

10 BEST REASONS TO INTERN AT A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

- 1. To build a variety of skills. The nonprofit sector loves a generalist.** With fewer staff slots than necessary for the work to be done, nonprofits look to interns to multi-task. You may find that your responsibilities include more than just one function. You will build a variety of business and personal skills with multiple responsibilities. Because of that, nonprofits offer the opportunity for interns to learn new skills and gain experience in areas they have yet to tackle.
- 2. For faster career development.** While three corporate employees may be assigned to one project, an intern in a non-profit may find him/herself assigned to three projects. This can lead to faster career development and unparalleled growth opportunities that exist for those looking to grow quickly.
- 3. For more direct access to decision-makers.** Employees at large for-profit corporations rarely get to interact with the top brass, either to show their stuff, learn from the best, or simply get reinvigorated on a regular basis. Not so at nonprofits. The structures are often less hierarchical and interns at nonprofits can take advantage of a smaller internal community.
- 4. For real world experience.** Interning for a nonprofit organization often provides a great deal of practical experience, such as: presenting plans to a board, working with the media, evaluating important projects, and supervising or collaborating with other bright, motivated people.
- 5. To pursue your personal passions.** Why limit your deepest personal interests to your “spare time?” Why not make your personal passions the center of your career? If you love the arts, intern for a museum or symphony. If you feel a strong connection to wildlife or the oceans, intern in conservation. If you love helping people, pick healthcare, education or international relief. Whatever moves you the most, you can be sure there are nonprofits devoted to the same passion.
- 6. Doing what you love will keep you motivated.** Ultimately, if you love what you are doing, it won't feel like work. If you align your internship with something you are passionate about, which may be easier to do at a non-profit (see #5 above), your performance on the internship will be better since you will be energized and motivated by your passion.
- 7. To help change things for the better.** Interning in the nonprofit sector is entirely about improving peoples' lives, protecting the planet, supporting the arts, caring for seniors, or educating young people. In a non-profit organization, you are “paid” by the satisfaction of doing something good for the world's benefit, whether it is saving lives, reducing poverty, making education affordable, bringing enrichment opportunities to children, or some other worthy cause. You know you've picked the right career when people you don't even know thank you for your effort.
- 8. To meet talented and passionate people.** Nonprofits employ interesting people. It is a common misconception that nonprofits have to settle for only those employees willing to work long hours for low pay. Nonprofits often get to choose between the best and the brightest candidates and can afford to be picky about who they choose to employ. While interning for a non-profit, you will have the opportunity to surround yourself with some of the most amazing people you will ever know. One way of improving yourself is to seek the company of people who are the best in the world. Get to know the people who sit on the organization's Board of Directors because they share the same goals and often bridge the gap to the for-profit world.
- 9. To meet dedicated people who share your interests.** Interning in the nonprofit sector brings you in daily contact with people who are there for the same reasons you are - to make a difference. Management isn't focused on stock prices or corporate takeovers; they are focused on achieving a mission that is measured by people educated, lives saved, art created, habitats protected, or diseases cured. From the “corner office” to staff in the field, nonprofit organizations are teams in the best sense of the word - people dedicated to a mission.
- 10. Because every day is a surprise.** Working or interning in the nonprofit sector is rarely a routine task. One day you could be helping with a fundraising event and the next you may be designing a website or recruiting volunteers. The benefit to this array of responsibilities is that they will strengthen your resume but more importantly, will assist you in narrowing down your desired career path.

(Adapted from several non-profit and internship sources.)

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