

Program  
Guide *(Beta)*:  
For Employers  
v.0.0.1

Better  
Internships  
for Creatives

**Never  
Not  
Creative**

[nevernotcreative.org](http://nevernotcreative.org)

**NEVER  
NOT  
BETTER  
INTER-  
SHIPS**

**We've heard stories of great internships all over the world. Unfortunately, we've also heard stories of terrible ones as well.**

**That's why we've put together this guide (or program template if you like) for you. No costs, no fees, we just want to see better internships.**

**If you're an employer looking to hire an intern use this guide to create or supplement your program.**

If you're an intern looking for an opportunity, you're in luck we've made a version of this document especially for you. You can find it [here](#)

**This guide has been developed by our collaborative team of educators, designers, leaders, lawyers and students.**

**Their multiple perspectives have helped to shape a guide / program template that delivers on a fair, transparent and ethical internship program.**

**There are lots of great reasons to take on an intern or run an internship program:**

Financial

**Contrary to many beliefs, an internship does not have to be a financial burden.**

Altruistic

**To help graduates get a foothold in the industry, to give back and to share knowledge.**

Finishing School  
**To bridge the gap  
between uni and work.**

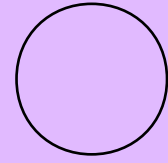
Sustainability  
**To improve the  
sustainability of  
the design industry  
by extending the  
pathways for  
emerging talent.**

# Experience

**To trial emerging designers without the commitment of offering them a job.**

# A Great Start

**For 'young studios it's the chance to experience being an employer without a long-term commitment.**



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



**Please feel free to follow the guide for your own internship program and use and / or adapt the resources to suit your needs. The forms should be completed by both the intern and the employee.**

**Within each form is a field to add the email address of your employer / intern. Be sure to include this information so that feedback around expectations and performance can be shared transparently.**

1

# WHAT TO EXPECT AS AN EMPLOYER

**Psst, hey you, over here.**  
Want to know what tips we give to interns in this step? Checkout our [Program Guide: For Interns](#) to get a feel for what it's like in their shoes.

**Congratulations. Inviting an intern into your world is a great way to give back to our industry and a great opportunity for you both.**

**For all intents and purposes, they should be treated as an employee – it will make it a better, more real experience for both sides – but in reality, they may need just a bit of help at the start...**

**Here are three ways you can make the best of the opportunity:**

# Have empathy – walk a few steps in their converse

Before the intern starts, think about involving the whole studio in an empathy-map or customer journey map exercise to imagine life in their shoes. Expect someone to not be in their natural habitat and probably feeling intimidated and overwhelmed.

Remember there are more of you than them — the sooner you can calm their nerves and make them feel comfortable, the better the experience will be for everyone.

Assure them everyone in the studio is happy to have them and will do their best to make your experience valuable.

Assure them of your expectations - they are not expected to churn out work immediately.

Do what you can to help them grasp the opportunity.

# Have patience – they're nervous

Nervousness can manifest itself in many ways. Your intern may appear stressed, or overawed, and may even appear overconfident.

Have patience, be prepared to take the lead and be prepared to repeat yourself a few times.

Prompt them to take notes or record instructions on their iPhones

Prompt them to ask questions and stress there are no wrong or dumb questions.

# Plan for the long haul

After the excitement of the first week, reality will set in that this is not a sprint.

Don't try to go it alone.

Make sure your intern has a buddy. Or give them a few buddies. Share the love.

Buddies work really well to give the intern experience across the whole of the studio.

One week with an account service buddy, one with a design buddy, one with a creative director buddy - you get the idea. It not only helps them settle their nerves (because they'll get to know everyone), it will deliver a spread of experiences.

# A few tips

Make sure your intern knows where the kitchen, the bathroom and the best lunch spot is.

Make sure you include your intern in any coffee runs (and not just as the coffee runner).

Be mindful, their budget may not extend to cafes and they've bought their lunch – let them know the best places to eat it (for example, a nearby park, the board room with others).

Be clear about the time clock of your studio – when to start, and especially when to stop (many might feel awkward about when to leave).

Run through your expectations (see the Joint Commitment form).

# A few extra ideas

Get to know them early: a few of you pitch in to buy them lunch on the first day, or better still everyone bring in a dish to share.

Welcome them warmly: perhaps give them their own keep cup on the first day as a welcome gift.

Make it as easy for them as possible: if it's not on your website, give the intern a list of your staff members and their titles - you could include a photo and list something they like to do outside work as a conversation starter.

Help them share their news: Tell them your elevator spiel – a brief description of your agency and the type of work you do. That way they can talk to their parents/friends/colleagues about their internship.



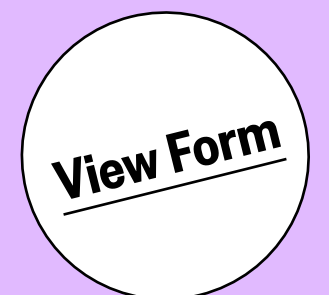
# 2

# PREP- ERATION FORM FOR EMPLOYERS

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**One of the most common reasons for a failed internship experience is a misalignment of expectations.**

**Don't worry, we've got your back. Fill out the prep form to share your expectations with your intern. To make sure you're all on the same page, ensure that they've also filled out theirs and sent it to you. With both points of view clear from both sides you're setting yourself up for the best possible experience.**



# 3 ONBOARDING: LOOKING AFTER YOUR INTERN ON THEIR FIRST DAY / WEEK

**Your new intern is in the building. You've got their schedule prepared, a small list of introductions to make and some induction meetings with a few key people that can help explain how things work around here. (Oh, you haven't? Quick! Get someone to take them for a coffee while you get yourself sorted).**

# Welcome them to the family

Ok, we're back. Like any first day or first couple of weeks, everything is new. The main thing, keep an eye out for them. If you're leaving the office, just let them know and give them someone else they can go to in your absence. This time at the beginning of the internship, or indeed any job, is when you want them to feel at home. You don't want them leaving and dreading coming back the next day.

As you introduce them to the team it's a good idea to share some of the expectations that the intern mentioned in their form. It shows to them that you read it and that also you're taking this seriously.

Their first week (or first 3 days) should be about making them feel comfortable. If there's anything going on in the office or outside as a team, then invite the intern along. You could plan something, or just try and get them an extra ticket to an event that some of the team are attending.

# Set the tone

Probably the biggest and most valuable moment that they'll remember from their internship is your first 1 on 1. Now, we're not saying you have to deliver your Braveheart speech or have your Jerry Maguire moment, or do your presidential acceptance speech... but this first 1 on 1 sit down with them will set the tone for the rest of their internship.

So what will you say?

Some start with the 'big motivator'. "This is the first day of the rest of your career. The opportunities you seize and the character you show in the next 12 weeks have the potential to set you up for greatness. Are you ready? Are you going to grab hold of this with both hands? Are you?"

Others may play it down with an 'ease them in' approach. "Ok, just remember, no-one's expecting too much from you. It takes years of experience to reach a top level in this industry. We all have to start somewhere and for you, it's at the bottom of the ladder in this internship. If you make a mistake, don't worry. If you need something explaining, or explaining again, that's ok. We're here to help you get through this."

Of course, the most important thing is that you're authentic and that you're you. There are pros and cons with all of the above. Do what's right for you, and based on your experience of them so far, what you think is right for them.

# Actively evaluate

Over the first 2 weeks, you'll be evaluating them. What are the early signs of their strengths and weaknesses? Are they better in a team situation? How do they handle being given a task to do on their own? Are they picking things up quickly or is it taking a while for things to sink in? Are they getting along with some people better than others?

This evaluation is going to help you make adjustments to the rest of the program so that you and they get the most out of the experience. Think about which project might be right to involve them in. Which team(s) they'd be best suited to work with. Who's working styles will be best suited to them. Are there people in your team that enjoy explaining things in-depth, or are there members of the team that are all about speed, quick-thinking and might be less tolerant of someone who's slower on the uptake?



And finally, think about you. Are there any bad habits that you know you have? Anything that you wouldn't want to pass on to someone just starting out? Are there any things that you wish you'd learned when you began your career? How can you create an experience that fills that gap for your intern?

Ok, good luck - see you in a few weeks time!

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# MID- PROGRAM ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS

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**So you've probably become a bit more accustomed to having an intern around the place now, hopefully, things are going well and the experience continues to be rewarding.**

**It's a good idea at this point to take a step back and make sure that you and your intern are getting the most out of the program. Things can get busy and it's easy to forget the things you outlined at the start.**

**Here are some tips and ideas for this stage in the internship, just to make sure things continue to tick along nicely.**

# Communicate

Keep up the talking with your intern, try and remember that even though they're hopefully doing a great job under your direction, they're probably new to most of the tasks you're giving them. It's important to try and check in constantly and make sure they're OK and know what they need to be doing.

Keeping up the engagement with them is also a great way of making sure that you're not in for any uncomfortable surprises when it comes to the end of the task you've set.

It's also just nice. Talk to them and make them feel at home.

# Get them in some meetings

If you haven't already, try and get your intern into a client or internal creative meeting. It's a great way for them to see how the teams deal with their business and their clients.

It's important though before this happens, you're clear on the meetings purpose and what you're expecting from them. If it's a strictly observe scenario, make sure they know that. Likewise, if you want them to give some input, then it's a good idea to let them know how that works before you get in there.

All meetings with clients are different, so choose a scenario that will work best and help the intern be prepared for it.

# Presenting work

Getting the intern to present ideas or work is a great way to integrate them in a job and gives them some amazing experience into the more daunting tasks working in agencies.

Remember it is daunting for most people and that they may be quite nervous.

Have a chat with them first about how to approach it, give them some pointers and maybe even discuss the work first before you show a wider group. Give them an advantage, don't try and catch them out.

Most of all, make them feel comfortable showing their work.

# Giving feedback

Giving feedback can be a daunting experience if you are not used to it. Likewise, the intern might find it quite challenging to be critiqued or asked to re-do a task.

Try to deliver the feedback in a way that doesn't come across as overtly negative and look for positive ways to get them to do what you need.

Asking why certain things were done and giving clear direction on how to change things is key to you getting the outcomes you want from their work. Make the feedback solutions based and positive.

Making sure the feedback is understood and that they have remembered it is important. Maybe you can ask them to repeat it back to you and the end of the session and suggest that they take notes.

Most important of all is to be calm and clear in your delivery of the feedback and respectful to the time and thought that they have put into a piece of work. Even if it's not right.



# Working as part of a team

Keeping in mind that in most cases, education requires you to work alone most of the time. This can mean that working to deadlines and as part of a team can be a new area for interns to navigate.

Make them feel valued as part of the team and make sure that they are contributing to the project and can see their efforts are worthwhile.

Making sure that they are clear on what they are doing and the job they need to do to support the team can help any frustrations later on. Giving them a direct report within the team means that there's always a communication channel for them to tap in to.

Make sure they are connected and not isolated when working in a team. Where possible try to involve them in all of the meetings, feedback sessions and reviews to help them understand the process in as much detail as possible.

# Downtime

Making sure there are some boundaries around free/downtime is important so that everyone knows where they stand.

It's highly likely that your intern will have some time on their hands during their time with you. Make sure that they are using this productively can save any frustrations or embarrassment on their behalf when they get told off for browsing Facebook.

Communication around this is key. Let them know what's acceptable and give them some pointers on what they could be doing in the downtime.

Setting a small internal project, encouraging them to work on something self-initiated or their own projects can mean they can still benefit from your advice and feedback, whilst getting to grips with how to manage their time.

# If things aren't great

Managing another person, especially someone with little to no experience can be hard work. Managing anyone can be hard work.

It's important that you keep communicating with your intern to see how they're doing, what they are enjoying and what they aren't and if need be how you can get the program back on track. Remember they may find it hard to speak up especially if they're feeling uncomfortable.

It's also important to keep talking to other members of your team and agency to get their advice on running the program. Share any concerns or problems and try to work through them with the support of others.

Hopefully, some talking and discussion can right any wrong paths before they cause too much damage.

# General tips

Keep talking to your intern, make sure they're ok and understand what to do

Make your direction and feedback clear and simple

Be respectful, even when things might be frustrating

Talk to your colleagues and get advice on managing the extra workload.

Keep referring to the internship plan to make sure you're ticking off the important things you and your intern discussed at the beginning of the program.

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MID-

PROGRAM

EMPLOYER

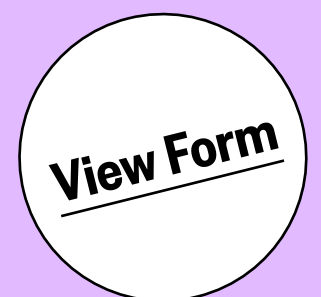
FEEDBACK

FORM

**Remember those expectations you shared with your intern before they started? Well how are they living up to them? How are you living up to theirs?**

**This is your chance to give feedback on your experience and to share clear, formalised feedback with your intern.**

**Fill out the form below and be sure to put your intern's email in so that they can see your answers. Be sure to ask them for a meeting to discuss the feedback.**



# 6

# THE FINISH LINE ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS

**Psst, hey you, over here.**

Want to know what tips we give to interns in this step?

Checkout our [Program](#)

[Guide: For Interns](#) to get a feel for what it's like in their shoes.

**Hey there. How's it feel? You've spent the last few months helping build the first steps of someone's career in our industry. That's a pretty big accomplishment, and a great way to give back.**



# Finishing up

With a couple of weeks left, are there any questions that you feel are unanswered?

Has the program met your expectations? Has the intern? Is there anything you can do to change that? Can you see any change in the intern between day 1 and now? What do you think they would say about the experience? Do you know their strengths and weaknesses? Can you tell them what to work on for the future? And is there anyone you can refer them to for future opportunities?

# Prepare them for what's next

As you push to the finish line, how can you leave your intern in the best possible shape, ready for their next steps in the industry?

Write a letter of reference for them. Explain what they achieved throughout the internship, how they worked with the team, what they gained exposure to and where you think they could thrive in the future. This will be a really valuable weapon in their armoury for the future, so take some time over it. If you're happy to, you could go one step further and write them a LinkedIn recommendation or even send the reference to another peer in the industry.

# Be honest

Sit down and go through the reference with them.

Have an honest chat. Be clear about what's gone well and where there's room for improvement. The more honest you can be, the better equipped they'll be for future positions and similar conversations. Listen to how they think the program has gone, and what they've achieved. Ask if there's anything they'd still like to get exposure to in their final weeks.

If you can make time for it, asking them to do a presentation for you or the team in their last week would be a great way to round off the experience.

# Send them off (In Style)

Finally, why not organise a leaving event. It could be a simple team get-together in the office. You could present them with a card, a book or something to remember the experience by.

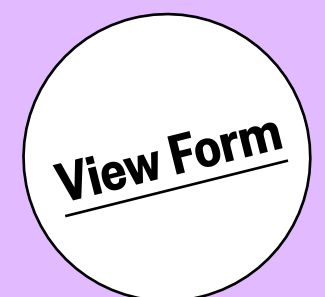
Share your contact details if you're happy to keep in touch with them and wish them all the best!

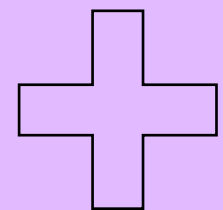
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POST-  
PROGRAM  
EMPLOYER  
FEEDBACK  
FORM

**And so... the time has come. Your internship is over. You've been working with and helping to develop another new talent into our industry. How did they do? How did you do? Has this been a rewarding experience?**

**Now's the time to reflect. Take stock of how your intern may have developed over the program. How would you compare them from day 1 to now? What feedback can you share with them that will help them to take the next step in their career?**





# MORE RESOURCES

**Download our Example Internship NDA\* and adapt it to your business.**

**Download our Example Internship Contract\* and get it signed before starting.**

\*Examples only. Please seek professional advice for your own purposes.



**Looking for more support, guidance or just want to find out a little more about NNC? Get in touch, we'd love to chat!**

**nevernotcreative.org**

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**hello@nevernotcreative.org**

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A massive thank you to everyone involved in putting this program together. This guide has been developed by our collaborative team of educators, designers, leaders, lawyers and students. Their multiple perspectives have helped to shape a guide / program template that delivers on a fair, transparent and ethical internship program. You can find out more about the team over on [our website](#).