

THE BASICS

Differences ~ School vs. Business: The first thing to remember is that while you are in school, *you* are the paying student (client); everything about school is organized to serve and give you an education. In a business or organization, you are the one doing the serving. So the role is now reversed. You will be learning, but as a part of the organization ~ not as the “client” like you are when you are in school. The organization’s first priority is almost always to serve and please its customers, to get its work done (meet deadlines), etc. Your learning experience has to take a “back seat” to those purposes. One of the most important things you may learn is that the customer comes first. You may experience how schedules can change with short notice, that new tasks may appear, that people may be pulled off one job to do another ~ many times because of the needs (and sometimes, the demands) of the organization’s clients. Recognize this and cooperate ~ pitch in and help when and where you can.

Dress: Before you start your internship, you should be given specific information about how you are expected to dress. If not, ask! Note these expectations and abide by them. This can be very important in some situations, as a business can lose customers (or sales) if they are put off by an intern’s attire. In other situations, it may not matter ~ or, indeed, you may have to dress ‘rougher’ than you usually do (farm work, outdoor internships, etc.). It’s not a matter of right or wrong, it’s what the organization has found works in their situation, and what their policies state. Cooperate gladly.

Timeliness: This is very important. Be on time and meet all other time issues that you’re aware of (lunch breaks, ending time, etc.). “Time is money” is an old saying, and you may well cost the organization more of their time and money than they committed to if you’re careless with time. Transportation to and from your internship is your responsibility in most cases, so make sure that you have worked out solid arrangements that will allow you to be on time. Plan ahead to so that you meet deadlines and adhere to company time policies. If you are running late, call in.

Behavior: Be observant; you will quickly gauge the standards of behavior in the organization. Try to meet and exceed standards of others around you. Some common-sense areas to consider:

- ◆ Manners ~ *Please; thank you; excuse me; I beg your pardon, I didn’t hear you ...* (instead of what? huh?) are all examples of being polite ... please remember them.
- ◆ When called upon, answering with a *yes* is more professional than a *yeah* or a *what*.
- ◆ Let others enter/exit first.
- ◆ Smile and look at people while talking (especially at customers) ~ preferably in their eyes.
- ◆ Do not put your feet on things, and do not eat, drink, or chew gum except in appropriate places.
- ◆ Do not play music or wear headphones or earphones.

TRISKELES FOUNDATION
Youth Experiential Learning Program (YELP)
Fundamentals "While on the Job"

Work Ethic: This basically means understanding the quality and quantity standards of the organization and meeting them. "Anything worth doing is worth doing well" is the adage here. Answering the phone, making change, painting a set for a movie, doing the extra task that needs to get done; you can chose to do it well or half-heartedly. You know the right choice here! Be enthusiastic. Don't wait to be told if you see something that clearly needs doing. Imagine if this were *your* business and *your* livelihood depending on its success.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

To Learn While You Work: You are at your internship to learn through your experiences. Remember, this is your choice. You should be a help to the organization, and it should teach you. This means that your mentor(s) will take time to explain things to you, show you how the organization work, give you feedback, etc. Of course, they still have to run their business first, so be patient. Let the relationship develop; help it develop. Ask questions if you don't understand. Communication is part of learning. You should be told everything that you need to know to understand the work. Try not to get upset if individuals seem busy with other things; give it time. Make sure that you are given opportunities to learn and that you get answers. The mentor has agreed to give interns different learning opportunities. If you stuck doing one repetitive job too long ~ like filing, ask politely for other opportunities. Call YELP support staff if that does not work. Take responsibility for your own learning by talking to co-workers where appropriate. Ask to go to meetings and other events, because they are learning opportunities.

To Be Supported and Respected: Your mentor has agreed to make this as positive an experience for you as possible, and that means, among other things, supporting you and treating you with respect. You should generally feel that you are valuable and that mentors are interested in you and your learning experience. You should feel that you are respected and that your strengths are noticed. But this is a professional relationship; you do not need to be 'friends' with everyone. Don't look for friends, and don't seek therapy or counseling for personal problems ~ get those at home or in school. You may not have too much in common with some individuals, but you can learn from everyone.

To Be Safe Physically and Personally: You should never be placed in a situation where you are in physical or emotional danger. Someone qualified should operate machinery or equipment that is beyond your skill level. Hazardous materials or chemicals should be avoided. Never allow yourself to get into a situation where you feel unsafe ~ working alone in a space with someone you're not sure of, riding in a vehicle with an unsafe driver, etc. You can say NO in a situation like this! Inappropriate personal questions, contact, off-color jokes, etc. are not acceptable. You can say something like, "Excuse me, I don't like that," and then tell someone in your support network about the incident right away.