

The Do's and Don'ts of Internships, a student perspective

Nicholas Uilk, M.ED.



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences

First things first... recruitment

- When should you recruit your summer interns?
 - Fall semester
 - SDSU is October 3rd
 - Should have positions filled by Christmas
 - Host an event on campus for students



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences

Onboarding –things to consider

- Most students pay rent 12 mo/yr. at college
- First time to town might be first day of work
- Many students are nervous prior to start day, give resources to help
- You MUST ensure the person overseeing an the intern, wants to be in charge of the intern.
 - “My internship experience was horrible, my supervisor flat out told me he didn’t want an intern under him but someone else left the company and he was stuck with me. Worst summer ever”



What students want

- In·tern·ship: The position of a student or trainee who works in an organization, sometimes without pay, in order to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification.
- “I collect data all summer long, but all I do is collect it, box it, and ship it off. I don’t get to actually see the results of my work”
- “They could put a little more effort into letting me shadow their precision ag guy, so I could learn more”
- “I would like to learn more about section control, rate controllers, etc.”
- “I got to attend a meeting talking about drones and their operating software” (asked what his favorite part has been)



Ensuring a good learning experience

- Tell 'em what your gonna tell 'em, tell 'em, tell 'em what you told 'em
- Have Learning Objectives established, communicate them with intern, and asses weekly
 - “my boss is very good about making sure I understand the reasons behind what I am doing. I spent a week running tender truck, which I knew I would be doing, but it helped that my boss explained the value in knowing how the company functions to better help manage the system”
- Have educational experiences for intern(s)
 - “I really like how they have intern learning classes where they take an hour every Thursday morning and teach us about financials, personal marketing, etc. They want to invest in us”



Ensuring a good learning experience

- “I have enjoyed my time as they are very organized and give me responsibilities showing me they trust me, they give me project that force me to use my brain and things I’ve learned in school”
- “I’m in charge of determining the feed ration for the bulls, monitoring the health, and adjusting ration accordingly. I love it!”
- “working in a big company that I have worked in before, it seems that I often have 10 bosses that are all trying to give me things to do”



Frequent one on one meetings

- Do frequent assessment of interns performance
 - “My supervisor met with me every Friday morning to recap the week, talk about what I did well, and also give constructive criticism and discuss ways I could improve myself”
- Make sure they are getting what they hoped to get out of the internship
 - “I would like them to give me a project so I can prove to them my skills and abilities and that I can make them money”



New Experiences

- “The interns at one location are in charge of soil sampling the entire region, I wish they would rotate all interns through the soil sampling process rather than just the precision ag interns.”
- “I dislike the amount of time I have spent soil sampling, I understand this has to be done but I wish I could also see the results of the sampling, analyze the data/make maps, interpret the data for producer, etc. Even if it was something as simple as doing a research study on 2.5 ac vs. 1 acre grids, something more than just pulling dirt”
- “so far there is nothing I would change about my internship, they are doing a great job of making sure I am getting out there and learning, not only the precision ag side of things, but many aspects of their company”



Communication

- Emails/conference calls, etc.
 - Have them set up/organize the skype meeting
 - Intentionally plan a skype meeting during a time you are out of town
- Presentations –let them teach
 - Summer-long project to large group
 - Short research topics to small group
 - Include authority figures
 - “I got to meet the CEO of the company and actually teach him about what we had been working on in our department!”
 - Customer meetings
 - I learned very quickly there is no room to be shy in this business. My supervisor did a great job of training me on how to approach a customer (cold call) and have a conversation with that customer



Communication + learning experience

- InfoAg 2018 –student registration price is \$120.
 - Bring your intern(s)
 - Have contest to determine attendees
 - Have them give a presentation to those who did not attend



Challenge them

- “about 3 weeks after I started my internship my boss left unexpectedly. I was afraid I would be out an internship, but instead they handed a lot of his responsibilities over to me and it was awesome!”
- “My boss called me Tuesday morning and said he had a family emergency and had to be gone the rest of the week and that he needed me to prepare and give a report he was supposed to give to management. I was so nervous but in the end it was by far the best learning experience I had, and it was really cool knowing he trusted me with that.”



Make them part of the company

- Make sure they know their value, do succession planning, etc.
- “I really felt like part of the company, and that was great”
- “Towards the end of summer, I had a review meeting with my boss and he went through the same succession planning with me as he does with all of his employees”



Stay connected

- “I greatly enjoyed my work during the summer and learned a lot, I just wish I could stick around for harvest to see actual yield results of my trials”



Thank you

- Nicholas Uilk
 - Nicholas.uilk@sdstate.edu
 - 605.212.9068

