

A common complaint from placement students and interns is that sometimes it can be difficult to know exactly what it is that employers want. With the importance of placements and internships increasing it makes it more important than ever to know how to make them a success.

As Maria Floud, Grant Thornton's Graduate Recruitment Manager says *"The whole industry is moving towards more and more interns and less hiring later, which means that you need to know how to make the most of your internship."*

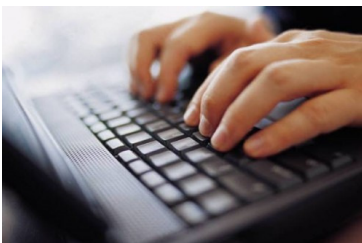
So how do you do that exactly? We asked some leading recruiters what makes them happy.



### Remember: You've Got A Foot In The Door... You're Not Through Yet

It's no secret that employers view placement schemes and internships as a way of recruiting candidates for full-time, permanent positions and many interns have found themselves being offered a job at the end of their placement or internship, but it's essential that you don't assume the job is in the bag.

*"You do find that in some areas students feel that because they're on the internship programme that they'll automatically get a job and that's not always the case,"* says Floud. *"From an employer's point of view we want to see students who have a focus, where they understand the role and have knowledge about the company. When we do see someone with that focus, who knows where they want to be and who's done their homework then they really stand out."*



### Do Some Essential Pre-Placement Homework

It's all very well saying that students should be prepared before their placement or internship starts, but what does that actually mean? What homework should you do? *"What I recommend is that students should keep an eye on the company's website before they arrive,"* says Richard Hough, Graduate Recruitment Partner for international law firm Allen & Overy.

*"Most companies have detailed websites that help with applications but also give you information on the business of the firm, the numbers of offices, numbers of lawyers, recent deals we've worked on. If you're going to hit the ground running, which is what we're looking for, you would need to be up to speed on this. All students should also keep an eye on current affairs and the industry press. We're not going to test you on it but having a working knowledge of what's going on will help."*

### Don't Think You're Too Good To Get Stuck In

One of the reasons that employers pay a premium for people with degrees (on an hourly rate people who have been to uni earn 47% more than those who haven't) is because they have valuable skills that can help their organisations. Consequently, you should be confident that you've got something to offer, but it's vital you don't let that confidence become arrogance.

*"The worst students on placement are the ones who say, 'I'm an undergraduate, I don't believe I should be doing that.'" With the best will in the world, a placement is not about making the coffee; you have to get stuck in because you just don't know where it's going to lead,"* says John Morewood, Senior Manager for Graduate Recruitment at HSBC.

Morewood has a special tip he gives to all of his interns to help them stay grounded. *“I say to my guys the key thing is to have an insatiable curiosity into what is going on around you, to get involved and not sit back waiting for it to happen for you.”*

### Be Professional Throughout Your Placement

The switch between a university lifestyle and a work lifestyle can be brutal, but if you want to be successful you need to act and look professional. That doesn't just mean wearing smart clothes and not smelling of beer, according to **Josephine Walton, who is responsible for KPMG's graduate campaigns and on-campus communication.**

*“Being professional is about lots of common sense things, like having excellent time-keeping and not making too many personal phone calls, but it's also about realising that while you're with us you are a representative of the company and you should behave the way your colleagues and our clients would expect. The worst example of unprofessional behaviour we had was a student laughing at clients and that is clearly unacceptable.”*

### Work Hard But Don't Forget To Enjoy Yourself

Just to prove that employers aren't all about the nasty side of business, there were a good number who responded that they're really keen that students have a positive and enjoyable experience on their placement or internship. No one wants employees who are 100% about work, so socialising with your new colleagues is fun and shows that you're not a robot.

*“We work hard to make the placements enjoyable and useful,”* says Richard Hough. *“There is always a social aspect to the schemes, things like boat trips down the river, drinks in our bar, or treasure hunts around the city. The reason for that is that we're looking for people who get stuck in but at the end of the day one of the most important parts of working in a law firm is team-working and enjoying that.”*



#### 5 ways to ensure you have a great first day...

- 1 Get there early.** A bit of an obvious one, but allow yourself plenty of time and make sure you know where you're going and who to ask for.
- 2 Take a pad of paper & pen.** Write down people's names and what they do plus any other useful information you pick up.
- 3 Ask questions.** Don't be afraid to ask any questions. Questions like “How long do we get for lunch?” should probably be avoided though!
- 4 Be sociable.** If after-work drinks are an option, try and make it along to show you're keen to become part of the team.
- 5 Be patient.** The first week or two is likely to be spent doing a lot of listening and not much else, so be patient. The work will come.

For more expert guides like this, visit [www.RateMyPlacement.co.uk](http://www.RateMyPlacement.co.uk).

The UK's premier website for students, universities and employers involved in work placements and internships