MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR INTERNSHIP

A Strategic Approach

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For Tracey, Evan, Grace, and Adin.
You are my reason for being and my hope for tomorrow.
—RG

To my wife, Megan, for her love, support,
and patience throughout all my endeavors.
—MM
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The Foundation of the Book

A capstone experience of a majority of academic programs in recreation, sport, and tourism industries is the internship. Designed as an opportunity to mesh classroom-based instruction with on-the-job experiences, the internship seeks to establish a mutually beneficial relationship among the student, the agency, and academic institution. For students, the internship provides “real-world” exposure to the field, strengthens their resume, and allows them to examine the “ins and outs” of a professional agency and chosen service sector (i.e., public, commercial, and nonprofit, etc.). Agencies that employ interns are able to get a first-hand look at the on-the-job performance within the pipeline of future professionals in a cost-effective manner. Finally, the internship allows the academic institution to further integrate the student’s intellectual and theoretical development with application-based experiences while promoting and fostering relationships with relevant agencies and practitioners.

Recognizing the prominence and value of the internship experience, this book aims to serve as a resource for the internship planning, selection, and management processes. Drawing from a variety of theoretically grounded sources, personal experiences in the advisement and supervision of interns and internship programs, and student and practitioner-based feedback, Making the Most of Your Internship: A Strategic Approach provides a comprehensive and up-to-date coverage of vital strategies associated with the internship. The book adopts an action-oriented approach by focusing on the “how-to” aspects of the internship experience while stressing the important and influential role of the internal (i.e., needs, constraints, interests, etc.) and external (i.e., trends, issues, job-related factors, etc.) environments in the internship planning, selection, and management phases.

The book’s purpose is to point the way toward the student thinking strategically about the tasks associated with the internship. A key tenet of Making the Most of Your Internship: A Strategic Approach is the contention that the internship is not an isolated activity that occurs without regard to the student’s previous coursework, experiences, interests, or future career plans. Rather, the internship represents a key piece in the student’s overall career. Guided by this framework, Making the Most of Your Internship: A Strategic Approach encourages the student through a variety of readings, examples, testimonials, and activities, to be intentional about the integration of their past, present, and future experiences and interests into the planning, selecting, and managing of their internship experiences.
The Audience for the Book
The primary audience for this book is undergraduate students who have aspirations to complete an internship experience in the recreation, sport, and tourism industries. More specifically, it is intended as a desk aid to help instructors prepare students for the internship and as a text for students. Making the Most of Your Internship: A Strategic Approach should also be of interest to recreation, sport, and tourism professionals who engage in their own career planning, supervise interns, or have an interest in developing an internship program for their agency.

Overview of the Contents
Making the Most of Your Internship: A Strategic Approach represents a collection of strategies, tips, personal stories and advice from students and professionals, exercises, activities, and case studies. Taken collectively, this information provides a comprehensive framework for the student’s successful and strategic engagement in the internship experience. The chapters are organized in a linear sequence starting with the steps and strategies associated with the internship planning processes and ending with a discussion of post internship activities including, career planning, job searching, and salary negotiation. It is also worth mentioning that while we expect that several will want to follow the sequence outlined in this book, it is also likely that others might wish to adapt their approach to meet specific student and/or course demands. Regardless of the sequence, it is our hope that the book’s content will provide you with a comprehensive resource that can be utilized before, during, and after the internship experience.

Making the Most of Your Internship: A Strategic Approach is divided into three sections related to the internship experience: planning, selecting, and managing. Section one consists of chapters one, two, and three. It provides a conceptual overview of the internship experience as well as the processes associated with internship planning.

Chapter one serves as an introduction to the internship experience. It positions the internship in the context of experiential learning while highlighting the outcomes of the experience. A discussion of the specific student, university, and agency benefits are also provided. In Chapter two, the individual assessment is presented including procedures for completing the self, task, and agency analyses. Chapter three focuses on the strategic connection between the individual assessment and the development of career and internship goals and objectives. A variety of examples, exercises, and testimonials are provided to assist the student in developing these goals and strategic direction.

Section two of the book comprises chapters four through seven. They are unified by a common direction—internship selection. Chapter four sets the stage for the internship selection phase with a description of the search process, including an overview of the recruitment process for students and agencies;
tips for beginning the internship search process; keys to finding the “perfect fit”; strategies for discovering internship opportunities; and internship search sources and best practices. Chapter five picks up where Chapter four left off with a detailed overview of resume and cover letter development. Specifically, the content and format of a cover letter are presented with several examples and testimonials provided to aid the student in the development of this important application document. Next, the resume and its essential components are discussed with special attention paid to the creation of a resume that is specific to recreation, sport, and tourism industries in its organization and format. Similar to the cover letter discussion, a variety of resume examples and testimonials are presented. The interview process, the different types, stages, and preparation strategies are reviewed in Chapter six. Chapter seven begins with an overview of the internship selection process (from the agency’s perspective) and insight on what the student can expect following the interview. The chapter concludes with tips on managing the internship offer and making and communicating the final decision to the agency.

Section three consists of Chapters eight through twelve that cover, respectively, strategies and tips on managing the internship experience and life following the internship. Specifically, Chapter eight provides an overview of the internship experience, including the five common stages—anticipation, disillusionment, confrontation, competence, and culmination. Chapter nine highlights the strategic role of networking in, and following, the internship. Truths about networking, the value of networking, identifying where to network, and instructions on how to network are provided. Chapter 10 encourages students to start (if they haven’t already) thinking about life after the internship. Specifically, the role and importance of individual-centered career planning is discussed. Information on career choice and interest inventories is provided as well as strategies to manage early career problems. Chapter 11 focuses on preparing for the next step—employment in the field. Definitions and responsibilities among the agency, academic institution, site-supervisor, and student in securing a job are discussed. Chapter 11 also identifies common myths associated with the job search process as well as the tips for landing that first full-time employment. Finally, Chapter 12 presents a detailed orientation on the salary negotiation process. The chapter begins with an overview of salary negotiation leading to a description of the essential elements needed in successful salary negotiating.

Ancillary materials accompany the book. These materials provide slides to accompany each chapter of the text. An example syllabus for a pre-internship course, many application-level exercises and examples and handouts from the text, and activities based on or meant to improve student understanding of each chapter are also provided.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As those who have gone through the process know, writing a text is a very time-consuming and involved process. I’d like to gratefully acknowledge the following people.

First and foremost, I’d like to thank my wife, Tracey, for her partnership in this text and in life. In her own right, Tracey is a talented educator who has supervised hundreds of student interns. Her insight, perspective, and good nature contributed greatly to the book. I’d also like to acknowledge my children, Evan, Grace, and Adin James. Thanks for letting Daddy spend a few extra hours at the office! The three of you are and always will be the best part of my life.

I’d also like to thank my coauthor, Dr. Michael Mulvaney. You helped make the process more enjoyable, and without the accountability of a good colleague like you, I am not sure the text would have ever been finished. I hope this is the first of many projects we complete together.

The staff at Sagamore Publishing deserves recognition here. Although she has now moved on to new adventures, Mrs. Elaina Tucker-Buhs, who was one of my talented undergraduate students, first brought the idea of an internship text to me, and I am grateful for her confidence in my abilities. Dr. Bannon, Mr. Sanders, and Mrs. Davis have extended us every courtesy, and have been wonderful to work with. Thank you all.

Finally, I’d like to acknowledge a man who forever changed the course of my life, Dr. Jim Brademas. For some reason, while I was one of his student interns, he saw something special in me and invited me to join him as a graduate assistant. He taught me everything he knew about internships and opened doors for me that I never even knew existed. He gave me my first experiences as a coordinator of student internships and even introduced me to my wife. Jim, you have been, and remain, a gentleman and a scholar. Thank you.

—Ryan

An internship is clearly a group effort of agency professionals, students, and faculty working together to advance the field of recreation, sport, and tourism. Without this passion for professional growth and development, the internship as we know it would be nonexistent. In this regard, a deep amount of gratitude is directed toward the recreation, sport, and tourism professionals and their agencies; the students; and the faculty and their university support systems that promote these opportunities.

Specific to this project, I would like to thank my employer, Eastern Illinois University. Eastern Illinois University has provided resources and support to complete this text. Through EIU’s increasing support and recognition for the value of the internship experience, they have demonstrated their belief in the future of our profession and its increasing importance to society.

I would also like to thank Sagamore Publishing for their ongoing support, assistance, and patience throughout the project. Textbook writing is a process involving several stages and resources. Sagamore’s staff provided an ideal level of autonomy and support as we worked through the textbook’s development and I thank them for their guidance.

Finally, I am indebted to my wife, Megan, for her loving support and willingness to tackle this challenge with me. Her caring nature, encouragement, and patience have been instrumental in completing this project. Many thanks and much love go out to her. My faithful Labrador companion, Atticus, has also played a significant role with this project by providing me with a bit of “balance” and perspective in life. His cheerful demeanor and demand for attention have provided much needed opportunities for relaxation and reflection, and I thank him for these experiences. To my parents, Richard and Dianne, thank you for your loving guidance. Your tireless efforts and encouraging words put me in position to pursue my dreams, and I am forever indebted to you. I will always remember that my accomplishments would not be possible without your selfless acts.

—Mike
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Section 1

INTERNSHIP PLANNING
Chapter 1

Benefitting from the Internship Experience

Overview

Congratulations! If you are reading this book, you will soon be participating in what has the potential to be one of the most memorable experiences in your life—an internship. The process of searching for and completing an internship is a challenging yet rewarding experience. Done thoughtfully and carefully, this internship can set the stage for your emerging professional career. It is important, however, that you begin this process with an understanding of what experiential learning is, why the internship is a part of your undergraduate curriculum, and what benefits you (and the sponsoring agency and your university) can hope to realize in the weeks ahead. In short, this chapter is designed to help you understand the purpose of the internship experience.

Let’s Get Started

Before you go any further in your readings, take a few moments to jot down your thoughts on the following questions:

• Why are you completing an internship?

• Name three things that you hope to gain as a result of your experience?

• What are you most afraid of about the internship?

Hang on to your responses for the next few weeks. As you will soon discover, if you are to have a positive experience, it is going to require a great deal of reflection, insight, and careful planning.
The Internship as Experiential Learning

Experiential learning has a long-standing history in American higher education. Early pioneers in education realized that carefully designed experiences outside of the traditional classroom could have tremendous educational impact. Such experiences, today commonly referred to as a co-op, internship, practicum, or service learning, are designed to assist students in bridging academia and their chosen profession. They do this by exposing students to new situations that force students to reflect and apply materials learned in the classroom while simultaneously developing professional competencies that might be difficult to impart in traditional classroom settings (Kiser & Partlow, 1999; Sweitzer & King, 1995). Due to the pioneering works and efforts of stewards like Herman Schneider and John Dewey, along with countless other early progressive educators, experiential learning has become an accepted educational pedagogy and plays a prominent and vital role in the education and development of college-aged students (Beauchamp, 1982; Gryski, Johnson, & O'Toole, 1987). These stewards recognized that students learn more effectively when they are placed in real-life settings in which they can test, apply, and better understand knowledge acquired in traditional settings (Beauchamp, 1982; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984).

Perhaps the simplest definition of experiential learning is any hands-on experience that yields learning (Kiser & Partlow, 1999). The basic premise of experiential learning is that the student is learning from a work or life experience. David Kolb, a leading expert in the field of experiential learning, indicated that experiential learning involves a “direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only considering the possibility of doing something about it” (Kolb, 1984, p. 42). Internships are not just a facet of service industry curriculums, as they have become popular additions to many programs of study. Hoffmann (2003) quoted a professor in business administration as saying,

Teaching management outside a business setting is just like teaching swimming without putting students in the water…it’s true, I’ve been teaching for almost a quarter of a century, but I’ve yet to meet another professor who took a course in how to be a professor. We learned by doing, not by watching from the sidelines. If business schools don’t ensure that all students, management students in particular, get this type of exposure through a required practicum of some form or fashion before they graduate, then we have failed them. …Many educators entertain the assumption, a false one, that with enough knowledge about how to do something one can do it. Well, folks, if you believe that works, read everything you can about flying and go jump off a tall building. (p. 2)
It is important for you to realize that participating in an internship does not guarantee that you will have an enjoyable or meaningful educational experience. If you hope to have a positive experience, you must engage in careful planning and deliberation. The design and implementation of the experience is critical if the desired outcomes are to be reached. Chapters 2 and 3 will help you in the beginning stages of this planning process. Done properly, an internship can be the single most significant experience of your undergraduate career. Recognizing the potential for significant learning through internships, the National Park and Recreation Association's (NRPA) Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions (COAPRT) considers an internship experience a crucial aspect of a quality curriculum.

Internships Defined

The term *internship* is one that is used rather loosely to describe a number of different types of experiences. Despite the inconsistencies in usage, in this text internships will be operationally defined as a single-term, off-campus, work-based learning experience. In an internship, students are not sent off to survive the workplace alone but are instead supervised by a faculty representative of the college or university in conjunction with an agency supervisor. You might be interested to know that internships can be paid or unpaid and academic credit of varying amounts are awarded by the educational institution for participation in the internship experience as long as the experience is related to the student’s major. In many programs of study, internships are a capstone experience, taking place in the senior year or at the end of traditional academic study. Most internships are full-time experiences, often referred to as *block placements*, where the student engages in the work-based learning experience to the exclusion of other academic classes. Preliminary studies suggest that student perception of the quality of their experience is greatly enhanced when they are fully immersed into an organization through a full-time internship (Gower, 2008). While concurrent classes are not typically acceptable as they could be a distraction to the working/learning process, an orientation course (you might be reading this book as a requirement of this class) is generally required before the onset of the internship experience (Gower, 2006). Less common in practice are *concurrent placements*, where students complete a designated number of hours each day with the host work agency and then attend traditional courses (Linn, 1999). Why is this important for you to know? The term *internship* is one that is used loosely and carries different meanings. When you are searching and applying for internships, you will want to be sure that all parties (you, the agency, and your faculty sponsor) all have the same expectations and understandings.
Did You Know?

Many employers require students to receive academic credit for an internship and use the award of such credit to justify not paying the student for their efforts. Why? The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires that employers compensate employees for activities that primarily benefit the employer. The exception is internships, which the law considers to be an apprenticeship primarily for the benefit of the student. This book will provide you with many helpful suggestions to help you ensure that you do benefit from the internship. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking of yourself as “inexpensive labor.” The law clearly states that if you are not being paid, the internship should primarily benefit you. For more information about the FLSA, check out the Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm.

Outcomes of the Internship

It would be normal for you to be wondering what you could expect to gain from an internship. You’ve just learned that you will likely be working full time, probably for 10 to 16 weeks, for an agency that might or might not be paying you. What’s in it for you? You will be glad to know that much of the literature on internships has focused on the benefits students derive from such experiences. The findings of these studies, however, have been varied and diverse. Qualitative studies, in particular, have been extremely supportive of internship experiences. Self-report data from students who have completed an internship and the faculty members who supervise them reveal a deep conviction that the experience is valuable and that the benefits of the experience are varied and highly individualized (Gryski et al., 1987). By contrast, a number of quantitative studies have found mixed or even negative results. These studies, which by and large have been outcome assessments, have found little impact of the experience on technical skills and have even linked experiences to a lack of confidence and trust in the agency (O’Hare & Collins, 1997). John Dewey (1938), considered by many to be the father of experiential education, noted that poorly designed experiences might be mis-educative and even detrimental to future student development. So will you benefit from this internship or not? The overwhelming majority of research suggests that there are positive outcomes from internship experiences, and this research is supported by student and supervisor testimony.

As you prepare for the internship, it is important for you to know how all of the parties involved—you as the intern, the university who sponsors you,
and the hiring agency—benefit from a good internship placement. While you might be most curious about what you can take away from this experience, it is equally important to understand the desires of the agency and the university and to recognize that internships are not solely intended to benefit students.

**Student Benefits from the Internship**

The literature is replete with support for student development through internship experiences. You can hope to benefit from your internship in at least two ways. *Pragmatic benefits* are those benefits that will have a direct impact on the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to gain entry into your chosen profession. *Personal benefits*, on the other hand, may improve your ability to perform on the job, but most directly impact your self-image and attitude. Among the pragmatic benefits are (a) increased postgraduation employment rate (Fletcher, 1989; Gualt, Redington, & Schlager, 2000), (b) higher starting salaries (Fletcher, 1989; Gualt et al., 2000), (c) more rapid promotion (Gualt et al., 2000), (d) development and refinement of technical skills (Fletcher, 1989; Gualt et al., 2000; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997), (e) problem solving and critical thinking (Parks, 2003; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997), (f) career exploration (Gualt et al., 2000; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997), (g) communication skills (Hensen, 2003; Parks, 2003), and (h) teamwork (Parks, 2003; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997). The personal benefits of the internship experience are (a) enhanced self-esteem (Fletcher, 1989; Gualt et al., 2000), (b) development of a professional and social ethic (Gualt et al., 2000), and (c) positive attitude and responsibility (Parks, 2003).

A close examination of the research has shown that students who have participated in an internship are at a distinct advantage over their peers who do not (Gualt et al., 2000; Moriarty, 2000; Southall, Nagel, LeGrande, & Han, 2003). For example, according to a 2008 study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2008), about 36% of new college hires had been former interns in their organization. Likewise, 48% of employers reported that they offer higher starting salaries to applicants who have had an internship experience compared to applicants who have not. Similarly, Coco (2000) claims that individuals who have had an internship experience have a significant “head start” and as a result are promoted more rapidly than those who have not.

The internship experience also aids in the development and refinement of technical skills and builds your professional résumé (Marlin-Bennett, 2002; Williams, Sternber, Rashotte, & Wagner, 1993). Students who have participated in internships have also had the opportunity to refine skills learned in the classroom and apply and practice them in a real-world setting. By developing these job skills, students become more attractive to employers who are looking for hires that are ready to begin work with less on-the-job training. Simply put, the inclusion of the experience and the skills you acquire on your internship can bolster your résumé and makes you more appealing for hire.
Another pragmatic benefit of the internship experience is the ability to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills (Beauchamp, 1982; Langford & Cates, 1995; Phillips, 1978). As analytical skills are frequently among the top three skills/trait listed as preferable by employers, the opportunity to develop these skills in an internship setting will again give you a distinct advantage as you search for full-time employment at the conclusion of the experience.

The internship can also provide you with a realistic preview of the industry before full-time employment is secured. The experience may help you determine if the industry holds appeal for full-time employment and could even raise awareness of opportunities and niches that may have been previously unknown. This allows for a more efficient and productive job search and presumably a better fit once employment is secured.

**Caution Advised!**

It is dangerous for a student to consider his/her experience in a single organization to be representative of the entire profession. Different agencies have unique cultures and characteristics that may contribute to your overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your experience. When things are going well, and especially when they are not, spend some time identifying what is and is not working and why. Don’t give up on the profession as the result of one bad placement. You may just need to find a larger/smaller organization or a manager with a different vision of service delivery.

Students who have participated in internship experiences have also been found to develop superior communication (interpersonal) skills (Langford & Cates, 1995). Commonly referred to as “soft skills,” these skill sets are frequently more desirable to service sector employers than “technical capabilities or higher grade point averages” (Langford & Cates, 1995, p. 13). Through the internship, you will likely be given the opportunity to develop these communication skills and learn to work collaboratively with a diverse clientele. Developing and demonstrating these skills to prospective employers will make you more attractive to employers than those who have yet to demonstrate their capabilities in this regard (Langford & Cates, 1995).

The development of these skills is also extremely valuable to your overall self-concept. One of the most frequently cited findings in the literature is the ability of the internship to enhance self-esteem (Dressler & Keeling, 2004; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997). In fact, students who have completed these experiences have been found to be more comfortable in professional settings, more aware of their professional capabilities, and more confident in interview settings (Dressler & Keeling, 2004).
A personal benefit that accrues from internship experiences is the development of a personal and social ethic. By confronting problems and understanding these problems in the context of professional application, you may quickly establish a personal code of ethics. Often these ethical standards are as a result of being placed in compromising or undesirable situations and, at times, are a result of seeing a social need that is not being addressed. Studies have also shown that students who participate in internships have better attitudes and are more eager to accept responsibility and criticism, recognizing that such input is necessary to learn and grow (Lemieux & Allen, 2007).

**University Benefits from the Internship**

A smaller portion of the experiential learning literature has addressed the impact that internships can have on the educational institution. This research, along with our many years of experience in higher education, suggests that there are at least four benefit areas for programs that include internships in their curriculum: (a) high student satisfaction with experience, (b) the opportunity for feedback on the curriculum, (c) building collaborative relationships with industry, and (d) recruitment of new students.

Students participating in internship experiences are typically very positive about their encounters (Diambra, Cole-Zakrzewski, & Booher, 2004; Gryski et al., 1987; Wonacott, 2002). In today's economic climate, institutions of higher education are under increased pressure to develop meaningful and enjoyable academic experiences for their students. For this reason, many programs of study elect to have a student internship serve as the capstone academic requirement required for graduation. In doing this, faculty and administrators can be comfortable knowing that as their students graduate, they are likely to leave with a positive final experience and an enhanced appreciation for the materials that have been presented in the classroom. Therefore, secondary benefits that might accrue from internship experiences could be alumni and potential donors expressing a positive impression of their academic program.

Internships also allow university administrators the unique ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their curriculum. Through conferences with students and site supervisors, areas of deficiency may become apparent and changes can be made to the curriculum to better prepare future students. By learning more about where the students go and what they do in their careers, the educational institution can make more informed decisions about its policies and curricula (Hull, Mather, Christopherson, & Young, 1994).

Placing students in professional environments also allows for increased communication between institutions of higher education and agencies of professional practice. When this occurs, it is likely that both parties will benefit. The university may benefit by identifying applied research laboratories for future studies or student engagement or by finding new consumers of the knowledge...
that they produce. The university may come to a better understanding of how it can serve the community and its profession through teaching, research, and service (Gryski et al., 1987).

Finally, universities can benefit from internship experiences by using them as a recruiting tool for new students. The excitement of having the opportunity to earn college credit for dynamic experiential learning encounters is attractive to prospective students. When prospective students are afforded the opportunity to see where former students in a particular program of study find employment, it may facilitate an interest in the academic program. Let’s face it—there are some pretty amazing jobs in the recreation, sport, and tourism fields. And since potential benefits of an internship include higher postgraduation employment rates and higher starting salaries, educational institutions may be able to advertise these employment rates and placement locations to recruit and retain talented students (Grubb, 1995; Gryski et al., 1987).

**Agency Benefits from the Internship**

The agency that supports the student through the internship program is also likely to experience several benefits. Among these agency benefits are (a) skilled labor at an inexpensive rate, (b) infusion of creativity, and (c) an opportunity to groom potential hires (Freeze, 1997; Morrow, 1995).

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**Think About It**

You should recognize that one of the most significant benefits agencies receive from hosting an intern is the infusion of creativity you bring and your critical perspective. Think about the tools/resources you have that your employers may not:

- first-hand experience with programs,
- technology and social media expertise, and
- digital media skills.

Also, if you find yourself wondering “why do they do it this way, it would be so much easier if we just...” don’t keep it to yourself. Speak up! Your ability to see things differently is one of the biggest values you bring.

Benefitting from the Internship Experience

Students who are or have participated in internships or cooperatives are often extremely attractive to employers because of the talents and skills that they bring to the organization and the relatively low cost of securing their employment. While cooperative experiences are always paid, many internships are not. Internships that are paid may be compensated at a level well below minimum wage by providing a stipend to the student to compensate them for their efforts. In this way, agencies are able to infuse their organization with talent and help at a relatively low cost (Coco, 2000; Morrow, 1995).

Student interns are also attractive to employers because of the creativity, energy, and information that they bring with them to the organization. Students often arrive with the latest information from the academic world, a better understanding of the technological tools to increase efficiency and effectiveness, or an outside perspective that challenges conventional thinking (Gryski et al., 1987). This can help organizations find new operational standards, maintain relevance, or reach new clientele (Morrow, 1995).

Don’t Sell Yourself Short!

Many soon-to-be college graduates have feelings of anxiety about entering the working world. The overall lack of confidence in their ability to perform and produce is usually unfounded. Students today fail to realize the value they add to the organizations they will be joining. While you and your peers may be well versed in video editing, uploading to YouTube, and using the host of social media tools, those who hire you may not be. Many of the tools you use in your leisure are yet to be fully integrated into the workforce—always look for creative ways to use the things you know in an unconventional way.

A final benefit to the agency is the ability to prescreen potential hires (Coco, 2000; Dennis, 1996). Many agencies hire from within and are more likely to select a former intern for an open position due to an established track record (NACE, 2008). A growing number of agencies no longer hire at entry-level positions, but instead use internships, practicum, or cooperatives as a way of training, screening, and ultimately grooming those they will bring into the agency (Freeze, 1997; Ramos, 1997). By using internships and cooperatives as a prescreening tool, agencies are able to test the capabilities and fit of the individual before they extend a full-time offer and minimize the chance that the hire will be a poor one (Gualt et al., 2000).
Summary

This chapter clearly illustrates a number of valuable benefits that you can potentially realize as you complete your internship experience. However, as John Dewey (1938) noted, not all experiences have the same educative value. If you do not approach the internship experience thoughtfully, understanding and communicating your personal and professional goals, and recognizing the needs and goals of the other parties involved, it is likely that you will be less than satisfied at the conclusion of the internship. The remainder of the text is designed to provide you with tangible steps you can take to ensure that your internship will be an instrumental start to a lifetime of continued learning experiences.

Chapter 1 Essentials

- An internship has the potential to be a powerful educational experience—or not—depending on the manner in which you approach it.

- Much of this text will help you focus on and explore your personal and career interests, but it is important to remember that internships are not all about you.

- Understanding why the sponsoring agency seeks to host an intern is important for several reasons:
  - It should give you ideas for key areas to address in an interview. Talk less about what you want to accomplish for yourself and focus on explaining what you can accomplish for them.
  - When completing your internship you will invariably be assigned duties and tasks that are not highly desirable. Remember that your internship is a symbiotic partnership that must benefit you, your sponsoring agency and your school. You must be willing to contribute to the partnership if it is to be successful.

- As you are completing your internship keep in constant communication with the Internship Coordinator at your school.
  - Let them know about areas your class work has supported you, or deficiencies you feel may need to be addressed.
  - Take time to introduce them to influential professionals that you meet. Supporting your school in this way helps them better prepare young professionals, and ultimately increases the value of your diploma!
Discussion Questions

1. Why are you completing an internship? What resources are available to help you obtain your desired outcomes?

2. Recognizing that all three parties involved in an internship have certain needs and expectations, what are things that you could do to help the internship be beneficial to the university, the organization, and yourself?

3. Is an internship really necessary? List at least three things you can do/learn through an internship that would be difficult to do/learn in a traditional classroom setting.

4. Do a little independent research on the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. How might it impact your internship experience?

Opportunity or Obligation?

Jason is a junior undergraduate student majoring in recreation and is beginning to think about his internship and the experiences associated with this experiential learning opportunity. His academic advisor has informed him that the internship must be completed with an approved recreation-based agency, and it must be at least 12 weeks in length (40 hours per week). The internship course/experience is 12-credit academic course and is a requirement for his major. Depending on the agency, the internship may or may not be a paid experience. Per university policy, Jason is also not allowed to hold any other (outside) employment during the internship experience.

As Jason begins the internship planning process, he shares the internship and its requirements with his parents. During the discussion, Jason’s parents inquire about the potential of the agency hiring him at the conclusion of the internship. Jason responds, “It does happen with some students, but it is not a guarantee.”

Concerned about the financial commitment required for the internship and the uncertainty of employment following the experience, Jason’s parents express concern over the utility of the internship experience. In particular, they ask, “Why not just go out and get a part-time job with the agency? At least you will be guaranteed to make some money, and it could lead to a job with the agency down the road. In fact, the internship sounds like a part-
time job, but with little to no pay. And, to top it off, we will have to pay university tuition for you to work there! This ‘free’ labor that is labeled an internship just doesn’t make sense to us.”

1. What do you think of issues presented by Jason’s parents? Are they valid? Do they have merit?

2. As you reflect on the internship experience, how would you respond to Jason’s parents?

3. Is there a difference between part-time employment and an internship experience? If so, how are they different?

References


Making the Most of Your Internship


