

# SIX STEPS TO A COLLEGE INTERNSHIP

Build Your Resume And Personal Brand, The Right Way

At CTS Financial Group, we've covered the topic of college preparation a lot in recent months. You might have seen our whitepaper that [analyzed whether college is worth the cost](#). Or maybe you caught our [college webinar](#). We focus on higher education within our commentary because it's a key part of our client's financial lives - both from a savings perspective and debt accumulation perspective.

While the previously mentioned white paper explored the pros and cons of investing in a college degree, and the webinar focused on preparing for the college application process, this article is a bit different. We wanted to focus on just one aspect of the college experience: how to land an internship.

Keep reading to find six steps that we've picked up over the years that can help you (or the next generation) find the right internship, apply for the position, and land it. In today's work environment, more and more jobs are contract to hire. In 2018, 51% of employers planned to hire temporary or contract workers and 64% of these employers planned to transition some temporary or contract workers into permanent roles.<sup>1</sup> So, finding a great internship opportunity just may be the key to getting your first post-college job.

## #1 THINK LONG-TERM, BUT KNOW YOU'RE NOT LOCKED IN

Internships can be a great way to establish credibility and meet people within your field, so consider the type of work you'd like to do after college and then try to find an internship that aligns with your vision.

But what if you don't know what you'd like to do after college? That's all the more reason to pursue an internship, as the experience will help you understand what options are available within your field and which of these options are best for you. In addition, an internship can help you develop important career skills – think decision-making, collaboration, and time management – and give you an indication of the types of responsibilities you could have.

## #2 GATHER YOUR APPLICATION MATERIAL

In the modern world, your application material is more than just a resume. Clean up social media profiles, connect with references, and build a portfolio (either hard copy or digital) of the work you've completed while in college. Once that's done, move on to your cover letter and resume.

Keep the resume brief, use bullet points, and support the credibility of your talents with data (for example, I managed 10 people OR the program grew by 30%). Hiring managers will be sifting through tens, maybe hundreds, of applications for a given internship, so make it easy for them to find the key pieces of your story. Keep it to one page and make every word count.

The cover letter is where you should address the intangibles that you bring to the table: enthusiasm, work ethic, and your ability to convey relevant information. Use the cover letter to let these facets of your life shine and write a unique cover letter for each job that you are applying for. This brings us to our next point.



<sup>1</sup> <http://press.careerbuilder.com/2018-01-09-44-Percent-of-Employers-Plan-to-Hire-in-the-New-Year-According-to-CareerBuilders-Annual-Forecast>

## #3 START THE SEARCH

There are four primary places to find internships: your network, online, career fairs, and direct from the company.

### YOUR NETWORK

According to Matt Youngquist, President of Career Horizons, 70 to 80% of job openings are never advertised - they are filled through word of mouth alone. We can assume that the same model holds true for internships. Let your friends and family know that you are looking for an internship and, odds are, someone within your network will know about an opportunity.

### ONLINE

Many colleges have a Career Services Office that posts upcoming internships online, and this can be a valuable resource as you begin your search. In addition to college-sponsored resources, don't forget about doing a simple Google search. Entering "Chicago internships" into Google turns up more than 100 openings, many of them at well-known companies.

## #4 NAIL THE INTERVIEW

Once you get short-listed for an internship, you will probably be brought in for a face-to-face interview. Just like your elevator pitch at the job fair, practice saying aloud the key parts of your story. If you want to get serious, sit down with a friend or family member for a mock interview.

In the interview, be honest, enthusiastic, and curious about the company and the position. When appropriate, ask follow-up questions. These questions show hiring managers that you are eager to learn and are engaged in the process, not just along for the ride. Interviews can be anxiety provoking but think of them as an opportunity to gain valuable professional experience. Whether you get the internship or not, you'll learn something that you can apply for next time.

## #5 ALWAYS FOLLOW-UP

Once the interview is over, you aren't finished just yet. When you get home, send an email to every person you met with at the company. This mail should reference specifics about your meeting and, most importantly, an appreciation for the person's time.

## #6 ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE

An internship can be a great way to develop new skills and grow your professional network, and it might be your first real experience within the corporate world. You'll learn a lot along the way, so enjoy the experience.

### CAREER FAIRS

Many employers, especially larger companies, have a presence at career fairs. This is an excellent opportunity to speak with hiring managers directly and move your name to the top of their prospect list. Before going to a career fair, practice a short elevator pitch explaining who you are, what you are studying, and what type of internship you are interested in. Say this elevator pitch out loud until you can say it with conviction.

### AT COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

All managers appreciate employees that take initiative and reaching out to companies directly is a great way to show that you are serious. Send emails, call companies, or even stop by in-person to drop off a resume. The worst-case scenario? They say "no."



If you'd like to discuss the topics we've covered or the financial planning aspect of higher education, reach out to the team at CTS Financial Group. Our team has been through the collegiate process and would be happy to help you make the most of it.

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