Importance of Virtual Internships

With the Internet and social media easily accessible at the hands of our own fingertips, we are able to connect with others and the world in a matter of seconds. As technology and the Internet becomes increasingly reachable, more and more employers are offering Virtual and Remote Internships for students. This means students have the opportunity to work at various organizations around the world at the convenience of their own home, school, apartment, etc. These internships allow you to be able to work for the organization remotely, instead of having to physically go into the company or organization for the internship. Below are reasons why students should take advantage of the growing popularity of Virtual Internships. UNC Charlotte student, Molly Flynn says, “With technology advancing and international relationships flourishing, it makes sense that virtual work is gaining popularity.”

Flexibility

Virtual internships are marvelous for students who work, volunteer, are in numerous student organizations, and so on, allowing the interns to have a more flexible internship which accommodates to your personal schedule. It can be hard to juggle school, work, organizations, a social life, AND an internship, so if this sounds like you, then look into virtual internships! Flynn says, “The virtual internship also works much better with my schedule than a traditional internship. I am a full-time student, a full-time employee, and a full-time wife. The virtual internship factors in my schedule and gives me more freedom to work on my own time.”

Most virtual internships give the interns a select time frame (usually a week) to get the certain workload completed before assigning new tasks. This allows the intern to complete the necessary work during his or her OWN availability (as long as it fits in the time frame). This could mean in the morning, middle of the night, whatever time frame works best for YOU. Just remember to stay in contact with your supervisor so they can best work with you about when the work is to be accomplished.

Easiness In Finding An Internship

The only requirement for a virtual internship is having access to a computer! Remember, some internships may require you to have certain programs like Photoshop, Final Cut Pro, etc., but if you meet the requirements for the position you will know what the internship requires. Mostly, you will simply need a computer! That being said, it is quite easy to find virtual internships nowadays. There is a site dedicated to internships called www.internships.com. Most of the internships listed on this site are Virtual internships. Popular job websites like www.Indeed.com or www.Beyond.com offer Virtual Internships as well; just make sure you type Virtual/Remote internships in the search engine. Thousands of companies are beginning to offer virtual internships, because this allows them to pool from a
national application pool, not just students that are located nearby or in the surrounding area. So this means virtual internships is a WIN-WIN for employers and students.

**Networking**
Since employers are pulling from a national applicant pool, this allows you to network and work with employers you might have not necessarily gotten to work with otherwise because of the location of your school or home. You can have the opportunity to intern at several organizations, each with their own work style, with completely different bosses, allowing you to learn from and contribute to different employers at the comfort of where you go to school or reside. Flynn says, “It is exciting to work with students from all over the country. I get to work with people who share similar interests and passions but contribute very different worldviews.” A big suggestion is to get to know your employer! Connect with them. Always put yourself out there! Stay connected with your employers at these locations because you never know whom they may know. These employers can help you connect with other employers, which then may help you land a job (maybe even another virtual internship).

Remember, virtual internships are still internships even though you work remotely. So still treat these internships equally as important as other internships. Virtual internships are amazing for boosting bland resumes, great for expanding knowledge on aspects of different jobs, and can leave you with a portfolio including all the work you've completed with the company.

**Advice from UNCC student:**

Molly Flynn – Virtual Internship: Study Break Magazines
“Do it! But you have to make sure you prioritize your time and take the initiative to get your work done. Without the structure of a traditional work environment, you must be extremely self-motivated to ensure you are fulfilling the expectations of your internship.”

**Nichole’s Tip:** Having experienced a virtual internship of my own at the online editorial magazine, The Indie Chicks Magazine, my biggest piece of advice regarding virtual internships is to ALWAYS stay connected with your boss and keep on top of your workload by planning weekly. I would say the hardest thing about virtual internships is the easiness to lose track of work/time because you are working remotely from home, library, school, etc. It can be easy to lose track of your workload and responsibilities, because you are not physically working with your boss looming over your shoulder or right around the corner from your desk. Also, since you are not in the same vicinity as your boss, it can be easy for miscommunication to happen regarding the tasks or workload that the employer requires from you.
Always remember, most employers get hundreds of emails weekly, so your email can easily get lost in the shuffle. Take the initiative with your employer weekly to have either Skype or Facetime conferences. Your employer will be impressed you took the initiative to communicate with them verbally instead of simply communicating with them via email, text message, etc. where misinterpretation can arise. Going the extra mile to talk to the employer verbally will tell them that you care about the organization and the work that needs to be completed. This also shows that you are taking the time to make sure miscommunication doesn’t occur so the work can be completed accurately, precisely, and effortlessly.