**HOSTING REMOTE INTERNSHIPS**

Internships are incredibly valuable for the young people who take advantage of them. At the same time, internship programs strengthen our talent pipeline, creating connections and building loyalty to businesses and the region overall. In addition, internships provide a cost-saving solution to maintaining a business’s capacity and productivity, even when they have to reduce staff due to financial constraints, like we saw during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Like every other aspect of our life, Covid-19 has changed the way we do business and approach employment. Many companies have moved to remote work. This shift to a virtual office does not mean that your company needs to take its internship program offline or pause on recruiting/hiring interns.

These are challenging and uncertain times for everyone, but recent college graduates who are entering the workforce are feeling this uncertainty even more. Many businesses are deciding whether it is still feasible to bring on interns. We are encouraging businesses to move forward with placing interns if there is still the financial ability to do so. Young people are eager to work and contribute, and employers should find ways to support interns and maximize their time at the organization, even if that happens remotely.

Even after the worst of the pandemic is over and we see a return to offices, remote internships could be a great opportunity to provide students with meaningful work without common barriers like transportation or available desk space. If done right, students and employers can still have a great experience.

Below are some tips, strategies, and resources for transitioning to remote internship programs.

**Things to consider before bringing on a virtual intern**

* Budget: Do you have the financial capacity to continue to offer *paid* internships? How many are you able to afford?
* Technology capacity: Are you able to provide computers and any other technology or supplies that an intern will require to do their work?
* Staff/supervisory capacity: Are staff willing and able to take on remote supervision of interns?
* Workload: Do you have enough work and projects to keep an intern busy and provide them with a meaningful work experience?
* Timeframe: Set a deadline to decide whether or not you’re moving forward with your program and stick to that – students are dealing with a lot of ambiguity so having a decision made early is really helpful to them.

*Tools and Templates: Considering a Virtual Internship*

[Creative Ways to Make Your Virtual Internship a Success](https://learn.joinhandshake.com/employers/creative-ways-to-make-your-virtual-internship-a-success/)

**Recruiting and Hiring**

*Virtual Recruitment Tips*

* Be upfront on the job description/posting that the internship opportunity is remote
* Recruit via online platforms – college/university job boards, Handshake, Indeed, etc.
* Leverage your network and relationships to spread the word

*Virtual Interview Tips*

* Provide clear communication and instructions just like you would for an in-person interview
* Use an accessible and user-friendly platform like Zoom, Google, or Teams
* Meet with your internal hiring team prior to the interview to come up with a plan and order of questions. Since you won’t be in the room together, it’s harder to pick up on body language and visual cues so you’ll need to have a bit more structure in place than you might for an in-person interview

*Virtual Recruiting Events/Job Fairs*

* There are many options for hosting virtual career fairs, including paid platforms designed for this exact purpose, Zoom, and even Facebook
* Consider working with a target population – such as graduates from the Detroit Promise scholarship program – to ensure you have an engaged and interested audience

*Tools and Templates: Virtual Recruiting and Hiring*

[Virtual Recruiting Resources](https://yello.co/blog/virtual-recruiting-resources-coronavirus/)

[Virtual Recruiting](https://harver.com/blog/virtual-recruiting/)

[6 Tips for Hosting Successful Virtual Job Interviews](https://www.brazen.com/resources/6-tips-for-hosting-successful-video-job-interviews)

[How to Conduct a Virtual Interview](https://www.smartrecruiters.com/blog/how-to-conduct-a-virtual-interview/)

[How to Host a Virtual Hiring Event](https://info.recruitics.com/blog/how-to-host-a-virtual-hiring-event)

[GVSU Career Center COVID 19 Employer Resources](https://www.gvsu.edu/careers/covid-19-employer-resources-252.htm)

**Onboarding**

*Supplies and Technology*

* The general rule of thumb here is that if you planned on providing supplies in the office (e.g. a laptop, wifi hotspot, or a cell phone reimbursement), you should plan on providing these by mail, delivery, or pick-up for your interns as well. There are equity concerns with limiting opportunities to those students with access to technology.

*Preparing for Their Start Date*

* Just like for in-person internships, prior to their start date, ensure they have access to their email address, all necessary files, Teams or Zoom software for collaborating, etc.
* Consider using an online folder (Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) to house the onboarding documents, employee handbook, contact list, etc. for the intern to read prior to the first day.

*First Day and Week*

* The interns’ supervisor should communicate with them the best way to contact their supervisor and other teammates, expectations around daily/weekly check-ins, and scheduling/time management.
* Schedule a coffee or cocktail hour with new hires and their teammates so that they can get to know one another; building rapport and connection with your team is harder in a virtual setting, so the company should facilitate this as much as possible.
* Schedule virtual one-on-ones or small group meetings with team members and other key departments.
* Assign clear, tangible projects that interns can take on independently or with minimal supervision.

*Tools and Templates: Virtual Onboarding*

[Virtual Onboarding for Remote Workers](https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/virtual-onboarding-remote-workers.aspx)

[Steps to Creating a Virtual Onboarding Program](https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/onboarding/2020/steps-to-creating-virtual-onboarding-program)

[Virtual Onboarding Best Practices](https://enterprisersproject.com/article/2020/4/virtual-onboarding-best-practices)

**Internship Experience and Teambuilding**

* Team coffees, lunches, or happy hours are great ways to stay connected and facilitate team-building, even without the office culture that traditional internships benefit from. It is essential to at least partially facilitate these spaces. Consider using facilitation tools like [Liberating Structures](http://www.liberatingstructures.com/ls-menu/) to ensure everyone gets a chance to participate in ways that are comfortable and less intimidating.
* If you are hiring multiple interns, introduce them and encourage to get to know one another and check in regularly, even if they’re working across departments.
* The onus of building a team culture should be on the team itself, not HR.
* Use the virtual landscape to provide professional development opportunities. Even if you didn’t traditionally have a budget to send interns to conferences or trainings, many are now being offered virtually for free or discounted prices. Another low-cost option is for staff members to work with interns to practice their video interview skills.
* If possible, provide your interns with subscriptions to learning platforms such as Udemy or LinkedinLearning.
* Invite interns to join Employee Resource Groups and other committees.

*Tools and Templates: Internship Experience*

[Best Practices for Supporting Students Remotely](https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/best-practices/best-practices-for-supporting-students-remotely/)

[Best Practices for Creating a Successful Virtual Internship](https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/blog/post/best-practices-for-creating-a-successful-virtual-internship)

*Tools and Templates: Teambuilding*

[Jackbox.tv](https://jackbox.tv/) – Games

[Orglynx.com](https://www.orglynx.com/) – Create Scavenger Hunt/Games

[Skribbl.io](https://skribbl.io/) – Virtual Gaming Opportunities

[Liberating Structures-](http://www.liberatingstructures.com/ls-menu/) Ensure everyone’s voice is heard, seen, respected

[Civilla-](https://www.civilla.com/newsletter) Learn from a Detroit design firm’s daily and weekly team rituals to stay connected and on track

[Puzzlebreak](https://www.puzzlebreak.us/virtual-teambuilding) – Virtual escape rooms and teambuilding

**Technology Tools and Programs**

[Handshake](https://www.joinhandshake.com/): Handshake is the place employers hire college students and new grads.

[Braven](https://bebraven.org/): The mission of Braven is to empower promising, underrepresented young people—first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color—with the skills, confidence, experiences and networks necessary to transition from college to strong first jobs, which lead to meaningful careers and lives of impact.

[Global Detroit](https://globaldetroitmi.org/) – For connecting with international talent in Michigan. Contact Guiqiu Wang (guiqiu@globaldetroitmi.org)

[Confluence](https://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence): Confluence is your remote-friendly team workspace where knowledge and collaboration meet.

*Virtual Meetings*

* Zoom
* Microsoft Teams
* Google Hangouts
* WebEx

*Communication Tools*

* Slack
* Microsoft Teams

*Project Management*

* Asana
* Basecamp
* Trello
* Monday
* Miro
* Google docs

*File Sharing*

* Dropbox
* Google Drive
* Microsoft OneDrive

**Other options if you can’t bring on an intern**

* If you need to cancel internships, consider doing a mentorship/training program where a cohort of students are able to get mentored by people in your business/network and receive access to training and development opportunities. This should be less of a time commitment – for both the students and the mentors – than a traditional internship opportunity.
* Offer micro-internships (short-term, flexible, online opportunities) or finite, one-off projects that students can complete. These are more cost-effective than traditional internships but still beneficial to employers – resulting in deliverables such as a completed project or report – and to students – offering valuable work experience and resume-builders.

**Webinars and Trainings**

[American Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives – Supporting Virtual Internships](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvqnv7n0U_s&feature=youtu.be)

Mike Slocum, Executive Director of Indiana INTERNnet at the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, will discuss the tools they are providing for employers to take internships virtual and the ways they have surveyed and engaged the business and education communities in these efforts.

[American Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives – Taking Job and Career Fairs Virtual](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFM7h6UU5dU)

Kate Lee of the South Bend Regional Chamber (Ind.) and Kent Ballard of the Huntsville/Madison Chamber of Commerce (Ala.) shared how they have pivoted from in-person career fairs to virtual events. The group split into two breakout rooms to continue the conversation. You can listen to those breakout conversations [**here**](https://secure.acce.org/clientuploads/Divisions/Education%20Attainment/VirtualCareerFairs_BreakoutRoom1.mp3)and [**here**](https://secure.acce.org/clientuploads/Divisions/Education%20Attainment/VirtualCareerFairs_BreakoutRoom2.mp3).

[Grand Valley State University Career Center – Taking Your Internship Virtual](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVYrIBkC5wk&feature=youtu.be)

[Young, Smart, & Local – Talent in the Age of Covid-19](https://vimeo.com/424381537)

[Virtual Liberating Structures: An Introduction to Online Interactions](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-liberating-structures-an-introduction-to-online-interactions-tickets-99524719114) – Free Webinar and [Google Slide Deck](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1SiTnaqjcoAYsCEXkWU_1T9Jx2yEUTj4W2H3b96w8X0Q/edit#slide=id.g8174157ba3_0_264)

[Personal Branding in a Virtual World](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/u5B4Ib39-mg3E9fBuASDVqN7W9S9Kf2s2yUfr_oIzxyzVHQLMVCjZ7EUZuTCEM2BtNxXV7i6MagpJOQp?startTime=1587580958000&_x_zm_rtaid=D50RvTowQV-rQCSx84bkbQ.1589393095004.54a42c01ee4740a2091c942ff0b0daa4&_x_zm_rhtaid=282) – Recorded Zoom Seminar

[Putting Your Best Face Forward in a Virtual Setting](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/vpMscL2vqGg3HIfDsQSDV_F8W43rfP2s0HAcqaJexR3gB3dWYwWjNLIWNOruxeVmLa11VOgLZrvRLYAq?startTime=1588186401000&_x_zm_rtaid=D50RvTowQV-rQCSx84bkbQ.1589393095004.54a42c01ee4740a2091c942ff0b0daa4&_x_zm_rhtaid=282) – Recorded Zoom Seminar

**Related Reading**

[A Majority of Students Say Companies are Unresponsive to Job Applications](https://diverseeducation.com/article/175135/)

[Microsoft Takes Internships Online](https://www.aspeninstitute.org/of-interest/microsoft-takes-internships-online/)

[Student’s Internships are Disappearing. Can Virtual Models Replace Them?](https://www.chronicle.com/article/Students-Internships-Are/248763?cid=wcontentlist)

[Tips for Summer Programming During Remote Internships](https://www.rightplace.org/blog/tips-for-summer-programming-during-remote-internships)

**Student Stories**

Let’s Detroit [5 Tips for Starting a Job During COVID-19](https://letsdetroit.com/5-tips-for-starting-a-job-during-covid-19/)

Let’s Detroit [Student Reflection on Remote Internship at Rivian](https://letsdetroit.com/lets-detroit-2020-remote-internship-diary-electric-car-lover-interns-at-rivian/)