



THE TWO SIDES OF AN INTERNSHIP



By Zach Fisher

The significance of an internship in one's life cannot be unmatched. In the world's growing businesses and organizations, it helps to have experience from an internship in order to do a job well. Many times, the word "internship" itself can be puzzling to working adults or students. There are two sides of an internship, there is the internship from the organization's perspective and the internship from an intern's perspective. Why is an internship so important and what can it offer to both the employer and the student? It is essential that internships and all they embody are understood by employers and interns alike. This article will examine both sides of an internship.

THE ORGANIZATION SIDE OF INTERNSHIPS

Why Offer an Internship?

When an organization offers an internship, often times the goal is to obtain some free labor to help out an understaffed office, but offering an internship is so much more than that. Through an internship, the opportunity to find future employees or create and maintain reliable and passionate volunteers is provided. Every organization has had a new hire that was just a bad fit. The employee blew you away during the interview process, but did not live up to the expectations in the workplace. Internships give organizations the chance to evaluate the intern's potential as a fulltime employee. Interns can bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to organizations that can find their employee's too close to their product. Technology is changing every day, there are new apps & new social media trends; interns can help bridge a generational gap that may exist between current employees who may not be as tech savvy.

What Departments in an Organization Have Interns?

Any department can have an intern if there is enough work to share. The Kentucky Derby Festival recruits interns for the following departments annually: Communications, Event Management, Merchandising, Sales/Sponsorship, and Marketing. The Event Management department at the Kentucky Derby Festival is made up of six Event Managers. For the 2018 festival, the event management team utilized four interns to produce roughly seventy events. There is no right or wrong answer on how many interns to use in each department; the department should evaluate their workload and decide how many projects they can delegate before deciding how many interns to bring on.

Organizations need to make sure their staff members have the time to manage and teach each intern. Interns can be very helpful when taking smaller projects off their supervisor's workload, but supervisors must remember interns are typically inexperienced in the workplace and

will make mistakes. Supervisors must prioritize time to meet with the intern to answer questions, check work, and evaluate the intern's progress. One of the biggest mistakes a supervisor can commit when delegating projects is not listening to the intern's opinion or questions on that project/event. Allow the intern to question why the project/event is done that way and give them the opportunity to pitch a new way to execute it. The classic line of, "that's how we have always done it" is only hindering the event and intern's opportunity to grow.

To determine the type of projects an intern should be assigned, organizations must first have a good grasp on their inventory of events and the amount of time each supervisor spends on them. Your event has many aspects to it; break down the event, department by department, to identify each department's needs. Once you have identified the needs within your department, look where you have the most opportunity for an intern to learn, take charge, and prepare them to operate that portion of the event. The project does not have to be anything big, but allowing an intern to take ownership of the project gives them a chance to gain quality experience outside of being a greeter or picking-up trash (not that they won't be doing that anyway). The Kentucky Derby Festival assigns the following projects to their interns annually:

- Creating Sponsorship Proposals
- Creating Sponsorship Follow-Ups
- Volunteer Coordination
- Data Entry
- Filling Merchandise Orders
- Set-Up & Oversee Merchandise Booths
- Organizing a "Mascot Party" (Children's Event)
- Organizing a Poker Tournament
- Overseeing a Half & Full Marathon Email Account

How to Find Interns

Good interns, like good volunteers are hard to find. One way to find an intern is to post the internship on an online job board. Below is a list of websites commonly used to find interns and employees:

- www.indeed.com
- www.internships.com
- www.linkedin.com
- www.glassdoor.com

Another avenue to find interns is to partner with local colleges. Before reaching out to the college, do some research on their website and see what degrees

and courses the college offers. Once you have a grasp on what is offered, align your department's internship with the college department that best fits it. For example, if the college offers a communications degree, reach out to the communications department to find students to intern within your communications department. If the college degree requires the completion of an internship prior to graduation, your organization can partner with the college department creating a pipeline that allows you to target students with common interests and skill sets. Please note this is just one way to find an intern who may be interested in the internship you are offering. Remember, most students are still trying to figure out what career field they want to enter, you never know who might be interested in interning with your organization. One final way to advertise the internship is through the organization's social media platforms. Students who follow the organization on social media already have some interest in the organization or the events it produces.

The Job Posting

The most important part of the internship listing is being true to what your organization and events are; be both transparent and honest about what the intern will be doing. Treat this like you are hiring someone, because you are. Give the intern an honest assessment of the hours you would need them to work and what type of work it will be. Of course, with free labor it is necessary to be flexible to the intern's schedule; remember they may still be in school or working another job. Be explicit about the days you would need them to be available e.g. event set-up, the event logistics, event teardown. Don't be afraid to let him or her know along with doing a lot of cool things within the event, they may also be responsible for other work like picking up trash, pushing port-potties, etc. If they are unwilling to commit to it before they have been on their feet for eight hours while it is raining, they will not commit to it during the event. Don't ever feel like being honest about what an event needs is going to intimidate anyone. Below are a few examples of internship postings:

The Allstate Sugar Bowl – Events Internship

Sugar Bowl Committee. Internship positions available. The Sugar Bowl Committee is accepting applications for intern positions in the Bowl's office. Paid positions are for 10 months and duties will be in the areas of Events and Operations.

Effective written and oral communications skills required along with strong computer skills. A Bachelor's Degree is required. Previous work experience in collegiate athletics preferred. Specific duties for the Sugar Bowl and its calendar of events will depend upon the background and experience of the applicant but will include work on the 2019 Allstate Sugar Bowl Football Classic and 50 other Committee sponsored events. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest, current résumé and a response to the event prompt listed below. The names and contact information of three professional references are also required. Electronic submissions are preferred: info@sugarbowl.org. Mailing address is: Human Resources, Sugar Bowl, 1500 Sugar Bowl Drive, New Orleans, LA 70112. Review of application materials will begin immediately and will continue until the positions are filled.

Event Prompt:

Each year the Sugar Bowl hosts hospitality functions for the two participating teams in the Sugar Bowl game. Please create a hospitality event for one of the teams to attend during their week-long stay in New Orleans. Please limit your response to the event prompt to one page.

The Sugar Bowl Committee is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

The Kentucky Derby Festival, Inc. – Events Internship

The Kentucky Derby Festival's Event Team is looking for interns to assist the department in preparing for the 2019 Kentucky Derby Festival. This person will have several responsibilities that may include:

- Assisting with the implementation and execution of KDF produced events
- Coordination of recruitment for event participants;
- On-site Event day duties including: Thunder, mini/Marathon, Fest-a-ville Concerts, Hole In One, Great Balloon Race, Pegasus Parade just to name a few.
- Data entry
- Other general department duties.
- Interning for the Kentucky Derby Festival is an invaluable experience. Interns have the opportunity to be part of the community's signature festival and one of the world's leading civic celebrations. In the past, internships at the Festival have also led to successful careers. Several current employees of the Festival started as Festival interns.

- We are looking for a student, who is hard-working, highly motivated and detail oriented. Proficiency in Microsoft programs and practical knowledge of the Internet is a plus. This is an unpaid position, but we do offer credit for school as well as many event-related perks. Applicants will need to be available 15-20 hours per week in March and as many as 30 or more during April and the first part of May. Positions start immediately.

Please send cover letter and resume to Matt Gibson, Senior Vice President of Events, Kentucky Derby Festival 1001 S. Third Street, Louisville, KY 40203. For more information, contact Matt by phone at (502) 584-6383 ext. 834 or email at mgibson@kdf.org

How Involved Should an Organization let an Intern Be?

Once the organization selects an intern they are now a part of that organization! They are a member of that team and you should try to include them in as much as possible. The intern is learning how a business operates and is there to soak up as much information as possible. Invite the intern to meetings, sales calls, site visits, or anything else you feel comfortable with. You do not have to invite them or include them on everything, but the more they can experience, the more they will gain from the internship. Use your best judgement on how much responsibility you give the intern; for example, you may ask an intern to create a sponsorship recap book for a large sponsor, make sure you allow yourself time to go back through the book and proof read it. This goes back to allotting time for yourself to answer questions about projects and checking the work assigned. Interns are typically young, inexperienced, and will make mistakes.

If your department is slow for a week or two, encourage the intern to work on short term projects with other departments. This allows the intern to get experience in all different aspects of events and to become well rounded. The worst way to put a damper on an intern's experience is to bring them on and give them nothing to do. If there is no way to give an intern a project to oversee or something to work on leading up to the event, an intern is not needed, a volunteer is. Remember, these are people who are interested in working in the field that you are! If there is nothing going on for the majority of the hours that an intern is working, it can be easy to feel like time is being wasted.

THE INTERN SIDE OF INTERNSHIPS

Why Pursue an Internship?

Within an organization, the interns have the opportunity to receive a hands-on experience within a field they desire to work in one day. That hands-on experience can change an intern's life, it allows the intern to discover or reaffirm a passion for the work they are doing, or may allow that intern to rethink their current career path if they find that they have no interest in a certain line of work. As an intern you are typically raw, you don't understand the workings of an event and all of the things that go into it. Unless you have previous experience with events, you are just like 99% of the population, you arrive at an event that was already set-up and leave when the event is over. You ask the people working the event if it is a full-time job and what they do for the rest of the year.

Best case scenario for an intern would be showing an organization that they can't afford to continue without you. You have made your mark on this organization and they offered you full time employment. If that doesn't happen, you have achieved at least one of the following:

- You have solidified your interest in this career, or found out it wasn't what you thought it would be and you have moved on.
- You have networked and made contacts that can help you find future employment.
- Established employees in the industry are willing to write a letter of recommendation for you.
- You have job experience that looks great on a resume.

Getting the Most Out of an Internship

An intern will get the most out of their experience by embracing the organization, their mission, and their values. You have an opportunity to gain real work experience that is not obtainable in a class room. This is your chance to make an impact on not only an organization, but all of the staff, board members and volunteers that work with the organization. To make sure you are getting the most of an internship, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I understand and represent the organization's mission and core values?
- Am I going above and beyond what is expected of me?
- Am I listening and actively participating during group meetings?
- Am I outgoing and networking at board meetings or other opportunities?

As an intern, make sure you take advantage of all networking opportunities. Board members are typically accomplished members in the business community. Networking at board meetings or events could lead to future job opportunities. Remember, it's not always what you know, it is sometimes who you know and the impression you made on them.

Post Internship

If an intern is interested in employment with the organization moving forward, continue to volunteer for their events and stay relevant to the organization and supervisors. Stay in touch with your supervisor and make sure they know you are interested in pursuing a career in that industry. Get involved with other organizations that produce similar events. The skills you can learn will be transferable and show the organization you are trying to build a resume that fits their needs. Your internship and volunteer experience can give you a leg up on the competition. Remember, your internship gave that organization first-hand knowledge of your potential as a future employee. Don't be afraid to reach out to your past supervisor and ask for a letter of recommendation.

Conclusion

Internships are beneficial for both the organization and intern. The organization gains the extra set of hands needed to lighten the load for their employees, a fresh perspective on the organization and events it produces, and the opportunity to find future employees or create and maintain reliable and passionate volunteers.

The interns have the opportunity to receive a hands-on experience within a field they desire to work in one day. That experience can change an intern's life, it allows the intern to discover or reaffirm a passion for the work they are doing, or may allow that intern to rethink their current career path if they find that they have no interest in a certain line of work. That is what an internship does. Regardless of whether an intern wants to continue the line of work or try their hand at a different potential career. Each one should leave having learned more than when they began.

Zach Fisher graduated from the University of Louisville in 2014 where he studied Sports Administration. While pursuing his degree, he interned with the Kentucky Derby Festival. Today he is an Event Manager with the Kentucky Derby Festival. He now manages the Republic Bank Pegasus Parade, Ford Motor Company Spelling Bee, among other events. Zach lives in Louisville, KY.