

Internships Made Easy

Get Started Edition



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Introduction

There are numerous benefits to beginning an internship program: It enables employers to find future employees; test-drive talent; increase productivity and employee retention rate; and revitalize an organization with fresh perspectives and specialized skill sets.

Furthermore, internship programs are not just for large companies and mega corporations. Small- and medium-sized businesses can benefit as much, if not more, from the up-to-date knowledge, boundless motivation, and extra sets of hands...whether it's one intern or a team of 10.

About This Program

Many employers have shied away from starting internship programs because they're not sure where to begin. Moreover, employer manuals typically give a list of steps to starting a program, but gloss over the ominous "design your program" or "put your program into place" phase.

This leaves employers wondering: What exactly *is* the program I am implementing? And moreover, why can't someone just *give me* the program template?

Internships Made Easy is a unique resource, because it is a ready-made, personalizable program in and of itself; in fact, it represents Internships.com's own internship blueprint.

Like other resources, it is formatted as a list of steps. However, here, each step represents one component of the actual internship program. Complete each section by carrying out the list of actions, and you have your program designed *and* put into place.

Essentially, this manual has taken Internships.com's program and reformatted it as a customizable template. It is created as a Word document, rather than a PDF, so you can conveniently create pages to reflect the policies and practices of your business.

This blueprint is also designed to be scalable. It enables you to start small (even a single intern!) and expand on the sections as you build your program. As your program grows, or internal policies and practices change, it's easy to revise the pages; then just print and collate updated documents.

The result is a timesaving, turnkey solution that frees you from the stress of worrying about *what* to include or *how* to assemble the components.

Program Framework

Internships Made Easy was developed to fit within the framework of [Internships.com's 12 steps to starting an internship program](#) (full document in Appendix A):

Research & Discover

1. Learn about the landscape
2. Evaluate your organization
3. Learn about legality^{*}
4. Understand college credit

Plan & Design

5. Gain business-wide backing
- 6. Design the program**
7. Put together a compensation plan
8. Delegate duties
9. Select a start date for interns

Take Action

10. Post the position
11. Evaluate candidates
12. Interview, select, and hire interns

These 12 steps provide a straightforward structure and ensure that you undergo the proper planning and assessment. But like other available resources, they don't delve in depth into step six: Design the program.

That is the purpose of this manual: to provide a systematic list of actions necessary to put together your actual program. Complete the sections within, and you can check step six—the largest barrier to beginning a program—off your list!

Program Structure

When you finish reading this manual and compiling the necessary forms, the pages can be printed out to form three booklets:

Booklet 1: Employer Manual

^{*} For comprehensive legal information, see the Internships.com Employer Legal Resource Guide at www.internships.com.

The Employer Manual will consist of the main pages of this program, which can be bound, duplicated, and distributed to all employees involved in coordinating or supervising your internship program.

Booklet 2: Intern Manual

The Intern Manual will be comprised of the pages you create in Section 2. These can also be bound, duplicated, and distributed...but to interns, during orientation.

Booklet 3: Intern Project Packet

Located in Appendix B, Intern Project Packet forms bring structure to the process of assigning projects, daily responsibilities, and learning exercises.

These forms are fill-in-the-blank templates, printed *as is*. When interns are assigned daily responsibilities, or as the internship progresses and they are assigned projects and learning exercises, interns can fill out the appropriate form, by hand, in conjunction with their supervisor (see section 6 for details). Additional blank copies of forms can be run off as needed.

There are three Project Packet forms:

- a. The Daily/Weekly Responsibilities form
- b. The Project Outline form
- c. The Learning Exercise form

Like the others, Intern Project Packet forms can be bound together to form the second of two binders given to interns, the Intern Project Packet. Like the Intern Manual, this booklet can be distributed during orientation.

How to Use This Program

The function of this manual is to simplify the process of step six: designing and implementing an internship program. Proceed systematically through the steps below, and designing a top-notch internship is as simple and stress free as checking items off a list.

Start Here!

- ✓ Review the 12 steps for starting an internship program (see Appendix A); begin these 12 steps concurrently as you make your way through step six using this manual.
- ✓ Start with Section 1: Read and understand the steps. When necessary, locate or develop specified forms (i.e. Intern Manual forms, intern evaluation forms, employer evaluation forms, etc.).
- ✓ Proceed in the same manner through Sections 2 through 10.
- ✓ Once you have finished creating and/or compiling the forms, print the entire manual, including these forms and the Intern Project Packet forms in Appendix B.
- ✓ Separate and bind the pages into **three booklets**: Booklet one will be the main pages of this program, which are for employer educational use and will comprise the Employer Manual. Booklet

two will be the Intern Manual forms, which will make up the Intern Manual. Booklet three will be the Intern Project Packet forms.

- ✓ Make copies of the binders: You'll need one Employer Manual for each company employee involved in setting up and/or supervising the internship program. You'll need one copy of both the Intern Manual and Intern Project Packet for each expected intern (plus a few extra to keep on hand).
- ✓ Distribute Employer Manuals. (Hang onto Intern Manuals and Project Packets; per Section 5, these should be distributed during orientation.)
- ✓ **Congratulations—at this point, you are ready to finalize your hiring decisions and bring your intern(s) on board.**
- ✓ Go back to Section 1, and carry out the steps sequentially as you engage with interns during the course of the semester or cycle.
- ✓ As interns exit, complete Section 10 by evaluating the effectiveness of the program: As detailed in Section 10, go back and revise forms to reflect program updates. Reprint, duplicate, and distribute updated Intern and Employer Manuals as necessary.

The Three Ts

When interacting with interns, remember that, just like the business world itself, universities are viral societies. And no good—or bad—deed goes undisclosed. In other words, interactions are not isolated; the way you treat an intern today may directly impact your company's reputation, and choice of talent, tomorrow.

Like anything else, starting an internship program is a work in progress. You will make mistakes, and your program will improve as you go along. But in the long run, **creating an effective internship program boils down to three Ts: Teach, train, and treat with respect.** Keep these three elements in mind, and you can take the pressure off your program to be perfect.

With that said, let's get started! Continue on to put your internship program into place—section by section, step by step...

Section 1: Identifying Organizational Goals & Project Needs

If you've reviewed the 12 steps for starting an internship, you know that step two is "Evaluate your organization." However, we have elaborated on this step as Section 1, because it is crucial that you not just *think about* your goals and specific needs for an internship program.

You need to brainstorm, and then formalize a list of objectives and requirements—to ensure your entire team is on board and headed in the same direction.

Also, without formalized goals, you have no way of evaluating the effectiveness of your program (Section 10).

And as we know, gaining company-wide buy-in is difficult enough. Maintaining continued support requires specifics. In other words, if you can't precisely identify what you need to accomplish, there's no way to prove it's actually been achieved.

Steps:

1. List organizational goals

Gather your internship team (even if it includes two people). Start by brainstorming possible goals. When you've exhausted your ideas, go back through the list and select the best two to five objectives. Print and distribute this list, so employees can keep the desired result(s) in mind as they move through the process.

Examples of appropriate goals include:

- ✓ Finding talented future employees
- ✓ Increasing employee retention rate
- ✓ Accomplishing clerical work
- ✓ Completing projects (such as creating a social media platform or keeping your website current)
- ✓ Facilitating fresh solutions to ongoing issues
- ✓ Infusing the company with new ideas and current knowledge
- ✓ Improving public perception of the organization
- ✓ Enhancing company/product recognition among the public or potential interns
- ✓ Contributing to the community

2. Create a list of potential responsibilities and projects

Ideally, pick tasks and projects that fill voids and are beneficial to your business, but that also provide challenging educational experiences for students.

Can some of the tasks be clerical work? Sure. After all, it's important that interns become familiar with *every* aspect of an organization—and phones, filing, and stocking supplies are part of it. But try to balance out repetitive tasks with number three, learning exercises.

When you have your list, separate items into "daily/weekly responsibilities" and "projects." The difference between the two is that daily (or weekly) responsibilities are usually more straightforward tasks that are performed on a regular basis. In other words, they are generally the jobs interns will do

each day or week when they first come in. Not always, but often, daily responsibilities are of a more mechanical nature.

Daily responsibilities can include tasks such as:

- ✓ Checking voicemail and email
- ✓ Replying to messages
- ✓ Filing
- ✓ Scheduling meetings
- ✓ Following up with potential clients
- ✓ Scanning industry blogs and reporting on competitor activities

Projects, on the other hand, are larger undertakings that usually (although not always) require more mental skill.

While they can include the simple (addressing envelopes) to the challenging (putting together marketing plans), they generally have a specific start and end. That said, projects can range from backburner (i.e. when you have free time) to urgent (i.e. focus all your energy on finishing this).

Examples of projects include:

- ✓ Researching the viability of a new program or campaign
- ✓ Compiling and presenting statistics
- ✓ Evaluating potential social media platforms
- ✓ Proposing a social media strategy
- ✓ Building a company sales database
- ✓ Cleaning up an existing database
- ✓ Critiquing the company's website from a user perspective
- ✓ Brainstorming ideas for boosting site usability
- ✓ Evaluating some area of IT functionality
- ✓ Generating cost-cutting ideas
- ✓ Preparing budgets, reports, plans, or proposals
- ✓ Creating materials
- ✓ Sourcing lower-cost supplies
- ✓ Developing process directions for tasks with high employee turnover

3. List possible learning exercises

Formal learning exercises balance out the clerical tasks you might ask the intern to take on.

Essentially, learning exercises involve taking along an intern to observe a meeting or participate in a networking opportunity, teaching an intern a new skill, or providing training in how to complete a project.

Examples of formal learning exercises include:

- ✓ Inviting an intern to observe an internal meeting, client meeting, or sales call
- ✓ Teaching an intern how to prepare a budget, report, or plan

- ✓ Training an intern in how to use a piece of equipment or software
- ✓ Helping an intern use their PowerPoint skills to create a company presentation
- ✓ Role-playing with an intern how to make client follow-up calls or close a sale

Section 2: Creating the Intern Manual

The Intern Manual is a key component of your internship program. And this section will take you step by step through creating this resource.

When you finish reading through this program and creating any necessary forms, you can print the Intern Manual pages and collate them to form the Intern Manual.

You can then duplicate the manual, so you have enough for your incoming interns. During orientation, you can distribute one to each intern and walk them through its components.

The steps below detail how to create each document included in the Intern Manual. Some of these documents you may already have on hand; others you might find online. Still others, however, you'll need to create yourself (which should be easy, considering you know your business better than anyone!)

Logistically speaking, you can add pages to the end of this document or open a new Word document to serve as your Intern Manual.

Steps:

1. Create a Company Profile sheet

The Company Profile sheet gives interns a more complete picture of your company. This is important, because studies have shown that interns who are familiarized early on with their host organizations are more productive sooner than those who are not as well orientated.

The Company Profile sheet may include:

- ✓ A paragraph providing an overview of the organization
- ✓ Important historical information
- ✓ A company mission statement
- ✓ A bit about the company's product or service and how it differentiates itself from competitors
- ✓ Brief biographical information about the company's primary customer (and whether the company caters to businesses or consumers): age range, sex, level of education, income level, primary motivation, geographic location, and any other key information that differentiates the target—or, a business profile for business-to-business marketers
- ✓ A flowchart or description of the business' structure (i.e. departments, etc.)
- ✓ A company organizational chart (including names and titles of pertinent individuals, particularly company leaders and those who will work directly with interns)
- ✓ Information on other offices/branches (if applicable)
- ✓ Information on retail locations (if applicable)
- ✓ Information about public perception
- ✓ Any important recent news

2. Create a Position Profile sheet

Unlike the other Intern Manual components, the Position and Supervisor Profile sheets will not be the same for all interns. Instead, employers can use the categories in the next two sections to create a unique profile for each position.

The appropriate version of the Position Profile sheet (i.e. “Marketing Intern,” “Accounting Intern,” etc.) should be inserted into the manual as specific interns are brought on board.

The Position Profile sheet may include:

- ✓ Position title
- ✓ Supervisor name and title
- ✓ Internship start date and end date
- ✓ Requirements (i.e. a certain GPA or number of hours in major-related classes)
- ✓ Whether academic credit is being received, and if so, the name of the school as well as the faculty sponsor’s name and contact information
- ✓ Required number of hours per week
- ✓ General scope of responsibility (specific responsibilities, project assignments, and learning exercises will be detailed separately)
- ✓ Other pertinent position-specific information
- ✓ Compensation (for questions about compensation laws and standards, see the Internships.com Employer Legal Resource Guide at www.internships.com.)

3. Create a Supervisor Profile sheet

The Supervisor Profile sheet gives the intern the information they need to best facilitate learning and communication with their site supervisor.

Like the Position Profile sheet, this document will not be the same for all interns. So the correct version should be inserted into the Intern Manual.

The Supervisor Profile sheet may include:

- ✓ Supervisor name and title
- ✓ Supervisor email and phone number(s)
- ✓ Preferred method of contact (i.e. “prefers email contact” or “call before coming by office”)
- ✓ General availability (i.e. “available for meetings Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays after 2:00” or “out of the office every Friday”)
- ✓ Alternate contact name and title (i.e. who will answer questions and give direction in the absence of the direct supervisor?)
- ✓ Alternate contact email and phone number

4. Create an Intern Policies sheet*

The Intern Policies sheet lists both the company policies as well as intern-specific policies. Therefore, you can likely use what is given to permanent employees as a jumping-off point, simply adding, deleting, and revising policies as appropriate for interns.

*There is a difference between the Intern Policies sheet and number six, the Intern Procedures sheet. For clarification, “policies” are more akin to rules, whereas “procedures” describe how something is done. For example, the number of allotted sick or vacation days is a policy; how employees go about calling in sick or scheduling vacation days is a procedure.

The Intern Policies sheet may include:

- ✓ Compensation policy (i.e. length of pay period and method of payment)
- ✓ Benefit policy
- ✓ Sick/personal day policy
- ✓ Vacation policy
- ✓ Policy on office relationships
- ✓ Safety regulations
- ✓ Confidentiality statement
- ✓ Disciplinary actions
- ✓ Termination policy
- ✓ Sexual harassment policy
- ✓ Academic credit policy (i.e. how academic credit is strictly between the student and the faculty sponsor; site supervisors do *not* assign academic credit)
- ✓ Any state or federal guidelines that may apply to intern work
- ✓ Any other applicable policies

5. Create an Intern Etiquette sheet

If “policies” are the overt rules of an organization, “etiquette” describes the covert conventions.

Defined as, “conventional requirements as to social behavior,” communicating to interns a company’s code of etiquette is almost as important as communicating formal policies.

In fact, a good way to brainstorm what should be included in your company’s Etiquette document is to ask yourself the following: What do I wish someone had told *me* on my first day of work?

The Intern Etiquette sheet may include:

- ✓ Dress guidelines for men and women (i.e. are jeans appropriate, or are suits expected?)
- ✓ Appearance guidelines for men and women (i.e. are tattoos and piercings the norm, or should they be removed or covered up at work?)
- ✓ Socialization and workplace romance covert guidelines (i.e. is having a beer afterhours with coworkers encouraged or looked down upon? What about dating?)
- ✓ Language and industry jargon guidelines (i.e. should employees make sure to address the CEO as “Mr. Weston”? Is there any specific company jargon interns should be familiar with?)
- ✓ Lunches and break standards (i.e. do most people leave the building for lunch, or is taking an hour off discouraged?)
- ✓ Outside availability (i.e. are employees expected to be reachable by cell phone outside normal business hours?)
- ✓ Any other etiquette standards observed at the organization

6. Create an Intern Procedures sheet

As explained above, the Intern Procedures sheet will be comprised of important processes the intern should be familiar with: anything from how to use office equipment to how to implement the rules of the organization.

The Intern Procedures sheet may include:

- ✓ Process for logging hours and submitting timesheets
- ✓ Project and responsibility assignment process (see Section 6 for details)
- ✓ Process for obtaining supervisor signoff on projects and academic progress reports
- ✓ Process for gaining entry to the office (i.e. security clearance, badges, keys, etc.)
- ✓ Process for calling in sick or taking personal days
- ✓ Vacation request process
- ✓ Safety or emergency procedures
- ✓ Conflict resolution process (i.e. should issues be taken to an immediate supervisor or an HR representative?)
- ✓ Evaluation process (see Section 7 for details)
- ✓ Instructions and passwords for logging onto computer, wireless Internet, or secured areas
- ✓ Instructions for operating the telephone and voicemail systems and other office equipment

7. Create an Intern Timesheet form

If you do not already have a timesheet for hourly employees, you can find a generic version online. Or, create a custom template that includes fields for pay period, date, time in, time out, breaks, and supervisor signoff.

8. Print, duplicate, and collate forms above

Once you have created or compiled the forms above, just print, make copies, and bind together to create the Intern Manual. Distribute copies during orientation (see Section 5).

Section 3: Creating the Intern Project Packet

The Intern Project Packet organizes, eliminates ambiguity, and provides a framework for the assignment and completion of daily tasks, projects, and learning exercises.

As explained in the Introduction, this booklet will include the Daily/Weekly Responsibilities form, the Project Outline form, and the Learning Exercise form. Together with the Intern Manual, an Intern Project Packet can be distributed to each intern during orientation.

Steps:

1. Print and collate Intern Project Packet forms

Locate the three forms in Appendix B. Print them as is and bind together approximately five copies of each.

Interns can fill in the forms by hand, in conjunction with their supervisors, as daily responsibilities, projects, or learning exercises are assigned and completed (see section 6). Direct interns to make additional copies of these templates as needed.

Section 4: Pre-arrival Preparation

Preparation *prior* to the arrival of interns is paramount to getting your program off to a smooth start. Not only does it enable your staff to feel organized and in control, it makes interns feel welcome and appreciated.

Consider this: An intern who arrives already informed of the entry procedure, welcomed by a friendly team member, and led to their pre-stocked, pre-assigned workspace feels a part of the organization immediately.

In contrast, an intern who can't get clearance to enter the building, wanders aimlessly looking for their supervisor, then stands humbly in a corner while employees argue about where the student will sit feels unwelcome, unwanted, and generally, "in the way."

Interns' worst fear is that they'll arrive and absolutely no one will be expecting them! Make it a point to provide exactly the *opposite* experience.

Steps:

1. Send a Welcome Packet confirming start date and communicating key first-day information

The Welcome Packet should be sent well in advance and should contain at least two items:

- a. A copy of your Internship Agreement (and any other HR documents interns need to sign ahead of time)
- b. A welcome letter containing any information necessary for the first day at work, which may include:
 - ✓ Confirmation of position title, start date, and supervisor's name
 - ✓ Confirmation of compensation plan
 - ✓ Confirmation of additional perks or benefits (if applicable)
 - ✓ Details on exactly where to report and at what time (include the full address as well as room or suite information and a map if necessary)
 - ✓ Parking information
 - ✓ Name and title of the person who will meet them
 - ✓ Any information necessary to gain access to the building (if badges are needed, have someone meet interns in the public area initially)
 - ✓ A list of items interns should bring with them on their first day: the signed Internship Agreement and any other employment forms requested; picture I.D.; Social Security card; a voided check from their bank for direct deposit purposes (if applicable); proof of U.S. citizenship (original birth certificate, original Certificate of Citizenship or Naturalization, or U.S.-issued passport)
 - ✓ A statement on the standard dress code. While this is optional, a common concern of interns is showing up either over or underdressed. Use this opportunity to give them the information they need to fit in immediately

2. If appropriate, set up security clearance

While items like creating badges can't be done until interns are present, anything that can make their entry smoother and more stress free should be done ahead of time. For example, if your building has a doorman or security guard, alert him or her to the arrival of interns and provide a list of names.

3. Designate and stock intern workstations

As mentioned, when an intern's physical space is not set up, it makes them feel unwelcome. Moreover, it impedes supervisor workflow when interns are constantly asking for items like pens and printer paper.

Essentially, each intern will need a chair, desk or tabletop, and likely their own computer. Therefore, prior to interns' arrival, decide where they will sit and stock workstations with the necessary supplies: computer and accessories, pens, highlighters, paperclips, stapler, trashcan, phone, etc.

3. Touch base with intern coordinator and supervisors

Check in with internship supervisors the day before to make sure everything is on schedule. Offer to answer any last-minute questions.

4. Check in and review orientation process

This should happen a couple days in advance in case last-minute changes need to be made. Depending on the size of your business, the person overseeing intern orientation may be the owner, a supervisor, the program coordinator, or someone else entirely.

5. Alert employees

Send a company-wide email alerting employees to the arrival of interns. Again, you don't want employees wandering the halls wondering why there are suddenly unfamiliar faces...or thinking that someone is threatening their job!

Instead, let employees know that interns will be starting. Ask them to make interns feel welcome by initiating introductions and answering questions when possible.

6. If necessary, complete forms required by students' schools

Since host organizations aren't involved in assigning academic credit, you don't need to initiate anything; simply cooperate with the requests of students' faculty sponsors.

Section 5: Onboarding & Orientation

You've interviewed, hired, prepped and planned...and now your interns have arrived at the office.

This section outlines the orientation process, which will comprise much of interns' first day on the job. It is crucial that orientation be completed prior to interns doing actual work, as important information will be conveyed during this process.

Orientation should consist of the steps below. During this process, encourage interns to ask questions, and reiterate that it's always better to ask if you are unsure than to risk making a mistake.

Steps:

1. Greet interns

Have the supervisor, internship program coordinator, or even a supervisor's assistant meet and greet interns upon arrival.

2. Tour facility and make introductions

Walk interns around the office. Point out the locations of their workspace, supervisor office(s), supply area, restrooms, break rooms, conference rooms, fire exits, etc.

As you proceed, make introductions to key people including supervisors, program coordinator, and any employees who will be working or sharing space with interns.

3. Turn in Internship Agreement and other employment paperwork

Have each intern hand in signed copies of the Internship Agreement and any other standard employment forms included in their Welcome Packet (i.e. tax and payroll documents, direct deposit release, etc.)

4. Conduct intern orientation meeting

The intern orientation meeting will likely consist of the following:

✓ **Distribute and discuss Intern Manual**

In Section 2, you compiled the Intern Manual. Here, you should pass it out and go through it, page by page, including policies, procedures, etiquette, etc. Clarify the information, answer questions, and explain how to use specific sheets (like the timesheet).

✓ **Distribute and discuss Intern Project Packet**

In Section 3, we discussed the Intern Project Packet. During intern orientation, this should be distributed along with the Intern Manual.

As with the manual, walk interns through the three types of templates, explaining how the sheets are to be filled in, with their supervisor, when they are assigned daily/weekly responsibilities, projects, and learning exercises. Mention that they should make additional copies of the templates when they run low.

✓ **Conduct any mandatory safety, security, and sexual harassment briefings**

5. Instruct how to use office equipment

For anything not covered specifically on the Procedures sheet, have someone walk each intern through how to operate pertinent office equipment and carry out processes: mail, phones, faxes, computers, etc.

Also, provide passwords for any software programs they'll need to access or help them set up accounts. Suggest that interns take notes, so they don't have to ask later.

6. Hand out additional materials

Give the intern any other organizational materials that help establish the company, its climate, or its customer base: company newsletters, annual reports, recent press releases, or news clippings.

Section 6: Assigning Intern Daily/Weekly Responsibilities, Projects, & Learning Exercises

At this point, your interns have completed orientation, and it's finally time to get to work!

Remember the brainstorming you did in Section 1—where you wrote down all the tasks and projects you need completed and all the learning exercises interns could take advantage of? Well, now it's time to assign them.

Review your list from Section 1 and the examples of the three types of intern assignments. To reiterate, there are three types of activities you can assign interns:

Work type 1: Daily/weekly responsibilities or tasks

These are the tasks performed on a regular basis (usually daily or weekly). Of the three types of work, these are likely to be the most mundane or mechanical; and these are often the tasks that benefit you more than the intern.

Work type 2: Projects

Projects may be short- or long-term, backburner or urgent, but they generally have a concrete start and end point. While not always, projects often require more high-level thinking and learned skills.

Work type 3: Learning exercises

Learning exercises are what you give back in exchange for clerical or repetitive tasks, as learning exercises benefit the *intern* as opposed to the employer.

In fact, they may even *impede* your workflow, since they are often training exercises. While there will be learning experiences all day, examples of formal learning exercises are listed in Section 1.

Using the Project Packet templates you distributed during orientation, proceed with the following steps for assigning projects.

Steps:

1. Explain daily workflow and three types of assignments

For those interns who have not had a job before, outline the general flow of work: Explain how they should carry out their daily/weekly responsibilities (usually first thing in the morning). After that, the rest of their time should be spent completing projects or engaging in formal learning exercises, based on priority.

Clarify the three types of assignments and emphasize open communication: If they run out of things to do, or feel overwhelmed, let their supervisor know.

Balancing workload and meeting deadlines is the result of honed skill in prioritization and time management, but also a product of keeping the lines of communication open.

2. Go over Daily/Weekly Responsibilities sheet and fill in initial tasks

Explain the sheet to interns and assign initial responsibilities (based on your list from Section 1).

Discuss the frequency of each task and provide any necessary notes or instructions on how to perform it. (Note: Since daily/weekly responsibilities are ongoing, there is no supervisor signoff on this form.)

3. Go over Project Outline sheet and assign initial projects

Explain the Project Outline template and assign initial projects, discussing priority, expected product or result, and learning goals.

As a supervisor, your challenge when assigning projects is to balance what *you* most need accomplished with what will provide educational merit for the intern...*while* keeping in mind what most closely corresponds to the intern's specific skills, experience, and area of study.

4. Go over Learning Exercise sheet

Explain to interns how to fill out this sheet for formal learning exercises.

5. Review signoff process for project completion

Explain your company's process for submitting work and obtaining supervisor review and signoff.

Section 7: Formal/Written Intern Evaluations

Effectively evaluating interns is one of the cornerstones of a successful program.

For starters, interns report greater levels of satisfaction when they receive regular feedback. Additionally, maintaining continued company support for your program is dependent on your ability to demonstrate adequate intern performance.

A productive evaluation process involves both periodic formal (written) evaluations as well as informal, more frequent, check-ins.

As a guideline, in a three-to-four-month internship, formal evaluations should take place at least once at the midpoint and again at the conclusion; although an employer should carry out the formal evaluation process more frequently if there are problems, if an intern requests formal feedback more regularly, or if a school requires it.

In longer internships, employers should conduct formal evaluations once every two to three months. This keeps interns on track, maintains motivation level, and circumvents issues before they escalate.

In short, there are three elements that comprise an effective evaluation:

1. Praise: Start on a positive note by pointing out intern strengths.
2. Clear communication: Be clear as to exactly which areas need improvement and why.
3. Specific strategies: Provide explicit ideas and actions for improving weaknesses.

Steps:

1. Fill out a written evaluation form

You can find a generic form online, or create a custom form yourself. The important point is that the supervisor fills out a written evaluation form prior to meeting with an intern. When completed, he or she should make a copy, so the intern can refer to it and make notes during the meeting.

2. Conduct a one-on-one intern evaluation meeting

During the evaluation session, the supervisor should engage in the following:

- ✓ Walk the intern through the evaluation sheet. Explain each score and why it was issued (making sure to emphasize both positive and negative performance results).
- ✓ Encourage the intern to ask questions and take notes on their copy of the evaluation. (Some interns get nervous, making it difficult to recall suggestions later.)
- ✓ For any areas marked as needing improvement, discuss how progress can be made. Provide explicit suggestions, making sure the intern is clear as to what they are doing that is less than expected and what actions are needed to progress.
- ✓ At the end of the meeting, have the intern summarize the areas needing improvement as well as their strengths.

3. Fulfill any academic evaluation requirements

Since academic credit is between students and their schools, interns should let supervisors know what is required. Academic evaluation may include onsite visits or conference calls with students' faculty supervisors.

Section 8: Informal Weekly Check-Ins

As discussed in Section 8, informal weekly check-ins should supplement periodic formal evaluations.

There are three main differences between formal evaluations and informal check-ins: First, formal evaluations are written, where as check-ins are simply a “status-check” conversation. Secondly, informal check-ins occur more regularly, ideally on a weekly basis. And third, formal evaluations focus primarily on intern assessment and progress, while check-ins include intern performance *and* project updates.

Steps:

1. Explain purpose of weekly check-ins

Discuss with interns how, in addition to providing more regular updates on performance and progress, weekly check-ins guarantee them at least once-a-week time alone with their supervisor’s undivided attention.

This is especially important in small businesses where the direct supervisor may be the owner or president of the company...and daily contact may be most frequently with an assistant.

Also, while interns can, of course, ask questions in between, supervisors should urge them to keep a list of non-urgent issues that don’t directly affect project progress. This way, interns can address these during check-ins instead of interrupting supervisors during daily activities.

2. Schedule a recurring day and time

At the onset of the internship, supervisors should set a weekly day, time, and place for check-ins. And supervisors should treat these short meetings with the same respect as client calls—because these weekly meetings will have a direct impact on interns’ contributions.

3. Conduct check-ins

While there is no evaluation form to fill out, the following may be part of the conversation:

- ✓ Answering intern questions
- ✓ Providing guidance on any issues or sticking points interns need help working through
- ✓ Asking interns to provide status reports on open projects
- ✓ Having interns provide follow-up reports on completed projects: What did they learn? What did they enjoy? What were they challenged by?
- ✓ Addressing any subpar performance and giving specific suggestions for improvement
- ✓ Praising intern accomplishments or areas of above-average performance
- ✓ If possible, giving interns a sense of upcoming projects or workload

Section 9: Offboarding

As you approach the close of the semester or cycle, it's tempting to let things slide or turn your attention too soon to the next group of interns. Don't. Doing so robs you of some of the more valuable benefits of the program you've worked hard to implement. Instead, stay committed long enough to carry out the offboarding procedures below.

Engaging in a formal offboarding process benefits your company in numerous ways:

- ✓ Provides interns with a sense of closure
- ✓ Creates a feeling of being appreciated
- ✓ Facilitates interns' professional growth and development
- ✓ Helps interns hone in on personal strengths and natural aptitude
- ✓ Aids your organization in making improvements to your internship program

Most importantly, interns feeling valued fuels positive word of mouth. When interns believe their learning goals are important to your company, they want to give back.

They do so by telling their peers about the opportunities at your organization. This not only builds interest among the next group of interns; it drives public opinion and positive perception of your company.

The purpose of this section is to collect information. The input you obtain in this section should be used in Section 10 to analyze program effectiveness and initiate upgrades.

Steps:

1. Conduct a final formal evaluation of interns

Repeat the steps in Section 7 for conducting a formal evaluation.

2. Fulfill any final academic evaluation requirements

Try to complete paperwork in a timely manner, as student grades and course credit are dependent on you.

3. Have interns fill out evaluations of program and supervisors

Similar to the intern evaluation sheet, you can find a generic evaluation sheet online or create a custom form yourself.

In it, you should solicit feedback from interns regarding the site itself, supervisors, and the overall learning experience.

4. Conduct intern exit interviews

An exit interview is essentially a one-on-one meeting with the supervisor (or program coordinator) where the intern is invited to give their honest impressions of the program, identify strengths and weaknesses, and offer suggestions for improvement.

Obviously some students will be more open than others. But you can encourage candidness by explaining the purpose of the interview (to help improve your program), requesting honest answers, and assuring interns that negative comments will not be attributed to them.

Other than that, starting with less sensitive issues will help interns get comfortable.

5. Consider a letter of recommendation

If a certain intern (or interns) has done an outstanding job, consider writing a letter of recommendation.

Composing a letter won't take much of your time, but it can be of infinite value to an intern entering the workforce. Essentially, a letter of recommendation is one of the most thoughtful ways to say "thank you" for a job well done.

A letter of recommendation should be written on company letterhead and can include the following:

- ✓ The date the letter was written
- ✓ The salutation "To Whom It May Concern"
- ✓ The position basics (i.e. the dates the intern was employed and the department or position title)
- ✓ Your role in relation to the intern (i.e. direct supervisor, program coordinator, department head, etc.)
- ✓ If desired, a bit about the intern's responsibilities
- ✓ Details of the intern's performance that exceeded expectations
- ✓ Any other pertinent information about your experience with the intern
- ✓ Your signature, plus typed full name and title
- ✓ An offer to contact you for more information (along with your email and/or phone number)

6. Consider a closure event

Arranging a "closure" event helps transition interns, provides a feeling of finality, offers a last chance for networking, and ends the program on a positive note, which increases the likelihood of interns providing positive feedback to peers.

Depending on the size of your organization and the number of interns leaving, this event may be a simple lunch or casual office gathering or a large event in a rented space.

Moreover, if you are considering interns for fulltime employment, creating a social situation also provides a covert way of evaluating how interns function in public.

Section 10: Internal Evaluation of Employer Goals

With your interns having departed, it's now time to reflect, analyze, and improve. This section consists of two aspects:

1. Revisiting your goals listed in Section 1 and assessing how well you worked toward achieving them.
2. Analyzing intern feedback from Section 9 and developing ideas for revising poorly rated program components.

Evaluating the success of your internship program is especially important in today's economic environment. Because for most businesses, maintaining financial support will require evidence—both quantitative and anecdotal—that goals are being met.

Steps:

1. Analyze feedback from intern evaluations

The key program coordinator should compile intern feedback from Section 9 and perform preliminary assessments.

2. Evaluate progress in accomplishing goals

The program coordinator should review the list of goals developed in Section 1 and make notes on perceived progress.

3. Compile and calculate quantifiable measures of success

Where at all possible, the coordinator should aim to calculate quantifiable data like ROI, the number of interns who are hired as fulltime employees (if that's a goal), or the number of intern applicants per semester (upticks mean word is spreading).

4. Present findings and brainstorm solutions and enhancements

Here, the coordinator should take his or her findings to the team. As a group, they should list challenges; issues; and less than optimal procedures, policies, processes, expenditures, and project completions.

The group should then devise a list of possible actions for improving low-scoring areas—as well as brainstorm ideas for increasing ROI or cutting costs.

Most importantly, the coordinator should make sure everyone on the team walks away with a list of action items or procedural changes to implement for the next semester or new-hire(s).

5. Revise forms to reflect program improvements

Once you have decided on revisions to your program, go back over any forms (particularly in the Intern Manual) and make necessary changes. Add or delete daily tasks, projects, or learning exercises from your main list based on what worked the first time around.

As discussed, your program will continue to improve as you devise solutions for overcoming stumbling blocks and build upon strengths. Although there will be challenges, keep at it.

In addition to the obvious benefits, like creating a steady stream of qualified future employees, maintaining a quality internship program is one of the most effective methods for keeping your company current.

While seasoned staff members have years of acquired experience, more recent graduates bring with them an innate understanding of social, technical, and even operational trends that are better *lived* than learned.

Build relationships with the workforce of the future, and ensure your organization will continue to thrive tomorrow.

For additional information on how to most effectively set up, recruit, and run an internship—including expert tips, shortcuts, Q&A, and strategies on how to avoid common pitfalls—visit Internships.com’s Employer Resource section at <http://internships.com/employer/resources>.

Appendix A: 12 Steps to Setting Up an Internship Program at Your Organization

Implementing an internship program can seem daunting: What's your first step? What's your *next* step? And how do you know if your company can *handle* an internship program?

In reality, setting up an internship program is similar to starting any new program or project: It's crucial you have a plan. Once you do, however, it's as easy as checking items off a list until that plan is put into action. Knowing how to start an internship program is no different.

Internship programs offer tremendous benefits to businesses in terms of increasing productivity and recruiting well-suited staff members—especially in small- to medium-sized organizations.

To help you reap these benefits, Internships.com has created a step-by-step, systematic plan to smoothly guide you from wishing you had an internship program to watching your company enjoy the advantages of this cost-effective source of highly motivated manpower.

Employers: 12 Steps to Starting an Internship

Research & Discover.

1. Learn about the landscape. Your first step is to gain a general understanding of the internship arena: What exactly is an internship? Who is Generation Y, and what should you know about hiring them? What are interns looking for in a host organization? Using internships.com as your headquarters, read and research as much as possible about the internship industry.

2. Evaluate your organization. Once you get a feel for what an internship program entails, your next step is to conduct an internal assessment of your company's needs and resources.

Some aspects to consider are whether you will pay interns, or how you can otherwise compensate intern efforts; whether your company can support multiple interns; the availability of meaningful work for interns; the type of projects that can be assigned; your ideal duration and time of year to host interns; and how your physical space and equipment will accommodate additional individuals.

3. Learn about legality. Before you design your program, it's wise to get a grasp on the legal ramifications of hosting interns in your state: minimum wage requirements, workers' compensation issues, safety and harassment policies, termination guidelines, and how other traditional employee benefits and business responsibilities do or don't apply to interns.

As a host organization, the best way to cover your bases legally is to consult with your company's legal counsel or contact an employment law professional...*before* you begin the hiring process. (For comprehensive legal information, see the Internships.com Employer Legal Resource Guide at www.internships.com.)

4. Understand college credit. It's a common misconception that internships are always in exchange for college or university credit. Yes, an internship *is* a learning experience. But whether or not educational credit is obtained is strictly between the student and his or her school.

Plan & Design.

5. Gain business-wide backing. For an internship to succeed, it's necessary to get the entire business on board. From the CEO to senior and junior management, without big-picture buy-in, interns won't feel welcome, and it will be a constant struggle to allocate resources.

The best way to get the green light? Prepare a presentation explaining how an internship program can help your organization reach its objectives.

6. Design the program. The key component in setting up an internship is to create the structure itself. A comprehensive internship structure should include information on learning objectives, daily responsibilities, short- and long-term projects, supervisor assignments, evaluation procedures, policies and expectations, and orientation and offboarding processes.

7. Put together a compensation plan. Develop your intern salary or compensation structure. Research current trends, intern expectations, and legal guidelines; then designate funds, create a budget, and gain the necessary financial approval.

8. Delegate duties. Having staff members take ownership of key roles and responsibilities ensures implementation will move forward and that the internship program will run smoothly once in place. But it doesn't end there. Make sure intern supervisors have the time and resources to effectively manage the participants and the program itself.

9. Select a start date for interns. Leaving your launch date open-ended almost guarantees procrastination. Instead, setting a date about 7 to 10 weeks out will facilitate proper planning.

Take Action.

10. Post the position. Posting openings on internships.com gives you exposure to the top student talent. Filling out the position profile is simple and allows you to explain about the position, the industry, and the benefits of working for your business.

11. Evaluate candidates. Start by identifying the specific skills, traits, and training you're looking for. Next, devise a system for evaluating resumes and submissions to decide which prospective interns you will interview.

12. Interview, select, and hire interns. Conduct interviews. Then, perform background checks and contact the references of your top contenders. When making final decisions, be sure the direct supervisor has a say in selecting a candidate. Finally, refer to the program structure designed in this manual to begin your onboarding and orientation processes.

Employer takeaway: Don't let the unknown nature of starting an internship program be a deterrent. Simply follow the 12 steps to starting an internship above, and your business will be benefitting from the extra sets of hands—and fresh perspectives—in no time.

Appendix B: Intern Project Packet Forms



Daily/Weekly Responsibilities

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Task name: _____ Frequency: _____
Notes: _____

Project Outline

Project name: _____

Deadline (if applicable): _____

Priority (circle one): Urgent High Medium Low During Free Time Only

Project supervisor: _____ **Contact info:** _____

Team or individual project? If team, project lead: _____

Expected product or result: _____

Project goal/purpose: _____

Learning goal: _____

Notes or guidelines: _____

Process notes (to keep on file for subsequent similar projects): _____

Date completed: _____

Intern signature: _____

Supervisor signature: _____

Learning Exercise

Exercise name: _____

Date of event/exercise: _____ **Location:** _____

Exercise supervisor: _____ **Contact info:** _____

Purpose of exercise or event (what is being learned?): _____

Notes: _____

Process/how-to steps (if applicable): _____

Key takeaway(s): _____

Names, titles, and contact info for contacts made (if applicable): _____

Intern signature: _____

Supervisor signature: _____