

14.4: Selling U - It's Your Career—Own It!

Learning Objectives

- Understand how to leverage internships and professional organizations to get the job you want.

When Jay Leno was young, he saw a Mercedes/Rolls-Royce dealership in his hometown in Boston and thought it would be a great place to work given his passion for cars. When he applied for a job the manager responded with the usual: “We’re not hiring right now.” Leno was undaunted; the next Monday morning he returned and went to the car wash bay. He told them he was the new guy and started washing cars. A few days later, the manager saw him and said, “What’s he doing here?” The head of the car wash team said he was a hard worker; Leno said that he figured he would work there until he got hired. Needless to say, he got the job. Jay Leno, “Jay Leno Says: Persistence Pays Off,” *Parade*, September 6, 2009, <http://www.parade.com/celebrity/2009/09/jay-leno-persistence-pays-off.html> (accessed May 16, 2010).

This same “can-do” positive attitude and willingness to work can help you get the job you want. Even in this difficult economy, there are opportunities to demonstrate your passion and skills and set yourself apart, just like Jay Leno did. Finding the right job requires focus, time management, and motivation...and sometimes even working for free. You have to keep a positive mental attitude throughout your search and manage your time to gain experience while you are going to school. Here are two key things that you can do every day to help you get the job you want: internships and professional organizations.

Build Your Résumé with Internships

“One hundred percent of the students I hire have had **internships**,” says Michelle Goza, a campus recruiter for Gap. “It’s foolish not to pursue the opportunity.” “Make the Most of Your Internship,” WetFeet. Paid or unpaid, internships can make a difference in whether you are considered for another internship or the job you want.

An internship, or more than one internship over the course of your academic career, can provide insight into an industry or a specific company or position. What better way to learn about something you might want to do during your career...or not want to do. (Some internships teach you what you don’t want to do during your career, which is as valuable as learning what you want to do.) Internships are almost the norm today, and many employers expect to hire recent grads for entry-level positions who have had some kind of internship. “There is no such thing as too much experience, just not enough,” says Craig Bollig, a journalism major at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Anya Kamenetz, “[Take This Internship and Shove It](#),” *New York Times*, May 30, 2006.

Internships aren’t just for undergraduates any more. Due to the challenging economy, recent graduates are finding internships to be an excellent way to build their experience while they continue to look for the full-time job of their dreams. The need for experience is always growing and one internship may not cut it like it did before.

If internships are so important to building your résumé and your experience, you might be wondering how you go about getting the right internship. First, stop by your campus career center. The people there are skilled at helping you understand the options that are available and can provide insight as to how to find the right internship to help you meet your career objectives. And most campuses include internship postings on the campus Web site. It’s a good idea to take the time to learn all about your internship options.

Consider an internship the same way you would consider a job: Is this the right fit for my experience and skills? Are the company values in line with my personal values? What will I be doing? Who will I report to? Will I be paid for the internship? If so, how much? How will I be evaluated during the internship? What is the possibility of getting a full-time position after graduation? While the interview process is usually more abbreviated for an internship than for a full-time job, take the time to ask questions so you understand the expectations of the role.

You've Got the Power: Tips for Your Job Search

Internship Offer Letter

Before accepting any internship (or full-time job), it’s best to get an offer letter. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 210. Even if you are accepting an unpaid internship, an offer letter outlines your areas of responsibility, dates of employment, and other specific information that you should agree upon with your employer before you begin. See the *Selling U* section of Chapter 12 for more specifics about offer letters.

The Right Internship for You

Internships come in all shapes and sizes; some are formal, structured programs while others are created by the student. Either way, here are some considerations when you are pursuing an internship:

Paid versus unpaid. Some, but not all, internships include a paycheck. Many large corporations have structured internship programs that include paid internships. However, many industries such as advertising, entertainment, and public relations offer unpaid internships as a way for you to gain experience. So you want to make some money and gain some experience in the field of your choice? You might be able to do both since approximately half of all internships are paid. But in today's challenging job market, you might find it worth your while to accept an unpaid internship. While that might be a tough pill to swallow, consider Lindsey Roberts's point of view after she graduated with an MBA from a top business school, "I could either sit at home all day and drive myself nuts going from company websites, to Indeed.com and back to Gmail and Facebook, or I could get out there, put my education and experience to work while I continued my job search." Lindsey Roberts, "A Millennial's View on Cost/Benefits of an Unpaid Internship Post-MBA," *Millennial Marketing*, August 10, 2009, <http://millennialmarketing.com/2009/08/a-millennial's-view-on-costbenefits-of-an-unpaid-internship-post-mba> (accessed September 11, 2009). It's not only graduate students who are accepting unpaid internships. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the recession has tightened the internship market; experienced workers who have been laid off are now successfully participating in unpaid internships for the same reasons students do: to build their résumés and increase their chances for full-time work. So you might think twice about holding out for a paid internship. Before you make a decision about a paid versus an unpaid internship, put your internship consideration to the test. The right internship, paid or unpaid, allows you the opportunity to get experience, a chance to network, and the opportunity to test drive a job to see if it's something you like to do. Rich DeMatteo, "3 Reasons to Take an Unpaid Internship," *Corn on the Job Blog*, July 23, 2009, <http://cornonthejob.com/2009/07/23/3-reasons-to-take-an-unpaid-internship> (accessed September 11, 2009). Those three things can be well worth temporarily foregoing a paycheck.

Credit versus noncredit. In many cases, you may be able to earn credit hours for your internship. Begin by visiting your faculty advisor and learn about the requirements to earn credit for internships. Internships usually require a faculty mentor or other university liaison. Besides working the specified number of hours each week, students are usually required to write a paper. In addition, an employer evaluation is usually included in the grade. It's best to understand the requirements for credit long before the internship is finished so that you can be sure that all the details are in order between your employer and the school. Be sure to fill out all the appropriate paperwork before the beginning of the internship. Just a note, although the internship does not usually require a textbook or classroom learning, most schools include the standard course fee for a credit internship.

It doesn't matter if your internship is paid or unpaid, for credit or noncredit, the payoff can be significant. Internships are like an extended job interview; the company gets to know you and your work, which could result in a full-time job offer after graduation. "Internships are so powerful," affirms Wendy Washington, a senior vice president at Universal Records, whose assistant is a former intern for the company. "We get our employees from our intern pool. They know the system. They know how things work, and you can't get a better character reference. Interns who work for our company have a better shot of becoming employed here than someone who just sends in an application." "Getting the Big Break with the Right Internship: You Can Beat the Odds and Become a Success in the Entertainment Industry," *TheFreeLibrary.com*, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Getting+the+big+break:+with+the+right+internship,+you+can+beat+the...-a094672526> (accessed September 11, 2009). That's why it's especially important to stand out in everything you do. And don't forget to keep copies of the projects you work on; they are excellent examples of your work to include in your portfolio and serve as a demonstration of your on-the-job experience.

Video: Internship Search - How do I find an internship?



The Best Places to Look for an Internship

Your campus career center and faculty advisor can be the best resources for getting an internship. In addition, there are several Web sites that can give you access to internships by industry or by geography. Table 14.4.2 provides some places for you to start your search.

Table 14.4.2: Recommended Web Sites for Internships

Web Site	Comments
GoAbroad.com http://www.internabroad.com/search.cfm	International internships
InternWeb.com http://www.internweb.com	Internships and entry-level jobs in technology industries
Internshipprograms.com http://internshipprograms.com	Internship listings
Summerinternships.com http://www.summerinternships.com	Internship listings
Internzoo.com www.internzoo.com	Internship listings

Professional Organizations: Your Key to Growth

You're probably really pressed for time this semester. A full course load, your job, your community service work, family, friends—it seems like you can't possibly fit in another thing to do. You already have twenty-eight hours for every twenty-four-hour day. Just when it seems like you can't do another thing, there is one thing you should consider: it's worth making time to join a **professional organization** while you're in school, then continue as a member after you graduate. It can build your experience and enhance your résumé.

There are most likely several professional organizations on your college campus. organizations such as the American Marketing Association, American Association of Advertising Agencies, American Society of Women Accountants, Sales & Marketing Executives International are just a few that may have a chapter on your campus called a **collegiate chapter**. If you're not sure about what professional organizations are available on campus, you might consider visiting your campus student services center or career center. The people who work there will likely have information about the purpose of each group; date, time, and place of the next meeting; and more. In addition, many professional organizations may not have a collegiate chapter, but they offer **student membership** into their organization at reduced rates. It depends on the organization whether they offer a collegiate chapter or a student membership. Collegiate chapters are usually extensions of national organizations such as the American Marketing Association, and usually have student members on campus and hold regular events and activities on campus while leveraging and participating in national conferences, competitions, and best practices. Professional organizations that do not have a collegiate

chapter but offer a student membership rate usually have events and activities with professionals in the local area but not on campus.

Being a member of a professional organization in school helps build your professional network, and hone your skills. It's also a great résumé-builder because it signals to your prospective employer that you are willing to take the time to get involved in a business function during your spare time (of which you probably have none). Participation in a professional organization can help make you stand out as a candidate or help you meet the right people. In fact, some professional organizations, such as the Philly Ad Club, offer a formal mentoring program. This is an excellent way to meet an executive in the industry of your choice. Philly Ad Club, "Philly Ad Club Mentor Program," May 5, 2009, http://www.phillyadclub.com/news_article.php?id=1973 (accessed September 12, 2009). The networking aspects of professional organizations are well documented and are covered in Chapter 3. The reason for the existence of most professional organizations is to promote the health and advancement of the industry and bring people together for networking purposes. In addition, most professional organizations offer a newsletter that includes information about the industry and companies that can be very helpful for job leads and interviewing research.

You might think that simply joining a professional organization is enough. However, what will help you stand out within the organization is to get involved. Keep in mind that all professional organizations are volunteer organizations, so it is easy to get onto one of the committees or even take on a leadership role of a committee. This allows you to demonstrate your skills, work ethic, and commitment to people who are usually more senior than you are (in the case of a campus professional organization, you stand out to your professors, which is a good strategy). It's a great way to build your leadership, teamwork, and networking skills.

There are several professional organizations off campus that invite students to join, usually at a reduced rate. For example, the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) costs \$290 for an annual membership while the fee for a student in the PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) is \$50. Public Relation Society of America (PRSA), "Receive a Free PRSA Chapter Membership," Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), "Join PRSSA," (accessed September 12, 2009). It's a good idea to talk to your faculty advisor, as she will most likely know what local organizations have a student rate. These off-campus professional organizations are excellent for networking to find the right people to whom you should be speaking to get the job you want. Professional organizations will serve you well throughout your career. Even after you graduate, you will be a student of the business. Professional organizations provide a platform for ongoing learning about industry trends, case studies, and best practices. Successful people stay involved in one or more professional organizations even after they have established careers.

There are professional organizations for virtually every profession and industry. Table 14.4.3 includes a list that can help you see some of what's available.

Table 14.4.3: Professional Organizations

Professional Organization Information and Web Site	Comments
Sales & Marketing Executives International http://www.smei.org	Web site of SMEI
Wikipedia http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_professional_organizations	List of professional organizations
American Marketing Association	Web site of the American Marketing Association
PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) http://www.prssa.org/about/join.aspx	Web site of PRSSA
10 Top Professional Networks for Women in Finance http://www.theglasshammer.com/news/2009/07/23/top-10-professional-networks-for-women-in-finance	Professional organizations for women in finance
Women's Career Networking and Professional Organizations	Women's networking organizations
Gale's Encyclopedia of Associations www.apl.org/quick/associations.html	List of all types of professional associations

Key Takeaways

- The best way to get the job you want when you graduate is to work on it right now with **internships** and by joining **professional organizations**. Both are expected by prospective employers of new hires for entry-level jobs.
- **Internships** provide an opportunity to gain experience, test drive a job, and network; many result in full-time job offers.
- Some **internships** are paid while others are unpaid; some **internships** qualify for college credit while others do not. It's best to consult your faculty advisor before you accept an **internship**.
- Professional organizations provide exposure to executives, industry news, and best practices and enhance your résumé. The best way to take advantage of your professional organization membership is to get involved one of the organization's committees.

? Exercise 14.4.1

1. Visit your campus career center and meet with one of the counselors. Learn about internships that are offered and how to apply for them. Discuss three things that you learned during this meeting.
2. Identify a student who has had an internship in your target industry. Set up a meeting to discuss how she landed her internship and what advice she can give you about finding the right internship.
3. Review your campus Web site and identify at least two professional organizations that may be of interest to you. Attend at least one of their meetings and determine which might be the right organization for you to join.

This page titled [14.4: Selling U - It's Your Career—Own It!](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Anonymous](#).