

## Turning Your Internship into a Full-time Job

**S**o you have been successful in landing the internship of your dreams. Congratulations. Now, how do you leverage that success and convert your internship into a full-time job? Follow these suggestions and you will be one step closer to getting an offer to join the company full-time upon graduation.

1. Never take a single task or a single day for granted.

In some cases, you may be one of several interns, and if there are full-time job opportunities with the organization, there may be a half-dozen interns competing for possibly one or two job opportunities. Don't think of your internship as a job; think of it as the longest interview of your life. Everyone with whom you are working is evaluating your performance and your style to see how well you are meeting expectations and if you are a fit for their department / organization.

2. Exceed expectations.

Don't just do the job; do more. Don't deliver on time; deliver ahead of schedule, even if it means staying late, taking work home, or coming in on weekends. If you were given a budget for your assignment, come in under budget. Just doing the job is satisfactory performance; doing the job better than what was assigned to you demonstrates above-average performance.

3. Don't be a clock-watcher.

9-to-5: you've seen the movie; Jane Fonda, Dolly Parton and Lily Tomlin arriving at 9:00 a.m., dealing with comic insanity while waiting for the 5:00 o'clock whistle to blow. Achievers don't walk out at 5:00 p.m. in the middle of an important task, or when the project shows signs of falling behind schedule, or when coworkers are still on-the-job. Show that you are more than the average worker and do what it takes to get the job done.

4. Fit in.

Observe the culture and become part of it. Corporate culture consists of shared values, beliefs, symbols and behaviors among the workforce. It creates common ground for teamwork and reduces the chance for any uncertainty among coworkers. This is especially important for collaborative work environments.

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5. Volunteer for extra work.

Don't just do what you are told. Anyone can do that. Ask for more responsibility, or volunteer to help others. This increases your value to your coworkers and managers by demonstrating an interest in learning additional tasks and skills, and a desire to help your department.

6. Network.

Cultivate relationships with as many coworkers as possible. Practice 360 degree networking - with those above your level, those lateral to you, and those under your level. The more positive relationships you build, the more supporters you will have when it comes to deciding on whether or not the boss should hire you full-time.

7. Demonstrate intellectual curiosity.

Simply put, curiosity by itself is an interest in something; non-inquisitive persons are intellectually disinterested. These individuals are not only less probing, they are often less open to new ideas and are often more resistant to change that requires mental adaptation.

When interest leads to research or inquiry, it becomes intellectual curiosity; in other words, inquisitive persons are knowledge-seeking individuals. Human civilization has been driven by the intellectually curious since the beginning of time.

Demonstrate that you have a desire to learn more; don't simply take a task and do it. Show interest in the complete end-to-end picture.

**Intellectual Curiosity Related to your Assignment:**

In 1917, high school journalism classes began teaching the Five-W's memorialized by Rudyard Kipling in his 1902 book, "*Just So Stories for Little Children.*" We know these as Who, What, When, Where, Why and How (yes, there is one H appended to the Five W's).

Think like a journalist, detective, or researcher. On your internship, ask questions like:

- Who provides the inputs to my assignment (or to my department)?
- What do these people provide?
- When does this occur? Daily, monthly, seasonal, spontaneous?
- Where does this occur?
- Why - what is the motivation for these persons to start this process or transaction?
- How is the task accomplished, what is the result (output) of what you do, and to whom does it go?

**Intellectual Curiosity Related to your Department:**

Don't just show intellectual curiosity for your assignment; ask insightful questions about your department:

- What are the goals and top priorities for this department?
- How do you define success for this department?
- How does this department contribute to the goals of the organization as a whole?
- Etc.

**Intellectual Curiosity Related to your Industry:**

Use your intern assignment as a means of learning all that you can about the industry, regardless of whether or not you aspire to launch a career in that industry. Inside knowledge and understanding can either strengthen your career chances, or change your mind about working in the industry - better to know early if a career in this industry is not for you.

- What is the history of this industry?
- What factors affect the growth of this industry?
- What is the size of this industry? Is it seasonal? How sensitive is this industry to economic fluctuations?
- Who are the consumers in this industry?
- Who regulates this industry, how, and why?
- What are the leading businesses in this industry?
- And so on...

8. Find a mentor within the company.

Some companies assign mentors to interns, but if yours doesn't, find a senior manager with whom you can relate easily and build your own mentor-mentee relationship. Seek advice that will help you cultivate skills needed to succeed in a full-time job with the company.

Some questions to ask:

- What qualities do you look for in the people you hire?
- Define the profile of a top performer in this job.
- Describe the management and leadership styles of the department / organization.
- If I were to consider applying here after college, what courses would you recommend I take in school?
- Aside from college, what else can I do to prepare for a career in this field?
- What professional journals and publications should I read to learn more about a career in this field?

And...get to know your mentor on a personal level, too:

- How was your weekend?
- Where did you go to school? What was your major?

9. Don't be a know-it-all.

Know-it-alls have an opinion on everything and are bad listeners. A know-it-all may be a very intelligent person, but by acting as if he knows everything, he is close-minded to opinions, comments and suggestions of others and as a result, he inhibits his ability to learn.

Remember you are only textbook-learned - your coworkers have real life experience.

10. Always be truthful.

Integrity is a core value that all companies look for in employees.

In the book, "*The Integrity Advantage: How Taking the High Road Creates a Competitive Advantage in Business*," Warren Buffet says that he hires people with integrity, high intelligence, and great energy. But Buffet further clarifies by saying that the latter two characteristics don't matter if you lack the first one.

11. Ask for feedback.

Most companies will give formal performance evaluations to their interns, but be proactive and ask for observations and pointers on how to improve.

12. Don't be afraid to ask if there are permanent opportunities within the company.

Take initiative and make your intentions known, but don't just ask if there is a permanent job opportunity when you graduate. Say why you would be a good addition to the team when you graduate; point to the successes on your internship and explain how you can contribute.

13. Don't give up.

If there is no job offer at the end of your internship, stay in touch with your manager and coworkers - an opening may develop after you are gone, or they may know of opportunities in other companies in the field.



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