

Tips for a Successful Internship (for businesses)

1) Provide interns with real work assignments

Our CTE students have developed skills in their fields and are eager to put them to use. Where possible, assign students tasks or projects that build on these skills. Sometimes, the best way for a student to participate is to observe. However, you can keep the student engaged by asking him/her to focus on, or listen for, something in particular during the activity or meeting and then tell you about it afterwards.

2) Provide an orientation, as you would for new hires

Have your intern attend safety trainings and orientation as you would for a regular employee. Review any “office rules,” spoken and unspoken. This ensures that everyone starts with the same expectations and that your intern understands who has what roles in your office. This investment of time at the beginning of the internship will pay off throughout the program.

3) Provide interns with a handbook or website for your company

A handbook serves as an easy reference guide for students, answering frequently asked questions and communicating company expectations in a friendly and consistent way.

4) Assign one specific supervisor / mentor for the intern

Having a dedicated mentor to supervise your intern is the best way to ensure a successful outcome. This gives the intern a “go-to” person for all their questions and builds a dependable relationship with accountability. Not everyone is comfortable teaching and working with youth. Be sure to choose a staff member who has experience training others and is a good communicator. The mentor will be asked to fill out a mid-term and final evaluation for the student and to provide constructive feedback.

5) Encourage company involvement

Invite your student intern to staff meetings, board meetings, or if possible to a conference. If there is a company picnic or luncheon, extend an invitation to your student. Does your company participate in the city-wide clean-up day, organize a canned food drive, participate as a team in a community marathon or serve at a local shelter? These are all great opportunities to extend to your intern that will make him/her more invested in your company and create a richer experience.

6) Introduce your intern to your company’s leadership / executives

It makes a big impression when a student has the opportunity to meet members of the company’s executive leadership. If there is the opportunity for a brief, 10 min interview with a couple other members of the staff during the internship, it can be very insightful and influential for an intern when they learn about how other employees navigated the transition from high school to career.

7) Showcase your intern’s experience

If you have a good internship experience, share about it with your staff and with your stakeholders. Some businesses highlight their intern’s story on their company websites or in social media.

8) Conduct an exit interview

After you’ve completed the intern’s final evaluation, ask about the student’s experience: What went smoothly? What was difficult? What could your company have done to support the intern differently?

