacts
- Explore different companies and organizations
- Evaluate different career alternatives and choices
- Test your chosen field
- Boost self-confidence and professional credibility

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