

Making the Most of Your Summer Internship

We trust that your summer internship will help you clarify your career direction and establish valuable professional networks. The following list offers some suggestions for ways to capitalize on your summer experience and make the most of your internship:

1. Schedule a Preliminary Meeting with Your Supervisor(s).

This may sound obvious, but meeting with your supervisor(s) in the first few days on the job is critical to getting started on the right foot. If your supervisor doesn't set up a time to talk about your projects and goals early on, ask for a meeting. Consider clarifying both your expectations and the supervisor's expectations regarding types of assignments you will handle, work schedule, training and supervisory opportunities, etc. Discussing these issues BEFORE you start your internship can help stave off miscommunication problems and disappointments down the road.

2. Take the Initiative.

Be pro-active in making the most of this summer. Your professional development and summer internship outcomes are ultimately your own responsibility. If things are not working out as you anticipated regarding the level of skill required for the bulk of your projects, etc., take the initiative and ask your supervisor about taking on different or additional responsibilities which are of more interest. Many employers may not be familiar with the skills and abilities you bring to the table. Offering to take on additional projects can be a win-win for both you and the employer.

3. Network, Network, Network.

Some internships rotate you among departments and supervisors, but if yours doesn't, don't let that stop you from meeting people outside your department, attending social events, and networking within the organization. Talk with your supervisor about individuals in the organization (or related organizations) who might make sense for you to meet. This could include staff who can give you a broader understanding of the organization's mission, recent hires who can talk about the nature of their work and share with you tips about their job search process and classes they now wished they'd taken, etc. Maintain a contact list with names, titles, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses you can refer to in the future. These contacts may become key connections for your full-time job search.

4. Conduct Informational Interviews.

Take advantage of your proximity to other employers of interest to you to conduct informational interviews. Conducting these in person is a great way to learn about various workplaces and make contacts with professionals in your field of interest as well as explore different sectors and policy fields. Ford School alumni in the area are a great resource. Career Services can help you identify alums in your internship location.

5. Update Your Resume.

Capitalize on the opportunity to get the employer's perspective on your updated resume before you begin your full-time job search. Your supervisor and colleagues can offer the "hiring manager's perspective" on your resume. Ask if you're highlighting your summer experience in an effective way and if your resume reflects what your employer would see as the skills and strengths most important to their organization.

6. Remember that "Past Performance is the Best Predictor of Future Performance."

Keep in mind that for most employers, the most effective recruiting strategy is hiring former interns who have already demonstrated themselves on the job. The quality of your work in small and large tasks as well as your attitude and approach to your work and colleagues are

being observed by supervisors and colleagues alike. Whether you ultimately want to work for your intern employer or not, the recommendation from your most recent employer is often a key component in most reference checks.

7. Explore the Local Area.

Get to know the area in which you're residing this summer. Can you see yourself living there after you graduate? There's more to work/life balance than just work! Enjoy the cultural and social events the area has to offer.

8. Keep Graduate Career Services in the Loop.

Call us and let us know how things are going. We look forward to receiving your phone calls, emails, or postcards! If your internship doesn't seem to be progressing the way you had expected, let us know. You do not have to go it alone; Graduate Career Services can coach you on how to negotiate your way through some of the issues you might encounter during your internship. Send us a quick email of organizations you run across which might be interested in establishing recruiting relationships with the Ford School. Summer is a great time for Graduate Career Services to work on establishing additional recruiting connections.

Have a great summer!