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**BODY:**

Do students get anything out of summer intern jobs at agencies, advertisers, media companies or supplier businesses? Do the well-meaning people who provide these opportunities get much in return?

A mini-survey of senior ad majors here at Chapel Hill suggests that the experience on both sides can be anything from stimulating to frustrating.

One student changed his course schedule in the fall because an internship showed him a hole in his education. But another came back to school feeling that she'd wasted her time. Experiences in between ranged from a new career interest in broadcasting for one student who'd been turned on by what she saw, to a new career interest for another who realized that she wasn't cut out for agency account work.

Some students, sadly, learned little, positive or negative.

As a former advertiser who always hired summer interns, I can tell you that employers' experiences vary, too.

Some interns we were sorry to lose. Others . . . well, let's just say that we'd give them less than a rave if they put us down as a reference.

What made the difference? Is there some way students and employers can make sure that an internship is a worthwhile experience on both sides?

Yes. Here's a summary of the advice our UNC students had for *interns*:

*Be prepared.* Read up on the company before you get there. Know something about an advertiser's products and markets, or an agency's clients or whatever else is critical to your employer's growth and profitability. Talk to anyone else from your school who's worked for this company before. One clever idea: Write your "What I learned this summer" report before you start the job, and make sure you do learn all you'd hoped you would.

*Don't wait for work to be assigned.* When you arrive on the job, find out what needs to be done and volunteer to do it. Don't be a nuisance, but don't be a wallflower, either. Ask questions. Ask to be included in meetings. Get to know the professionals around you; learn what they do, and help all you can.

*Don't get discouraged.* If there's dumb work to be done, do it with a smile, quickly and well. Be interested in everyone. Even in the worst situation, there's a lesson: How to do things better someday when it's your turn.

And here's what the students said to *employers*:

*Pay the intern.* Even if it's only the minimum wage. Free internships are too often perceived on both sides as worth what they cost.

Putting things on a businesslike basis raises everyone's expectations.

*Be prepared.* "Hey, Sid, the intern's here. Got anything for her to do?" That's every intern's nightmare. Plan the intern's duties. Assign a mentor, if possible. Try to know something about the intern's interests and abilities in advance, so you can have him or her doing useful work from the beginning.

*Involve the intern.* Remember to include him or her in meetings with media reps, suppliers, clients or the agency. The intern will learn something; but you might, too, if you take the time later to find out how the meeting looked to innocent eyes.

*Set standards.* Your intern is a budding professional. Don't accept work you wouldn't accept from your permanent staff, but explain carefully (and patiently) what you'll expect next time. Of course internships are worthwhile. But the survey's lesson is that they're most valuable when students and employers work to make them so.