

A photograph of two women sitting at a desk, looking at a tablet. The woman on the left is wearing a green t-shirt and has her hand on the tablet. The woman on the right is wearing a black top, glasses, and is holding a pen, ready to write on a piece of paper. The background is a blurred office setting.

Tapping into tomorrow's talent

How to build a successful internship program – and why it's worthwhile



From coffee runs to career building

Once upon a time, interns' main responsibilities consisted of getting coffee and making copies – and not much else.

That's all changed.

Today, forward-thinking companies are transforming the role of the intern, helping young professionals start their careers on the right track by gaining real-world skills and experience.

This isn't just good news for interns. The best internship programs are mutually beneficial, allowing companies to identify and nurture future talent, all while giving candidates a firsthand look at what it's like to work at your company.

To help you create an internship program that pays off now and in the long run, we've put together this handy guide. Read on to become an internship expert in no time.



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Bonus
checklist!

Tapping into tomorrow's talent

Discover how to structure your program, find great interns, and set your interns and your company up for success.

Chapter 1

Building the right type of internship program

There are countless ways to tailor your internship program to match your company's needs – and provide the best possible experience for your interns. With the right framework in place, your interns can gain valuable firsthand work experience and you can develop a strong pipeline full of up-and-coming talent.

Before diving in, it's important to think about what type of internship(s) you want to offer.

The 4 main types of internships



Paid vs. unpaid



School credit vs. no-credit



Full time vs. part time



On-site vs. remote

Chapter 1 | **Building the right type of internship program**

Choosing a program that benefits everyone



Paid vs. unpaid

Depending on specific labor laws, it may be illegal not to pay interns. Review your country's rules about internships to protect your company from liability and ensure your interns are treated fairly.

Naturally, paid internships are more appealing to candidates. But if you don't have the resources, communicate other core benefits of your program – like working on meaningful projects and gaining experience they won't get elsewhere – that interns may find compelling.



School credit vs. no credit

A common misconception is that the company decides whether an intern gets school credit – but it's actually the intern's school that decides. For an internship to count toward college credit, it has to be tied to an academic area. Your interns may also have to complete certain tasks, like a final project, to earn their credit.

They might have to dedicate time to these tasks during their normal work hours, so factor that in as you start planning your program.



TIP

Extra credit

If an intern's school allows internships to count for credit, make sure the day-to-day responsibilities of your internship program align with their major.

Chapter 1 | **Building the right type of internship program**

Choosing a program that benefits everyone



On-site vs. remote

Today, it's possible for interns to work remotely, using collaborative tools that plug into your company's work from wherever they are. That said, there are certain parts of the on-site experience that can't be replicated on a video call.

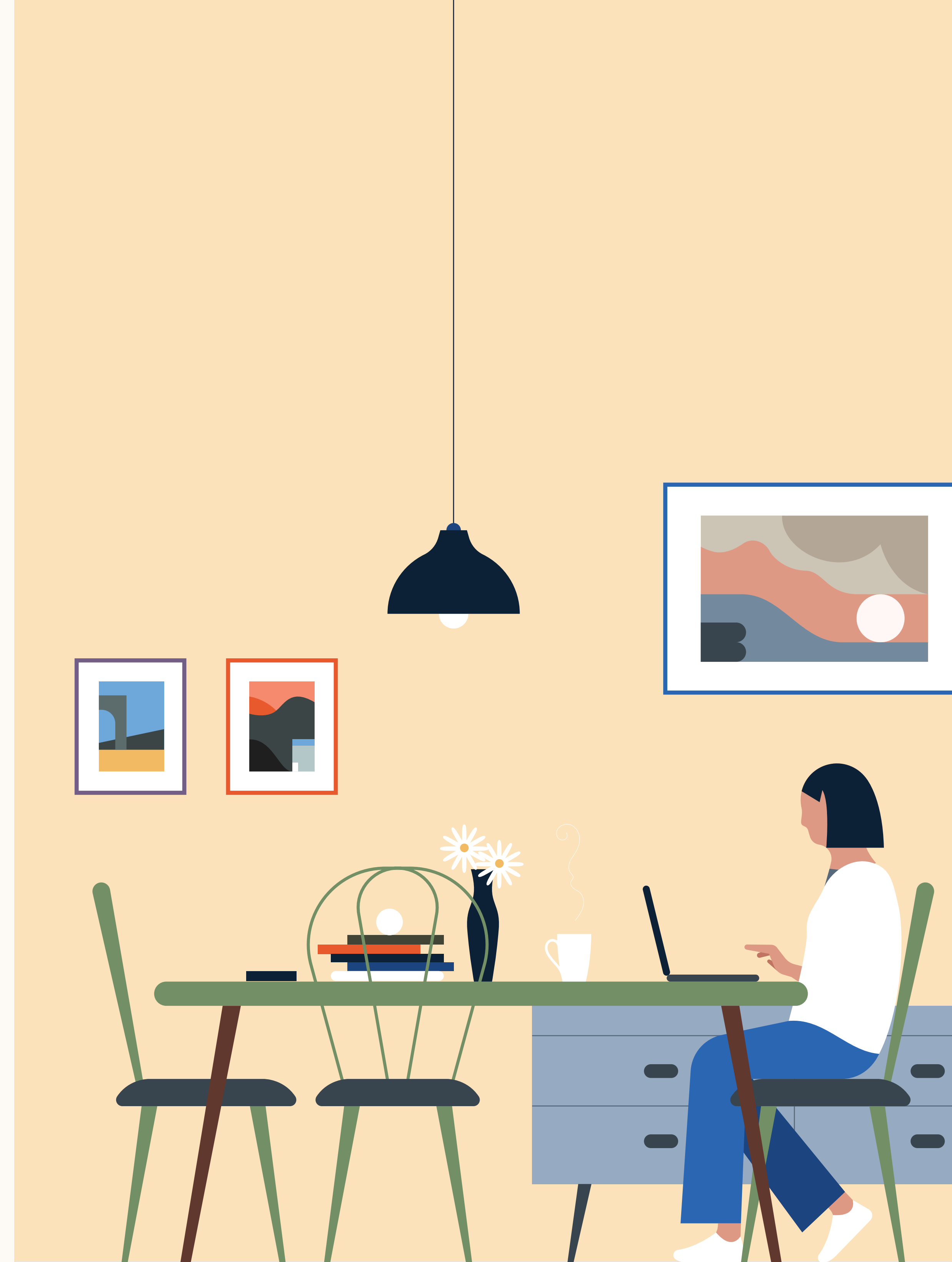
If you opt for a 100% remote internship, make sure you offer interns the occasional chance to connect with the team, reducing the likelihood that they'll feel isolated or lonely.



Full time vs. part time

Think carefully about the work and training your internship program will cover, and align your program's duration with the start and end of college semesters. Some students look for full-time internships during summer and winter breaks, while others prefer to intern part time while school is in session.

You can also decide whether you want the program to be short term (a few weeks to a few months) or long term (spanning a whole semester or more).



33%

of companies hired remote interns last year.¹

1 | "2019 Virtual Internships" Wayup.com, 2019

Chapter 2

Structuring your program for success

Since your interns are probably just entering the workforce, providing the right resources and infrastructure will help set them up for success – and help your company build a strong pipeline of engaged talent.

In this chapter, we'll cover the importance of mentorship as a foundation for your interns, as well as how to establish milestones so your team can foster the next generation of talent.

Using your team to support your interns

Establishing core milestones



Chapter 2 | Structuring your program for success

Using your team to support your interns

The foundation of any strong internship program is good preparation. This includes assigning a mentor as well as outlining the work your interns will be doing. Try to ensure it will fill the duration of their time with you.

84%

of workers with mentors become proficient in their roles faster.²

69%

of workers with mentors make better decisions.²

2 | "Why Mentoring: What the Stats Say" McCarthyMentoring.com

If possible, consider rotating interns between different teams. Creating opportunities to build cross-department relationships can help them be successful in their projects – and feel welcomed at the organization.



Choosing an internship mentor

Ask yourself these questions when deciding who will be your interns' go-to contact:

- Does this person have a passion for mentorship? Or will they treat it like a chore?
- Do they have sufficient bandwidth to dedicate to the interns?
- Are they comfortable with the responsibilities and goals they'll be accountable for?

Chapter 2 | Structuring your program for success

Establishing core milestones

While consistent mentoring will be the backbone of your program, here are some major milestones to plan in advance.

Onboarding

You can create a great impression even before the interns' start date by opening the lines of communication. When their first day comes, make sure the program supervisor is there to greet them, introduce them to the team, walk them through their goals, and set up expectations for their internships.

Check-ins

Scheduling formal check-ins throughout the duration of the program gives interns the chance to discuss their progress and voice any concerns. Help them understand what they're doing well, along with what they could improve, and work collaboratively with them to address any challenges they're facing.

Offboarding

Before wrapping up their internships, consider assigning a final project that allows your interns to share what they've been working on.

Also, whether you plan on hiring them or not, schedule an exit interview where they can provide feedback on your program.

TIP

Good or bad, interns love feedback.

Try to provide both positive and constructive feedback on a weekly basis.



Measuring success

Must-have milestones checklist

To help you keep your internship program on track, we've created a simple checklist of major milestones that you can check off as you go along.

Onboarding

Prior to first day

- ☐ Confirm intern's start and end dates
- ☐ Send welcome packet with instructions and a schedule for their first day
- ☐ Answer any questions from intern

First day

- ☐ Hold orientation session outlining tasks, goals, and expectations
- ☐ Get intern set up with computer, telephone, etc., and on company systems
- ☐ Help intern fill out any HR paperwork

First Week

- ☐ Assign intern a mentor
- ☐ Schedule training sessions
- ☐ Arrange group activities (ex: team lunch)

Check-ins

Hold regular check-ins (e.g. every week)

- ☐ Discuss progress towards goals
- ☐ Identify opportunities for further training and skills development
- ☐ Gauge the happiness level of the intern and address any concerns

Give constructive, ongoing feedback

- ☐ Offer regular praise and encouragement
- ☐ Highlight areas for improvement and provide additional resources

Offboarding

Final Weeks

- ☐ Assign a final project
- ☐ Help interns wrap up any outstanding work
- ☐ Allow intern to present their work to the wider team
- ☐ Schedule exit interview
- ☐ Discuss job opportunity and extend formal offer (optional)

Chapter 3

Attracting and engaging interns

Understanding where candidates search for internship opportunities, and what motivates them, can help you attract and recruit them more successfully.

Bear in mind, most college students begin looking for internship opportunities a whole semester in advance. Plan to find your interns about eight months ahead of their start date, rather than scrambling at the last minute.

In chapter 3, we dig into essential intern-recruiting channels and tools. Keep these tips in mind and your team will be able to land interns who will fit in great at your company.

Having a strong campus presence

Tailoring your job descriptions

Finding interns on LinkedIn



Chapter 3 | Attracting and engaging interns

Connecting talent with opportunity

Have a strong campus presence.

Campus career fairs are the perfect places to connect with potential candidates face-to-face and start building relationships. You'll also be able to see the other options available to them, allowing you to fine-tune your strategy to stand out from the crowd.

Don't limit yourself to only the most prestigious schools. Not only will those students likely be in high demand, but you may miss out on candidates who could bring new perspectives to your company. Explore underrepresented schools and send a diverse group to these events.

Tailor your job descriptions.

Intern candidates have different priorities than regular job seekers, so it's best to write fresh job posts for intern roles. In your posts, clearly outline specifics about what your interns will take away from the role.

And be sure to address compensation and perks. Unpaid internships aren't for everyone, and perks can set your company apart from others they're considering.



Top 6 places where students find internships

- 1 University career office
- 2 A company's website
- 3 Friends and family
- 4 Social media
- 5 Online job boards
- 6 Career fairs³

3 | "6 Best Places To Find Internships" UndercoverRecruiter.com, 2018

Chapter 3 | Attracting and engaging interns

Finding interns on LinkedIn

LinkedIn Jobs

Since internships are professional opportunities, many candidates look for them on LinkedIn. You can leverage your own personal network to spread the news about your internship program, or increase your reach by posting internship opportunities on LinkedIn Jobs.

[Post a job](#)

Sponsored Content

Sponsored Content is an efficient way to build awareness of the internships you offer. By placing native ads in candidates' newsfeeds, you can put your company on their radars.

[Request demo](#)

Career Pages

Career Pages allow candidates to think about your internship opportunities in the broader context of your company's culture, mission, and values, helping them decide whether it's a good fit. As your program develops, it's also worth sharing short video testimonials from former interns talking about their experiences.

[Request demo](#)

LinkedIn Recruiter

You can also actively source intern candidates using LinkedIn Recruiter. Filter your search by location, school, skills, and other criteria to find great matches.

[Request demo](#)

87%

of recruiters cite LinkedIn as an important part of their hiring process⁴

4 | "30+ Interview and Resume Statistics Every Job Seeker Should Know"

Chapter 4

Interviewing intern candidates

Interviewing interns is different than assessing traditional candidates. Adapting your usual interview process to focus on potential is a great way to start.

For some intern candidates, this may be the first time they've ever interviewed. Providing guidance on how to interview successfully can help them answer to the best of their ability. It also shows you're invested in helping them learn, building their confidence in your company.

Next up is the not-so-easy task of interviewing someone with no previous work experience. In chapter 4, you'll learn what to look out for when interviewing interns and how to know when you've found the right candidate.

Providing basic interview coaching

Focusing on soft skills

Spotting telltale signs of apathy

Setting appropriate expectations



Chapter 4 | Interviewing intern candidates

How to make the most of intern interviews

Provide interview coaching.

Once you've identified candidates, send them a list of interview topics. This lets them think about their answers, showing them you're in their corner.

Another useful tactic is to talk candidates through the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) interview structure. To save you some time, we've created a handy template you can share before the interview begins.

[Download the STAR template](#)

Focus on soft skills.

Most interviews focus on hard skills and experience. But since interns are coming to you to gain both, shift the focus toward soft skills.

93%

of employers said that soft skills are either "essential" or "very important" factors in hiring decisions.⁵

5 | "The Soft Skill Stats You Need To Know" Coursera.com, 2017

A few revealing questions you can use to get started:

Tell me about the last time you found a creative solution to a problem.

What skills are you currently working to develop and what steps have you taken?

Have you ever helped resolve a conflict between two friends or peers? How did you go about it?

What are you hoping to get out of this role?

Chapter 4 | Interviewing intern candidates

What to watch for during interviews

Spotting telltale signs of apathy.

Internships are designed to help young professionals grow and develop, so it's okay if they're not totally polished. But if they treat it more like a chore than an exciting opportunity, they may not be the right fit for the role.

Look for candidates who have passion. If a candidate doesn't seem to care what your company does, they may not bring the dedication you're looking for.

#1

Passion is the top indicator that an intern will be a high performer.⁶

6 | "Identifying the 10 Soft Skills of a Great Intern" SmartRecruiters.com, 2012

Setting appropriate expectations.

Before extending an internship offer, it's important to set expectations about the role and what the intern will get out of it.

Give an overview of responsibilities, discuss compensation, and establish the hours of the role. Be transparent about whether there's a possibility they'll be hired at the end, and discuss what they'd need to demonstrate to receive a job offer.

By providing this information up front, you can avoid tricky situations later – and help your interns step into the workplace with confidence.



TIP

Know your audience

Interns don't have much interview experience. Building rapport by asking about their background can help you get more insightful answers to future questions.



Conclusion

Successful internships are rewarding for all involved

You may discover an exceptional employee, and your interns will gain valuable experience that can help them transition into a meaningful career – possibly with your company. Your employees will also benefit from having more hands on deck.

If every intern leaves feeling satisfied, your program is a success. If they're offered a job, they'll feel confident about what's expected of them. And if they move on to other opportunities, they'll leave with a positive impression of your company – making them more likely to recommend you to family and friends.

Experience LinkedIn in action.

From helpful tools for finding interns – as well as for roles of all levels – LinkedIn has the resources to help you build winning teams.

Founded in 2003, LinkedIn connects the world’s professionals to make them more productive and successful. With 645+ million members worldwide, including 75% of the US workforce, LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional network.

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