

VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS: Tips for Success

Challenges to be aware of with a virtual internship:

There might be a lack of structure and support: An internship can become like a mentorship if your boss excels at providing structured supervision and support. You probably won't get that same feeling of having been mentored if you're communicating only by email, zoom, and phone.

There might be less job training and guidance: Similarly, you may get less training on and guidance about the duties of the job from your boss and colleagues at a remote internship than you would if you could see them face-to-face.

You won't experience the organization's environment or the satisfaction of building relationships:

The drawbacks of online internships include the lack of in-person relationship building, immersion in the physical and cultural spaces of a firm or organization, and fewer opportunities to engage in the ad hoc interaction that typically arise during an on-site experience. You also won't be able to learn successful work behaviors such as following office etiquette and understanding and responding to an organization's culture. You will miss out on the daily experiences of life in a professional setting.

You will have to be more self-motivating: Without an in-the-flesh boss to answer to, you will have to muster the motivation from within to do your job.

Overcoming Obstacles: Success Strategies

- **Build a relationship with your supervisor.** S/he will be your go-to connection with any questions or assignments you have during your internship, so establish a good connection right away. Ask how supervision will work. How often should you check in? Will you have a regular meeting time? Communicate clearly and regularly. Show interest in your supervisor. Not only will this help you in the internship, but that relationship could help you land a job down the line.
- **Make a schedule.** One of the most difficult parts about a virtual internship is the unstructured time. It can be all too easy to forget when things are due because you are not physically in a work setting every day. Making a daily schedule will allow you to plan out when you're going to work on assignments so that you're always on top of your work. Do you need a paper planner? Will you use google calendar? Find what works for you and your team and stick to it.
- **Set goals.** This will give you the opportunity to see your progression over a period of time. Whether it's short term or long-term, setting goals allows you to push yourself in a positive direction during virtual internships. It also helps you keep track of your progress, so you'll know if there's ever a time when you need to push yourself more. Clarify time constraints on the project. How will work be evaluated? What will the finished product look like?
- **Take initiative.** When you know something needs to be done, do it before you're asked. Taking initiative and showing your boss that you can do things without being told to—they'll definitely appreciate it. The goal of an internship is to learn, so take advantage of all of the opportunities that you can. If you see an opportunity to work on a new kind of project or to listen in to a call with the CEO, don't be afraid to ask about it. Not only should you start projects before you're asked to, but don't be afraid to ask for new tasks and come up with original ideas as well. Try asking "what would you like me to work on if I finish this portion of the work or this project ahead of time?"

- **Stay in contact.** Clarify tasks and projects as needed. What is the preferred method for handling a snag in the project that's preventing the student from moving forward - contact supervisor right away; go to another available person; etc.? Ask about people involved in the project or people who may be important sources of information to complete the project. What is the protocol for reaching out to others at organization or partner agencies about the project? Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- **Ask for feedback.** As an intern, it's important to show enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Ask clarifying questions whenever you need to do so. Asking for feedback consistently makes it apparent that you care about the work you are doing and you want to improve. It can be tough to hear improvements, your boss would like you to make, but in the long run you'll be a better intern and employee.
- **Track your progress.** Keep a log of your work--tasks completed, accomplishments--to share with your supervisor. This will also come in handy when you update your resume.

Tips for Communicating at Your Internship

Zoom Etiquette

1. Be present and limit distractions
2. Mute your mic
3. Dress for success
4. Beware of your backdrop
5. Raise your hand, use Chat appropriately

Email Etiquette

1. Clarify which account student should use: own account (personal or ND?) or organization email account?
2. Don't send confidential material by e-mail unless directed to do so by the supervisor.
3. Use a subject line that reflects what your message is about.
4. Be professional. Don't use abbreviations or text-message jargon (BTW, LOL, or smiley faces, and so forth) in your e-mail. Use typefaces and colors that are appropriate to your workplace. Ask if your office has a style that you should follow.
5. Use spellcheck and reread your message before sending.
6. Respond to email promptly. Within 24 hours.
7. Do not share other people's email addresses without permission.
8. Do not forward other people's messages without permission.
9. Watch the tone of your email. Remember, the person receiving the email can't see your body language.

Phone Etiquette

1. Give the caller your complete attention. Multitasking is more apparent to the caller than you think.
2. As the caller does not have the benefit of seeing your facial expression or body language, you must use your words, tone and vocal projection to convey professionalism. Be warm and polite.