

Internship



10 Steps to Creating a Mutually Beneficial Program.

This guide serves as a reference for employers who are interested in offering an internship with their company. It is complete with 10 steps that will aid you in developing a beneficial program for your company, your intern, and the Green Industry workforce.

Before you get started, review some of the perks of employing an intern and understand what each of the parties involved can gain from the experience.

The objective of an Internship: To enable students to integrate their schooling with more professional knowledge and skills gained through practical, real world work experience with industry employers.

Employer Benefits:

- provides a workplace and training ground for a source of highly motivated technicians and pre-professionals who want to work and learn more
- recruits and evaluates potential employees and provides employers with a flexible, cost-effective work force not requiring a long-term commitment
- provides freedom for existing staff to pursue new or more creative projects
- brings new solutions to solve old problems
- the positive, education-oriented visibility of the employer is greatly enhanced on campus and in your community

Student Benefits:

- provides an opportunity to explore career opportunities with potential full-time employers
- learn new skills
- gain needed work experience for professional certifications
- begin to develop a network of professional colleagues
- enhance their professional resume.

Faculty Advisor Benefits:

- provides a mechanism for the school to get needed feedback on course offerings and curriculum assessment.
- builds a network of varied employers who will be hiring the school's students.
- provides additional field experience that faculty members many times cannot give because of time or equipment restrictions placed on them.

Internships create an opportunity to:

- get a scoop on the recruiting effort for quality management personnel
- see students in action before an employer makes hefty permanent commitments to full-time salaries and benefits
- get to know a potential employee's knowledge of the field
- watch a potential employee in realistic problem solving situations
- determine if the intern can quickly assimilate new concepts and adapt to changing situations.

Internships are extremely popular because everyone benefits and most everyone in the Green Industry knows; there IS no substitute for hands-on experience!!

Step 1: Recruiting an Intern

How to recruit

- 1) Contact the internship coordinators in the departments of programs from which you wish to recruit.
- 2) Determine what sort of background and experience you want in an intern before you advertise your needs to a school.
- 3) Decide on your minimum qualifications needed from an intern beforehand and be realistic with your expectations of them.
- 4) Develop promotional material, attend job fairs, and advertise in print and/or electronic media, or get the word out through former interns.

When to recruit

The peak time for horticulture internship recruiting often runs from **late winter through early spring**. The vast majority of horticulture majors participate only in summer internships because most universities offer each upper division horticulture course only once per year and this is almost always in the spring or fall semester, with winters included for institutions on quarter systems.

Step 2: Preparing a Training Agreement & Learning Objectives

Most schools granting educational credit for this experience will have the training agreement form already prepared and require the learning objectives to be established and mutually agreed upon between the student, employer, and school before the internship begins.

Things to Consider:

- Make the work assignments as challenging and diverse as possible while still accommodating your needs.
- Prepare a daily schedule outlining tasks and completion dates to ensure that the objectives of the program are being met.
- Schedule weekly meetings between the supervisor and intern to allow both parties to discuss any progress or problems that might occur.

Step 3: Creating an Internship Description

A position description, just as if it were a permanent position, should be completed by the employer prior to the start of the internship to help students understand the types of jobs and duties that they will be required to do. It is imperative for the employer to be very honest and to tell the student whether they will be exposed to a wide-range of work experiences or if they will primarily be working in one or two specialized types of jobs.

About the Internship Description:

- It should clearly indicate the prerequisite course or subject knowledge that is needed to participate in the internship.
- It should have a list of challenging job duties relative to the student's individual abilities.
- It should clearly define working conditions.

Step 4: Establishing the Internship Duration

The duration of the internship should be worked out and agreed upon by all parties before the internship begins with the exact starting and ending date stated on the agreement form.

The school or university offering the internship credit will have a minimum number of hours required for each credit earned by the student. Many internships last between 12 to 15 weeks and most are approximately 40 hours per week.

Step 5: Establishing the Salary and Benefits

Another essential component of a successful internship is to establish (in writing) how much the intern will be paid and how often.

Things to Consider: Salary

- Some internships exist as unpaid positions, but they are becoming increasingly rare and most students today will desire some type of compensation for their hard work.
- It is important for employers to make sure they are competitive or offer competitive incentives.

Things to Consider: Benefits and Incentives

- reduced or free housing
- gas allowances
- equipment price-breaks
- free uniforms and hand-tools
- personal use of company equipment
- professional development opportunities

Step 6: Conducting Student Initiation and Orientation

Once an intern is hired, the company should take the time to properly initiate and orient the student.

What should the orientation include?

- company policies and procedures
- introductions to existing employees and staff
- tour of the facilities
- safety training and testing
- exposure to the laborsaving equipment that the intern will be using

Step 7: Appointing Site Supervisors and Intern Student Mentors

One of the most important components of any internship is establishing who will have the primary responsibility for supervising the intern. This person should ultimately be responsible for on-site evaluation.

Things to consider:

- The intern's supervisor should be selected because they like to teach or train and they have the management skills and resources to do it well.
- Supervisors should maintain the academic nature of the internship because credit is awarded for the experience and education is one of the main objectives of an internship, not just work.
- A successful site supervisor should provide constructive feedback to the student AND provide opportunities for the student to ask questions.
- With the proper supervision, the intern's learning curve and satisfaction level will be higher.

Step 8: Formulating the Learning Opportunity Guidelines

One of the best ways to ensure a variety of learning experiences is to have a predetermined rotation of the interns through the various departments of the company. This should include a significant exposure to the management side of the business as well as the technical applied tasks. Students need exposure to the marketing, sales, finance, materials procurement, and personnel management aspects as well as the technical hands-on activities specific to the industry.

Step 9: Conducting Internship Evaluations and Grading

In most internships, a final responsibility of the employer or site supervisor is to evaluate and report the student's progress and experiences to the school's faculty internship coordinator and the student. Evaluations can be either formal (written) or informal (oral) and be as frequent as every two weeks or conducted only midway through the internship and at its conclusion. In either case, all parties should agree upon evaluation methods and frequency of evaluation before the internship begins.

For many schools, the faculty internship coordinator ultimately assigns grades after consulting with the site supervisor and employer. If the internship is going well, students will appreciate periodic evaluations and feedback. Continuous encouragement goes a long way in motivating most students.

Due to the investment in time and energy spent employing interns, justification of the internship program will sometimes be needed as well as some type of evidence of success. Conducting exit interviews or final evaluations when interns leave will help determine whether or not the interns have had a good or bad experience. Some company's feedback from these interviews and evaluations helps employers evaluate where they can improve their internship program for the coming year and helps gauge their relative success.

Other ways to measure or evaluate success:

- Analyze the number of interns that apply each year.
- Analyze the number of interns that become full-time employees after their internship.
- Analyze repeat requests for interns from area and district managers.

Step 10: Reviewing Legal Issues

Of course, a safety-oriented company is an essential component of any successful internship and is required not only by the educational institution but also by OSHA. All employees (including interns) are entitled to work in a safe environment and with proper safety training and personal protective equipment provided. Hence, employers should always provide OSHA's Hazardous Communication safety training and documentation before any student is required or allowed to work or use a piece of equipment. Most institutions reserve the right to terminate the internship if a student is being subjected to unsafe practices, after attempts were made to resolve the problem.

Because interns generally make substantial contributions to a company, workers' compensation boards have generally considered them to be employees and as such, most employers will cover interns under a workers' compensation policy. Even though it may not be required in some states, many educational institutions will require the employer to provide workers' comp on their internship training agreement contract. Student interns are not generally eligible for unemployment compensation when they conclude an internship and that wording is also included on many internship agreements.

Conclusion

Establishing a successful internship program is not difficult and results in numerous benefits to the employer, student and school. If an employer establishes a successful internship now, they will have a distinct, competitive advantage in recruiting the best, highly motivated workers for the future because they will already be known by the school and past interns. Employers will be benefiting from student workers who will already be trained and familiar with their workplace. Employers will be building a reputation that will pay off with the students, schools, and the local community.

Internship programs will vary in size and scope. This is only a general guide and employers interested in hiring an intern should consult with their chosen educational institution's faculty coordinator/supervisor for full internship terms. Industry employers wishing to find out more about student horticulture internships should contact an educational institution near them.

Following is a partial list of institutions in Texas:

Collin County Community College
Central Texas College
Houston Community College
Northeast Texas Community College
Palo Alto College
Richland College
Sam Houston State
Texas State University
Stephen F. Austin State University
Tarelton University

Tarrant County College
Texas A&M University, College Station
Texas A&M University, Commerce
Texas A&M University, Kingsville
Texas State Technical College
Texas Tech University
Trinity Valley College
Wharton County Junior College
Western Texas College

Additional Resources:

[Internship/Job Newsletters](#)

<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/introhtml/hortprog.html#undergrad>

<http://www.ashs.org/hortops.html>

[Searchable Online Databases for Advertising Internships](#)

<http://www.hcs.ohio-state.edu/hcs/Ed/Interns.html>

[Searching for Interns](#)

<http://aggies-forhire.tamu.edu/>

This information was compiled from the Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association's *Essential Components of a Successful Internship Program* publication and Dr. Michael Arnold's *So You Think You Want an Intern?* online article.

Many thanks to ONLA and Dr. Arnold!

**For more information on the
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