You’ve completed an internship. NOW WHAT?

REFLECTING ON YOUR INTERNSHIP

It’s easy to characterize an internship as a “learning experience” or the opposite, but it takes a little more work to figure out what were the positive and negative elements of the experience. By understanding our workplace preferences, you are able to clarify what you want more of, and what you want to avoid next time around, and you increase your chances significantly of finding what you are after.

One way to evaluate an internship is first to break it down into its key components. Next, think about the value to you (negative and positive) of each component. The three components of your internship to look at are work content, work culture and supervision.

In the second part of this handout, you will see tips on how to build upon your internship, and how to articulate your experience on resumes or in interviews for jobs or graduate school admissions.

EVALUATING KEY INTERNSHIP COMPONENTS

I. Work Content

Did your work feel meaningful to you? Yes____ No ____

If “yes”, did any of the following help make your work meaningful? Can you think of any other ways in which your work felt important to you?

- Related to a subject that interested me.
- Made me think harder or in a different way about something.
- Challenged me in some way (learned a new skill, expanded an old one, placed me outside my usual “comfort zone”, expanded my world view).
- Made me see that I was competent in specific areas.
- Made me feel that I was contributing to the office’s mission.
- Made me feel that I was contributing to a greater good.
- Made me feel that my work had an impact on furthering the organization’s mission.

If “no”, were any of the following items missing from your work? Can you think of any other reasons why your work lacked meaning for you?

- Tasks were not related directly enough to what I wanted to learn.
- Didn’t learn much that felt significant to me.
- Didn’t see the impact of my work on the department or organization.
- Didn’t have enough preparation to accomplish tasks.
- Realized that this was not the career for me.
II. Work Culture
I felt comfortable and “at home” in my workplace. Yes___  No___

If “yes”, which of the following contributed to your feeling of comfort? Any other reasons?
• Shared many of the organization’s values.
• Shared many of the values of my co-workers and supervisor.
• People welcomed me and made me feel part of the group.
• People were willing to answer my questions.
• People were respectful of each other.
• The department was organized and well-run.

If “no”, did any of the following contribute to your not being comfortable in your workplace? Any other reasons?
• Didn’t share the values of the organization.
• Didn’t share the values of my co-workers or supervisor.
• People treated me as an outsider.
• The department was poorly run and disorganized.
• People were not particularly respectful of each other.

III. Supervision
In general, was your relationship to your supervisor a productive one for you?
Yes_____  No_____

If “yes”, did any of the following help to make it so? Any other reasons?
• She/he gave me the right amount and right kind of feedback.
• She/he gave me significant responsibility.
• She/he was encouraging and positive.
• She/he made it clear what was expected of me and was accessible to answer my questions.
• She/he took an active interest in my learning.

If “no”, did any of the following make it less productive than it could have been? Any other reasons?
• Supervisor was not accessible to answer my questions or to give feedback.
• She/he was not very interested in my learning.
• She/he was not clear in giving direction.
• She/he gave me little responsibility.
• She/he was not encouraging or gave me very little feedback about my work.

Conclusion: Once you’ve identified what you value in the content of your work, in a work culture and in a supervisory relationship, you are much better equipped to find a job which shares, if not all, then most of your core work values.
Part IV. Communicating your internship experience to potential employers and to graduate school admissions

One of the best ways to show a potential employer or graduate school admissions counselor how qualified you are for a position is to talk about your successes in past internships, jobs or activities. In thinking about your internship, ask yourself what skills you gained or improved through your work?

Identifying internship-related skills
Place a check mark next to the skills you developed through your internship:

- [ ] Taking initiative
- [ ] Working under pressure
- [ ] Analyzing statistics and data
- [ ] Communicating well with staff and clients
- [ ] Making a presentation
- [ ] Meeting deadlines
- [ ] Contributing to the work team
- [ ] Coming up with ideas
- [ ] Following through on the details
- [ ] Being accurate
- [ ] Managing databases
- [ ] Writing articles or reports
- [ ] Being persuasive

These are just a few possible skills you may have learned or enhanced through your internship

Presenting your skills on a resume
Choose a skill or a cluster of related skills that you developed during your internship, and think of an example of your work that illustrates your proficiency with this skill(s).

For instance, because of the type of position Mary Jones is seeking, Mary wants to emphasize in her resume her abilities to communicate well, and to persuade and motivate others.

On her resume Mary included the following example of her work as an intern at a food bank to illustrate her proficiency with these skills:

- Researched local business owners and contacted them in-person and by phone to describe food bank needs, and to solicit auction donations.
- Convinced 90% of local businesses to donate items for auction. Bids on items solicited brought in over 35% of total funds raised for the year.

Presenting your skills at an interview
Mary’s job interview gave her the chance to expand on her illustrative example. She spoke about how she convinced an initially unwilling receptionist to let her in to speak with the company’s director. She let her interviewer know that she was not demoralized by uninterested or rude business owners. These details provided further evidence of Mary’s mastery of communication and persuasion skills.
Build on your internship
If you think that you may want to pursue the career field in which you interned, look for ways to continue gaining experience in that area. Set up informational meetings or telephone appointments with Augsburg alumnæ or other people to learn more about the field. If there are relevant professional associations, find out if you can attend an event or take out a student membership.

Keeping in touch
If you haven’t written thank you notes to your supervisor and to anyone else who was helpful to you during your internship, do so now. It’s better late than never. Send an email or call your supervisor or co-workers from time to time to let them know what you’re up to and find out how they are. Drop by and say hello during a vacation if you’re in the vicinity. When you start job hunting and could use some help, it will be easier to contact your internship supervisor and co-workers for advice and guidance or to serve as references, if you’ve stayed in touch.

Letter of recommendation
The best time to ask your supervisor for a letter of recommendation is at the end of your internship; however, you may still ask for one even if you haven’t spoken to your supervisor in awhile. Remind your supervisor of your job duties and point out some of your accomplishments and successes. If you would like your supervisor to stress certain aspects of your work, bring that up as well.

References
A reference is a person willing to be contacted by people who are considering you for jobs or graduate schools to speak about the quality of your work performance. If you would like your internship supervisor to act as reference for you, contact her to ask permission to list her as reference, and tell her the nature of the job or graduate school to which you are applying.