

# DIY INTERNSHIPS

There are many benefits to having a formal internship, but there may be some instances where the “*Create Your Own Internship*” model can be equally valuable in exploring careers and gaining experience.

## WARNING!

**Exploration without a plan is merely procrastination. As with any internship, it is imperative that you determine how this option will move you towards your career goals.**

\*This option should **not** be used as an alternative to avoiding the traditional internship application and interview process. This model requires a high level of curiosity, good research skills, and the confidence to pitch your ideas.

If you need an internship for credit, check with your academic advisor first! This model may not satisfy your department’s requirements.

Below are 3 situations where creating your own internship might be an excellent option;

1. You have not had a previous internship. This is a good time to identify a small business owner or non-profit that may not have extra financial resources, but would welcome your skill set.
2. You want to target a specific company, or opportunity where internships don’t currently exist. Even if there is not a formal internship program in place, it does not mean that they can’t use your help. Since you aren’t competing with other interns, you will likely get offered a larger variety of responsibilities and opportunities.
3. You have applied/interviewed for internships, but not been hired. In this situation, we suggest you meet with a CCS Career Advisor to determine whether your resume or interview skills might need some work. If the issue is only that you need more experience to bring to your resume or interviews, this can be a good option.

# BEST STRATEGIES FOR DIY INTERNSHIPS

**BOTTOM LINE:** If you can present a convincing argument for why a company or small business owner needs your specific skill set, you're likely to be successful.

## 1. KNOW YOURSELF

Now is a great time to honestly evaluate your strengths and weaknesses to see where you'd be a good fit. You want to really know what you can offer a company or small business owner before you approach them. Think about situations where you have excelled in group projects. What challenges do people ask you to help them solve (and you don't mind saying yes!).

## 2. KNOW YOUR TARGET COMPANY

Try to gain an in-depth understanding of what your target company *actually* does and believes. Their "about us" is a good indicator of how they want the public to perceive them, but dig deeper if you want to get a handle on their current challenges. If you can figure out how you can help solve a problem they're having, you'll have a great advantage.

## 3. TAKE ACTION

Reach out to HR or a specific department and ask if you can meet with the head of the department. Another tip, call after hours. The people who make the decisions are still there after 5:30, but since most of the employees will be gone, you are more likely to have a decision maker answer the phone.

If it feels overwhelming to you to pitch a job description right off the bat, try asking for an informational interview. Once you're in the door, ask your interviewer questions, remember that the CEO does not want to hear your life story. You're there to learn about the industry. Ask them for advice and how they landed in their current position, and ask what they are currently focused on. Most people will be happy to oblige.

## 4. GO IN WITH A PLAN

*How are you going to help solve the company's biggest problem through your internship?*

Be prepared to answer those types of questions. Even if you can't solve every problem, think about what skills you could offer to employers so they can address even bigger problems. Think about it, it is possible that even though a CEO might really want to offer you a learning opportunity, they may be thinking "I already have my hands full and this might take some of my time, what's in it for me?"

## 5. PUT IT DOWN ON PAPER

Be sure to write an organized outline of your plan. Write down what you'll be doing, for how long, during what hours, and most of all, your expectations and what you both hope to get out of the internship. Do this *before* you talk about hours or pay so that you can set expectations for your employer and for you. It doesn't have to be a formal contract, but if you have an outline written down, you'll avoid misunderstandings and increase the odds that this will be a valuable experience for you as well as the employer.