Internship Etiquette and Advice

Exhibit a Can-Do Attitude
- Attitude speaks loud and clear and makes a lasting impression, so make sure yours is one of your greatest assets.
- Take on any task assigned – no matter how small – with enthusiasm.
- Take the initiative to acquire new skills and ask for things to do. Make the most of your time there!
- Accept criticism graciously and maintain a sense of humor.
- Ask to attend meetings and events that interest you.
- Ask to shadow different people and talk with them about their work experiences (if time permits).

Set Realistic Goals & Expectations
- Work with your supervisor to set up your learning agenda. It should target specific skills and competencies you wish to acquire. After all, the learning agenda is what distinguishes a short-term job from an internship.
- Maintain a journal of your activities and accomplishments in order to monitor your progress.
- Read everything you can get your hands on; talk with people in different departments as well as clients and vendors to become informed on all elements of the business.
- Seek regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance.

Learn the Unwritten Rules
- Being the “new kid” is like being a freshman all over again...you will need to adapt, observe, learn, and process a large volume of information. Be patient; don’t expect too much too soon.
- Buy into the mission & vision of your workplace.
- Get to know your co-workers early. Office customs may not always match the formal rules...so ask questions and pay attention to how people interact with each other. Watch closely how things get done.
- Be sensitive to others...don’t gossip, don’t complain, and avoid internal politics.
- Be aware of people’s differences (cultural, work style, management style, etc.)
- Also be receptive to the dress of your co-workers and supervisors...and tailor accordingly.

Take Your Position and Assignments Seriously
- Build a reputation for being reliable and dependable.
- Be diligent and accurate in your work.
- You may encounter a great deal of ambiguity, so seek direction when in doubt. Your supervisor knows there will be an initial learning curve and will make allowances for mistakes. Learn from your errors and move on to your next task.
Meet Deadlines
- Always assume the responsibility to ask when an assignment is due. This will help you understand your supervisor’s priorities and to manage your time accordingly.
- Be willing to accept additional work responsibilities as the position continues.
- Be prepared to work late or overtime when necessary...give 110%. Your willingness to go the extra mile, especially during “crunch time,” will help you pave the way to assuming greater responsibilities.
- Alert your boss in advance if you will be unable to meet expectations. This shows respect and professional maturity.

Communicate Respectfully
- Find out the proper way to address supervisors and co-workers, including customers. Remember their names!
- Maintain a pleasant and respectful demeanor with every person, regardless of his or her rank.
- Assume everyone else knows more than you do, but don’t be afraid to present useful ideas that may save time, money, or solve problems.
- Make sure, however, that your style doesn’t come across as cocky. Employers value assertiveness, not aggressiveness.

Be a Team Player
- Learn how to follow the chain of command. Don’t go over or around your supervisor to get noticed, to get ahead, or to complain. Establish and maintain good business relationships with everyone.
- Learn how your assignment fits into the grand scheme of things. In today’s work environment, success is often defined by your ability to get along with and interact with others. You’re a winner only if your team wins.

Get a Mentor
- Identify at least one individual to serve as your mentor or professional guardian. It should be someone who is willing to take a personal interest in your career development and success.
- Once you know your way around, begin to network wisely and get “plugged in” by associating with seasoned employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives, and insights.
- Get noticed, because many people will have a role in determining your future.

Remember...
- As an Intern & KU student, you represent the University, your academic department, the faculty, and other students. Be sure you represent us well.
- Learn all you can, develop your skills, develop your network, and have fun learning!