intern [in-turn]

*noun.*
a person who works as an apprentice or trainee to gain experience in a chosen field

*verb.*
to perform the duties of intern, usually with enthusiasm, determination and proficiency

SEE ALSO: future star

In other words, a great idea!
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The best-laid plans actually do make for the best internships — and create the most value for both the employer and intern. So it is worth the extra work in the beginning.  

— Erica Bruno, HR Generalist, Bentley Systems, Inc.

We've found that students try to shape their class schedules to allow for internships, and we return the favor by remaining flexible.

— Jameel Farruk, Co-Founder, Inhabi Inc.
How do I know if I need an intern?
Many different types of organizations—large, small, non-profit, for-profit, technical, non-technical—benefit from internship programs. Talk to managers in your company to assess your needs. Could you use help with a specific project, task or research? Would a new, fresh perspective boost an area of your organization? Do you have a technical need, such as updating your website? Would any employees be more productive if they had some assistance? Look for more ways to determine your intern needs on page 8.

My organization can’t afford to pay for an intern. Are there alternatives?
Sure. Not all interns are paid an hourly wage. As you’re determining the resources needed for your internship program, be sure to explore all options. For example, some employers are surprised to find that they actually can afford to pay their part-time interns. Others choose to offer a stipend or a scholarship to cover the cost of a credited internship. See page 10.

Do I have to provide health care for interns?
No, most students are covered by their parents’ or guardians’ health care plans, or they obtain it through their schools.

I’ve heard about some changes in non-paid employee rules. Could my company get in trouble for having unpaid interns?
Because of the increasing need for students to gain real-world experience to graduate and land a job and the pressure on employers to produce more with less in the current economy, non-paid internships have been on the rise and have gained the attention of some watchdog groups. The simple answer: For your unpaid internship program to meet regulations, ensure your interns are learning, gaining experience and bolstering their related coursework. Discuss the issue with your human resources representative and/or lawyer, and see page 12 for some helpful resources.

Interns are young, inexperienced and don’t have a real tie to the company. Are they more trouble than they’re worth?
On the contrary, most interns prove to be enthusiastic employees who bring new life to projects or procedures. After all, when they aren’t working at their internship, they’re learning the most up-to-date information about their chosen field of study.

How long are internships?
Typically, internships last 10 to 12 weeks and run on the same timeline as semesters: fall (August through December), spring (January through May) and summer (May through August). However, your internship program can be customized to fit your needs. For example, if you have a two-month project that calls for additional help, search for students who want to work in that timeline.

Can I hire an intern as a full-time employee at the end of their internship?
That’s one of the great advantages of an internship program. It gives employers the opportunity to find talented young professionals before they graduate. Once they get their diploma, feel free to offer them a permanent full-time position at your organization.

This guide will further answer these and many other questions you may have about starting an internship program.
Interns: 10 Perks for You

Retention rates for employees who were interns are higher than non-interns.*

Current employees hone management skills.

EXTRA HELP DURING BIG PROJECTS.

Philadelphia is one giant talent pool.

Get your products and work in front of young, in-touch consumers.

“Back-burner projects come to the front”

The latest industry info—right from the classroom.

GREAT WAY TO TEST A POTENTIAL NEW POSITION.

Help with social media tools that are second nature to them.

Could end up with a full-time employee.

* According to National Association of Colleges and Employers’ 2011 Student Survey
Employers find value in internships, just as the interns themselves do. Here are just some of the ways an internship program can positively affect your organization.

**Interns can fill a specific skill need.**

An employer may realize that the company or a project requires the addition of certain skill sets, but they don't think the need warrants a full-time employee. Enter the intern. Remember, students of all majors are looking for internships, and even those outside your field can bring value to your organization. A clothing store that wishes to start a social media program, a food service provider in need of a revamped website and a pharmaceutical company wanting to design a brochure can hire students with technical backgrounds to fill those roles.

**Employers can check off their back-burner list.**

Almost all managers have ideas of “future,” “down-the-pipeline” or “back-burner” projects, many of which go unrealized because of staff time constraints. Employers who hire interns can check some of those items off their workplace bucket list. A start-to-end project, such as a brochure, provides a great opportunity for a student, who will feel ownership and responsibility to make their work as good as possible.

**Enthusiastic interns bring fresh ideas to the office.**

Just like any new employee, an intern comes armed with a new perspective, and their input can boost projects. And since the student hopes to impress employers in the hopes of obtaining references and letters of recommendation, landing a job with the company or simply starting his/her career off right, an intern likely will bring a great deal of enthusiasm to every task they undertake.

**Employers have the opportunity to train the future workforce.**

This is your chance to train your future colleagues. One day, your interns may work at your own organization or at a partnering company. Take the time to immerse them in the company and make them experts in the field, and you’ll ensure yourself an easy work relationship with this person later in his/her career. In other words, train them to work to your standards.

**Mid-level staff members have the opportunity to manage.**

Many companies opt to have their interns report to mid-level employees who show promise as future managers. It’s a great way to test their abilities and mentor them through the management process before putting them in a supervising role.

**It’s like an advertisement to college students.**

The well-connected, tech-savvy and highly social demographic of young college students can be tough to reach and influence. Organizations that employ interns have regular access to this group, and interns experience and embrace the products or causes of their employers. They become cheerleaders for the organization, representing it online and in person to their networks.

**Who knows—you might find your next full-time employee.**

Think of an internship as the longest job interview out there. As the weeks and months pass, you can assess the strengths and talents of the student, as well as the needs of your company. You might find that the role they fill as an intern becomes invaluable, or that it could be adjusted or expanded in order to keep a star employee at your company.
While there are many benefits of hiring interns, employers also retain certain responsibilities to the students.

Employers must treat interns fairly—just like all employees.
Like all employees, interns must be treated with respect.

Employers should ensure that interns are learning and adding to their coursework.
Sure, almost every job includes some amount of administrative work, but employers should view the intern just like another employee—one who is searching for meaningful work experience. This can come in the form of a big project or various tasks that add to the organization’s goals. It’s important for the student to feel ownership of their work and understand that he/she plays an important role in the team.

Employers should understand that many interns require initial training to guarantee their success.
Remember—many times, internships introduce students to the world of the office. Tasks that may seem obvious to seasoned workers are new for them. So, a training day that includes basic office know-how (using the copier, answering the telephone, dressing appropriately) will help the student quickly become a successful addition to your company.

Employers must recognize that interns are part of the team.
For the intern to understand how his/her projects or tasks fit into the company and its larger strategies, the student should be integrated into the team. Staff and project meetings provide perfect opportunities for them to hear how their work is contributing to the end goal, and it’s a time to learn more about the company and offer his/her own insights or ideas. Moreover, meeting as many company employees as possible will help the intern get the full view of the organization.

Students need feedback and evaluation to become stellar employees.
Throughout the internship, a student needs feedback about his/her work in order to be successful. Formal reviews at the halfway point and at the end of the internship period can help students grow and hone their skills. Interns want tips from the pros—how to package themselves as a must-hire employee, how to present themselves professionally, how to make the most of any work situation and how to contribute to the team. Internships for credit often require formal evaluations, so at the beginning of the program, be sure to ask the school or the intern what your responsibilities entail (usually filling out an evaluation form).

Greater Philadelphia Film Office interns work specifically in the production or marketing departments and are supervised by those department heads. But we hold a get-to-know-you breakfast or lunch very early in the semester so that the interns meet the entire staff. We encourage them to engage us all and get the benefit of our varied experiences. We pride ourselves in being very approachable!

Joan Bressler, Director, Greater Philadelphia Filmmakers at the Greater Philadelphia Film Office
For a smooth and successful process, companies should plan the entire internship before it starts—job description, team and supervisor assignments, hours, compensation, projects and tasks and evaluation. Campus Philly can help you throughout the process, and we even have sample job descriptions for internships.

Step 1: Identify Internship Coordinator.

At each organization, one person should coordinate all internships. This could be a human resources representative, an office manager or project or team leader. Whoever it is, he/she should have the capacity to implement the following steps.

Step 2: Assess Needs.

The internship coordinator may work with various departments to determine the company’s needs. Employees should answer questions such as:

- Do I experience a “busy time” when I could use support?
- Are there any upcoming projects that will require extra staff time?
- Is there a project that I’ve wanted to do, but I just haven’t had the time to begin? Are our website and collateral materials as good as they can be? Is our database up to date?
- Would my company benefit from a research project, such as a competitive analysis?

Step 3: Assign Mentor, Supervisor and Project Team.

- A mentor acts as the “intern buddy.” He/She will be the student’s go-to source for questions ranging from “What’s the best way to begin this task?” to “Is there a good lunch spot nearby?” The mentor can be the supervisor, fellow team member or simply a longtime employee.
- The supervisor is the student’s boss, assigning work and monitoring progress. Regular feedback and structured evaluations can help the intern understand his/her strengths and the areas that need improvement, promoting growth during the internship.
- The project team is comprised of the people with whom the student will work most. The best interns are those who are fully integrated into a team.

Step 4: Write Internship Description and Solidify Pay and Hours.

Like all job listings, internship descriptions should clearly state the company background, goals of the position, hours and necessary skills, plus required coursework or majors. While shaping the description, the internship coordinator and the supervisor should determine whether the student will be paid and how many hours they expect the intern to work.

Step 5: Post Internship Opening.

Publicize your open position. Post it to your own organization’s website and to campusphilly.org/careers, encourage referrals from your internal team and even discuss it with career office representatives at nearby colleges. See page 11 for special opportunities to find the best match for your internship need.
Step 6: **Evaluate and Interview Candidates.**

This is similar to finding and hiring any employee. Because students have less experience than other candidates you may have interviewed, you should prepare appropriate questions beforehand. Here are some examples:

- Why did you choose your major?
- What extracurricular activities are you involved in?
- What coursework have you completed that will help you succeed in this position?

Step 7: **Complete Day-Before Prep.**

Be sure that your intern has everything he/she needs to start off right. Set up time for the intern to meet his/her mentor, supervisor, team and other staff members; designate the intern’s workspace, along with computer and office supplies; alert the appropriate person that the intern will need a phone number and email address; and set time for an office orientation.

Step 8: **Provide an Orientation.**

Remember, this may be the student’s first office experience. On your intern’s first day, ensure that he/she gets to know the office—people, layout, equipment, procedures and etiquette. If the internship counts for credit, you may be required to call a representative from the school or fill out a form outlining the goals of the program.

Step 9: **Get to Work.**

Your intern’s work will boost your bottom line in a few different ways: His/Her work contributes to the company’s total output, and other employees may enjoy extra time to start new projects or further invest in current ones. You’ll notice that in time and with your support, the intern will become a valuable member of the team, contributing work, sharing ideas and bringing enthusiasm to the office every day.

Step 10: **Evaluate the Intern and the Internship Program.**

- You may find it useful to set up an employee review halfway through the internship. It’s here that you and the intern can discuss successes and areas for improvement.
- At the end of the internship period, you should reiterate the student’s accomplishments and give advice for the future. You may want to offer to be a reference for them as they seek new internship positions or full-time jobs. (Or, hire them!)
- If the internship counts for academic credit, you may be required to fill out an evaluation or meet with a representative from the school.
- In addition to evaluating the student, the internal team should evaluate the internship program: Did the hours work? Did the project or company benefit from the student’s work? What could have improved the experience? Would other departments benefit from an intern?
In some industries, unpaid internships are common, and compensation comes in various forms; in others, companies pay interns well.

Levels of Compensation
Typically, internship wages for non-technical majors range from $10-12 per hour, while students studying technical majors may pull in $15-20.

Alternatives
Many companies that cannot pay interns an hourly wage choose to compensate them in other ways—a monthly, semester or project-based stipend; a housing allowance; parking or transportation reimbursement; or a scholarship fund that contributes to the cost of academic credits.

Making the Decision
Discuss internally what your organization can afford to offer an intern. Ask other companies in your field about their policies, and inquire with college career offices. If you cannot afford “the norm,” consider adjusting the hours of the internship or adding other incentives, such as a transportation stipend. Most importantly, be sure that your internship would be perceived as a value to the student—whether through pay or through experience.

The Million-Dollar Question: Paid vs. Unpaid

If you give a good intern an attainable project, some independence and a way to be proud of the final product, he or she will almost always rise to the challenge.

- Chris Wink, Co-Founder, Technically Philly

Our interns continue to wow us all the time. They want to make an impression and contribute to the team, and their excitement translates into hard work and great ideas.

- Nicole Somers, Marketing & Admin Coordinator, ShootersJNC
Do you wish someone would guide you through the internship process? Granted.

Campus Philly works to attract students to go to school in Greater Philadelphia, to engage students in the life of the region while they’re in school and to retain them as residents and workers after they graduate. We maintain relationships with colleges and universities, as well as with students in all stages and at key points of the college-going experience.

The Philadelphia College Connection
Campus Philly acts as one giant career office, thanks to invaluable relationships with more than 30 regional schools, their career offices, their faculty and their students. When you work with us to find the perfect candidates to match your internship needs, it’s like going door-to-door to every college and university in the region.

Campusphilly.org/careers: Always Working
Every day of the year, you can look for interested students to match your internship needs—for free. Go to campusphilly.org/careers and search the extensive database, or post your position and wait for the resumes to come to you.

Special Events
Throughout the year, Campus Philly hosts programs for employers looking for hardworking and talented students. Use the following events to fill your internship positions.

- **Online Internship Fairs:** In the fall and the spring, this online fair gives employers the opportunity to get their internship positions in front of hundreds of interested students. It’s all online, and it’s all free.

- **Opportunity Fair:** In June, 100+ businesses and civic groups meet Philadelphia’s recent graduates who are looking for professional internships, full-time jobs and volunteer opportunities.

- **Createadelphia:** Geared toward students in design, this fall event connects skilled up-and-comers to internship opportunities in graphic arts, fashion, entertainment, environmental design and arts and culture.

- **Meet Your Industry:** Once a year, Campus Philly brings together students in specialized fields and industry employers for networking and employment opportunities.

- **Campus Philly Crawls:** To introduce students to your business, contact Campus Philly to be part of the free Campus Philly Crawl, during which groups of students take a behind-the-scenes tour of a specific industry. The students who sign up identify themselves as interested in your work and eager to meet you. In other words, these are great candidates.

If you want A+ candidates, you need to provide an A+ job description.

- Mike Luisi, TD Bank, Undergraduate Program Lead
More Resources:

Campus Philly
campusphilly.org

National Association of Colleges and Employers
naceweb.org

U.S. Department of Labor
dol.gov

Fair Labor Standards Act
dol.gov/whd/flsa

University and College Career Offices
Contact available on school websites or visit
campusphilly.org/our-college-partners