

Internship Advice Listen Up

Idea In Short

Finish your internship with the same intensity you started. Recap your impact, apply feedback visibly and build genuine relationships. Deliver high-quality work, ask for the order if you want a full-time offer and leave the place better than you found it. Celebrate your effort.

Advice From Twenty-Five Senior Managers

Internships are auditions. You never know who is watching or who is hiring. The final weeks matter as much as the first because people remember how you start and finish. Strong starts and strong finishes create the most lasting impressions. 1

Be Proud of Your Work

Summarize the project. Recap all the projects you worked on and the results or impact. Document and share key insights gained and how they will affect your studies or career plans. Ask yourself what impression you want to leave and structure your final presentation around those goals.

Ensure the decision maker is crystal clear on what you will deliver. Having a clear end in mind is critical. If the deliverable is a presentation or report, build a mockup with placeholders and get agreement. Do not be afraid to ask for clarity and confirmation on what you are working toward. Now is the time to focus on the deliverable and avoid distractions or scope creep.

Check whether the remainder of your task or project will deliver value at the same pace as the first two-thirds. If the pace increases and you deliver more value, stay the course. If most value has already been delivered, check with your manager about pivoting to higher-value activities.

One piece of advice is to go back to the beginning. Review the initial objectives of the internship and the specific case study. Measure whether those objectives were met. Finishing strong requires knowing where you started.

Apply What You Learned

Show you are coachable. If there is a final project, incorporate something specific your manager shared earlier in the internship. One manager shared how Slideology by Duarte is a fantastic reference for creating compelling slides. The intern pored over the book during downtime and applied its principles in the final presentation. The manager could see specific elements drawn from the book. 2

Actively try to have learned five new things and show this to your supervisor. Provide a link to all materials created so the next person has a reference sheet. These actions demonstrate that you absorb feedback and translate it into tangible improvement.

Coachability is a trait managers test throughout the internship. When you reflect feedback in your final deliverable, you prove you were listening. This is more persuasive than any verbal claim of being coachable.

Keep Going and Show Grit

Treat the internship like a real job. You never know who is watching or who is hiring. If you are positioning for an offer, it may not be too late to recover from a slow start if you can crunch a critical deliverable. Do not give up until the finish line.

Finish as strong as you can. If you are working on a report, burn the midnight oil and make it your best work. You want to come out of this with a full-time offer for two reasons. First, you may have found the right company, so lock it in. Second, it is an option you can take back to school that will boost your confidence and competitiveness in other interviews. Having more than one choice always puts you at an advantage.

It is fine to not know something at the beginning of your working journey. However, you must take the initiative to learn and figure out what you need to do. Do not sit and wait for someone to spoon-feed information. There is no such thing as a free lunch in the working world.

Build Relationships

Focus on building good relationships. Take time to know co-workers, fellow interns and managers. These connections help later when you need network connections for a full-time position. They also expand your horizons to the diversity of talent and attitudes, making you more empathetic and a better colleague.

Secure contacts. When you are an intern, almost everyone is willing to grab coffee. Look up people who can be of interest later and invite them for coffee. Have a conversation about their job and what you can learn. They will appreciate this and may become sponsors later in your career.

Take time to thank people, including administrative staff. Do not wait until the end. A box of cookies or a thank you note goes a long way. Continue to be a sponge and connect with colleagues you have not had time to speak with.

Enjoy the experience because it is a great chance to get a taste for the occupation. If you did not enjoy the internship, you generally will not enjoy it as a full-time role. This insight is valuable even if disappointing.

Give credit where credit is due. If full-time staff contributed to your case study, acknowledge them. This could have been a lunch-and-learn chat, a lesson on discounted cash flow analysis or covering for you on an off day. The analysis and synthesis must be presented and accounted for, but soft skills and class acts are most memorable. 3

Be Memorable

Make noise and take the stage. Your work may end up in a drawer collecting dust, so take the opportunity to advertise yourself and your work. Depending on the internship, this can range from a big presentation to a thank you note on LinkedIn. Visibility matters because quiet competence often goes unnoticed.

Keep in mind that strong starts and finishes are critical. These are the moments most remembered by how you perform. First impressions and the quality of the last project or deliverable shape your reputation.

Solidify future relationships with thoughtful thank you notes. Yes, handwritten thank you notes. For close mentors and managers, these go a long way regardless of whether you receive a return offer. For people you interacted with over the summer, an email goodbye is likely fine. For the most influential people in your career so far, cultivate relationships accordingly.

Review your deliverable with your manager. Nothing is more persuasive than high-quality work. Reiterate your interest in the company, role and full-time employment if true. Ask for the order.

Reflect on feedback you received during the internship. Were you really listening, and did you make changes? If it is a formal internship program, reach out to human resources and ask if you can help with onboarding, testimonials or program improvements for next time.

Create training manuals if necessary. Document any best practices you created or used so they can be used long after you leave. Leave the place better than you found it. If you created financial models or anything difficult to interpret, create an instruction document explaining where data came from, with links and steps. If someone calls in November about cell A325, you will have no idea without documentation.

Be generous. Is there another intern or team member who could use your help? Finally, celebrate. Completing an internship is an achievement worth recognizing, and the relationships you built will serve you for years to come.

- 1Harvard Business Review on prioritizing business relationships that matter most
- 2Duarte on Slideology and presentation design
- 3Harvard Business Review on leading when you do not have formal authority

Summary

Strong finishes define internships. Recap results, apply manager feedback and build authentic relationships. Deliver your best work, document processes and ask for the full-time offer if you want it. Leave the place better than you found it and celebrate.

