

Do's and Don'ts for a Summer Internship

The job application process doesn't start after you graduate college. It starts your freshman year of college as you apply for summer internships. No matter the degree you are pursuing, the application, interview and internship process is important when making a first impression in the working world. We asked Bloomberg hiring manager, Bill Szafranski, and University of Alabama's Director of Career Education and Development, Mary Lowrey, the key to finding and landing your dream summer internship and the tips to be successful once you've found one.

DO

Start Early

The beginning of the school year is exciting and the last thing you are thinking about is what you will be doing nine months from then. But those first few months of the fall semester is the time to be doing your research and figuring out what internships you want to apply to. Getting in contact with these companies early on will show them how interested you are and will also give you ample time to network. "Some summer internships are posted in the fall with applications due before or shortly after the new year," said Mary Lowrey. Different internships have different application due dates, but the majority of companies want applications early on in the New Year. If you miss those deadlines you have to work ten times harder to find another opportunity.

Network

Use the resources around you. Friends, family and faculty members are usually always willing and interested in helping an eager student out. These professionals have been students before and understand that sometimes you just need a foot in the door. Every college has some type of career service department that is available to students for help with job applications, interviews, networking and more. Utilize this free service.

Do your research

Figuring out what internship you want is not always cut and dry. Most majors have many different types of internships available with different aspects of the industry. There are many different websites geared strictly towards internships like Internmatch.com or Internships.com. Almost every one of these sites has the option to search for strictly internships. Research doesn't stop after the application. Once you land the interview, Bill Szafranski advises to "do some digging. Find information that isn't easily known. Show that you did more prep than just going through the standard motions." Use this research to know what skills and experience the company values to highlight during the interview. You can also use the research to ask informed questions that will show your genuine interest in the company.

Show up ready to go

Landing the internship is half the battle. Now you have to prove why you deserve to be there and learn and grow as a young professional. Show up to work in appropriate clothing. There is not a huge range in outfit choice for men, but there is for women. Regardless, reach out to your hiring manager or boss before you start work and ask what the dress code is. Always show up early to work. Early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable and unprofessional. Being early and ready to go shows your boss how seriously you take your internship and is one of the many ways to impress your boss.

Meet Everyone You Can

Get to know everyone in your department. And then get to know everyone in the department next to you and the one down the hall. You never know whom you are going to meet and what type of professional relationships can grow from a simple conversation. If you have an opportunity to explore other departments, take it. Depending on your workload and permission from your boss, learning about different parts of a company can help you better understand the company and do a better job within your own department. Also, many times departments collaborate on different projects and to already have a relationship with the other departments will help the project go smoothly.

Take Initiative

Some internships require that interns work together on a summer-long project or help with an on-going project. Take initiative by volunteering to do the grunt work or stay later to get the work done. Use collaborative assignments to showcase your leadership and management skills. Other ways to show initiative is to always be ready for more work. If you finish what you have to do for the day, check in with your boss and ask if there's anything more you can do. If your boss doesn't have anything more for you to do, ask if you can ask other employees if they need help with anything.

DON'T

Forget the Internet is Forever

Social media is so widely used on personal and professional levels. Don't let your personal social media accounts ruin your professional career. Szafranski is in charge of hiring new employees and told us he looks at every applicant's social media accounts. "Social media should be used to demonstrate to a company why they should hire you not why they

shouldn't. If you don't want to clean up your social media just attach a picture of you doing a keg stand on your resume. It is the same thing," said Szafranski.

Just listen, but also hear

Interviews are usually more talking on the applicant's end. The employer wants to hear about who you are, what you've done and what you can do for the company. Szafranski stresses the importance of finding a balance when answering questions. He said, "One of the worse things you can do is talk too much. Answer the question appropriately give color if necessary then shut up and really listen." Another important skill Szafranski advises to bring to the interview is the ability to hear what the employer is telling you about the company, job or themselves. Take the time to focus on their response and stop thinking about what you're going to say back.

Bombard the company

After your interview, Lowrey says if you know someone in the company, you can ask their advice for reaching out after the interview, but if you do not, the time recommended for following up is about one week. Make sure to thank the employer for taking the time to meet with you and giving you the opportunity. Hand-written thank you notes are especially appreciated and get an employers' attention more than another email in their inbox.

Forget that an internship is one long job interview

Many companies use internships as feeder programs for full time jobs. While you may not be tasked with the most challenging assignments, treat every assignment as if it is going to be shown to the CEO. Impressing your boss with hard work can translate into a full time job opportunity or a glowing recommendation letter for your future internships and jobs. Don't slack off because you have few responsibilities. Absolutely do not use your cellphone or the Internet for things other than work. Just because your boss may use her cellphone, it does not give you permission. You wouldn't take out your cellphone during an interview, don't use it during the workday.