



Internships in the Digital Age

Preparing for Virtual Internships

Hi, I'm Heather



- Founding and President of [Come Recommended](#)
 - Content marketing and digital PR firm specializing in HR and job search tech
 - Come Recommended is a 100% remote workplace
- Author of *Lies, Damned Lies & Internships: The Truth About Getting From Classroom to Cubicle*
- Named one of the top career and job search experts to follow on [Twitter](#) by
 - Mashable
 - The Muse



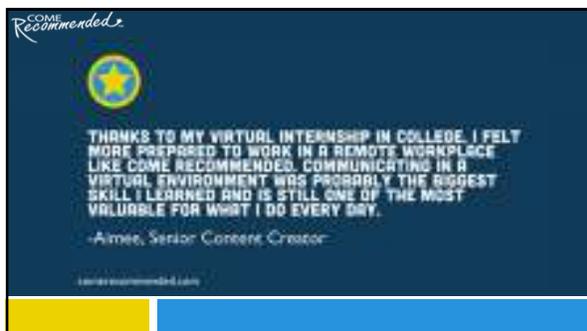
The Need for Virtual Internships

- Remote work has increased 103% since 2005 ([Global Workplace Analytics](#))
- However, 52% of employees who had flexible work options received no training or guidance about that type of work environment ([Flex+Strategy Group](#))
 - 80% had never used project management software before
 - 66% had never used video or web conferencing platforms before
- Virtual internships allow students to gain the experience they need to succeed in a virtual work environment









The Difficulties With Virtual Internships

- Evaluating the legitimacy of virtual internships
 - New questions arise like: Is this a reputable company? Are students getting an accurate view into what the professional world is like?
- The out of sight out of mind paradigm
 - How can you be sure students are getting the attention they need if they're not in a physical office?
- Adjusting the ways we measure a student's success
 - Since new skills are being learned, there needs to be a new way to assess them

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Signs of a Great Virtual Internship

Signs of a Great Virtual Internship

The Work

- Relevant to the student's major
 - Internships provide a unique look into potential careers and should give students an in-depth look at what their future career might be like
- Actual assignments and projects
 - Meaningful work that will show future employers students' experience level
- Expected hours/schedule
 - Is it structured in a way that's flexible, but still allows students to learn about working within deadlines?

Signs of a Great Virtual Internship

The Benefits to the Student

- Mentorship
 - The internship supervisor should have time to dedicate to the student and their professional development
- Build a professional network
 - Networking is a lifelong venture. The sooner students learn to make valuable connections, the better.
- Future references
 - Once students enter the job market, they need to be able to turn to supervisors from their internship as references to back up their credentials
- Chances for advancement
 - Ideally, the internship can transition into a full-time job after graduation



Signs of a Great Virtual Internship

The Virtual Environment

- Prevalent telecommuting
 - At least 25% of the workforce -- not just the intern -- should regularly work remotely
- Established method of digital communication
 - Should give students experience communicating with supervisors, co-workers, and clients in a professional way
 - Not just email (instant messaging, voice/video chat, project management tools, etc.)
- Ways to track remote workers' progress
 - Consider:
 - How deadlines are communicated
 - How daily tasks are organized
 - How feedback is provided



Signs of a Great Virtual Internship

Up-to-date Technology

- Project management software
 - Ex: Teamwork, Wrike, Asana, Trello, and BaseCamp
- Communication platforms
 - Instant messaging platforms
 - Video and web conferencing
- Goal tracking software
- Cloud storage





Appropriate Learning Objectives

- What makes for awesome virtual internship learning objectives?
 - Clarity, clarity, clarity
 - Standardized year after year
 - Measurable
 - Complements classroom learning
 - Transferrable to the workforce in the future

CR's Internship Learning Objectives

- Create quality blog posts for online outlets like Entrepreneur and Glassdoor
 - Intern will develop ideas and write 3 blogs a week
- Researching relevant trends in the HR and job search industry
- Managing multiple social media accounts
 - Intern will participate in Twitter chats on behalf of Come Recommended
 - Respond to followers in a way that accurately represents the brand
 - Post daily on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn as Heather and Come Recommended



Misconceptions About Virtual Internships

And what the truth really is

The Old Way of Thinking

- The organization must be an established, legitimate business or nonprofit, as evidenced by considerations such as a **PHYSICAL LOCATION**, website, history of offering paid employment, listed telephone number, tax ID number, etc.
 - The organization must agree to a site visit from a representative of the college.
- There are resources, **EQUIPMENT, AND FACILITIES** provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

Pulled from Michael True and Internship.net



The Truth

- Physical location doesn't matter in a virtual internship
 - No two employees of Come Recommended are ever working from the same place, yet we produce amazing work and have a family-like atmosphere
- Resources, equipment, and facilities need to be reframed from physical objects to digital tools that help interns complete their job



How Career Services Can Help

- Provide a syllabus that details the skills students are supposed to learn in a related class/major
- Create resources for students interested in virtual internships so they understand the differences compared to a traditional internship
- Prepare feedback surveys for students to complete at the beginning of the internship to gauge expectations, middle of the internship to check on progress, and end of the internship so organizations can make adjustments as needed



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Questions?

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