

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Phone 413-538-2080 / Fax 413-538-2081 / Email

CDC@mtholyoke.edu

[www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/careers](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/careers)

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## Making the Most of Your First Internship

Congratulations on securing an internship! Making the most of this opportunity requires careful planning and dedication on your part. Here are suggestions from the Career Development Center based on the experiences of previous interns.

### Before the Internship

Talk to your supervisor about your goals and future career aspirations. The more defined your goals are, the more likely it is that you will get what you want from the internship. Also, be sure to have your directions and transportation arrangements ready. Before the first day, do a trial run to your internship site and time how long your commute might take. Carry a small bag with basic things like money, pens, notepad, maps (if in a foreign city) and a planner.

### During the Internship

#### Basic Do's and Don'ts

- **Do** be punctual. Arrive on time, and don't go over on breaks. Constant tardiness could eventually be held against you.
- **Don't** be afraid to ask questions. Everyone knows that you are an intern; so do not expect to know everything right away. But also don't behave like a 'know-it-all'.
- **Don't** forget to talk to your supervisor within the first week of your stay to discuss the **Sponsor Evaluation Form** that will be required at the end of your internship and will provide you with feedback on your performance. Also inform him or her that you may request a separate written evaluation that can be used for future reference.
- **Do** keep a daily journal or unofficial record of your assignments (for your eyes only), how you accomplished them, and what you learned. This will be useful in writing your **Final Report**, but more importantly to assess what you have learned from your experience.
- **Don't** play on the computer or make personal phone calls. Be sure that your cell phone is off - it may just ring at the most inappropriate time.
- **Do** try to engross yourself in company material or information pertinent to current project. Be alert and aware of new things that the company is trying to achieve and see if there is a way that you can be of assistance.

- **Do** understand the company culture, and dress and behave appropriately. Some outfits or conversations may be inappropriate. Identify someone within the organization whose style you admire, and use that as a guide to how you can also present yourself.
- **Do** steer clear from giving your opinion on politics and other sensitive issues. Office politics can be sticky!
- **Don't** complain or slack off your assignments. You might feel like you are doing unimportant tasks, but if you work with a good attitude, you might eventually get bigger opportunities.
- **Do** take responsibility for your work, even if you make a mistake. Learn from your mistakes and demonstrate that to the person who will be evaluating you.
- **Don't** take things personally. Assess the situation objectively. Furthermore, if you receive criticism, don't get defensive. Know when to speak and when to listen.
- **Do NETWORK.** Professionals in a field of your interest surround you. Take initiative and try to learn as much about them as possible by asking or joining them for lunch. Talk to them about your interests and aspirations. Find someone within the organization with whom you may want to conduct your **Informational Interview** - you may find yourself a valuable mentor!
- **Do** get feedback and take interest in projects around you. This will help you understand how you are doing, and your interest might help you attain similar jobs.
- **Do** remember that the Career Development Center is open during the summer and that you may contact us at (413) 538-2080 if you have any questions.

## Self-Reflection

This is an important part of your internship experience. Halfway through the internship, you should be able to analyze whether you are attaining your goals, or if they have changed. Use a journal to help yourself gain insight. Be proactive about your learning and take the necessary steps that might make your experience better. Also feel free to talk to your supervisor about your concerns or opinions.

## After the Internship:

Talk to your supervisor about what you have achieved, and if possible, make a portfolio of the work you did so that you have concrete examples.

Send a thank you letter to your sponsor and to other people at the organization who made a difference to your overall experience, and try to stay in touch with them on a regular basis. This will ensure your name does not fade away and it might come up for other job or networking opportunities.

Be sure to complete the **Final Report Form**, which will help you assess what you have learned from your experience. It also serves as invaluable information to the Career Development Center and other students who are looking to intern with the organization or with similar ones.