Employer Guide for Remote Internships

Working remotely is a trend that has been on the upswing in recent years and is also being implemented by employers for students creating remote internships. This internship option offers geographical flexibility, as there is no required commute to the workplace or even that the intern is in the same state as the employer. Remote internships also offer time flexibility for students and their personal schedules. To make a remote internship as meaningful as possible there needs to be a few key aspects put in place by the employer, below are suggestions for creating a remote internship program.

Structure
- Similar to an in-person internship, remote internships should have a duration where the intern can have a purposeful role in the company.
    - A minimum recommendation is at least 6 weeks, with at least 10 hours of work a week.
- The interns should still go through an interview process prior to being hired to make sure they will be a good fit for the company and the company is for them as well.
- Once the intern has been hired, there should be a structured onboarding process
    - This should include organizational and training material that needs to be covered and the interns should have access to these documents for reference (if applicable).
    - There should be (virtual) introductions to the other employees they may be working with or they can ask questions to.
    - It is also suggested that at the beginning of their internship, the intern is provided a space to share their goals for their internship as well as their professional ambitions.
- Projects assigned to the interns should have clear and attainable goals.
    - Overall end goals for the projects should be discussed as well as sub goals tasks should be outlined with the intern to work through the project process.
        - Additionally, letting the intern know the connection between their project and what it is contributing to for the organization can be beneficial to give some perspective for the intern.
    - Projects are a chance for interns to work independently and think through problems and processes on their own, knowing that they can reach out to you will any questions can give them the confidence they need to build their independent working skills.
    - Example Remote Project Ideas:
        - *Health Science Intern Project: create personalized exercise programs for specific patient populations or demographics*
        - *Sports Management Intern Project: Targeted marketing or fundraising project for a sports organization*

- Feedback is an essential component of the internship experience, probably even more so in remote internships.
    - Constructive criticism on projects completed can help the intern develop their skills related to their particular career path and learning how to implement requested changes can be a valuable learning experience.
    - One effective way to offer feedback on the interns' overall performance is to have the intern set goals at the beginning of the internship, actions they plan to do to reach those goals, and then at the end of the internship have them complete a self-evaluation.
    - The intern's self-evaluation should be discussed with their supervisor along with the supervisor's evaluation of the intern in a one-on-one meeting. They can then talk about what the intern did well, what they can improve on, and any future goals the intern should set.

Communication
- As with in-person internships, clear communication is essential for any functioning team, but it is even more important with remote internships because there is less face to face contact.
    - Communication standards should be in place and discussed with the intern on their first day.
    - Guidelines should include which communication method to use for various circumstances *(i.e. email chat for questions, formal emails for reports, etc.*) as well as letting the intern know what communication platforms, they need to become familiar with.
- It is recommended to have at least one weekly video meeting to check-in.
    - During this meeting you can discuss project progress, problems that have arisen, or questions the intern may have.
- Encourage the intern to reach out with any questions or ideas they may have for their projects.
- An additional consideration for communications between employers and interns is establishing response times for any non-instant communication methods
    - Examples:
        - The intern may be expected to reply within 48 hours of receiving an email.
        - The intern should expect to hear back from their employer via email within 48 hours of sending the message

Additional Opportunities
- To create the most meaningful remote experience possible for their interns, employers may consider providing career exploration or mentoring resources.
- Weekly "lunch" meetings where an employee shares their experiences with the intern(s) is an option to contribute to career exploration.
- Connecting the intern to a mentor within the organization at the start of their internship is another resource that the intern can go to with questions about their internship as well as for future career inquiries and decisions.