

The Top Five Reasons You *Need* to Intern, Part Two

By Mary Waldron

It's June now. Graduation season. And many grads are asking themselves that golden question: "What do I do now?" Well, this is what they will do. They will spend the next six months or so scavenging the Internet desperately in search of *real* jobs—the types of jobs where their experience as servers at Fridays will not help them in the ways they need.

Finally, after months of mom and dad tapping their toes and raising their eyebrows, they will find typical entry-level positions—decent jobs. Emphasis on decent. However, they will still be behind those who had internships during college.

Why? Because those who served as interns got the hook-ups before they even needed real jobs. Interning is truly an investment—no matter what industry you hope to go into. I've spoken with many of the country's smartest and most successful attorneys, and they're all plugging internships. Read on to find out why.

4. Beef Up Your Resume.

A resume can be a very blank document after you graduate from law school—but it doesn't have to be! Many graduates find themselves in the predicament of applying for entry-level jobs that require experience. If a job is entry level, what kind of experience are you supposed to have? Interning can fill in all the gaps. You will gain so much insight just by interning for a couple of months, but the real bonus is how your resume benefits from the experience.

Aside from all the references you collect, you can list all the skills that you acquired during your internship. Legal research, scheduling and following up with clients, and drafting memoranda can all be listed as special skills and experience on a resume. Basically anything that you did in that office can be tweaked (not twisted) to sound resume worthy and captivating.

And don't forget to list the internship under "employment"! Many people downgrade their internships by leaving them out of resumes or not properly showcasing them on resumes. I always feel bad for those who list "legal intern" on their resumes. You were employed by the firm; why not spruce up the title to convey what you did? You might be able to say "legal assistant" or "research assistant." The fact that you got school credit for your work doesn't mean you have to highlight it by calling yourself an intern in the job title. Get creative and savvy. Don't lie. Just present the piece in a different light.

5. They Usually Lead to Other Opportunities.

The champion moment of any internship is when your boss says, "We'd like to have you continue working for us—in a paid associate position." And then, on your last day of interning, you wait and wait, and nothing ever happens, and you say to yourself, "Well, that was a waste."

In addition to all of the other benefits I've already listed, interning can also lead to job opportunities in other firms or companies. Lawyers usually have friends. More than a few have lawyer friends. You get the picture. Many times, if lawyers move to new firms or start new firms, they remember those loyal interns who worked for free. Then, months or even years later, they call or email you with a job offer, and at that moment, the internship becomes priceless. It really happens more often than you think in many industries. Build a good reputation as soon as you can, and the benefits will come.

So sign up for an internship now because the moment you graduate and pass the bar, it's a different world. It's so much more difficult to intern after college because you know that you have the credentials to get a paying job even if your lack of experience and connections is holding you back. You can start interning anywhere at any time. Even if it's too late to register for credit for the fall, you can always register for credit during the next term. Start this summer before it's too late!