

STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL CO-OP OR INTERNSHIP

As a co-op or intern student, you have several opportunities to demonstrate your professionalism and maximize your experiential education experience. The following are suggestions you should consider both during and after your experience.

1. **Remain in contact with the Center for Career Development** during the course of your work term through UE JobLink. If you have questions or concerns, it is appropriate to mention them early instead of at the end of your experience.
2. **Represent the University in a professional and courteous manner** while completing your internship or co-op experience.
3. **Have a game plan.** By developing learning objectives and discussing them with your supervisor, you will be establishing a strong foundation and open line of communication. Also, you will have a clear road map to help you navigate your new professional experience and environment.
4. **Maintain realistic expectations.** During the first few weeks of your co-op or internship, the employer will be purposeful in asking you to complete small and basic tasks before eventually asking you to manage larger complex projects. Even though the employer has hired you, as a new employee you will need to prove yourself before you are asked to take on more.
5. **Make the most of menial tasks.** As a general rule, you should plan on spending 60% of your time on professionally focused tasks and projects and 40% of your time on administrative/clerical support pieces. Use the time you are asked to complete more administrative/clerical support pieces to learn more about the company by introducing yourself to other members of the company, but...
6. **Don't turn into the office gofer.** Remember you are here to successfully complete your set learning objectives.
7. **Follow your interests.** When appropriate, ask your direct supervisor if you may attend a workshop being held in a different department or attend other department's meetings as a way to expand your knowledge and understanding of the organization.
8. **See your boss often.** It is to your best interest to establish a professional relationship with your direct supervisor by scheduling a consistent meeting time to review your progress in reports and find out more about his or her daily responsibilities.
9. **Ask for help and advice.** One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to wait until you have a serious issue, concern or question to ask for help. Employers do not expect you to have all of the answers; it's okay to ask.
10. **Be careful...** Part of building and managing your professional image is to spend time with the group of people at work who are positive about the company and their projects. Not only will you learn more, but you will also have a better experience. Be cautious about spending too much time around co-workers who are negative...and definitely don't be labeled as a negative employee.
11. **Stay in touch.** Even though it is last on this list, it is one of the most important pieces of advice. Many co-op and internships lead to full-time employment at the student's place(s) of employment. Even if this isn't the case for you, your director supervisor(s) will not only provide you with references but they should be considered as part of your professional network to access in future job searches.