

Top ten concerns of interns

1. Give us real work!

It cannot be said too many times that interns want to work and learn. An intern can help you with projects and assignments that may not get accomplished otherwise. Don't be afraid to give him or her some "real work" to do.

2. Do what you say, and say what you do!

Be honest with your interns about what they can expect during their internship. If the job will require stuffing some envelopes, then make that clear. But if you tell the intern they will be researching a project, and they spend 90% of their time doing "grunt work," then bad feelings may develop.

3. We like feedback!

Remember that interns are students, and they may not have the business skills, experiences, and workplace behaviors that you take for granted. If your intern makes a mistake, use this as a "teaching moment" and pull him or her aside and explain how the situation should be handled in the future.

4. We want to be included, too!

Is there a staff meeting that your interns can attend? Can they tag along to the next project meeting? Or join a couple of people in the office at lunch? Please include them in the daily life of your workplace. After all, if you provide a little more perspective on the intern's work, the product will be much better.

5. Please explain.

When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who has never done it before. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will pay off later when your intern can produce good work independently.

6. I want a mentor!

Make sure that interns have mentors or supervisors to provide guidance. Identify those who truly like to teach and train, and the experience will be even better.

7. A minute of your time please.

The best mentor in the world is useless if he or she cannot or will not spend the necessary time mentoring. As newcomers, interns may not speak up if they are feeling ignored, so the burden of making sure they are okay is on the mentor. If the busiest person in the office wants to be the designated mentor, he or she should schedule regular times to meet with the intern.

8. Be prepared!

That wonderful day has arrived and the intern begins his/her internship only to learn that no one knew they were coming, and there is no place for them to work.

9. Um...I need a chair.

It's amazing how many employers hire an intern and do not think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, phone, and computer to perform assigned tasks. It's no fun, and not efficient, to move an intern from desk to desk as people are out one day to the next.

10. Show me the money.

While each internship is different, and each industry has its own personality, remember that interns have expenses. Your organization may not be in a position to pay much, but anything can help. Maybe you can help pay for parking, take them to lunch every so often, or develop some other creative way to assist them.