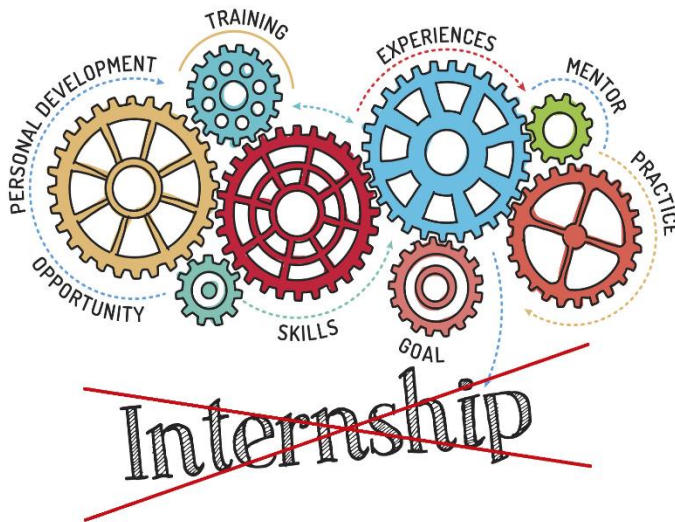


Attention Gen Z'ers – Has Your Internship Been Cancelled Due to COVID-19? What's Next?

By: Kathy Freeman Godfrey
April 13th, 2020

First, the good news: The current crisis won't last forever. Employers need talented, young Gen Z'ers to grow their businesses. So what are some steps you can take if you no longer have an internship?



This advice stems from our recruiting work for over 25 years in executive search where we have intersected thousands of talented senior-level leaders for positions across the financial services sector. When interviewing accomplished candidates for our clients' critical roles, we always ask to hear their career stories, dating back to college. What we hear time and time again is how they forged their paths and drove results across a multitude of obstacles. Taking a positive and proactive outlook in the face of a crisis can make the difference between building an average career for yourself or an awesome one!

Find A Mentor

Mentors are among the most valuable allies you can have in the business world.

They can offer advice, advance your career, and be a confidante on your journey. You may be thinking, "Why would anyone choose to spend time helping someone just starting their career?" Because successful people like to share their wisdom, both success and failures, and be inspirational leaders. They are simply paying it forward. It's quite possible that your prospective mentor also had a mentor earlier on in their career. Some employers also require their employees to contribute to the community; mentoring can often satisfy that requirement.

When seeking out a mentor, you should set goals. Choose the industry you're most passionate about and identify functional areas that you would like to learn more about. You might, for example, select three areas of interest. For the investment industry, it could be sales, investments, or operations. For the viticulture industry, it could be winemaking, sales, or farming techniques.

Then, ask your mentor if he or she is willing to let you shadow them at work when things return to normal or join them on some of their calls. Ask them for homework assignments, too. That gives your mentor an opportunity to see you in action and provide direction and feedback.

Where Should You Look For A Mentor?

One good starting point in your search for a mentor is at the firm that cancelled your internship.

They may have connections and/or be willing to open doors for you. The internship hiring manager may be very amenable to helping, since he or she is likely to be empathetic about the sudden loss of your opportunity.

Another invaluable resource is LinkedIn. It is extremely useful in uncovering someone who works at a company you are interested in or in a function that you'd like to learn more about. You can easily reach out with LinkedIn InMail. You should craft a concise, compelling message with a clear call-to-action.

LinkedIn also has very powerful search tools to identify potential mentors by industry, geography, and title.

Asking your college counselor or professors for help is another good idea. Particularly now, counselors and professors may be willing to source opportunities for their students through their network. And, don't underestimate the value of your parents' network. Many internships in the corporate world are filled by word-of-mouth by parents trying to help their college-age children get ahead. If your parents aren't in the field you are interested in, they may still have connections.



Assessment Testing & Training

Assessment testing as well as training are effective ways to develop skills, understand your strengths, and impress future employers.

Assessment testing can be a very insightful tool. Firms will often do assessment tests to understand the aptitude and learning styles of their new hire. If you're not with a firm yet, it's relatively easy to find and take some online assessment tests. Some examples include [Myers Briggs](#), [Predictive Index](#), or [Profile XT](#). While there may be a cost involved, you may also be able to leverage a corporate mentor to gain access to a test at a reduced cost through your mentor's company. Don't hesitate to ask.

An assessment test will help you gain a better sense of your innate strengths and passions. Identifying the building blocks of your personal value proposition to employers will only accelerate your success. When the time comes for post-college interviews, your ability to speak to your strengths and weaknesses insightfully and how you think they correlate with your career passions will undoubtedly set you apart from the masses of graduates you are competing against.

Training is also another great way to get employers interested in you.

Like assessment tests, training comes in a multiplicity of forms. To name just a few, there is sales training, technical training, managerial training, and training in customer relationship management, among many other disciplines. There are many books, webinars, and podcasts that offer training and are accessible online.

Credentials can also be obtained by successfully finishing certification programs. The more credentials on your resume, the more attractive hire you are.

From an employer's perspective, think about how impressive it would be if someone who lost their internship took the initiative to take various assessment tests or embark upon their own career development?

The Bottom Line

The loss of an internship is unfortunate, but it should not stop your momentum. You can take the steps above to gain valuable industry knowledge and expertise.

So, when you graduate, and an interviewer asks about your internship – or why you didn't have one – now you don't have to blame COVID-19. You can instead show them the truly motivated person you are and how you were able to pivot and come up with creative solutions to offset the obstacles in front of you!

About Kathy Freeman Company

[Kathy Freeman Company](#) is a national, retained, executive search firm that addresses critical talent needs across the investment industry.