MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR INTERNSHIP

Be a Star Performer
1. Work hard to make a good impression at all times. Your professional manner may lead to a job offer. At the very least, it will aid you in getting a good letter of reference.
2. Know and follow the office dress code. Dress for the position you want, not the one you have.
3. Don’t be afraid to ask questions – it will demonstrate an interest in learning as much as possible.
4. Pay attention to the “unspoken rules” of the organization, as they are often as important as the formal, written rules.
5. Demonstrate a positive attitude – no one likes to work with a chronic complainer.
6. Make the most of basic tasks by doing them well and without complaining. Virtually all internships (and jobs) have some mundane components. However, menial tasks should not be the majority of your internship work. Remember your learning objectives for your internship.
7. Do not be defensive when a supervisor suggests ways to improve your performance.
8. Save copies of things you create (e.g., press releases, flyers, research reports, etc.) to use as work samples in your portfolio when interviewing for full-time employment.
9. Ask for a letter of reference before leaving the internship, while your performance is still fresh in your supervisor's mind.

Learn About the Employer
1. During breaks, lunch, or slow times ask co-workers about their jobs; find out what they do on a day-to-day basis and what they like/dislike. Ask how their jobs compare to colleagues in other organizations.
2. Take advantage of being on the “inside” of an organization. Arrange information appointments with staff in other departments to better understand the organization as a whole.
3. Get to know top decision-makers – they can provide valuable insight as to why and how things are done.

Build Your Network
1. Collect business cards – they will come in handy when looking for a full-time job later.
2. Always send thank you emails/notes to those who helped you in some way. Write a thank you note to your supervisor when you are finished with the internship.
3. Keep in touch with your co-workers and supervisor after leaving the site.

Test out Your Interests and Skills
1. As you get into the internship, you may discover a “pet project” you would like to tackle – do not hesitate to ask if you can pursue it.
2. Step out of your “comfort zone” – volunteer for projects that will be challenging so you can gauge if you have the aptitudes to develop skills in those areas.

Plug into Professional Activities
1. Try to attend trade shows, seminars, conferences, and/or professional meetings/lunches.
2. Read the publications produced by the relevant professional associations. Chances are that your supervisor will have copies you can borrow.

Adapted from internship guidelines developed by Messiah College, the University of Pennsylvania, and St. Mary's University.