

Internships and other work experiences



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Introduction and guidance

Introduction and guidance

This free badged course *Internships and other work experiences* lasts 24 hours and is comprised of eight weeks. You can work through the course at your own pace, so if you have more time one week there is no problem with pushing on to complete a further study week. The eight weeks are linked to ensure a logical flow through the course. They are:

1. What is an internship or work experience opportunity?
2. What could I gain from an internship or other work experience?
3. How to choose the right internship or work experience
4. How to find a work experience opportunity – promoting myself in writing
5. Obtaining a work experience opportunity – promoting myself in person
6. How to make the most of my internship or other work experience
7. Experiencing a virtual internship
8. Next steps

You will be able to test your understanding of the course through the weekly interactive quizzes, of which Weeks 4 and 8 will provide you with an opportunity to earn a badge to demonstrate your new skills. You can read more on how to study the course and about badges in the next sections.

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- describe and identify different types of internship or other work experience opportunity
- reflect on existing skills and attributes and recognise how building on them through an internship or other work experience can bring value
- build an effective personal brand to use on social media and throughout the job application process
- identify strategies for maximising the chance of success. both during an internship or other work experience, and beyond
- define personal goals for undertaking an internship or other work experience, and produce a set of actions to support the achievement of these goals.

Moving around the course

In the 'Summary' at the end of each week, you will find a link to the next week. If at any time you want to return to the start of the course, click on 'Full course description'. From here you can navigate to any part of the course.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page (including links to the quizzes), to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations for the course before you begin, in our optional [start-of-course survey](#). Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

What is a badged course?

While studying *Internships and other work experiences* you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's *mission to promote the educational well-being of the community*. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning.

Completing a course will require about 24 hours of study time. However, you can study the course at any time and at a pace to suit you.

Badged courses are available on The Open University's [OpenLearn](#) website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University courses because you do not receive support from a tutor, but you do get useful feedback from the interactive quizzes.

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a new way of demonstrating online that you have gained a skill.

Colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media. Badges are a great motivation, helping you to reach the end of the course. Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course could encourage you to think about taking other courses.



How to get a badge

Getting a badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

- read each week of the course
- score 50% or more in the two badge quizzes in Week 4 and Week 8.

For all the quizzes, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false type questions you usually only get one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the two badge quizzes it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 50% and be eligible for the badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will often receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

For the badge quizzes, if you're not successful in getting 50% the first time, after 24 hours you can attempt the whole quiz, and come back as many times as you like.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge – so you should see getting a badge as an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned rather than as a test.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, take a look at the [OpenLearn FAQs](#). When you gain your badge you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge.

Get started with [Week 1](#).

Week 1: What is an internship or work experience opportunity?

Introduction

Welcome to Week 1 of the free badged course *Internships and other work experiences*. Congratulations! You've taken your first step towards gaining valuable work experience and achieving the career you want to have.

The word 'internship' might be familiar to you but do you know what it actually means or how to choose the right opportunities to support your future plans? This course will help you to identify what's right for you, what to look for and how to obtain appropriate experience and maximise your learning and career development throughout.

While 'internship' is a commonly used word and will feature regularly throughout this course, it is important to understand that there are other forms of work experience that are equally useful and that in some sectors the word 'internship' is not commonly used.

If you're a mature applicant, not currently in education or looking for part-time positions, internship and work experience opportunities are certainly available to you. However, you'll find that many of the roles advertised online are aimed at school, college or university students, so a more proactive approach can be beneficial. Of course, this can be a useful approach for anyone looking for work experience and you'll explore it in more detail as you progress through the course.

This week, you'll start by exploring some definitions and learning more about the terminology employers use to describe work experience, so you'll know what to look for. You'll reflect on any work experience that you've already had and start to identify what you want to gain from completing this course.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1](#)



By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- describe an internship and understand the difference between that and other forms of work experience
- identify key learning points from your own work experiences so far
- clarify your aims for the course.

Before you start, The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations of the course. Your input will help to further improve the online learning experience. If you'd like to help, and if you haven't done so already, please fill in this optional [start-of-course survey](#). Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

1 What is an internship?

An internship is, basically, work experience, i.e. a period of time spent working for a particular company or organisation on a temporary basis. Internships are typically taken up by people wanting to gain the relevant skills and experience to start a new career.



Before you start to explore work experience and internships in more detail, take a moment to define your current understanding.

Activity 1 How would I define an internship?

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Use the box below to write a short sentence or paragraph explaining your current understanding of what an internship is and why you would benefit from doing one.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Most of us understand that an internship is a period of work experience that develops the skills, confidence and networks that can add value to future job applications, but did you know that there are other ways to gain experience that will impress future employers? If you are currently researching your career options, you may already have come across the word 'internship' several times, and it can be easy to assume that you must complete one otherwise employers will never be interested in you. Read on to find out why that is not the case.

1.1 What's the difference between work experience and an internship?

Work experience is a generic term that can refer to a wide range of opportunities, from volunteering and work shadowing to internships and work placements.

Depending on the industry that interests you, your initial work experiences might be pretty informal, e.g. helping at a show or event, or running errands for an entrepreneur. Although these often won't be structured experiences with designated points for reflection and feedback, they will help you to build up evidence that you understand how your chosen industry works – which is vital for future job applications – and allow you to meet and network with people who can make a difference in your future career.

The word 'internship' is often used to refer to more structured work experience opportunities. An internship might involve training, mentoring and networking with senior staff, as well as project work and customer liaison. In some circumstances, the employer might use it to assess your capability for potential employment in the future, and to give you a valuable opportunity to learn and develop. If you are a university student, these opportunities are commonly available further on in your studies, e.g. during the summer holiday after your second year.

Case study 1 Internship confusion

Gemma is a first-year design student. She regularly meets up with a group of economics students who want to work in the banking sector when they graduate. Her

friends are already applying for internships in a range of investment and high street banks.

She contacts staff at her university careers service and explains that she needs to organise a banking internship but is worried because she isn't interested in banking and has none of the skills they seem to require. She's also unsure about how this will directly benefit her career plans to be a product designer.

After some discussion, it becomes clear that Gemma thinks that every student should undertake an internship in a bank or similar institution in order to impress future employers, regardless of their sector. She doesn't realise that she would benefit much more from gaining experience relevant to design and that her course placements are essentially internships under a different name.

Gemma's story is not uncommon. There is a perception, particularly among new university students, that internships are the only type of work experience that matter and that everyone needs to have at least one on their CV. In some industries, such as finance or IT, there is more of an emphasis on formal internships but there are many others where the knowledge and skills that you gain are what's important – regardless of the environment in which you experience them.

In Week 3, you'll focus on choosing the right work experience for you, which might be a formal internship, or it might not!

1.2 A typical internship structure

In the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 'Internships that work: a guide for employers' (2015, pp. 7–9), the following important elements are highlighted:

Table 1 Important elements of internships

Induction	The induction process should include an introduction to the company and its senior staff, a tour of the facilities, and discussion of day-to-day duties and any relevant objectives.
Tasks	If an internship is to be beneficial to both the intern and employer, it is imperative that the intern is given as much responsibility and diversity in their work as possible. Employers should devise a suitable work plan for each intern.
Supervision	Ideally, an intern will work with a range of people and have a mentor who maintains regular contact. The work plan can be used as the basis for regular performance review conversations.

(CIPD, 2015)

1.3 How long is an internship?

Smith (2019) describes an internship as lasting 'for a fixed period of time, anywhere between a week and 12 months'.

Typically, university students will undertake them during holiday periods. A summer internship will last for 2–3 months which, as Smith (2019) explains, is 'long enough for you

to get a taste of the job and gain valuable skills' without requiring 'the commitment of longer programmes'.

However, those studying on a part-time basis might choose a different model – undertaking their internship alongside their study or even virtually.

A 12-month internship will usually be targeted at new graduates, although there are cases of individuals with more experience undertaking them where appropriate.

If the standard internship offerings don't fit with your lifestyle, it's always worth exploring further with the employer as there may be flexible or virtual options available.

1.4 The employer perspective

Employers don't offer internships or work experience opportunities purely to help you learn skills and gain experience that will help you in the future. There's a lot more in it for them, including:

- the development of existing employees through mentoring or line management of the intern
- the opportunity to give something back to society and support the future of an individual who might find it harder to progress without it
- gaining a new/different perspective within the team
- the chance to 'try before you buy' – an internship or other form of work experience can act as a much longer interview process.

The ISE ***!Warning! Calibri not supported**Annual Recruitment Survey 2018* found that employers rehired an average of 52% of their interns and 43% of their summer placement students (Smith, 2019).

As mentioned before, internships are not the only type of work experience available to you and sometimes other options might work better for you and your career. In the next section you'll look at some of the other work experience options that could be available to you.

2 What other work experiences are there?

Internships provide one type of work experience; however, there are a variety of other options available to you.



Other options include:

- volunteering
- work shadowing
- work placement
- part-time work
- extra-curricular activities
- secondments
- full-time work.

You'll take a look at each of these in turn in the next few sections.

2.1 Volunteering

Lots of people assume that voluntary, or unpaid, work won't be seen by employers as valid work experience. This is incorrect! Some sectors, such as the media or social work, have very few formal internship opportunities and volunteering is a key way to gain experience and a foot in the door. Likewise, if you hope to work within the voluntary sector itself, volunteering will provide vital experience, evidence your commitment to the sector and help you to start your network of useful contacts.



If your volunteering allows you to develop useful skills – such as communication, dealing with difficult situations and time management – it can provide useful evidence for any job application. In fact, doing something voluntarily with no financial reward is a good way to demonstrate your commitment.

Volunteering can also be a stepping stone to securing paid work or a more formal internship in the sector you are interested in and allows you to try out the sector or to see how you cope with working for a specific client group, e.g. volunteering in a classroom if you want to teach.

Activity 2 Comparing volunteering with a formal internship

Allow about 20 minutes for this activity

Read the following case studies and then summarise any differences and similarities between the two experiences in the box below.

Example 1

Sarah has just completed an internship with a major high street retailer. She worked within the buying department, helping to source the latest on-trend products. She was in a large team and had to liaise with staff in two other departments. She was given her own responsibilities and had a buddy/mentor to support her if she needed it.

Example 2

Raj has been volunteering with a local charity focused on the needs of asylum seekers. He has been interpreting and liaising with local authorities on each individual's behalf. There are only three people doing this work and he is the least experienced. He is often left to solve any problems that arise, although he can call on the more experienced members of the team if he needs them.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Hopefully, despite their very different contexts, you will have identified several similarities in the skills and experience being gained by both Sarah and Raj. For example, both will have developed their communication skills and their ability to take

on responsibility and work under pressure. They might also have learned something about knowing when to ask for support and when to make decisions for themselves. These are all skills that will be highly valued by any future employer and the context in which they have developed them is of less importance. Of course, if Raj is intending to work in the voluntary sector in the future, this experience will be a key starting point for his career.

You may have identified some different skills too, which will be just as useful in their future job applications, but the point of this activity is to highlight that similar skills can be gained from both formal and informal work experiences.

Later in the course, you'll spend some time thinking about the skills and experiences that will help you with your career plans, and this will assist your decisions about the work experience you choose.

2.2 Insight into the world of work

If you are looking for insight into a particular sector or organisation, there are several ways you can gain that, including through work shadowing, work placements or part time work.



Work shadowing

Work shadowing, sometimes known as an 'externship' in the US, involves spending a short time (perhaps just a day or a week) observing someone's daily activities in their job and attending meetings with them, etc. This can give you a valuable insight into the day-to-day work involved in your chosen career area.

Work shadowing can be a useful thing to do early on in your career consideration, as it could show you that a particular career really isn't for you!

Although you aren't usually practically involved in the work, this type of experience does enhance your awareness and helps to demonstrate your commitment when you start applying for jobs. It can also give you some useful contacts to ask for advice and support. Additionally, if you impress them with your questions and enthusiasm, they might agree to be your mentor or even offer you some paid work experience.

These opportunities won't be advertised anywhere so you'll need to be proactive and organise them for yourself. You'll investigate how to do this in Weeks 4 and 5.

Work placement

Typically, work placements (sometimes known as sandwich placements) will be connected to a course that you are studying, providing a 'real life' element for assessment and academic credit.

At degree level, they often last for 12 months and are undertaken between your penultimate and final year of study. However, there are other models such as working one day a week over a longer period of time, an option that could be particularly relevant for part-time students.

As you would expect, the content of the placement is usually closely linked to your subject of study. The placement may be organised by your academic department or you may be given support to identify and obtain it yourself.

As well as enhancing your studies, a key benefit of this more embedded experience is that it gives you an in-depth view of a particular sector, employer or department from the inside.

Part-time work

A common misconception, particularly amongst students, is that casual part-time work, such as in retail or hospitality, is of less interest to employers than a formal internship with an impressive company.

This isn't necessarily the case.

Most employers will be delighted to see evidence of your customer service experience, communication skills and ability to work under pressure, for example.

Casual experience can often be short-term, which gives you an opportunity to sample several different work environments over a period of time. This can help you identify preferences in terms of management styles, working hours, customer interaction, etc.

Of course, not all part-time work is casual. Increasing flexibility from employers means that there are many more part-time professional roles available and these are also a valuable way to build your skills and experience, and gain insight into a particular work environment.

2.3 Development opportunities whilst in employment

Much of the information available about work experience and internships is aimed at school, college and university students. However, if you are already in work there are still ways to access new experiences, either in your current job role, via a secondment or through extra-curricular activities.



Full-time work

If you have already worked full-time or are currently working, don't forget that this is also work experience! Even if you are in a situation that you want to change, your current role will be giving you useful opportunities to build and develop your skills.

Try to see what you are doing from a future employer's perspective. Make a note of good examples of valuable skills such as communication or flexibility. You could also be alert to opportunities to develop yourself further, such as training, new projects to get involved with and mentoring.

Secondments

Depending on your career ambitions, a secondment is one way to experience a new or different environment without leaving your current employment. For example, as long as there are benefits for everyone involved, your employer might agree to you working for a designated period in another department or even within a client organisation. This can be a strong career development tool.

A Randstad recruitment agency blogpost (2019) outlines some of the benefits to the individual of a secondment. They include:

- gaining new skills and experiences
- the chance to apply your skills in a different environment
- enhanced career motivation
- broadening your network of contacts.

Watch this short video where staff from publishing company RELX explain the benefits of their own secondment experiences.

View at: [youtube:ynnn9yOfN3g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynnn9yOfN3g)

Extra-curricular activities

Similar to volunteering, people often forget about their extra-curricular activities when considering work experience. For example, if you have been involved with a sports club and have taken an active role in organising events or overseeing the finances, you will have developed skills in a work-place context that are very relevant to the needs of employers.

Roles such as school governor or charity trustee will also allow you to develop some key skills.

Within your home life there will be examples of relevant skill development. For example, if you are juggling your studies with the needs of a young family, your time management and multi-tasking skills are likely to be well developed.

Now you have a better idea of the range of work experience opportunities that are valued by employers, in the next section you'll pause to review your own experiences so far and consider what you have gained from them.

3 Reviewing my own work experiences

In this section, you'll spend some time reflecting on the work experiences you have had and analysing what you learned from them.



In Week 3, you'll look at choosing the right work experience for you, and the following short period of reflection on what you've done so far will support that future decision-making process by:

1. highlighting any skills and/or knowledge gaps that you still need to address
2. identifying things that didn't suit you, such as a particular working environment or style
3. clarifying the logical next step to progress your experience further, e.g. by working with a larger employer or in a different context.

With your broader understanding of work experience gained from the previous section, you might find that there are more activities and roles that you can incorporate in your reflections.

Activity 3 My work experiences

Allow about 40 minutes for this activity

The length of time you spend on this activity will depend on how much material you have to reflect on.

1. List anything you've done in the last 2–5 years that might be viewed as work experience. As well as the experiences outlined in the previous section, this might include positions of responsibility within your educational institution (e.g. student representative or prefect) or work you've done for a family member's business, etc.

If you are an experienced individual with a detailed CV and your focus for this course is career change, you might want to focus this activity slightly differently. For example, you could look at new experiences you've had within your workplace over the last 2–5 years, such as becoming a line manager or mentor for the first time.

Provide your answer...

2. Rank your experiences in number order, where 1 is the most useful. This might mean it was the most relevant to your future career plans, offered the greatest scope for developing new and existing skills, or you felt that the working environment was a particularly good fit for your needs, for example.

12345

3. Choose the experience you ranked as the most useful and write a sentence or paragraph summarising what you gained from it. You could include specific skills, sector awareness, useful contacts or a realisation that you could never work in that type of role for long.

If it was a substantial piece of experience, such as a part-time job over several years or a course placement, you might need to write more.

Provide your answer...

Now choose the experience you placed at the bottom of your list and do the same.

Provide your answer...

Finally, summarise your key learning points in the box below using the following questions as prompts:

- What were the key differences between your highest and lowest rated experiences?
- Did you focus on more personal issues, such as how you were treated and the value of the relationships you developed, or did you prioritise the variety of tasks and responsibilities you were given?
- If you were focusing on specific tasks, did they align with your values? Did that make them more or less satisfying? (You'll explore values further in Week 2.)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

This exercise can give you an insight into the things that are important to you in the workplace, which can be helpful when making career decisions. You can also use what you've highlighted to work out what is missing from your experiences so far. For example, you might have learned a lot about how the office environment works internally but you'd like your next opportunity to give you more direct exposure to customers.

Try flipping the negatives of the experience you rated at the bottom of your list, and this could give you a range of things to look out for in future opportunities.

If you found this activity useful, you could go through each of the experiences on your list and summarise what you gained. There might be some interesting patterns to pick

up on, e.g. all your experiences have given you the same skills so the next one needs to help you build new ones.

In Week 3, you'll develop these ideas further to help you decide what type of internship or work experience to apply for.

Now that you've reflected on some past experiences, you'll look to the immediate future and spend some time identifying what you hope to gain from doing this course.

4 What I hope to gain from this course

There are many reasons why someone might choose to undertake a course about internships and other work experiences, and identifying which of those resonate the most with you will help you to focus your attention on relevant aspects of the content as you progress through each week. The next activity will help you to do this.



Activity 4 What I want to know about internships and other work experiences

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Look at the list below and identify the reason(s) most relevant to you for studying this course:

- I want to know what my options are
- I want to know what an internship is and why everyone says I must do one
- I'd like to explore the skills and experience I could develop through work experience
- I'd love to do some work experience but I don't know where to find it
- I want to identify the best work experience for me and my career plans
- I've done lots of work experience already and it isn't helping me to secure the right job, so I want to understand what I'm doing wrong
- I've got an internship coming up and I need to know how to make the most of it
- I've heard that employers sometimes exploit their interns and I want to avoid that happening to me
- I've applied for lots of work experience opportunities and I haven't even had an interview
- I'm a mature career changer and I need to gain some experience that is relevant to my current and future plans.
- I'd like to explore more flexible approaches to work experience.
- Other (type your ideas below)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

All the issues raised in this activity will be addressed in this course. Keep a note of the ones that were most important to you and refer to your list as you progress. Tick them off as your questions are answered.

5 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 1, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 1 quiz](#)

6 Summary of Week 1

By this point, you should have a better understanding of what internships and work experience are. You've considered what a typical internship looks like and explored the variety of other work experiences available. You've also reflected on your own work experiences and what you gained from them.

You should now be able to:

- describe an internship and understand the difference between that and other forms of work experience
- identify key learning points from your own work experiences so far
- clarify your aims for the course.

Next week, you'll focus on what you can gain personally from undertaking an internship or other form of work experience.

You can now go to [Week 2](#).

Week 2: What could I gain from an internship or other work experience?

Introduction

In Week 1, you were introduced to internships and some of the other forms of work experience you might choose. You also took some time to reflect on your own experiences and clarify what you want to gain from participating in this course.

This week, you'll focus more specifically on the benefits of undertaking an internship or other form of work experience. You'll learn about the skills you can develop, how your confidence can grow and the value of building a network of useful contacts.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1](#)

Week 2|

What could I gain from an internship or other work experience?

By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- recognise the various benefits that work experience can provide
- summarise some of the key skills that employers value
- reflect on the personal development that can be facilitated through an internship or other work experience.

You'll start by looking at a variety of the evidence that shows work experience can be beneficial to both you and your employer.

1 Work experience works – the evidence

There's a reason why so many people undertake an internship or other form of work experience... it can help you and your career to progress.

It can help in a range of ways – from allowing you to identify the things you enjoy and the things you don't, to building useful contacts for future networking.



In this section, you'll review some of the evidence that shows work experience is definitely worth considering.

Improves your CV

In High Fliers research into the graduate labour market (High Fliers Research Ltd., 2019, p. 23) over a third of the 150-plus leading graduate employers surveyed warned that 'graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process for their graduate programmes'. In some sectors, such as the media, relevant experience has been essential for years.

In a competitive labour market, employers need some way to differentiate between candidates, and work experience provides that.

Enhances academic achievement

There is a growing body of evidence to support the enhancement of academic achievement following a work placement.

Following their study of students undertaking a year-long, integrated placement at two UK institutions, Jones *et al.* (2017, p. 988) concluded that this activity has 'a positive and significant impact on final year academic performance. [The] report estimates in the range

of 2–4% across both institutions.’ They add that this is ‘somewhat comparable to other estimates reported in the literature.’

This could be due to placement students gaining:

- a clearer understanding of the value of their academic knowledge in the workplace
- an enhanced work ethic developed during the placement period
- greater motivation to succeed as they now have a longer-term goal to aim for.

Degree result is an important element of your job applications when you are a new graduate, so combining a potentially improved result with the skill development and experience you’ll also gain is a very positive outcome.

Enhances career readiness

Through enhancing your skills, awareness and confidence, work experience can make you more ‘ready’ for your chosen career.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines career readiness as ‘the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace’ (NACE, no date).

Buzzeo (2017, p. 11) confirms that ‘a number of studies have shown how placements can ... help young people either to confirm or reject potential career options’.

Whether you are a new graduate or someone with a previous career behind you, you can use work experience to help you decide whether a particular sector or role could work for you or not. Even if your response is negative, it can still be a valuable experience. For example, flipping the negatives can help you to identify what would suit you better.

Closes skills gaps

Research conducted by IBM (LaPrade *et al.*, 2019, p. 4) focuses on the talent shortages and skills gaps reported by executives across a wide range of organisations. The authors emphasise a recent change in the skills seen as most critical for members of the workforce today – shifting from digital to behavioural. In fact, the top four skills highlighted in the report are:

- willingness to be flexible, agile and adaptable to change
- time management skills and ability to prioritise
- ability to work effectively in team environments
- ability to communicate effectively in business contexts.

They also acknowledge that these skills are best developed through ‘practical, real-world experience’. Therefore, internships and work experience programmes are clearly advantageous to both you and the employer.

Another report highlight is the need to recruit employees with a ‘propensity to learn and embrace lifelong learning’. By undertaking work experience of any kind, you are already demonstrating your commitment to learning new skills and gaining experience.

There may also be sector specific skills gaps, so if you have a specific sector in mind for your future career plans, it can be worth searching for any reports on those. You’ll try this next.

1.1 Identifying the skills gaps in my sector

Identifying the skills gaps in the sector you want to pursue a career in can help to give you an advantage when applying for jobs in the future. If you know where the shortages are, you can spend some time seeking opportunities to build those skills and then present your evidence in job applications. Activity 1 will help you to identify those gaps.

Activity 1 Where are the skills gaps?

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Use your favourite search engine to explore skills gaps in your preferred sector(s). Make notes about your findings in the box below.

The relevant professional body website could be a good place to start. To find the relevant website search the [list of professional associations in the United Kingdom](#).

[Prospects sector pages](#) could also provide some useful insight.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you can identify where the gaps are now, you could look for work experience, or other opportunities, that will help you build those skills, giving you a future advantage when applying for jobs.

2 Skills employers are looking for

In Section 1, you touched upon some of the key skills employers value but feel are currently lacking in their workforce, such as adaptability, time management and communication. You're now going to explore some of these skills in more detail.



The fact that you have proactively sought out and undertaken work experience will already demonstrate some of these skills. You can then use your work experience as an opportunity to develop the others.

2.1 Adaptability/flexibility

This is increasingly important in today's workplace, where rapid digital developments and constant change are the norm. Employers are looking for staff who are adaptable and resilient when faced with change.

You can build your adaptability during your work experience by following the advice below.

- *Be open to changes* in your schedule or work plan, even if it initially feels uncomfortable.
- Take every opportunity to *learn new skills*; keeping up to date with new developments in technology, for example, will give you more flexibility.
- *Communicate clearly* with those around you. It's easier to adapt if you understand why change is needed.
- When things don't go to plan, *reflect on what you've learned* from the experience and what you would do differently the next time.

If your work experience takes place in an organisation where change is underway, use this as an opportunity to observe how your colleagues are reacting to it. As a temporary member of staff, you might feel less personal impact than they do but you could talk to them about how they are approaching it and feeling about it. What can you learn from their reactions? Are they being flexible?

Top tip: experiencing change is easier if you take an active role.

Remember, by choosing to take on an internship, part-time job or secondment etc. you are demonstrating your adaptability by pro-actively introducing something new and different into your life.

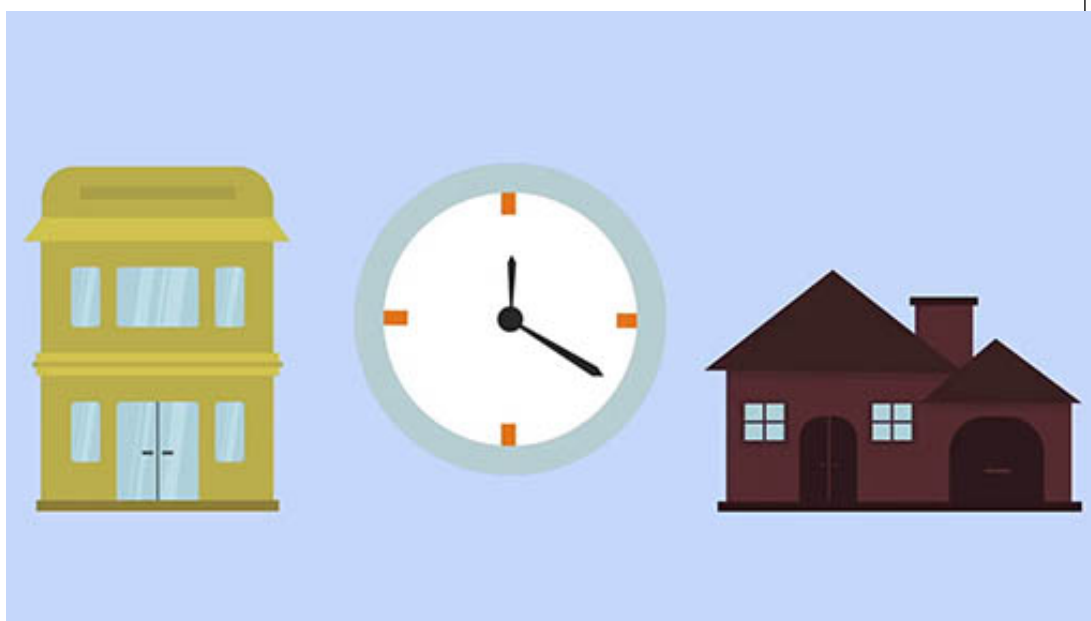
2.2 Time management skills

The more experience you have of juggling and prioritising a range of tasks, the better you will be at doing it. Undertaking work experience while studying full-time, or studying alongside a full-time job, will give you a great opportunity to build your time management skills and is a great example to use in job applications.

Watch this short video to hear some top tips about managing your time effectively:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2



2.3 Teamwork

It is likely that in most work experience scenarios you will be interacting with other people in a team environment and it can be useful to have an idea of the role you naturally fall into. Effective teams need a range of roles and no one is more important than any other. A commonly used description of the different roles within a team was developed by Dr Meredith Belbin in the 1970s. A summary of the nine roles is presented in Table 1 (Belbin, no date) but more detailed information can be found on the Belbin website (see **Further reading** for details).

Table 1 Belbin's nine team roles

Resource investigator:	Teamworker:	Coordinator:
------------------------	-------------	--------------

Uses their inquisitive nature to find ideas to bring back to the team.	Helps the team to gel, using their versatility to identify the work required and complete it on behalf of the team.	Needed to focus on the team's objectives, draw out team members and delegate work appropriately.
Plant:	Monitor Evaluator:	Specialist:
Tends to be highly creative and good at solving problems in unconventional ways.	Provides a logical eye, making impartial judgements where required and weighs up the team's options in a dispassionate way.	Brings in-depth knowledge of a key area to the team.
Shaper:	Implementer:	Completer Finisher:
Provides the necessary drive to ensure that the team keeps moving and does not lose focus or momentum.	Needed to plan a workable strategy and carry it out as efficiently as possible.	Most effectively used at the end of tasks to polish and scrutinise the work for errors, subjecting it to the highest standards of quality control.

(Belbin, no date)

Which one(s) sound most like you? There may be more than one that feels like a fit. Understanding your natural role in a team should help you to identify potential strengths and weaknesses and work with others more effectively. For example, if you are a 'teamworker' you might feel uncomfortable making unpopular decisions, whereas a 'completer finisher' could be accused of being a perfectionist.

Understanding the roles of others will give you an insight into why people act and react in the way they do.

It is possible to undertake a Belbin team roles test via the [Belbin website](#). There is a charge, but they will send you a discount code once you sign up. If you are currently in work, it might be worth investigating whether your employer already uses Belbin, as they may already pay a subscription fee and have access to the materials.

2.4 Communication

There are many different facets to good communication – from listening and asking effective questions, to building trust, self-awareness and empathy. Work experience gives you the perfect opportunity to practise your communication skills, both written and verbal, and if this is an area you need or want to develop, you might find the badged open course [Effective communication in the workplace](#) useful.

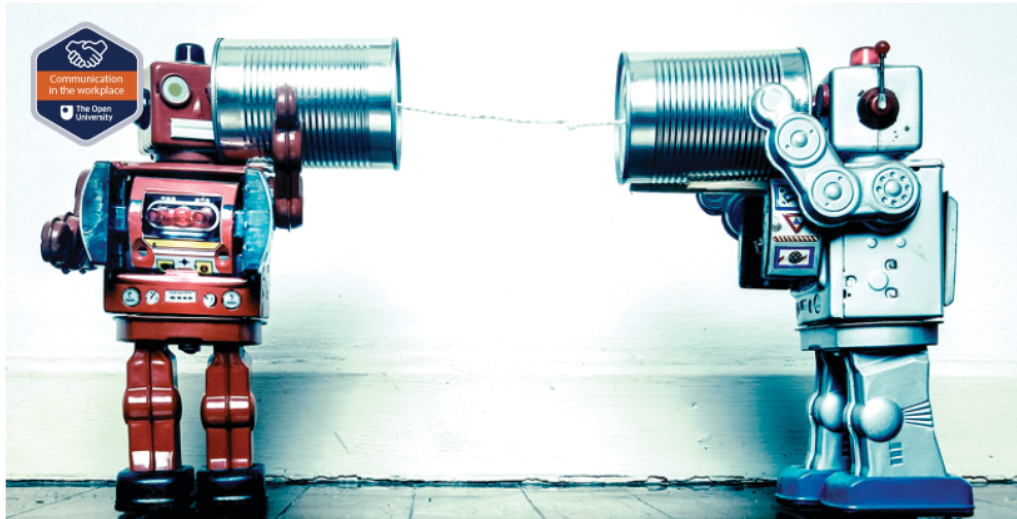
Free course

Effective communication in the workplace



Free statement
of participation
on completion

You're on this free course ✓



Course description

Course content

Course reviews

You'll explore communication from a distance in more detail in Week 7 when you focus on virtual internships.

2.5 Emotional intelligence

The Department for Education's 'Employer skills survey 2017' (Winterbotham *et al.*, 2018, p. 49) highlights key skills that are reported as lacking. At the top of their list are self-management skills, comprising 'managing own time and task prioritisation' and 'managing own feelings/handling those of others'.

The second part of that statement is commonly known as emotional intelligence, defined by Mayer and Salovey (1990) as the 'ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions'.

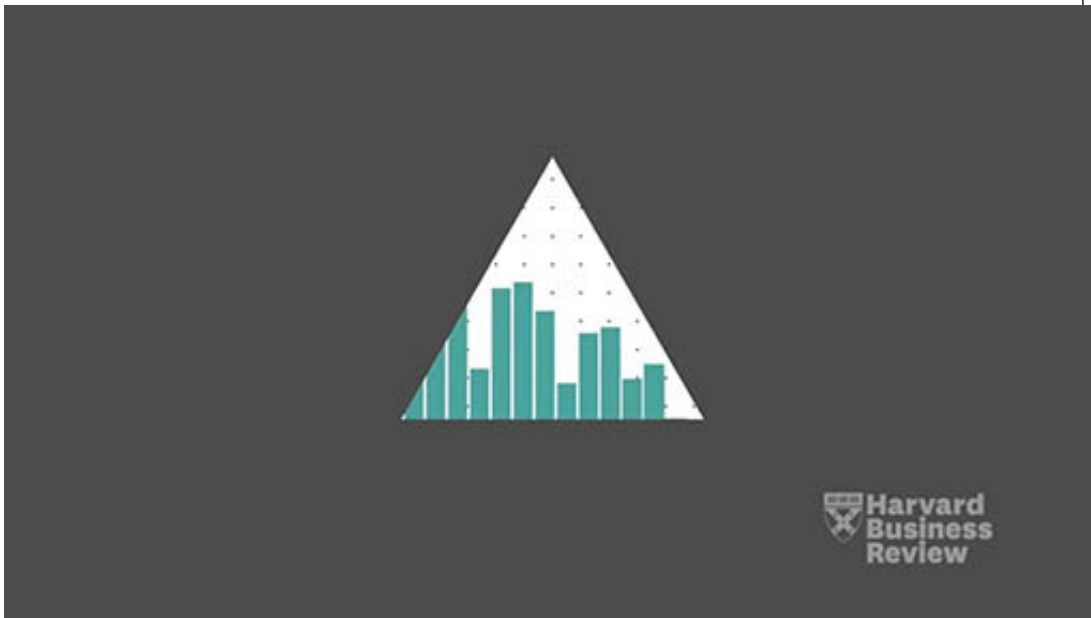
!Warning! Calibri not supported Daniel Goleman (1998) adapted their model to identify five basic emotional and social competencies:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-regulation
3. Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

Emotional intelligence is a very valuable attribute in the workplace because it enhances communication and relationships. This video below explains the concept in more detail.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3



In the next section, you'll check your understanding of these and other key skills valued by employers.

2.6 Identifying other important skills

From the outside, it's not always immediately obvious which skills are being used and developed in different work experiences. Quite often, more skills are being developed and used than first appears. In the next activity, the example case studies will highlight just how many skills one period of work experience can develop.

Activity 2 Which skills are these interns developing?

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Look at the following work experience case studies and see if you can identify the skills each individual will be developing. Some of the skills you might identify haven't been covered in this section. Still note them down in the box adjacent to each example as they are also key skills which will be valued by employers.

Table 2 Identifying skills

Alice works part time in a very busy coffee shop with six staff. She serves customers and takes their payments, arranges food and cold drinks in the display fridge, and generally keeps the café tidy.

Provide your answer...

Soraya has an internship in the local council offices, where she works with the housing team. She accompanies housing officers on their visits, does basic admin and is helping them overhaul their social media presence.

Provide your answer...

Darren has managed to secure a week of work shadowing within a local publishing firm. He also works full time as an accountant and is doing a part-time degree.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You could have chosen some of the following skills:

Table 2 (completed) Identifying skills

Alice works part time in a very busy coffee shop with six staff. She serves customers and takes their payments, arranges food and cold drinks in the display fridge, and generally keeps the café tidy.

- Communication (face to face)
- Empathy
- Social skills
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Team working
- Attention to detail

Soraya has an internship in the local council offices, where she works with the housing team. She accompanies housing officers on their visits, does basic admin and is helping them overhaul their social media presence.

- Administrative skills
- Communication (both face to face and online)
- Empathy
- Social skills
- Team working
- Time management
- Working under pressure

Darren has managed to secure a week of work shadowing within a local publishing firm. He also works full time as an accountant and is doing a part-time degree.

- Communication
- Networking skills
- Active listening and questioning
- Time management
- Prioritising

You'll see from this activity that many of the skills that employers value can be developed from a wide range of different experiences.

So now you are more aware of some of the skills you could develop from almost any work experience you choose, how do you make the most of them in your future career? The key is to be self-aware, and you'll learn more about that in the next section.

3 Building my self-awareness

As well as building skills that will be valued by employers throughout your future career, work experience can help you to build your self-awareness.

Tasha Eurich (2018, p. 3) defines self-awareness as ‘the ability to see ourselves clearly – to understand who we are, how others see us, and how we fit into the world around us’.

You can use work experience to enhance your self-awareness in the following ways:

- asking for feedback from colleagues and managers
- keeping a journal to actively reflect on what went well and what you found more challenging each day
- taking advantage of any psychometric tests that might be available through your employer
- making a note of the goals you have when you start the work experience, and monitoring progress towards them.



Building self-awareness is key to a successful career in so many ways. For example, the greater your self-awareness:

- the easier it will be to identify roles that suit your skills and values when they arise
- the better you will be at learning from the work experiences you have – unpicking what went well and what didn’t and understanding your role in that
- the more clearly you will be able to describe yourself in future job applications
- the more effective you will be as a colleague and as a leader (remember self-awareness plays a key role in emotional intelligence).

Enhancing your self-awareness takes time and effort. The next section will look at ‘seven pillars of insight’ that should help you to more easily understand the concept.

3.1 Seven pillars of insight

So how do you build self-awareness?

In her book *Insight*, Eurich describes seven pillars of insight (2018, pp. 24–37) that will help you to become more self-aware. They are:

1. values – a core set of principles that guide how we want to live our lives
2. passions – what we love to do
3. aspirations – what we really want out of life
4. fit – the type of environment we require to be happy and engaged
5. patterns – our consistent ways of thinking, feeling and behaving across different situations
6. reactions – the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that reveal our capabilities
7. impact – how our behaviour affects others.

By taking the time to work out what your values, passions and aspirations are, you will get to know yourself better. In the next activity you'll start to identify your values.

Activity 3 What are my values?

Allow about 20 minutes for this activity

Identifying your values is a key part of becoming more self-aware. Think of values as motivators or drivers influencing everything you do in life. There are no right or wrong answers.

Start this activity by spending a few minutes thinking about times in your home or work life when you felt happiest, proudest or most fulfilled.

When you have reflected on those occasions for a few minutes, consider the values that best represent why those times in your life made you feel so positive and write a list in the box below.

The following image will give you some ideas of values but if you think of others that fit better, add them to your list. If you're running out of ideas, there are numerous lists of core values available online – type 'core values' into your preferred search engine to find them.

Go with your initial reaction to each word. Don't overthink it.



Figure 1 What are my values?

Provide your answer...

Now narrow down your list to between three and five values that resonate the most with you. These are your core values.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Your core values will already be reflected in what you do and what you say when you are comfortable in your environment. Identifying and labelling them in this type of exercise can help you to keep them front and centre when you are considering what work experience to choose or reflecting on how things are going.

Understanding the values that are important to you will help you to recognise good career opportunities when they arise. If you've already done the thinking, it will be easier to see if a particular role aligns with what you feel is important. For example, if you chose 'wealth', salary will be a serious consideration. If you value 'individuality', a work environment that requires you to conform might not be a comfortable one.

Understanding your values can also help you to identify why you felt stressed in a particular situation that didn't align well with them.

This can be a challenging exercise so do seek support and feedback if you need to, either from a careers adviser or coach, or a trusted friend or colleague.

This is an exercise that is worth repeating throughout your career as values can change as you grow and mature. For example, having children is an experience that changes many people's values and this can have an impact on future career choices.

Another significant advantage to be gained from work experience is building your self-confidence, and you'll explore that in more detail in the next section.

4 Building self-confidence

Work experience is the perfect place to build your self-confidence as it will push you outside your comfort zone in an environment where your employer acknowledges that you have less experience and are there to learn.



If you are looking to change direction in your career, leaving a familiar area of expertise to start something new can certainly feel daunting, so work experience can help to build your confidence too.

Self-confidence and resilience often go together, and you'll explore resilience in more detail in Week 8.

Watch this short video from Mind Tools to find out more about building your confidence in the workplace.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4



Activity 4 Building self confidence

Allow about 20 minutes for this activity

As recommended in the Mind Tools video, list 10 achievements from your life and career so far.

If you're stuck, you could ask for input from family, friends or colleagues.

After you have noted these down, take a moment to reflect on how these achievements make you feel.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You'll be looking at goal setting a little later in the course but for now, enjoy the confidence boost that listing those achievements has given you.

You could do a version of this activity during your work experience – looking back at the end of each week and listing a key achievement you've made during that week. It doesn't have to be ground breaking, just something that makes you feel pleased with yourself. For example, it could be a conversation with a senior member of staff who you've been nervous about approaching or acknowledgement from a colleague of a job well done.

In the final section of this week, you'll look at the benefits of being able to build your network of contacts.

5 Building contacts

Work experience gives you a fantastic opportunity to expand your network of contacts. From direct colleagues to individuals in other departments around you, you will have a captive audience for any questions you might have. Networking is a key theme and something you'll return to throughout the course.



But what are the benefits of networking?

5.1 Why networking works

Expanding your network will give you a wider pool of potential support. Proactively introducing yourself to the people in your office, even if they don't work in your immediate team, will help you fit in more quickly and make it easier to ask them for help if/when you need it.

If you impress people with your commitment and enthusiasm, you never know when that could work to your advantage – from gaining access to additional learning opportunities, to job offers further down the line. Letting those around you know about your plans and ambitions will help them to keep you in mind when future vacancies arise.

One way to maximise your work experience is to gather as much inside information as possible about how an organisation or sector works. Make the most of the range of 'experts' around you by asking them questions or for advice. This detailed knowledge will give you an advantage over other candidates in future job interviews. You will start to think about what these questions could be in the next activity.

Activity 5 Preparing questions

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Once you've started your work experience, it will be useful to make a list of the people who you'd like to network with. They might be senior managers, individuals in roles that sound particularly interesting to you or colleagues with a role that allows them to see the bigger picture.

To help you target the right people, spend a few minutes thinking about the questions you might want answers to and make a note of them below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you have your list of questions in mind, you should find it easier to identify the right people to answer them, plus you'll have a set of pre-planned questions to ask if a networking opportunity comes up unexpectedly. Asking focused, intelligent question will usually impress the person you are talking to more than a vague, meandering conversation!

If you already have a career sector in mind, you may have found it easy to come up with a list of targeted questions. But if you are planning to use your internship or other experience to start your career exploration, you might find some more generic questions useful. For example:

- What do you enjoy about working here?
- What do you find challenging about working here?
- What would be a typical career progression from your role?

You'll return to the topic of networking in Week 5.

6 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 2, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 2 quiz](#)

7 Summary of Week 2

This week, you've focused on the benefits of an internship or other form of work experience. You've considered some of the evidence available and looked at the personal development you can expect in terms of skills, self-awareness and confidence. You've also learned the value of networking and how that can enhance your future career as well as the work experience itself.

You should now be able to:

- recognise the various benefits that work experience can provide
- summarise some of the key skills that employers value
- reflect on the personal development that can be facilitated through an internship or other work experience.

Next week, you'll focus on what you can gain personally from undertaking an internship or other form of work experience.

You can now go to [Week 3](#).

Week 3: How to choose the right internship or work experience

Introduction

In Week 2, you looked at the benefits work experience can bring, so you should by now be reassured that this will be a worthwhile use of your time.

This week, you'll focus on how to choose the right opportunity for you. Perhaps it won't be an internship at all, but some other form of work experience that better suits your career plans or life circumstances.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1

Week 3

**How to choose the right
internship or work experience**

By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- understand your rights and what you can expect from an employer

- reflect on what you want to gain from your internship or other work experience
- make more effective decisions about which opportunities to target.

You'll start by looking at what you can expect from an employer and what they will expect from you.

1 Knowing my rights

When you undertake work experience, you have the right to expect certain things from your employer. In this section, you'll learn more about these rights as well as what the employer will expect from you.



1.1 What to expect from my employer

In the UK, work experience should usually be paid. However, there are exceptions to that rule. In Activity 1 you'll identify the different situations when it is and isn't a requirement for an employer to pay an intern.

Activity 1 When is an unpaid internship legal?

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Use your preferred search engine to research unpaid internships. When are they acceptable and when are they legal?

Summarise your findings in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here is a useful explanation of the UK Government's rules on employment rights and pay for interns (TARGETJobs, no date):

By law, employers *have to* pay their interns the national minimum wage if:

- the intern counts as a 'worker' (things that make you a worker include having a contract – written or verbal – and being required to turn up even if you don't want to)
- the intern is promised a work contract in future.

By law, employers *do not* have to pay their interns the national minimum wage if:

- the intern is required to do an internship (lasting less than a year) as part of a UK-based higher education course
- the intern is working for a registered charity or voluntary organisation and is receiving limited expenses, such as for food and travel (but if they receive any money that can't be regarded as a reimbursement of expenses, this counts as payment and they should therefore be paid the national minimum wage)
- the intern is work-shadowing – i.e. they are observing an employee and not carrying out any work themselves.

Despite these rules, many unpaid opportunities are still available, particularly in industries such as retail, the arts and media. This is a controversial issue and Government legislation is progressing slowly, so you will need to decide for yourself whether to accept unpaid work. If you can afford to do it, the hours and expectations are acceptable and not exploitative, and it will give you a definite advantage when applying for jobs in the future, you might decide it is worthwhile.

Many higher education institutions take a position on advertising unpaid work. For example, the Open University Careers and Employability Service states:

All unpaid opportunities are reviewed on a case by case basis. The Careers and Employability Service reserve the right to refuse the promotion of unpaid opportunities which are:

- promoted by anyone other than registered charities or voluntary groups
- vacancies which would normally be filled by a permanent or temporary paid member of staff (e.g. data input, telesales, administrative work, filing, market research)
- ongoing opportunities with fixed hours (e.g. 20 hours a week for 3 months or longer); or
- require students to make any form of payment.

Worksmart (no date) outlines some of the other things you can expect from a good work experience opportunity, including:

- **the chance to learn valuable work skills and gain useful experience.** Don't be fobbed off with general duties. Talk to your manager about opportunities to develop genuine vocational skills. Is there a specific project you can own or be given a dedicated role in? A good employer would also allow and even encourage you to take advantage of any in-house training courses available.
- **sensible working hours.** Certain sectors, such as media, fashion or finance, have a reputation for working staff long and hard, leading to stress and burn-out. If you're keen to impress, it's very tempting to work excessively long hours, but it's a dangerous habit to get into and not a good way to get ahead in the long run. Depending on your employment status, it's very likely you have legal protection against overwork.
- to be treated with the same **respect** as any other member of staff.
- **a reference** upon completion of the internship.

You can also expect someone to report to/receive feedback from.

Next you'll have a look at what your employer will expect from you in return.

1.2 What my employer will expect from me

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) guide for employers 'Internships that work' (2015, p. 13) includes a sample internship agreement, which lists the following intern responsibilities:

- behave in a professional manner at all times
- abide by the rules and regulations of this company
- work hard and diligently throughout the internship
- complete the projects and assignments given to me in a timely and accurate manner.

For those with limited work experience, behaving in a professional manner can be unexpectedly challenging. Feedback from employers suggests that a lack of awareness of how workplaces operate can be reflected in poor time-keeping, over-reliance on social media and/or an unrealistic sense of entitlement. Being aware of this feedback will help to prepare you for some of the common challenges you might face when starting work experience for the first time.

In the next section, you'll reflect on what you want to gain from your next work experience.

2 What do I want to gain?

As you've already seen, there are many potential benefits to work experience, but what do you want to gain from it?



The next sections look at some of the reasons you might want to take on work experience and what you can gain from it.

2.1 Developing skills and attributes

You've already looked briefly at some of the skills you can gain from almost any form of work experience and there will be many more that are role specific. Are there particular skills you'd like to gain or develop further? Where are your gaps?

Attributes are another valuable aspect of what you can offer to an employer, and these tend to be thought of as personal qualities or characteristics, such as being trustworthy or proactive. Do you need to collect evidence for your attributes? What situations might provide you with that?

Activity 2 will help you to find any skills gaps that you might want to develop.

Activity 2 Personal skills audit

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

In the table below, you will find a list of the skills and attributes that many employers look for. If you have a specific role or sector in mind, you may wish to add your own suggestions of skills or attributes to the empty rows in the table, or even base this exercise on a typical job description for that role.

Score your level of expertise against each skill/ability as follows:

0 = no experience yet

1 = basic

2 = competent

3 = proficient

Add at least one example of when you've demonstrated that skill. This will make your analysis of a particular skill more concrete and give you evidence that you can use in future job applications.

When you've completed the task, ask a colleague, manager, mentor or friend who knows you well, whether they agree with your assessment. Note down their comments in the box beneath the table.

Table 1 Skills and attributes commonly sought by employers

Skill	Proficiency	Evidence
Communication – verbal	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Communication – written	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Teamwork	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Relationship building	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Negotiation skills	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Decision-making skills	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Problem solving	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Time management	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Organisational skills	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Ability to work under pressure	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Initiative	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Commercial awareness	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Leadership	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Emotional intelligence	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Self-awareness	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Self-confidence	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Self-motivation	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Adaptability	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>		

Discussion

If you group your skills by score, e.g. all those that scored 3, all those that scored 2 etc., you can identify what you see as your strengths and areas for further development. What are your perceived strengths and weaknesses? Is there an obvious gap in your experience or is your next step to grow your overall expertise from basic to competent?

In the final part of the activity, talking to someone who knows you well can help you to understand whether your perceptions of yourself are accurate. They may also have ideas to add. Many people underestimate their own abilities!

2.2 Building knowledge, experience and contacts

Personal skills, such as those mentioned in the previous activity, are important in all work environments, although some may have more relevance than others. Gaining more sector specific knowledge and experience is another reason why you might want to gain work experience.

Knowledge

Building your knowledge about the world of work in general, a specific sector, or even a particular employer is another good reason to undertake work experience. These are all things that will help you in future job applications. Where are your knowledge gaps and how might you fill them?

Experience

If you are currently studying and enjoying your chosen subject(s), you may feel that the next step for you is to apply your theoretical or academic knowledge in a more practical setting. If your course offers a work placement opportunity, this is the ideal way to do that but there are other options open to you.

There may already be links between your educational institution and relevant employers that you could investigate further, such as employers coming in to give talks or run activities, or opportunities for workplace visits. Talk to your teachers or tutors to find out more.

Alternatively, you may just be looking to gain a better understanding of how a workplace operates and what is expected of you etc.

Contacts

Perhaps you already have a sector in mind and some relevant experience. In that case, the next step might be to get a foot in the door with the right organisation, using your work experience as an opportunity to get your name and face known by an employer you'd love to work for.

Or perhaps you have another reason for looking for work experience? The next section will get you to think specifically about what you want to gain from your work experience.

2.3 What else?

Building up your knowledge, experience or list of contacts, or developing your skills, could be exactly what you hope to gain from a work experience. But you might have other reasons for doing it. The next activity will encourage you to focus on your own motives for undertaking work experience.

Activity 3 What do I want from my work experience?

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Take a few moments to reflect on what you want to gain from the next piece of work experience you undertake. You probably touched on this in [Activity 4 in Week 1](#) when you considered what you wanted to gain from this course, but this is an opportunity to do some more detailed thinking about the work experience you need to look for. Start by answering the following questions:

1. Do you need to fill a gap in your skills/experience? If so, what is the gap?

Provide your answer...

2. Do you want to find out if a particular role or organisation will suit your values? What values are important to you?

Provide your answer...

3. Are you targeting a specific sector or employer? Or do you simply want to gain some experience of the world of work?

Provide your answer...

Knowing the answers to questions like these will help you make decisions as you progress through the rest of this course.

Use the box below to note down any other reasons you have for undertaking work experience. For example, it might be to build your confidence, help your academic studies or earn some money.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

It doesn't matter if you don't know what you want to do – that just gives you a wider range of potential opportunities to apply for. Choosing something that sounds interesting and plays to your strengths is a great starting point.

This might be a good time to have a discussion with a careers professional if you have access to one – either within your institution or independently – to talk through all of your work this week on skills and values.

Once you have a better idea of the ideal internship or work experience for your needs, you need to make sure that your plan is practical too. You'll explore some of these practical priorities in the next section.

3 Practical considerations

There are a number of practical issues that you might need to take into consideration when choosing your work experience.

Location

This may be less of an issue if you are a new graduate with no ties to a particular place, but if you have family commitments, for example, then location could be very important. This can have an impact if your ambitions lie in a sector with a particular geographical bias – for example, many media production companies are based in London.



Travel and other costs, such as accommodation, could be significant if your work experience isn't conveniently located.

Alternatively, you might be considering an overseas experience, where travel will be a significant factor. The [Prospects website](#) has a useful section on working abroad, with details on over 30 countries including information on summer jobs and internships.

Salary

As you've already learned, internships and other work experiences in certain sectors might be unpaid. Even if they are paid, the amount will depend heavily on the industry you choose and may be the minimum wage for your age bracket.

The government reviews the minimum wage each year. The latest figures can be found on their [website](#).

It's important to consider whether your salary will cover the expenditure you need it to. The next activity will help you do this.

Activity 4 What does my salary need to cover?

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Use the table below to list the things that your work experience salary will have to cover while you are doing it. If you can calculate an approximate cost, enter it into the second column.

Table 2 Itemised living costs (per year)

Item/service etc.	Approximate cost
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Total	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

Depending on your circumstances, you might have included travel, accommodation, food, bills, childcare, social life etc. If you find that your chosen work experience is unlikely to cover those costs, a plan B may be required.

If you found this activity useful, you might want to take longer over it and work out the costs in more detail.

If finance, other work commitments or location are issues, a remote or virtual internship might be a good option. You can find out more about these in Week 7. Another option might be to look for work that you can do alongside your studies, or voluntary work you can do at weekends or during a short period of leave.

Financial support

If you are currently in higher education, some universities provide bursaries to help with the costs of work experience, particularly if it is unpaid. Contact your careers service to find out more.

Duration

What is practical for your current situation? For example, you might prefer to do work experience for a specific time period during a holiday, or perhaps it could run alongside your other activities on a part-time basis. You might be looking for a variety of short periods of work experience in different organisations or even sectors, or you might prefer to do a longer period with one employer.

Compromise

If you aren't able to find something that matches your needs exactly, it is useful to have an idea of what you are willing or able to compromise on. For example, could you manage on a smaller income if you made certain cuts to your expenditure? Would buying a discounted season ticket help with your travel costs and widen potential location?

How far might you be willing to compromise for the ideal work experience opportunity? Having an idea about what would suit you best on a practical level will allow you to make decisions more easily when you come across different opportunities. You'll look at the decision-making process in the next section.

4 Decision making

For some people, the key to good decision making is to be as informed as possible; for others, it centres on a gut reaction.



Watch this *Psychologies* video from life coach Barry Ennis to hear a bit more about these two approaches and the value of using both to explore the options that might be open to you.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2



A useful approach is to think about how you've made significant decisions in the past, and whether the choices you made were good ones. For example, how did you choose previous jobs, your university course or a major holiday?

There is no right or wrong way of making decisions, but knowing which style you naturally favour can give you more confidence in your final choices. If you can view it from both perspectives, this will potentially give you a greater insight.

If you struggle with decision making and feel you would benefit from a more analytical approach, you might find it useful to use a decision-making tool such as the decision matrix analysis. You will look at this next.

4.1 Decision matrix analysis

Watch this short video from Mind Tools explaining the process of the decision matrix analysis.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3



Here's a worked example:

Stanley is at university in Manchester and his parents live in Sheffield. He is trying to decide between three different offers of work experience. One is with an investment bank in London, one is with a social enterprise that works with young offenders in Brighton and the other is within the widening participation department at his university. He can't decide between them as they all have different attractions.

He decides to do a decision matrix analysis. His first step is to populate the table below. He chooses salary, location and values as the three factors that are most important to him.

Table 3 Decision matrix analysis

Factors	Salary	Location	Alignment with my values	Totals
Importance to me (0–5)	2	2	4	
Investment bank	Score = 5 Score x importance = $5 \times 2 = 10$	$3 \times 2 = 6$	$1 \times 4 = 4$	20
Social enterprise	Score = 2 Score x importance = $2 \times 2 = 4$	$2 \times 2 = 4$	$4 \times 4 = 16$	24

Widening participation	Score = 3	$5 \times 2 = 10$	$3 \times 4 = 12$	28
	Score x importance = 3×2 = 6			

Scores: 0 = absolutely unimportant and 5 = very important

When he assesses the factors, the investment banking role scores highly for salary whereas the widening participation job scores highly for location, as he could just stay living in his current student house. The social enterprise role aligns closely with his values and so scores 4.

The widening participation role has the highest overall score as it aligns well with Stanley's values, is in a very convenient location and offers a good salary. He can now check whether that sits well with his intuitive feeling about the role. If not, he can explore his scores again and think about the issues that have been raised.

Now it's your turn!

Activity 5 My decision matrix analysis

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

Think of a decision you need to make. It could be the same as Stanley's or it could be a different issue. For example, you might need to decide between three different job sectors or you could be focusing on whether to look for a summer internship, volunteering opportunity or part-time work.

Use the table below to design your matrix.

Enter the things you are trying to decide between down the left-hand column, and enter the factors that are important to you across the top. Extra rows have been included to accommodate more choices.

Table 4 My decision matrix analysis

Factors	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Totals
Importance to me (0–5)	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide

<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide</i>
<hr/> Discussion Were you surprised by the outcome, or did it align well with your intuitive feeling about the decision? Don't expect this tool to always give you the 'correct' answer but do use it to explore your decision-making processes and don't be afraid to question what comes out of it. As the expert in the video explains, an unexpected result might be a sign that different factors are more important to you than you first thought. Not everyone will find this activity effective but for those of you who prefer a more structured approach to decision making, it could be a helpful tool.				

If you want to explore decision matrix analysis further, visit the [Mind Tools website](#) and look for 'Decision Matrix Analysis'. This will be one of three articles you can access for free.

4.2 Career decision-making style

An informed decision and an intuitive decision are two general decision-making styles, however when considering your career specifically Bimrose and Barnes (2008, pp. 33-54) define four career decision making styles that you might adopt. Higgins (2013) summarises the key characteristics of each below.

Evaluative careerists

- Are comfortable reflecting on their own needs, values and abilities and working out what sort of work is going to fulfil them.
- Take into account practical considerations, such as money, but balance them against less tangible considerations.

Strategic careerists

- Take a much more rational decision-making approach to their careers – laying out options, weighing them up and then implementing plans to achieve their goals.
- Focus on matching (e.g. skills and experience with job requirements) and benefits when career planning rather than emotion or wider needs.

Aspirational careerists

- Have a very clear aspirational goal, often quite different from where they are now, and which is closely linked with their personal priorities.
- May take a number of different roles to make ends meet but are clear about where they want to get to.

Opportunistic careerists

- Grab what is in front of them based on a chance conversation or an opportunity that crops up unexpectedly.
- Are flexible and may not even seem to make a conscious choice as to what to do next.

All of these approaches are perfectly valid and choosing the most appropriate category for you can help you to feel comfortable about your style, rather than worrying that you might be making decisions for the wrong reasons.

Now you have gained some insight into how you might choose the right opportunity, you can start to research where to look and how to maximise your applications.

5 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 3, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 3 quiz](#)

6 Summary of Week 3

At this stage, you should be feeling more confident about what a good work experience opportunity should offer and what employers might expect from you. You've looked at what you want to gain from the experience, considered your practical needs and explored a decision-making tool.

You should now be able to:

- understand your rights and what you can expect from an employer
- reflect on what you want to gain from your internship or other work experience
- make more effective decisions about which opportunities to target.

Next week, you'll move on to looking for opportunities and making effective applications.

You can now go to [Week 4](#).

Week 4: How to find a work experience opportunity – promoting myself in writing

Introduction

In Week 3, you focused on how to choose the right opportunity for you. You reflected on what you want to gain from the experience and any practical constraints you may have. This week, you'll find out where to look for opportunities and how to make a strong application through promoting your personal brand in writing.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1

Week 4

How to find a work experience opportunity – promoting myself in writing

By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- locate suitable work experience opportunities
- use social media to your advantage

- present yourself more effectively in written applications.

You'll begin this week by looking at where internships and other work experiences might be advertised.

1 Finding advertised vacancies

There are many online sources of internship and other work experience vacancies, including the following:

- **[TARGETJobs](#)** – a good website source of vacancies aimed at higher education students. Searchable by degree subject, opportunity type, career sector, salary, region, degree requirements and whether organisations accept applications from those requiring work permits. It includes internships, work placements and summer jobs.
- **[Milkround](#)** – another popular student and graduate job website with an internships vacancy database. Searchable by job type/sector/skill and town/city/region.
- **[Prospects](#)** – an extensive graduate careers advice website with a jobs database. In 'Type of work', choose 'work experience' to see a range of opportunities. If you want to narrow your search further, you could type 'Internship' into the 'Keyword' box.
- **[Ratemyplacement](#)** – this site has a focus on student internships and placements. It also collects student reviews on a wide range of employing organisations, which can provide useful insight.
- **[Student Job](#)** – this site includes vacancies for those who are not at university. It has a focus on part-time and temporary roles and also includes work from home jobs.



If you have specific ideas about the employers you'd like to work with, check out their websites as they may advertise vacancies directly.

Activity 1 Finding work experience vacancies

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Spend a few minutes looking at one or more of the vacancy websites listed. Get a feel for the types of vacancies advertised and whether they are likely to suit your needs. If you already have an idea of what you want to do, is the search facility capable of narrowing it down enough for you?

Make some notes about your findings in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You may find that the employers who use these sites don't represent the sector or type of organisation you want to work with. If that is the case, there are other ways to more proactively find the experience you're searching for, which you will look at in the next section.

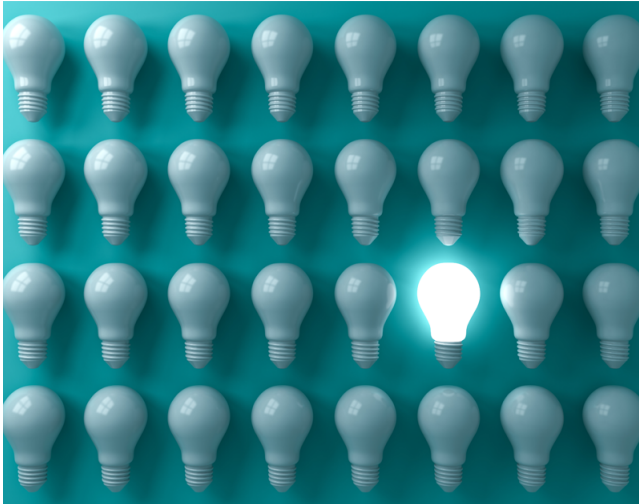
If you are currently in higher education, your institution's careers service will often have their own vacancy database that you can access. They may also have a dedicated team who match students with vacancies in the local area or with other opportunities that are specifically targeted at students from your institution.

If you don't have access to an institutional careers service, there are other ways to find opportunities and the next section will introduce you to them.

2 Finding hidden vacancies

Advertised vacancies are one way to find work experience. The other way to find work experience of relevance to your needs is to take a pro-active approach and look for it yourself. This process is also referred to as making a speculative application.

Some employers will be more receptive to this than others and you may find a speculative approach more successful with smaller businesses because larger ones are more likely to run their own formal internships programmes with online application processes.



The key to successfully accessing the hidden job market is building and using your network of contacts.

Go back to [Activity 3 in Week 3](#) where you analysed what you want to gain from work experience. What types of employer/role could offer you what you are looking for?

There are several useful steps you could take, listed below.

- Research companies or organisations that sound interesting and have the potential to meet your needs, and create a shortlist based on your priorities (e.g. location).
- Try to have a conversation with someone who works there. This could be online, through a social media platform such as LinkedIn, over the phone or even in person at a relevant event. Don't start by asking for some work experience, instead take the time to learn more about them and what they do.
- Find out who is the head of the department that interests you in each organisation. Company websites sometimes list staff names and roles to help you as a starting point or you could try phoning the main switchboard and asking who you need to contact.
- Find out as much as you can about the priorities of your target organisation by looking at their website, following them on social media and looking at any job vacancies you can find. What are they proud of? What are the issues they are currently working on or grappling with?

Speculative applications are always more effective if you can make a personal connection with someone before applying. Think about who you know already and whether they could make a suitable introduction. Be aware that people aren't always comfortable with doing this but the more they understand about your motives, career plans and thinking so far,

the more likely they are to agree. The next activity will help you to set out your personal and professional networks.

Activity 2 Who do I know?

Allow about 25 minutes for this activity

In this exercise, you're going to focus on personal and professional networks that could help you to move forward with your plans.

First you need to think about what you want to gain from your network, and the conversations you might have with people. For example,

- if you have a specific sector in mind, you could ask them if they or anyone they know has any connections in that sector. If they know someone, would they be happy to introduce you?
- if you don't have a specific plan, you could ask them what they do and see where the conversation takes you. If they have a role that interests you, you could ask them some more focused questions and find out about work experience opportunities.

Next, think about who will be in the different networks you approach. Your list could include:

- people you know well, e.g. family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, people you've met through hobbies or other life experiences
- people you are friendly with but don't know well, e.g. friends of friends, colleagues from previous or current employment or people who live on your street
- people you are virtually connected to, e.g. follow on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn.

Depending on your preference, you could use the table below, draw a spider diagram or write a list of people you'd like to talk to.

Table 1 Contacts from your personal and professional networks

Work life	Personal life	Distant connections	Virtual connections
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Did you come up with a long list of possible conversations to have? Who are you going to talk to first?

If your list is short or you don't find any relevant connections amongst those you speak to, you can take various steps to build new ones.

- Look at your LinkedIn or Facebook contacts to see who they know or the groups they are members of – did you find anything interesting? (Or maybe your first step is to set up a LinkedIn account – you will find out more about that in the next section.)
- Investigate bloggers, trainers, successful individuals etc. in the areas that you want to focus on and follow them on social media.
- Scan key organisations' websites and try to identify who is working in the roles or areas you are interested in. Could you email and ask to meet them to learn more about their role and what they do? Or are the organisations that you're interested in running any workshops or events you could attend? This is a good way of meeting new people and building connections in the industry that you are targeting.

You'll find out more about using your networking skills to access the hidden job market in Week 5.

Now you've thought about who you are going to target, whether in response to a vacancy or speculatively, you can start to look at how to promote yourself effectively.

3 Building my profile on social media

‘Social recruiting’ is a growing trend amongst employers. This means using social media platforms to find, attract and recruit employees.

In a recent article on recruitment trends, Andre (no date) shares the following infographic from Infinity Social Media and Jobcast.



Figure 1 Social recruiting infographic

You can see that developing a strong profile on social media can be useful when you're looking for work experience.

Social media can also be a good way to raise your profile with potential employers – for example, by contributing to relevant discussion groups in a positive and professional way. Moreover, if you follow organisations that interest you on social media, you might sometimes get early warning of a new vacancy or other opportunity.

Depending on the sectors that interest you, different social media platforms may be more or less relevant. Find the platform that people in your preferred industry use the most. For example, a more visual-based industry might be more likely to use Instagram or YouTube, whereas a more traditional or corporate business will probably have a presence on LinkedIn.

In the next section you'll focus on LinkedIn as this is the platform that is likely to be of most relevance to all. It also has the most obvious connection to the world of work.

3.1 Promoting myself on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking platform for professionals. It has approximately 700 million users in over 200 countries and territories worldwide.

There are many ways to use it to both develop and promote your personal brand. For beginners, Nations (2018) suggests the following:

- get back in touch with old colleagues
- use your profile as your CV or resume
- find and apply to jobs
- find and connect with new professionals
- participate in relevant groups
- blog about what you know.

You can also search for internships or work experience in the jobs section.

Joining relevant groups and regularly contributing to the conversations that take place is a great way to build your profile. Watch the video [Grow your network with LinkedIn Groups](#) to find out more about how to use groups effectively.

The next activity will help you to set up a LinkedIn profile if you don't already have one or, if you do, to enhance and update it.

Activity 3 My LinkedIn profile

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

A key element of your LinkedIn profile is the summary section. This appears at the top of your profile and is the first thing people will read about you.

Do you already have a LinkedIn profile?

- If yes, use this exercise to update your summary section.
- If no, consider setting one up and then using this activity to fill in your summary section when you are ready.

A LinkedIn summary is usually no more than 2–3 paragraphs long and is an opportunity to grab people's attention and encourage them to read on. It is a bit like a personal profile on a CV.

Compose your summary in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

If you need some ideas, Frost (no date) has some suggestions for different templates:

- the mission-based summary – opens with a broad description of what you do, then gets more and more specific
- the personality summary – begins with an anecdote that demonstrates one or two key personality traits
- the short and sweet summary – shares current role, previous positions and skills, useful for technical or conservative industries
- the blended summary – blending the personality and mission-based approaches to create something light, fun and professional
- the accomplishments summary – tells potential employers why you deserve the job.

Frost's blog also includes examples of each and shares some useful ideas and suggestions. Find the link in the References section at the end of this week.

3.2 Tidying my digital footprint

The other aspect of social media that you need to be aware of is whether there are any posts/images from the past that could be detrimental to your work experience plans. Use your preferred search engine to look for your name and see what comes up. Grothaus (2018) offers the following tips for tidying up your digital footprint.

Box 1 Tips for tidying your digital footprint

- Make your social media accounts private.
- Review your timelines and remove any photos or comments that could cast you in a negative light.
- Tags with your name can come up in online searches. Either untag yourself, ask friends to untag you or investigate how the platform allows you to disable other people from tagging you in the first place.
- Find and close any old social media accounts. If you've forgotten what they are, try a service like Deseat.me which aims to help you find all your forgotten online accounts.

Grothaus (2018)

If you want to find out more about this topic, the OpenLearn course *Digital literacy: succeeding in a digital world* has some useful content, including the following video about how to improve your digital footprint.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2



Developing a good digital footprint



As you've seen, if used correctly, a social media presence can be beneficial to finding work experience. But once you've found the work experience you'd like to do, you'll usually need to make an application of some kind. You'll look at how to make yourself stand out in your application next.

4 Presenting myself in writing

This section will give you some relevant advice to help with internships and work experience applications.

Your written application, which could include a covering letter, an application form or a CV, is your first opportunity to showcase your skills and strengths to the employer. At this point, your intention is to impress them enough to make them want to meet you at an interview.



There are many online resources available to help you fill out an application form or write a CV effectively. Visit the [Open University Careers and Employability](#) page on CVs, applications and interviews to find out more.

4.1 Making my application stand out

The key to grabbing an employer's attention is tailoring your covering letter, CV or application form, and the way to do that is by thoroughly researching the employer you are targeting.

If you are making a speculative application, it is even more important that you are able to grab the employer's attention as they won't necessarily be recruiting.

Rolfe (no date) recommends finding answers to 10 key questions about an employer listed in Box 2.

Box 2 Key questions to answer before making a speculative application

1. **What do they do?** Find out everything you can about their products and services, along with who their target audience is.
2. **What are they looking for in an employee?** Check their job advert, careers page and social media profiles to find out what skills, attributes and experience they value most.

3. **What's new within the organisation?** From news stories to 'About us' pages, you'll be able to gain a good idea of a company's recent developments, successes and failures.
4. **What are the company values?** Find out what they're passionate about and what their goals are as a company. If you can find a mission statement, that's even better.
5. **What is their company culture like?** A company's culture is demonstrated in everything they do, so look out for indicators of work–life balance, work environment, examples of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and any social schemes they might offer.
6. **Are there good opportunities for progression?** By finding out more about the company structure, and any senior vacancies coming up, you'll be able to get a rough idea of whether progression is an option. (When you're looking for work experience, this might involve finding out how often they take their work experience interns onto permanent contracts).
7. **What are their employee benefits?** Do they offer flexi-time hours? How much holiday will you get? This is often stated in a job description, but may also be referenced on review sites and on a company's career page. (For work experience, there might be other more relevant benefits to investigate, such as whether you will receive a reference on completion).
8. **Who are their professional contacts?** Check their social media pages to find out how well-linked they are within their industry.
9. **Who will you be interviewed by?** Learning about their background, position, and common interests means less surprises if you're invited to interview.
10. **Who are their competitors?** Make notes on how their competitors differ and what makes the company you're applying to stand out.

Rolfe (no date)

Once you have found out as much as you can about an employer, you can think about what you have to offer and where the links are. For example, their values might align particularly well with yours or they might prioritise skills and attributes that you have.

When you answer their application-form questions or write your covering letter and CV, you can tailor your content to what you now understand about their priorities and interests based on your research.

Some of this information will also be really useful at interview stage. You'll find out more about interviews in Week 6, but first you'll consider what should be included in your covering letter as part of your application.

4.2 What to include in a covering letter

A good place to catch a new employer's attention, particularly if you are applying speculatively, is in your covering letter, i.e. the letter you write to accompany your CV. If you're sending your CV online, this could be your introductory email.

If you're applying with an application form, a covering letter is less likely to be a requirement. The form has usually been carefully designed by the organisation to ask you everything they need to know, so a letter isn't needed.

White (no date) offers top tips on writing covering letters, including those shown in Box 3.

Box 3 Covering letter top tips

- Don't rewrite your CV – just provide edited highlights and aim to distil the key themes.
- Talk about the company – tell them what you are impressed with and what attracts you to them.
- Provide specific evidence of your qualities – pick out the main qualities the employer is seeking in their advert and show that you have them. Provide concrete examples and solid numbers wherever you can.
- Reflect your personality – ensure the letter shows how motivated and enthusiastic you are. Do not include negative comments.
- Relevant and brief – a well-written letter should draw the recruiter's eye to relevant experience on your CV. Ensure it is never more than a page long.
- Contact details – wherever possible, send your letter and CV to a named individual. It will look a lot better than 'Dear sir/madam'.
- Neatness/presentation – make sure your covering letter is clearly laid out with no typos or spelling errors.

White (no date)

Activity 4 is an opportunity for you to practise writing a covering letter.

Activity 4 Writing a strong covering letter

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

Imagine you are applying for a part-time job in a local café. You've already done your research and read some excellent reviews. You know from personal experience that it has a good reputation and it is hard to get a table. Whenever you've been there, the atmosphere and service has been great and the food is delicious. You've followed them on Facebook for a few months and their posts indicate a good sense of humour and a genuine interest in cakes and pastries. They've hinted that they are looking to expand the team.

Now write a covering letter to accompany your CV.

Think about any skills and/or experience that you have that would be relevant for this post and refer to those in your letter. As this is an imaginary exercise, make up the details if that is easier for you.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The aim of this activity is to familiarise you with the content of a good covering letter, so it doesn't matter if you've embellished a few details for the exercise! However, when you are applying for a real work experience opportunity, if you really have nothing specific to say in your covering letter – about them as an employer or how your skills align with what they are looking for – you might be applying for the wrong job.

With this example, there was lots of scope to share what you've learned about the employer and link that with why you want to work for them. For example:

As you can see from my CV, I already have four years of part-time café experience, working my way up from kitchen porter to my recent role supervising new staff. I've followed you on social media for a few months now and I'm really excited by your obvious passion for new and innovative cakes and pastries. In my spare time I love to bake and would be keen to contribute ideas and learn from your experience.

This paragraph not only draws attention to your previous relevant experience but highlights the fact that you have progressed to a more responsible position and demonstrates your shared enthusiasm for baking.

Now that you've mastered a good covering letter, you can move on to the application itself. There's less to say about tailoring application forms as they are designed by the employer so you must carefully follow their instructions and answer the questions asked. While you can, of course, still tailor your answers to what you have learned about their priorities, in a CV there is more scope to make it your own and structure it to highlight the key skills and experience you want an employer to notice.

There are several types of CV that might be used in different circumstances, but one that is potentially useful if you don't have a lot of relevant experience yet, is the skills-based CV. You'll look at that next.

4.3 Benefits of a skills-based CV

A skills-based or functional CV is a CV that highlights your skills rather than where you got them from. This type of CV can be particularly useful if you are a student or new graduate who doesn't have much experience to share in your applications, which means your emphasis should be on highlighting your existing skills and strengths and demonstrating your potential.

Equally, if you are a career changer with significant experience but in an unrelated industry, your relevant skills risk getting lost in a long list of work roles that may not mean anything to the employer reading your application. In this case, a skills-based CV might also be appropriate. Read this [example of a skills-based CV](#) to see what you should include.

When you highlight your key skills, make sure you choose skills that you know the employer will be interested in. In the example, Madeleine is looking for marketing experience, so it makes sense to highlight skills that are important in a marketing context.

Once you have impressed a potential employer on paper, they will usually want to meet with you, and you'll explore face-to-face interactions further in Week 5.

5 This week's quiz

It's now time to take the Week 4 badge quiz. It's similar to previous quizzes but this time, instead of answering five questions, there will be 15.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 4 compulsory badge quiz](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

6 Summary of Week 4

This week, you've looked at how to find work experience and how to make the most effective applications. You've learned about typical sources of internship and other work experience vacancies, how to access the hidden job market, and you've focused on how to make your applications more effective.

You should now be able to:

- locate suitable work experience opportunities
- use social media to your advantage
- present yourself more effectively in written applications.

Next week, you'll focus on presenting yourself effectively in person.

You are now halfway through the course. The Open University would really appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future improvement in our optional [end-of-course survey](#), which you will also have an opportunity to complete at the end of Week 8. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

You can now go to [Week 5](#).

Week 5: Obtaining a work experience opportunity – promoting myself in person

Introduction

In Week 4, you looked at where to find vacancies and how to promote yourself effectively in writing. This week, you'll focus on the next part of securing an internship or work experience opportunity – presenting yourself in person.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 1](#)

Week 5

Obtaining a work experience opportunity – promoting myself in person

By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- create a good first impression when you meet potential employers
- present yourself more effectively at interview

- understand the benefits of networking and feel more confident doing it.

You'll begin the week by looking at first impressions.

1 Creating a good first impression

It is normal to feel anxious about meeting people for the first time, but first impressions are important and they are made in a matter of seconds. You can help to reduce your anxiety on these occasions by being well prepared and self-aware.



The following tips are based around a blog by Knight (2019) for the Harvard Business Review Ascend platform.

Box 1 Tips for making a good first impression

- **Prepare talking points** – do some homework. Know who you're meeting, what they care about and what they want from you. Look at their LinkedIn profile or company website.
- **Be aware of your body language** – take long strides. Sit up straight. Walk with your chest held high. Smile and make eye contact.
- **Play to your strengths** – ask trusted friends and colleagues what they see as your strengths or the most likable things about you, and then try to emphasise those things when you're meeting someone new. (You'll consider this in more detail later this week when creating an elevator pitch.)
- **Find something in common** – the goal is to create a connection on a human level and small talk is a great way to build rapport. That could be local transport, the weather or the amazing building you are in, for example. If you're at an event, you could talk about the workshops or presentations you've attended.
- **Engage and be engaging** – don't try to impress the other person with your knowledge. Listen to them, ask them about themselves.
- **Follow up** – write a note of appreciation showing what you learned from your conversation. Share a tweet or blog that they've written via your own social media.

Knight (2019)

In an interview situation, rapport building can start from the moment you walk into the room. Some of the other advice Knight gives, such as being well prepared, playing to your strengths and being engaging, will also be very relevant to the interview process.

The next few sections will look at some other important elements of a first impression you should consider, starting with the handshake.

1.1 Shaking hands

In the UK, a key part of your first impression is created by your handshake.

Note: the Covid-19 pandemic has changed this fact, but we're leaving this section in the course for now as it should become relevant again when we are able to return to normality. We will review this decision as longer-term Government advice becomes clearer.

Watch this humorous video about bad handshakes from the Australian Government to see what you should avoid.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2



So what should you do? Lennon (2018) makes the suggestions shown in Box 2.

Box 2 What makes a good handshake?

- **Introduce yourself** – tell the person who you are before you reach out and shake their hand.
- **Initiate appropriately** – it's almost always appropriate to initiate a handshake during a greeting. Never leave an extended hand hanging.

- **Use the correct hand** – most people shake with their right hand, but be prepared to shake with your left hand if circumstances require that.
- **Stand up** – out of respect for the person you are greeting.
- **Make eye contact** – look a person in the eyes as you shake hands.
- **Smile** – establishing that you are a confident, friendly, genuine person.
- **Grip firmly** – a good tip is to match the grip of the interviewer.
- **Shake from the elbow** – two to three times.
- **Repeat their name** – saying something like ‘It’s great to meet you, Tom’ during the handshake can help you to remember their name later on.

Lennon (2018)

You’ll now have a go yourself.

Activity 1 Shake some hands!

Allow about 5 minutes for this activity

Find someone you know well and feel comfortable with and practise shaking their hand. Perhaps you could try some of the bad handshakes as well as the one you plan to use when you meet potential employers.

Note: during the Covid-19 pandemic, you’ll need to restrict this activity to those you are permitted to have physical contact with.

Discussion

That may have felt slightly awkward but the more you do it, the more natural it will feel. A strong, appropriate handshake is a great way to start a first impression.

1.2 Dressing appropriately

Another aspect of the first impression that many people worry about is what to wear.

Watch this video from business image specialist Jane Chapman explaining her top tips for presenting yourself at an interview or networking event.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3



1.3 Body language

In Knight's top tips at the beginning of Section 1, she spoke about sitting up straight and walking with your chest held high. Not only will this make you look more confident, it will make you feel that way too. Try sitting up straighter now – do you feel more professional and confident now?

When trying to create a good first impression, other body language cues that it can be useful to be aware of include:

- **crossed arms and legs** – these present a physical barrier and can indicate that you are resistant to the other person's ideas or that you are feeling insecure or defensive; avoiding this type of body language will help to show that you are interested in the conversation you are having
- **posture** – slouching in your seat will suggest boredom or a lack of confidence, whereas leaning in towards someone (not too close!) can demonstrate an interest in what they are saying
- **gestures** – waving your arms around can be distracting for the other person but using your hands to stress specific points can add impact to what you are saying.

1.4 Good first impression checklist

Creating a mental checklist for when you meet an interviewer or someone at a networking event is a useful way to make sure your first impression is a good one. You could use the following:

- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Firm handshake (if appropriate)
- Sit straight in your chair, shoulders down and back
- Maintain open body language (don't fold your arms or cross your legs)
- Listen to what the other person is saying.

Once you've made a good first impression, you then need to make sure that your answers to interview questions are as effective as possible. You'll look at how to do this next.

2 Typical interview questions

Interview preparation and technique is covered in depth by many excellent resources. Visit [the Open University Careers and Employability page on CVs](#), application forms and interviews to find out more.



When applying for work experience, the style of interview might vary. For example, an internship or placement interview is likely to be formal and structured, whereas an interview for part-time work or volunteering might be less so.

Typical questions in a more formal interview are likely to fall into two categories: competency-based questions and strengths-based questions. You will look at these each in turn next.

2.1 Competency-based questions

Competency-based questions, sometimes known as behavioural questions, have been used by employers for years. They usually start with something like 'tell us about a time when you ...' and require you to recount an example of when you've used a specific skill that is of interest to them. For example, 'Tell us about a time when you demonstrated excellent customer service in a difficult situation.' Basically, they are trying to determine your future potential from your past experience.

Watch this video from manufacturing company Saint Gobain, which explains why employers use competency-based questions and how you should prepare for them.

View at: [youtube:1g9S43xAeXg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1g9S43xAeXg)

Video 4

Now have a go yourself.

Activity 2 Time to try the technique

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Draft your answer to this typical interview question about adaptability in the box below.

Describe a situation when you had to change the way you worked because of changing circumstances. How did you adapt?

Remember to use the STAR model, i.e. situation, task, action, result. Your emphasis should be on the action you took.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Sample answer:

Situation: My employer introduced a new IT system at very short notice, which fundamentally changed my daily activities.

Task: I was tasked with training my team to ensure that they could work with it efficiently.

Action: Despite my initial reservations, I quickly researched the system and identified colleagues within my sector who were already using it. I was reassured by my conversations with them that it would lead to significant improvements for us. I invited one of my contacts to come and talk to the team, which was very well received, and I took a small group to visit their premises to see exactly how the system worked for them.

I involved myself closely with the team who came to install the system, ensuring that I had a good overview of how it worked and knew who to contact if I had any problems.

Result: There were a few hiccups along the way, but the system was installed on time and my team were enthusiastic about using it. By the time it was up and running, we all felt confident about the key elements of the system and how it would fit in with our work.

Next you'll look at strengths-based questions.

2.2 Strengths-based questions

Employers are increasingly interested in exploring the strengths of job candidates.

Strengths are skills that you are **good at**, feel **energised by** and **use regularly**.

Watch this video from EY explaining why employers use strengths-based questions.

View at: [youtube:vui4uZ1X0bw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vui4uZ1X0bw)

Video 5

You'll now have a go at identifying your own strengths.

Activity 3 Identifying my strengths

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

1. Look back at the [skills audit](#) you did in Week 3. In that case, you were trying to identify gaps that you could develop or fill through work experience. But you can also use your results to identify strengths.

Which were the skills that you labelled yourself as competent or proficient in (a score of 2 or 3)? List them in the box below.

Provide your answer...

2. Of those you listed in the box above, consider which you most enjoy using – the ones where you don't notice the time passing as you are so immersed in your task, or the ones that you use all the time, almost without realising. List them in the box below. The skills you list here are the most likely to be your natural strengths.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

When you look at the list you generated in that last box, does it feel like an accurate description of your strengths? Remember, you can be really good at something without it being a strength. A strength is something you feel energised by when you are using it.

As EY explained in the video, if employers can find staff who are able to use their strengths in their work, they are more likely to have a happy workforce.

Strengths-based interviews can sometimes feel more relaxed and comfortable, but don't forget they are still assessing you for a role in their organisation – so keep it professional.

The following video from the University of Glasgow explains strengths-based interviews in more detail. It is a little longer than most of the videos included in this course, but it does cover a lot of relevant material, including what you should expect and how to prepare.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 6



Mason (2019) has compiled the following list of strengths-based interview questions:

- How would your close friends describe you?
- Do you prefer the big picture or the small details?
- What are you good at?
- When did you achieve something you're really proud of?
- What do you enjoy doing the least?
- What tasks are always left on your to-do list?
- How do you feel about deadlines?
- Do you think this role will play to your strengths?

If you want to practise one of these questions, there will be an opportunity in the next section where you will look at the video interview – something that is becoming increasingly common.

3 Video interviews

Employers are increasingly using video interviews as part of their recruitment processes – either **live**, using a video conferencing tool with a recruiter at the other end, or **recorded**, where you answer pre-set questions using your own equipment and submit them when you've finished.



Live video interviews follow the same rules as any ordinary interview but it can be useful to be aware of how you come across on camera. Practise by using Skype, Zoom or Google Hangouts etc. with your friends or family. You'll explore these online conferencing tools in more detail in Week 7 when you investigate virtual internships.

Pre-recorded video interviews are a bit different and can feel quite uncomfortable when you don't have a person to interact with, i.e. there are no visual cues or encouragement/feedback from dialogue with an interviewer. Knowing what to expect can help to build your confidence. A good first step is to be more aware of the practicalities involved.

Box 3 gives some practical points to consider when preparing for a pre-recorded video interview.

Box 3 Practical points to consider when preparing for a pre-recorded video interview

- The employer will provide you with login details.
- You'll usually be able to check that your equipment works and have a practice run before you start.
- During the interview, the questions will appear on the screen and you'll have a set time to read and then answer them. This time can vary between employers but is usually around 30–90 seconds. The time is often displayed on the screen so you can keep an eye on how much you have left.
- You can usually choose when you start recording but you can't stop and restart unless there is a technical problem.
- If there is a technical problem, the software should sort it out but there will be a helpline number available just in case. Make it clear in your recording or to the person interviewing you that something has gone wrong.

For both a live and pre-recorded interview it will be important to consider the following:

- **location** – think about background and lighting and make sure you are somewhere you won't be disturbed or easily distracted
- **equipment** – make sure your internet connection, webcam and microphone are working correctly and that you are happy with the position of your camera; ideally you should aim to have it slightly above eye level
- **practise** – speaking over a video connection can be strange if you haven't done it before; for example, the appearance of eye contact comes from looking into the camera rather than at the screen, and the images and sound sometimes lag.

A video interview might be something you haven't experienced yet or, if you have, it might be something you don't yet feel comfortable with. If this is the case, Activity 4 will give you an opportunity to practise and build your confidence.

Activity 4 Practising for a video interview

Allow about 20 minutes for this activity

Go to [the Assessment Day website](#) where you have the opportunity to do a practice recording.

The technical requirements to participate are as follows:

Ensure you have a webcam and microphone connected to your PC or laptop. You will also need to allow access to your microphone and camera on your phone. This will be used only to record your responses. You can then play them back to review your responses yourself. You will also need Flash installed on your browser.

If you don't have the equipment required, ask a friend or family member to record you on their camera or phone.

Choose one or more of the following practice questions suggested by Assessment Day (no date):

- Tell me about a time you needed to use teamwork to solve a problem. (Use the STAR technique for this one from [Activity 2](#).)
- What motivates you at work?
- Describe a time when you needed to develop an unconventional approach to solve an existing problem. (STAR technique.)
- Which achievements are you particularly proud of?

If you prefer, you could choose one of the strengths-based questions listed in the [previous section](#).

Discussion

How did that feel? How did you come across? Were you awkward and hesitant or did you feel confident? What was your body language like?

Did you structure your answer using STAR? Did you take the opportunity to highlight some of your key strengths?

The benefit of getting a friend to film you is that they can give you feedback too. If you did it on the website this time, perhaps ask a friend to help you next time.

As well as Assessment Day, guidance on video interviews for candidates is also offered by Sonru and LaunchPad Recruits – two online platforms used by recruiters for video interviewing. You can access their websites in the **Further reading** section of this week.

If you are currently studying at university, some university careers services can give you access to practice interview opportunities on these platforms. For example, the Open University Careers and Employability Services have access to Sonru and students can apply to take part and get feedback from an employer or a careers consultant.

A networking event is another opportunity for face-to-face interaction with potential employers, and you'll investigate these further in the next section.

4 Networking with potential employers

Sometimes a networking event with potential colleagues will be part of your interview day. On other occasions you might deliberately attend an event in order to make potentially useful contacts in the hidden job market you learned about in Week 4.



Networking doesn't come easily to many people. The information on first impressions that you've already covered is very relevant here, but it can be intimidating or challenging to initiate a conversation with someone you don't know. Remember that you won't be the only person in the room who is feeling nervous. The next activity will help you to think of ways to break the ice in a networking situation.

Activity 5 Opening lines to break the ice

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Take a few minutes to come up with some good opening lines you could use at your next networking event. List them in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Having some ideas for what you could say will help you to feel more confident.

Zetlin (2016) recommends some openers:

- say hello and let the rest of the conversation flow from there
- ask why the other person is there (this works well at an event where lots of people from different organisations are gathering, e.g. a conference)
- comment on the weather
- share your feelings about the event so far or the venue, etc. Stick with positive feelings at first so you don't risk offending anyone
- ask if the other person knows anyone at the event.

Know what you want before you get there

Another useful way to increase your confidence is to know what you want to get from the event before you arrive. Make sure you understand the context and try to do some research about who will be there. Two different examples are given in Box 4.

Box 4 Different networking contexts

Example 1 The informal lunch with potential new colleagues in between interview activities

In this case, you will want to come across as professional, approachable and engaging, so they are more likely to give positive feedback when asked what they thought of you. Your research about the organisation and the role should give you lots to say. It would also be sensible to pre-plan some appropriate questions, such as 'What do you enjoy most about working here?' or 'Did you start as an intern here yourself?'.

For other ideas, look back at the questions you came up with in [Activity 5, Week 2](#).

Example 2 Attending an industry event in order to make contacts that could help you to find some relevant work experience

Your key aim here is to come away with some contacts that you can follow up afterwards. If it's a conference you are attending, you might receive a list of delegates in your welcome pack or you could contact the organisers and ask them which organisations will be represented. That way, you can have a plan for who you want to target and perhaps find them on social media, e.g. LinkedIn, before the event. In this scenario, you should also pre-prepare a short pitch about yourself. This is sometimes called an elevator pitch.

4.1 Elevator pitch

An elevator pitch is so called because you must deliver it in the amount of time it might take to travel between floors in a lift or elevator. That means it needs to be brief and to the point, explaining who you are, what you have to offer and what you are looking for.

Watch this video from Canada's York Region Government showing you some of the dos and don'ts of an elevator pitch.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 7



This is a useful technique to get right as you never know when a quick summary of your situation will be useful.

Activity 6 My elevator pitch

Allow about 20 minutes for this activity

In the box below, write five points that summarise what you want to cover in your elevator pitch. Remember the advice in the video about highlighting your accomplishments, your job history or your strengths. If you have a specific target or event in mind already, you could also tailor your points so that they are relevant to the individual or situation.

Provide your answer...

Now refine what you've listed so you can cover what you want to say in 20–30 seconds. Time yourself reading it out. If you're feeling brave, record yourself on your phone and play it back.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Did you manage to fit in everything you wanted to say? Did 30 seconds feel too long or not long enough? It doesn't matter if you are a little over or under, the key is to make clear what you have to offer and what you want from them.

If you recorded your elevator pitch, perhaps you could show it to a trusted friend or colleague and ask for their feedback? Or better still, practise it in front of them.

It might be a bit much to ask the person you are speaking to for work experience in that first 30 seconds but it could be appropriate later in the conversation, particularly if they ask you what you do or what your future plans are.

Follow up

As the video mentioned, if you meet someone who you think will be a valuable connection, it is important to consolidate that connection by following up after the event. Make sure you end your conversation with a way to contact them – for example, ask for their business card or whether they are on LinkedIn.

Doyle (2019) offers the following tips:

- follow up within 24 hours so they are more likely to remember you
- mention a conversation from the event – also to jog their memory
- offer to help – it's always a good idea to offer something before asking for a favour
- ask to meet up for a coffee – you might frame it as a chance to continue a conversation you were having at the event
- connect with them on LinkedIn to further strengthen your professional relationship
- edit, edit, edit – make sure your follow up communication doesn't have any errors in it.

You'll find out more about the nuances of networking with colleagues *during* your work experience, in Week 6.

5 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 5, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 5 quiz](#)

6 Summary of Week 5

By the end of this week, you should be feeling more confident about presenting yourself in person, whether at interview or during a networking event. You've considered the importance of first impressions, looked at different interview questions and scenarios, and learned about elevator pitches.

You should now be able to:

- create a good first impression when you meet potential employers
- present yourself more effectively at interview
- understand the benefits of networking and feel more confident doing it.

Now that you know how to obtain your work experience, in the next week of this course you'll look in more detail at how to maximise the experience while you are there.

You can now go to [Week 6](#).

Week 6: How to make the most of my internship or other work experience

Introduction

In Week 5, you looked at obtaining work experience by presenting yourself well in person – exploring the importance of a good first impression, networking and interview techniques.

This week, you'll explore ways to increase the value of the experience once you've secured it, both for yourself and the employer.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1

Week 6

**How to make the most of my
internship or other work experience**

By the end of this week you will be able to:

- set clear goals for yourself

- build more effective relationships with your colleagues
- understand the value of making time for self-reflection.

You'll start by looking at the process of goal setting.

1 Goal setting for my internship or other work experience

In many cases, your employer will set goals for what they want you to achieve while you're with them.



Figure 1 Setting SMART goals

Nguyen (2017) shares his experience of having interns at his company. He highlights 'the importance of setting a set of ambitious goals for each of the interns we hired, and working closely with them to realize these goals over the course of the internship'. Goals he set for company interns included:

- mastering technical skills
- gaining essential background knowledge
- perfecting interpersonal skills
- building a network of contacts.

This is a great set of goals as they are well aligned with the ones you might set for yourself during work experience. However, you might already have come up with some different ones.

In Activity 1, you'll look back at Activities 2 and 3 from Week 3, when you were thinking about what you wanted to gain from an internship or other work experience. This will be your opportunity to turn those thoughts and/or any skills gaps you identified into goals.

A common acronym used when setting goals is to make them SMART, i.e.:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable (or Agreed, if you are working on them with a line manager etc.)

R = Realistic

T = Time bound

Making your goals specific and measurable helps you to clarify them and measure your progress towards achieving them. There's no point in setting yourself goals that aren't attainable or realistic as that will lead to disappointment and can impact on your self-confidence. Giving yourself a time limit to achieve them helps you to keep on track and stay motivated.

Activity 1 Making my goals SMART

Allow about 25 minutes for this activity

1. Look back at [Activities 2](#) and [3](#) from Week 3 and list in the box below any goals that you came up with.

Provide your answer...

2. Choose one goal for your next work experience and answer the relevant questions in the table below.

Table 1 Key questions to ask yourself

My goal is:		<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Question		Answer
S	Is your goal specific and clear?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
M	How will you measure success?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
A	Is it attainable? Do you have the ability to achieve it?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
R	Is it realistic in your context? Does it fit in with the other priorities in your life?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
T	Is it time bound? What's your deadline?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

In Week 8, you'll work through a process that helps you to break down your goals into actions, but the key outcome for this activity is to refine them into SMART goals rather than a list of vague desires. If you found this a useful exercise, you could repeat it for your other goals.

Mead (2019) lists a selection of digital goal-setting tools that you might find useful. See the References section for a link to her article.

In the next section you'll explore another valuable tactic when doing work experience – volunteering to take on additional responsibilities.

2 Taking on additional responsibilities

A good way to both impress your employer and enhance your own learning is to volunteer for extra responsibilities during your work experience.



For example, if your employer is looking for staff to join a focus group or brainstorm some new project ideas over lunch, volunteer to take part. Alternatively, offer to help colleagues with a particular task or activity.

By taking on additional responsibilities you'll broaden your experience further and you never know what you'll learn or who you'll encounter. Working alongside someone in a shared endeavour presents a great opportunity to have an informal conversation and maybe ask some of your questions.

In situations like these it is important to make sure you come across as friendly, open and approachable. Watch this video from ATI-Mirage which explains five ways to be more approachable.

View at: [youtube:CUMNmBFm4sU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUMNmBFm4sU)

Video 2

Something that lots of employers look for in their work experience staff is initiative. Showing initiative is a great way to demonstrate your enthusiasm to learn and you'll find out more about how to do it in the next section.

2.1 Showing initiative

Showing initiative means taking the lead in something or taking the first step. During an internship or work experience that could mean spotting something that needs to be done and offering to do it, or sharing your ideas about potential improvements to systems or processes.

Here are two reasons why you might feel uncomfortable about showing your initiative, along with some possible solutions:

1. I don't have ideas

Lots of people think they don't have ideas but they are usually wrong. Mind Tools (no date) suggests some unusual approaches to generating new ideas, including:

- **Breaking old thinking patterns** – for example, try exploring the exact opposite of what you want to achieve. This might help you to come up with innovative ways to tackle the real issue. For example, Mind Tools gives the example of redesigning a website. By trying to make the design boring, frustrating and forgettable, you might generate some ideas about how to do the opposite.
- **Making new creative connections** – try picking a word at random and looking for novel associations between that word and your problem. You could also do this with images or objects. Mind Tools gives an example of trying to reduce sick leave across a company. The random word is 'ball', which might trigger ideas about organising a monthly football game to raise morale and encourage people to be healthy, etc.

Activity 2 Making creative connections

Allow about 5 minutes for this activity

Kenzo has noticed a problem in his workplace. It has a decent sized room available for gathering to have lunch together, but no one uses it. He realises that this is a missed opportunity for networking, sharing ideas and generally building stronger relationships with colleagues.

He opens a book and randomly hits on the word 'garden'.

How could he apply that word to solving his problem? Make a note of your ideas in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

One example might be to bring some house plants in to make the room a more attractive place to sit. Or perhaps the room could be given pictures or a colour scheme that evokes a more natural environment. The team could even plan a regular picnic lunch when the weather is good.

What ideas did you come up with? Were you surprised that a random word could spark a different way of thinking? As suggested by Mind Tools, this could also be done with an image or an object.

If you struggled with this activity, try it again with a friend or colleague. Perhaps a shared brainstorming session will make it easier for you to come up with ideas.

2. I have lots of ideas but I'm not confident about sharing them

The other common issue with feeling uncomfortable about showing initiative is a lack of confidence. This is especially common if the forum for sharing ideas is, for example, a formal meeting. This can be very daunting at first but it gets easier the more you do it.

To help you feel more confident when entering these types of settings, make sure you prepare for the meeting in advance. Think about what you want to say or ask about. You could even run your ideas past a colleague or ask them about the format of these meetings so that you have a feel for when it would be appropriate to contribute.

It's also worth remembering that when you are the new person in the room, particularly if you are perceived as an inexperienced intern (rightly or wrongly), sharing your ideas is a reasonably low risk strategy. Colleagues will appreciate your enthusiasm but forgive you if you haven't yet understood all the facts. You should see this as an opportunity to surprise and impress them!

In the next section, you'll start to look in more detail at ways to talk to colleagues, building relationships and your reputation.

3 Networking in the workplace

You'll have realised by now that networking is a recurring theme throughout this course. In this section, you'll focus on networking in the workplace.

If you perceive networking as rather intimidating, it might feel easier to think of it as a series of conversations with colleagues. Your aim is for these conversations to help you to build more productive working relationships and learn more about the sector, the organisation and its roles.

In fact, when you are gaining work experience you have an advantage because the people around you will be expecting you to ask questions. This means it is a great opportunity to practise your skills and build your knowledge at the same time.



So who might you network with?

Other interns

If there are several of you undertaking work experience at the same time, it will be well worth taking the time to build your relationships with them. Not only will that give you a support group of peers to share thoughts and ideas with while you are alongside them but you never know what they will go on to do later in their careers, or what they have already done, and when they could be helpful to you.

Make sure you keep in touch with them after you leave too, sharing progress updates or information that you think might be useful to them. That way, you'll stay in their minds and getting in touch to explore work opportunities will be much easier later on.

Colleagues

These are the people who will be able to give you inside information on working for this organisation or in this sector. This will be invaluable when making future career decisions.

A key colleague that you need to build a good relationship with is your line manager or supervisor. Keeping a regular dialogue with them, giving them progress reports and asking for feedback will certainly enhance your experience and create a good impression. They are an obvious person to provide a reference for you in the future so keeping them on side and impressed could have long term benefits.

Senior managers

This can sometimes feel difficult, but many organisations offering work experience will take deliberate steps to ensure that you meet the senior managers at some point. Or if not, you could ask for the opportunity. Do your research about them and have some key questions ready. Make sure you have something to say.

Watch this video from Professional Relationship Strategist Andy Lopata about approaching senior executives. Although he isn't talking specifically about interns, this is relevant advice for you as well.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3



Lopata's tip on learning something about them and mentioning it at the start of your conversation with them is a particularly useful one. This goes back to the research you considered in Week 4. Does your target have a social media presence? Does the company website have a news page? If you've built a good relationship with your line manager, you could ask them what senior managers value and prioritise and refer to that. Setting up a LinkedIn profile before you start your work experience is another good tip. It will give you a useful platform for collecting key contacts and staying in touch with them after your experience has ended.

Activity 3 Talking to the CEO

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Zahara is doing an internship with a large software company. She knows that she and the other interns will be meeting the CEO next week at a networking lunch and she wants to stand out.

She's been following the company on social media and so has seen clips from a recent TV interview in which the CEO spoke about the importance of the company recruiting from a wide pool of diverse candidates, not just focusing on top universities.

Zahara was recently part of a focus group for an organisation lobbying for change in this area.

When she gets her opportunity to talk to the CEO, what could her opening line be? Write your suggestions in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The point of this activity is to get you thinking about good opening lines. You might not be at the stage yet where you know who you're going to be working for and can comment on something they've said or done – hence the case study here.

Zahara should refer to the interview and the parallels with her own experience as this is likely to grab the CEO's attention. For example, she might say:

I really enjoyed your interview with the BBC last Wednesday, I'm really interested in recruitment diversity and was recently involved in a focus group on this topic for a lobbying organisation.

When you start your research, if you can't find anything interesting that the CEO has said, you might choose instead to comment on some good results the company has had or how welcoming the company culture is. Try to think of things that will be on their radar.

Making all these contacts and learning lots of new information can feel overwhelming, especially if you're trying to make the most of a fairly short period of work experience. Having a journal to make notes in as you go along will mean that you can capture everything without having to try and remember it all. You'll consider this next.

4 Starting a work experience journal

During a busy internship, where you're trying to make the most of a relatively short time period, it can be difficult to find time to reflect on your goals and the things you are learning. Writing a journal can help you to clarify any thoughts/questions/concerns.



If you can get into this habit from an early stage in your career, it will stand you in good stead when you reach more senior leadership roles.

You can use it to:

- capture and explore your ideas or note down questions you'd like to answer
- look back on specific events and consider how you felt at the time, what you did and what you could have done differently etc.
- rehearse future conversations
- note anything of interest – quotes, goals, feelings and lessons learned etc.
- note things that have gone well. Consider what you did, how you felt and what you would do again. Positive reinforcement can give your confidence a boost when you need it.

Over time, you can reflect on what you've written and look for patterns or themes that will give you insights into your typical behaviours and responses.

All of this information will also be useful during future job application processes.

Activity 4 Starting my journal

Allow about 25 minutes for this activity

Decide whether you are going to create an online journal or do things the old-fashioned way! You might decide to treat yourself to a new notebook and pen or explore some of the numerous journaling apps that are available.

Also consider the best time of your day for journaling. For example, is it first thing in the morning, before you go to bed, in the office or at home? You must be able to focus on what you are doing with no distractions.

When you have decided on your time, set aside 10–15 minutes to write about things that are currently in your head. This might mean that you come back to this activity later on. In time, you can use your journal to explore wider issues in your life but for now, try to focus on issues that relate to your work experience and the aspirations that

you outlined in [Activity 2 in Week 3](#). If you want to use it to reflect on your goals, you could use the SMART goals you outlined in Activity 1 this week.

You might ask yourself questions, jot down ideas, revisit events and experiences that you have recently had, or outline your goals for the future.

When you've done that exercise think about how this process could enhance your work experience.

Discussion

Did you spend more than 15 minutes on this activity or did you struggle to think of anything to write in the time? Self-reflection is a skill and it can seem difficult or awkward at first but it does get easier with practice. The key element is to make the time to do it. If every day seems too much, try setting aside 10–15 minutes each week to start with. If you aim to do this at work, you might need to schedule a slot in your diary.

Setting goals and monitoring your progress is a great way to use your journal. Mead (2019) describes using a journal as 'a strong visual and physical representation of how far you've come already towards achieving your goals'.

She recommends the 'One year from now' exercise, where you write down what your best possible future self might look like one year from now. This might be helpful to you in clarifying how you want your work experience to aid your development.

You'll have a go at this exercise now.

Activity 5 One year from now

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

Where do you want to be one year from now?

In a work context, some of the key areas to think about when answering this question include where you want to be in terms of your work-life and where you want to be financially. However, the more detailed and rounded you can make this picture the more powerful the exercise will be, so focusing on where you want to be physically, mentally, socially and personally is also important.

Consider each of these areas in turn to help you plot what your best possible future self might look like this time next year.

1. **My work** – What job will you be doing? Where will you be working? How will you be working towards what you want your life to look like? If you're still studying, what work experience will you be doing alongside your studies?

Provide your answer...

2. **My finances** – Do you have some debts you want to pay off? Are you saving for something in particular? Do you want to get on top of your retirement plans?

Provide your answer...

3. **Myself** – How do you want to feel about yourself one year from now? Mentally, physically, socially, personally? What does that look and feel like?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Once you've created 'you – one year from now', you can start thinking about the steps required to achieve the things you're aiming for. An action plan will help you to break it down and you'll look at action planning in more detail in Week 8.

Journaling encourages self-reflection, but another way to enhance your self-awareness is to find a good mentor who will give you advice and feedback. The next section will help you to know how to make the most of a mentor.

5 Making the most of a mentor

A mentor can be a sounding board for your ideas, a person to listen, confidentially, to any workplace issues you're experiencing, or someone to give you feedback, e.g. about how you come across in certain situations. They can also help you with goal setting by keeping you accountable and checking on your progress.



In many work experience situations, you'll be given or offered a mentor. But if you're not, there's nothing to stop you from finding one for yourself. Evidence suggests that mentees who find their own mentor tend to have a more successful experience. You might do this by approaching an individual directly. If you choose this approach, make sure you do your homework first. Know what you want from them and what you can offer in return.

Now watch this video of people explaining why workplace mentoring matters.

View at: [youtube:S-01t1tVPlo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-01t1tVPlo)

Video 4

Mentoring is traditionally a one-to-one interaction and can happen in an informal chat over coffee or through a more structured series of meetings. Having said that, Cristescu (2017) lists a range of different types of mentoring, including:

- **peer mentoring** – individuals at the same level and in similar positions providing support, skills training, advice on options and career goals etc.
- **situational mentoring** – used for a short time to address a specific purpose or skill
- **group or team mentoring** – a mentor working with several mentees at the same time through regular meetings. Everyone gives opinions and shares experiences.

Other types of mentoring include **distance mentoring**, where the relationship is facilitated by technology such as email or Skype, and reverse mentoring, where a less experienced employee mentors a more experienced individual, encouraging both parties to teach and learn at the same time.

What type of mentoring do you think might suit you best?

G-STAR model

A model often used to provide a structure in mentoring conversations is the G-STAR model (Lowbridge, 2012, pp. 32–3). It is particularly useful if the mentee is facing a specific issue or has a specific goal they want to achieve.

In Activity 6, you'll investigate the different stages of the G-STAR model.

Activity 6 What does G-STAR stand for?

Allow about 5 minutes for this activity

Decide what you think each letter of the acronym stands for and match them up with the options below.

Options: Goals — Strengths — Thinking — Actions — Results — Situation — Theory — Growth — Achievements — Reasons

Table 2 G-STAR acronym

G =	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
S =	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
T =	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
A =	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
R =	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>

Discussion

When using this model, the mentor will be exploring:

What are your **G**oals?

What **S**ituation are you facing?

What is your **T**hinking at this time?

What **A**ctions are you considering?

What **R**esults will you achieve?

The opportunity to reflect, guided by an experienced colleague, is another valuable chance to enhance your self-awareness, which was identified in Week 2 as key to a successful career.

6 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 6, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 6 quiz](#)

7 Summary of Week 6

By now, you should have a good idea about how to maximise your work experience by making yourself approachable to colleagues, building your work relationships effectively and keeping a journal.

You should now be able to:

- set clear goals for yourself
- build more effective relationships with your colleagues
- understand the value of making time for self-reflection.

Next week, you'll move on to explore a new type of internship, growing in popularity with both employers and interns: the virtual internship.

You can now go to [Week 7](#).

Week 7: Experiencing a virtual internship

Introduction

In Week 6, you focused on maximising your internship or other work experience through volunteering for additional responsibilities, building effective relationships with your colleagues, and making opportunities for self-reflection.

This week, you'll learn about virtual internships – looking at what they are, the pros and cons of this style of work experience and how to build relationships and work effectively at a distance.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1

Week 7

Experiencing a virtual internship

By the end of this week you will be able to:

- understand what a virtual internship is and analyse the potential pros and cons
- maximise your performance during a virtual internship
- promote your virtual experience to future employers.

You'll start by exploring what a virtual internship is and why employers are becoming increasingly interested in them.

1 What is a virtual internship?

A virtual internship doesn't involve a virtual reality headset – at least not yet! Also known as remote, online, micro- or e-internships, the key difference between a virtual internship and a standard internship is that you don't attend the premises of the employer. Instead, you work for them online or remotely, usually from home (or close to home, e.g. in a coffee shop or library).



Typical communication methods include online conferencing tools such as Skype, Zoom or Google Hangouts, instant messaging, telephone conversations, email and various project management tools.

Virtual internships are already popular in the US and growing in availability across the UK. Typical sectors where you might currently find them include IT, sales, journalism, marketing, and software development, but other areas of employment are starting to offer them too (Loretto, 2019). The breadth of opportunities has the potential to be huge.

1.1 Different types of virtual internship

Be aware that the name 'virtual internship' can be used for different things, including a simulated experience rather than a 'real life' one. For example, Juliet (2019) describes a virtual internship programme in the legal sector as aiming to:

give students an insight into what it's really like to work as a lawyer, all without needing to leave the comfort of their own bedrooms. The 'virtual interns' complete a series of online tasks, most of which involve submitting a short piece of writing or audio file, then they're guided through them by videos from senior lawyers at the firm. The tasks are supposed to mimic those that a trainee lawyer might be expected to complete and are usually based around a fictional legal case or client.

These internships are presented as 'a way to learn more about lawyers' work' – so they do provide a potentially useful insight. Being more like an online course though, this type of simulated experience is no substitute for real work experience where you are given real responsibilities and deadlines and need to work with real colleagues.

Make sure you understand the purpose of the internship and have an idea of what will be expected of you before you apply.

Paid or unpaid

There are currently a range of different approaches to the virtual internship, including paid and unpaid opportunities and those where you pay a fee to be matched with an internship and receive career support at various stages throughout. Do your research so you can make an informed decision before you apply. If you are currently at university, you could discuss this with staff in your careers service.

What type of work might be involved?

Although the scope for this is vast, The Open University (no date), a pioneer of paid, virtual internships in the UK, has the following suggestions:

- undertaking background research to scope the viability of a project
- leading on the delivery of a specific short-term project
- developing communications or marketing materials
- management of social media campaigns
- designing website materials
- writing training material or online guidance
- event organisation.

Virtual internships often revolve around a specific project lasting anywhere from a few days to a few months, depending on the arrangement.

In the next section, you'll look at some of the potential pros and cons both for the virtual intern and the employer.

2 The pros of a virtual internship

An attractive element of the virtual internship is its potential for flexibility and part-time commitment, allowing you to fit it in alongside other activities or responsibilities.

It offers the opportunity for international work experience but can also allow you to work for employers elsewhere in your home country that might not be easily accessible to you. This gives you a much broader range of potential employers to target.

The information you covered in Weeks 4 and 5 about finding and securing work experience is equally applicable here, but you might find that the recruitment processes used are more likely to be online, e.g. video interviews.



Other key advantages include the opportunity to **develop and enhance your experience of remote working**. According to Merchant Savvy (2020) 'across the globe, working from home and remote locations has grown 159% since 2005, more than 11x faster than the rest of the workforce'. This trend is predicted to continue, so experience of working in this way will be advantageous.

The **development of digital skills** that a virtual internship encourages will also bring benefits and increase your future employability. Microsoft (no date) suggests that 'within the next two decades, 90% of jobs will require some level of digital proficiency', despite Lloyds Bank (2019) stating that 'more than half of UK employees (53%) do not have the digital skills needed for work'.

Open University student and Online Marketing and Public Relations Intern, Lily Beach, says about her internship:

The internship at Nubis Aviation Training has developed my business, digital marketing and written skills. It has been great to work and collaborate with a small team and take on responsibility for developing an area of the company.

Virtual internships provide benefits not just for you as an employee but also for employers. You'll consider what these benefits are in Activity 1.

Activity 1 Why do employers use virtual internships?

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Think about the potential benefits for an employer in recruiting a virtual intern and make a note of your ideas in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You could have listed several potential benefits, including:

- the ability to recruit from a much larger pool of candidates, extending far beyond their local area and including those who need to have flexible working hours
- as students can potentially do a virtual internship alongside their studies, employers have greater access to new talent all year round rather than having to wait for the traditional summer holiday period
- reduced costs in terms of providing a workspace and equipment etc. for the intern
- flexibility in recruiting an intern for a particular project.

3 The cons of a virtual internship

Despite the benefits, there are some drawbacks of a virtual internship to consider. Loretto (2019) outlines some of these below. It is useful to note, however, that with the right mitigations, many of the 'cons' outlined by Loretto in this list can be minimised:

- there might be a lack of structure and support
- there might be less job training and guidance
- you won't experience the office environment
- you will have to be more self-motivating.

As remote working becomes more prevalent in the working world, some of the common issues for remote workers are becoming more widely recognised, including burnout due to a lack of definition between the working day and normal life, and the potential for feelings of isolation.

Watch this short video from Inc. to hear some advice from remote workers about avoiding some of the potential problems.

View at: [youtube:6J7rr2whlRY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6J7rr2whlRY)

Video 2

4 Would working remotely suit me?

Watch this short video to hear from an intern and an employer about how working remotely worked for them.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3



Take the time now to consider whether working remotely and doing a virtual internship could work for you.

Activity 2 Could I work remotely?

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

In the box below, summarise the potential pros and cons for you of working from home.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Even if you've never worked at home in an employment context, the experience could be very similar to time spent writing a dissertation or other piece of academic work. Dorsey (2017) outlines the following pros and cons, many of which chime with the pros and cons of virtual internships outlined earlier:

Pros

- flexible working hours
- no commute
- better work–life balance

- home comforts
- no office politics.

Cons

- social isolation
- fewer work friends
- lack of group brainstorming and colleague support
- distractions
- IT issues.

If you are early on in your career, you might decide that an internship that bases you in an office or similar environment surrounded by people will suit you better. This will certainly develop and enhance your face-to-face communication skills and familiarise you with office etiquette etc.

However, if you have already experienced the world of work, and had opportunities to develop your communications skills, the option of a virtual internship could work very well for you. It might also allow you to develop different kinds of communication skills, e.g. using digital skills, that could become increasingly useful in the future.

Also, if you are already in full-time work or education, a virtual internship might be the most convenient option for you.

In the next section, you'll look at how to make a success of working from a distance.

5 Distance working – how to do it well

There are several things you can do to make remote working more successful. Remote Year (no date) makes the suggestions given in Box 1.



Box 1 How to make remote working more successful

- **Over-communicate** – schedule regular check-in meetings with colleagues to discuss goals and daily tasks.
- **Invest in reliable tech** – consistent WiFi is important.
- **Lean on your community** – being surrounded by others who are successfully remote working can inspire you to remain productive.
- **Consider your workspace** – create a designated spot at home or find a nearby co-working space to make sure you feel motivated by your environment.
- **Figure out your working style** – do you prefer background noise or silence? Are you more productive in the morning or evening? Do you like short breaks throughout the day or a long lunch?
- **Take time for self-care** – commit to your fitness routine and make time for healthy nutritious meals.
- **Know when to log off** – set a time when you officially log off for the night.
- **Embrace the perks** of working remotely.

Remote Year (no date)

The first point about communication is an important one: you need to be clear about who you're reporting to, how often you are expected to check-in, what your objectives are and the timescale in which you are expected to achieve them.

There are also some key skills that will make working remotely easier. Birnir (no date) lists several of the most important in Box 2.

Box 2 Skills to make working remotely easier

- **Organisation** – knowing what needs to be done, balancing priorities
- **Communication** – keeping in touch, replying to messages promptly, being clear and concise
- **Time-consciousness** – awareness of time-zones, setting and keeping to time limits for conversations
- **Proactiveness** – demonstrate that you are self-reliant and a self-starter
- **Tech savvy** – be comfortable with technology, demonstrate your digital skills
- **Motivation** – get involved, follow relevant podcasts, know what's going on for the company
- **Balance** – don't over-work, stay healthy and happy, look for opportunities to share what you do in your spare time.

Birnir (no date)

Open University graduate Anika Roberts has the following top tips, for both the employee and employer.

Case study 1 Anika's top tips for a successful virtual internship

Anika has completed a virtual internship, currently does consultancy work which involves an element of working from home and has been a line manager. Drawing on all of that experience she has kindly shared with us her top tips for students and employers considering a virtual internship.

The virtual internship: it's a real job!

Essentially, you're an employee with work expectations for both virtual and office based staff being the same. So, what's good practice for virtual working?

For the virtual employee:

- Organise a dedicated workspace/area with all you need, it's your office.
- Dress for impromptu web conferences, always!
- Create a work mindset: avoid the sofa and wearing slippers.
- Take breaks and track your time as you go.
- Compile a daily log of your activities, as you go, sharing weekly.
- Let people know your key weekly availability.
- Set up shared/backup work folders online; updating at each session.
- Keep in touch with other staff.

For the office staff and employer:

- Treat virtual working staff as any other employee.
- Provide a virtual induction.
- Select an affable line manager who is regularly available.
- Organise key meetings via web conferencing to encourage inclusion.
- Treat audio meetings as just that, for all staff i.e. avoid grouping office staff together.
- Try and ask some non-work related questions too.
- Be clear on what tasks/actions are required, avoiding assumptions.
- Keep in touch; it's as easy to make a call as it is to pop over to someone's desk.

For both:

- cooperation is intrinsic to successful virtual employment.

Anika Roberts, BSc (Hons) in Natural Sciences Open University graduate, virtual intern 2019

All of the sources referenced here include communication in their lists, and it is really important to get that right when working remotely.

5.1 Communication

During a virtual internship, you might be required to use a remote conferencing tool such as Skype, Zoom or Google Hangouts for both one-to-one discussions and group calls.

Here are some top tips from Bednarz (2016) for maximising the experience:

Prior to the call:

- check the time zone
- have an agenda prepared (you could even share it with the other person in advance)
- test your equipment
- eliminate possible interruptions
- wear appropriate clothing and think about lighting; for example, try not to have a window behind you.

During the call:

- focus on the conversation and think about your non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, posture etc.
- remember to look into the camera, particularly when you are talking about something important; that way, they will see eye contact from you and be more engaged with what you are saying
- check for understanding – ask questions, invite feedback, etc.; make regular glances at the other person's face so you can check their facial expressions

- smile and keep the conversation going – use phrases like ‘are you with me?’ or ‘do you know what I mean?’ as this can help with awkward pauses if the connection is slow.

After the call:

- follow up with an email summarising agreed points and further steps.

Now have a go for yourself.

Activity 3 Have a remote conversation

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

If you’ve never used a visual tool like Skype before, it is worth familiarising yourself with it or something similar. Even if you don’t end up undertaking a virtual internship, as you saw in Week 5, many employers use these tools in their recruitment processes or to have internal meetings with staff from other offices etc., so it will be beneficial to experience using one beforehand.

Find a friend or family member who you know you can have a relaxed conversation with and ask them if they’ve used any of these tools before. Any tool that includes live images of both people involved in the conversation would be good. For example, you could even use Facetime or WhatsApp video calling.

Arrange a time to have a conversation.

After you’ve done it, ask your friend or family member for some feedback about how you came across.

Discussion

How did you feel? Did you manage to do the things Bednarz suggested? It can be awkward at first, and you need to get used to issues such as eye contact or images that are a little delayed or freeze periodically. But once you’ve got used to those, it should become easier. Maybe you could repeat the activity until you do feel comfortable. This will be a useful skill for the future.

Email is likely to be another commonly used tool in your virtual internship (or, indeed, any internship or work experience). It was in fact estimated that by the end of 2019, the number of email users worldwide was over 2.9 billion (Radicati Group, 2015). Here are some rules that will help you write more effective emails:

- subject lines are important – they should be clear and informative and grab the receiver’s attention
- text should be clear and succinct – it might be easier to send a couple of emails on different subjects rather than one very lengthy one covering several topics
- always proofread what you have written
- check your tone and be polite – for example, using capital letters in an email can add emphasis but can also appear to the receiver as if you are SHOUTING AT THEM!

It is also important to maintain formality and professionalism in your work emails. Try to avoid slang, abbreviations or an over-familiar tone, as you never know how the reader will perceive it.

So now you have a better idea of the *process* of communication, you can start to think about the *content* and how you can use that to build effective relationships from a distance.

6 How to build relationships from a distance

Poor communication is often at the root of negative issues experienced in any workplace, but this is especially significant when remote working.



The next activity will help you to think about how you can encourage good communication from your colleagues.

Activity 4 Good communication

Allow about 10 minutes for this activity

Watch Shauna Moran from Operate Remote as she explains to leaders what is recognised as a key cause of frustration in remote teams.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4



Leaders not understanding and communicating expectations on remote teams!

Now make a note of the ways in which you could help your 'leader' to communicate better.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

A key issue is lack of communication about key expectations, so you might have listed some of the following ideas:

- asking your line manager or supervisor to clarify their expectations for your work
- following up that conversation with an email summarising your understanding of their expectations and asking for confirmation that you have done so accurately
- agreeing a daily or weekly point of contact where you can report on progress and ask for feedback/support etc.

In a workplace situation, both informal and professional communication are important in developing productive working relationships. You'll start by looking at the benefits of informal interactions.

6.1 Informal communication

When you are building relationships with colleagues, it is often the non-work conversations where you share information about what you did at the weekend, or a film you've recently enjoyed, etc. that create a more informal link between you. This is more difficult when you are working remotely as you don't have those moments during your lunch break or when walking to the car park/train station/bus stop etc.

One way to create those informal links is to allow time for a non-work conversation during each interaction you have. If your employer has lots of staff working remotely, they might even have a virtual coffee meeting once a week where everyone gets together for a chat with no pressure to discuss work. Don't dismiss this as a waste of time. As an intern, it could be a particularly useful way of building your network. If you're unsure how to contribute, introduce yourself and then listen to others for a while so you can get a feel for typical topics for discussion.

One recent virtual intern shares another good example:

I used to meet some of my co-workers face-to-face over coffee once a month and we also had a Christmas lunch. It was a good way to get to know them and spend some time together outside work.

6.2 Professional communication

As outlined in Activity 4 earlier, it is important to communicate regularly with managers and co-workers. Do not be afraid of asking for explanations when tasks aren't clear.

Difficult conversations

If you need to have a difficult or assertive conversation with a remote colleague, this can be tricky. You can't just put your head around their door and ask for a quick word and, as you've already considered, tone can often be misconstrued in an email. The tactics listed below are based on those suggested by Markman (2019).

- **Create a sense of co-presence**, which is the ability to feel as though you can interact effectively with another person. Using a video conferencing tool can be more effective than speaking on the phone. Also, try to ensure you are in an environment with limited distractions so the other person feels they have your full attention.
- **Have eye-contact if possible**. Try to use your facial expressions and tone of voice to convey your attitude.
- **Be specific**. Try to give specific demonstrations of problems and particular actions that someone can take to fix the problem. It can be helpful to refer to notes – that extra preparation can make all the difference.

Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is important in any workplace, but the digital nature of virtual internships lends itself to working with overseas colleagues so it will be useful to be aware of any cultural differences. For example, in some cultures making eye contact is considered disrespectful and can be interpreted as a sign of dishonesty, whereas in others, making eye contact is seen as essential in building rapport.

You don't need to have a detailed knowledge of different cultural norms but there are some steps you can take to maximise multicultural working relationships.

- Ask your supervisor or line manager if there are any cultural differences you should be aware of.
- Be aware of time zone differences and make sure you discuss how best to work around them.
- Be careful about using humour to break the ice – this can backfire in a country where the workplace is more formal.

7 Promoting my virtual work experience to future employers

A common query about virtual internships is whether an employer will see them as valid and valuable work experience. If you're not in the office surrounded by colleagues what are you learning about the world of work? Activity 5 will give you some ideas.



Activity 5 Summarising skills

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

Case study

Simon has been doing a virtual internship helping to develop new products for a software company. He has a supervisor who was difficult to get hold of at first and kept changing the expected outcomes for his project work. But their relationship has significantly improved since he started sending short update emails about his progress each morning and initiated a Skype meeting with her every Monday to discuss goals for the week. He had never used Skype before this internship but now uses that and Zoom regularly. He has also used a project management tool called Slack, which he has found really useful. He has developed a LinkedIn profile and has connected with several of his virtual colleagues.

If you were Simon and you were trying to convince an employer that a virtual internship was great experience, what would you highlight? Make some notes in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have chosen to highlight:

- **Your enhanced digital skills** – as more people choose to work remotely, there will be a greater need for familiarity with video conferencing tools, e.g. Skype and project management tools. If you've used them regularly in your internship, you already have evidence that gives you an advantage over other applicants who haven't.
- **Your enhanced communication skills** – working remotely presents communication challenges and you have found ways to overcome them. You can give examples of how you've built effective relationships from a distance and worked more closely with your line manager or supervisor.
- **Your ability to motivate yourself** – employers are keen on resilient self-starters, and working on your own – perhaps from your bedroom or dining table – may be a tough environment to stay motivated in. You can talk about how you achieved that despite the potential distractions of home.
- **Your adaptability** – another key skill that employers look for is flexibility/adaptability. You have to be adaptable to undertake this kind of internship and complete it successfully – working around study, other work, family commitments, etc.

You've now explored many aspects of internships and other work experiences, both actual and virtual. After completing this week's quiz, you will be able to start making your own action plan for what you are going to do next in Week 8.

8 This week's quiz

Now that you've completed Week 7, you can take a short quiz to help you to reflect on what you've learned.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 7 quiz](#)

9 Summary of Week 7

By now, you should have a clearer understanding of what a virtual internship is and what it can offer you. You've considered how to maximise the remote working experience, building effective relationships and communicating clearly.

You should now be able to:

- understand what a virtual internship is and analyse the potential pros and cons
- maximise your performance during a virtual internship
- promote your virtual experience to future employers.

Next week, you'll pull everything you've learned together and make a plan for your next actions.

You can now go to [Week 8](#).

Week 8: Next steps

Introduction

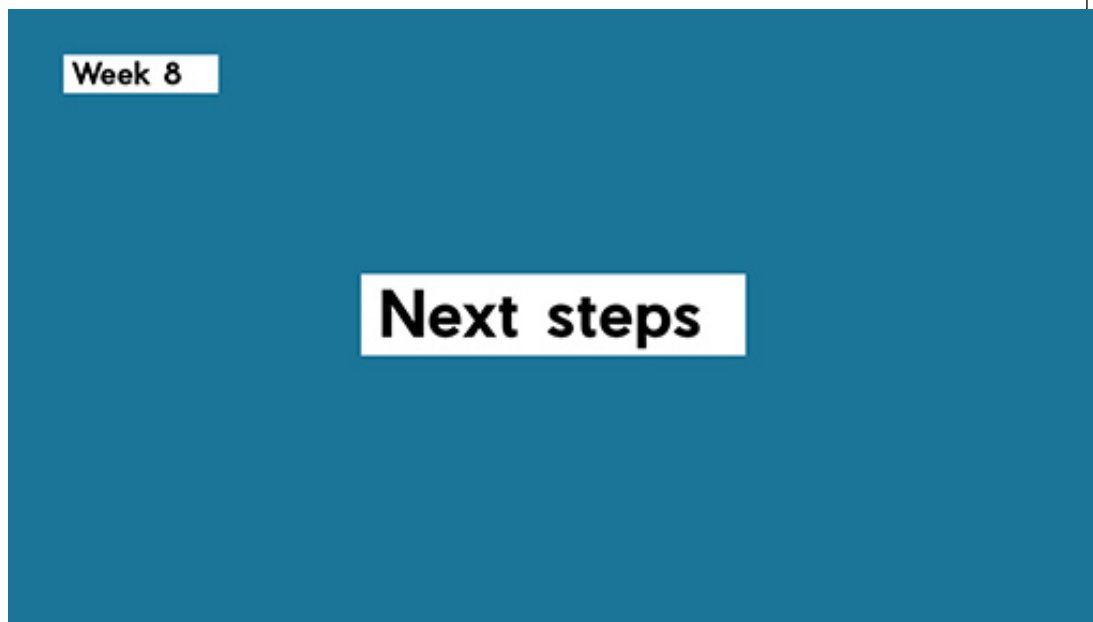
Welcome to the final week of this course! You should, by now, have a good idea of what an internship is, how to apply for one and how to make the most of that or any other work experience you obtain.

This week, you'll bring all of your learning together and start to plan your next steps. You'll reflect on your aims from Weeks 1 and 2 and create an action plan. In a potentially competitive environment, you'll reflect on the importance of resilience in the face of application rejection. You'll also consider how to maximise your work experience after it has finished.

Watch this video that introduces the week:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1



By the end of the week you will be able to:

- develop an action plan for your next steps
- use your work experience to your advantage in the future
- reflect on your personal resilience and how to deal with rejection.

You'll start by acknowledging where you are now and considering your next steps.

1 Reflecting on the course

You'll start this week with an activity that encourages you to look back over the course and reflect on what you've learned each week.



Activity 1 Pulling it all together

Allow about 40 minutes for this activity

Review your notes and responses to each activity of the course, then summarise your key learning points in the boxes below.

The easiest way to review your notes is to download your answers as a PDF via the 'Download your answers for the documents on this course' link on the left-hand side of the page. You should open this link in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link.

These notes don't need to be too detailed – thinking in bullet points or using a mind map if you prefer a more visual approach, should help to capture the key points.

Week 1 – defining internship, comparing different work experiences, reflecting on your work experiences and what you want to gain from this course.

Provide your answer...

Week 2 – identifying skills gaps and the skills that can be developed through work experience, focusing on your values, building self-confidence and mapping your network of contacts.

Provide your answer...

Week 3 – understanding the legalities, auditing your skills and reflecting on what you want to gain from work experience, considering financial needs and decision-making techniques.

Provide your answer...

Week 4 – looking for vacancies, using your network, raising your profile on social media and making your applications stand out.

Provide your answer...

Week 5 – creating a good first impression, tackling interview questions, video interviews, networking openers and an elevator pitch.

Provide your answer...

Week 6 – setting SMART goals, generating ideas, talking to senior colleagues, journaling and finding a mentor.

Provide your answer...

Week 7 – exploring virtual internships, working and communicating remotely and gaining skills.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Summarising your learning in one place should illustrate how your knowledge and understanding of internships and other work experience opportunities has developed over the last eight weeks. You can now use that to work out your next steps.

What did your summarising in Activity 1 show you? For example, you may have decided that you don't want to apply for a formal internship as you can gain the experience you need more easily from volunteering or some other form of work experience. Or maybe you've realised that a virtual internship would be ideal in your situation.

You may have pinpointed some key skills that you want to gain or develop further in order to impress the employers you plan to target in the future.

Or perhaps you've taken some first steps towards identifying the career path you want to follow and now have a better idea of what to do next in order to get there.

In the next section, you'll narrow down your options further and start to plan your next move.

2 My next steps

Throughout this course, you've been exploring what an internship is and how this or another form of work experience can benefit you. In Week 6, you looked at the value of setting goals for your work experience. This week, you'll take those goals and break them down into actions.



Table 1 and Table 2 show one way of breaking down each of your goals and recording the outcomes of your actions. In both cases, the person has secured some work experience and has set a goal to achieve during that period.

Table 1 Scenario A

Goal	To find out more about the sector and whether it is right for me
<p>Current status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Experience b. Knowledge c. Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I have never worked in this sector before. b. I have researched it thoroughly by looking online and speaking to people. c. I'm a good communicator so can use that to my advantage.
<p>Development/training/knowledge needed to reach my goal</p>	<p>I need to find out as much as possible during my internship.</p>
<p>Action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come up with a set of questions that will encourage colleagues to share useful information. • Look for opportunities to speak to as many people as possible during my internship and build my LinkedIn connections. • Make a note of the things I learn.
<p>Outcome</p>	<p>I have a useful set of questions that I've committed to memory so I can ask them whenever appropriate, and I've joined a social group within the organisation that meets up every Thursday evening.</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>I'm currently noting anything useful I learn in a journal that I've bought specifically for this internship. I try to do this every day.</p>
<p>Next step</p>	<p>I'm attending a professional conference in August where I'll be able to talk to others across the sector.</p>

Table 2 Scenario B

Goal	To develop my self-awareness during my work experience
<p>Current status:</p> <p>a. Experience</p> <p>b. Knowledge</p> <p>c. Skills</p>	<p>a. I know what's important to me and I spend time thinking about my values and strengths etc. but I don't know what others think of me.</p> <p>b. I've read some useful resources that explain what self-awareness is.</p> <p>c. I'm quite analytical and good at reflecting on experiences I've had.</p>
Development/training/knowledge needed to reach my goal	I'd like to find a mentor who could give me feedback.
Action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask my line manager if it would be possible to find a mentor in my work-place. • Approach that person to see if we can meet up each week while I'm here. • Consider what I'd like to know about myself, e.g. how I come across in meetings.
Outcome	My line manager has suggested an experienced mentor who would be happy to work with me. We are meeting for the first time next week.
Evaluation	The person who has been suggested sounds great. They started off doing work experience here too and they have mentored several new staff.
Next step	Think about how I can make the most of this mentoring relationship and be clear about what I need help with in our first meeting. Spend some time after our conversation reflecting on its value.

Now it's your turn!

Activity 2 Achieving my goals

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

Choose up to three of your goals that you have identified during this course (look back to [Activity 1 of Week 6](#) if you need a reminder). Then use the template below to set your goals, reflect on where you are now and identify appropriate actions. If your workplace has a template that is used to support performance review processes etc., use that if you prefer. You can come back to the Outcome, Evaluation and Next Step sections when you're ready.

Table 3 Breaking it down

	1	2	3
Goal	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Current status:	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
a. Experience			
b. Knowledge			
c. Skills			
Development/training/knowledge needed to reach my goal	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Action plan	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Outcome	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Evaluation	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Next step	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

If you have identified more than one goal in this activity, your next step should be to prioritise your action plans. Which goal will you work towards first? Are they actually sequential goals or can you do them alongside each other? Make sure you don't take on too much alongside your day job – if you don't achieve all your goals this can be a negative experience.

You should now have a set of SMART goals and an action plan for achieving them.

The goals you have focused on in this course are specifically about your work experience and what you want to gain from it. However, you could also use these goal setting techniques to think about your career aims in the longer term. In that scenario, work experience would be one of the steps towards achieving those aims.

Most people experience rejection in the job application process at some point during their careers. In the next section, you'll consider what happens when you are rejected. Although it might seem like a failure to meet your goals, it can actually be a useful step towards them.

3 Personal resilience

So far on this course you've done some great work towards planning and maximising your work experiences. But obtaining work experience is a competitive process and it is highly likely that you will encounter rejection at some point on your journey.



So how will you cope?

This is where building your resilience comes in. One way to do this is to follow the NAC approach:

- N** – notice
- A** – accept
- C** – choose

Read the following response to a rejection from a job using the NAC approach. The text in bold explains each stage (Howard, cited in Brewer, 2016).

Box 1 How to use the NAC approach to setbacks

- *Notice* that you are experiencing thoughts of being fed up, down, angry or whatever it is that you are feeling as a result of the rejection.
The process of noticing its impact allows you to begin to step outside of it, almost as an observer, and acknowledge what is happening, which in turn releases you from the mind spending endless energy.
- *Accept* what has happened. Many of us will think, 'Why is this happening to me?' but asking a negative question leads to a negative answer.
Acceptance is recognising that as human beings we experience emotions, such as disappointment, and it is pointless fighting them.

- Choose to use the negative energy or stress you are feeling as a result of your setback.

Having connected with the motivation behind the stress, you can channel that energy in a positive way by asking, 'What can I do right now?' and 'How do I do it?'

Now watch bestselling author Margie Warrell explain the different ways you could choose to respond to setbacks in the following video.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2



Activity 3 Building resilience

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity

You're now going to try a story telling activity as described by Doll (2019):

Consider an example in your life where you continue to repeat a story that produces worry or anxiety. Now try writing out a new version with a more positive interpretation. As you do, recognise how you feel in the process.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

In her explanation, Doll says 'We can adjust our paradigms by re-creating narratives we tell ourselves. We can get stuck in re-playing the same stories, which may not be helpful or productive. By creating a healthier storyline, we foster our sense of control and how we interpret events.'

This activity might not feel very practical, but often our resilience is to do with what we tell ourselves, and re-framing that can be a very helpful activity. The more you can get into the habit of seeing mistakes as learning experiences, the more resilient you will become.

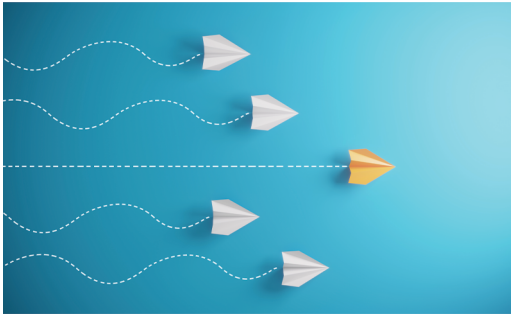
Continuing with Brewer's example of rejection from a job, you can turn that into a learning experience by asking for some feedback from the employer. They won't always be able to provide it but being brave enough to ask the question is a positive step.

Other sources of feedback might be careers advisers or coaches at your university or elsewhere, or even friends and colleagues who are more experienced in making job applications. Show them the CV you used or a copy of your application form and ask for their opinion. You could even request a mock or practice interview.

Learning from your rejections and setbacks will not only make you more resilient but will also make you more likely to succeed in the future. Once you are successful and get the work experience you've been looking for, the next step is to make sure you use the opportunity to your advantage in your future career.

4 Making the most from my internship or other work experience

Once your work experience is completed, you can use it to leverage your next opportunity, which could be another short-term experience or a full-time role. This section will look at the different ways you can do this.



At this stage, you may or may not have a finished period of work experience behind you. If you haven't, the content in this section will help you to be better prepared for the next steps when you do finish.

4.1 Tip 1: look back at your journal

The first thing you'll want to do after completing your internship or work experience is reflect on the experience you've just had and what you have learned from it. That should help you in deciding what step to take next.

If you've kept a work experience journal as suggested in Week 6, this will be a great help in this process. Did you achieve your goals? Did you find the work satisfying? What surprised or challenged you?

Ask yourself what were the most and least successful elements of the experience and make a decision about whether the sector or role you gained your experience in is right for you.

This process can be challenging and it may help to find someone to go through it with. For example, if you are currently at university, a careers adviser or career coach would be helpful. Alternatively, a mentor or supervisor (academic or work related) could be a useful sounding board.

You can also use your journal to work through any decisions that you face. Activity 4 will take you through this process. You looked at quite a structured approach to decision making in [Week 3 Activity 5](#). This is a more intuitive method.

Activity 4 Using a journal to make decisions

Allow about 20 minutes for this activity

Katherine (2018) suggests the following exercise for making decisions:

The next time you find yourself facing a big decision, try writing out each choice available. Underneath each choice, journal your thoughts on the following questions for each:

1. What is your first reaction to this choice?
2. Imagine this is the choice you've chosen. Visualise your life five years from now – what does it look like?
3. Reconnect with your goal/mission in life. Does this choice bring you closer to that?
4. Does the thought of this choice make you feel energised or drained?
5. What information do you need to feel more comfortable with this choice?

Once you've done this for each potential choice, you should have a clearer idea of which way to go.

Decisions about work experience, such as choosing between different career sectors you'd like to explore or deciding which opportunity to apply for, would be ideal for this activity. Alternatively, you could consider something unrelated to your career.

If you don't feel you are facing any decisions at the moment, another approach would be to look at a decision you made in the past. Would this activity have led to a different choice? Try it out in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

This is a good way to break down and capture your thoughts about something potentially complex and is a useful habit to get into.

Another advantage of using your journal in this way is that you can take some time to reflect. For example, you can go back to it the next day and review what you've written. Do you still feel the same way? Gaining a greater understanding of your decision-making processes should make it easier in the future.

4.2 Tip 2: use your network of contacts

In Week 6, you looked at networking with other interns, colleagues and senior managers. Now is the time to use those contacts to explore other opportunities.

Don't just ask them for a job. Instead, start a conversation about what you want to do next. Ask for their advice and build up to whether they know of any opportunities that might suit you.

If you've started this conversation in person while you were working with them, it will be much easier to continue it now, perhaps initially via LinkedIn or email.

Activity 5 Top five contacts

Allow about 15 minutes for this activity

In the box below, list your top five contacts for follow up conversations after your internship or work experience. If you haven't found any significant work experience yet, choose five people from the list you came up with in [Activity 2, Week 4](#).

Give yourself a deadline for when you want to talk to them.

Table 4 Contacts to get in touch with

Name	Deadline for opening conversation
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

You can keep coming back to this list and refining it as you meet new people who you think could have a beneficial role to play in your future career. For the moment, you have nothing to lose by having an early conversation with them. Start by asking about their own career journey or asking for their advice. Most people will be happy to help and if they're not, it's probably because they've got things going on in their own lives that don't allow them the time.

4.3 Tip 3: maximise your new skills and knowledge in future applications

During your work experience, you will have developed your existing skills further and perhaps gained new ones. Look back at the [skills audit](#) you completed in Week 3. Would you rate any of those skills differently now that you've completed your work experience?

When completing the written stage of a job application, make sure any new skills that are relevant to your career plans stand out. The **skills-based CV** you looked at in Week 4 is one way to do this.

If your new work experience is particularly relevant to your next step, use an eye-catching heading and put it near the top of the first page. For example, if you've done some work experience in the sector you're applying to, give the first heading – after your contact details and personal statement – a sector-specific title to draw the reader's attention, such as 'Publishing experience', 'Healthcare experience', 'Manufacturing experience', etc.

If you've got relevant experience that isn't sector-specific, you could call that section 'Relevant experience'. It all depends on which information you want to give the most prominence to in order to catch the employer's eye.

On an **application form**, you can use your work experiences and the skills you've developed as the basis for some of your examples when answering the questions.

At some point during the job application process, your prospective employer will want to collect **references** from previous employers, describing your performance and contribution to the workplace. You could certainly use a relevant person from your work experience as a referee, but do make sure you obtain their permission before giving their name.

Finally, at **interview**, talk about how you proactively found an opportunity to develop your skills and give specific examples from your internship or work experience.

The key to a successful job application, whether at written or interview stage, is successfully matching your skills and experience to what the employer is looking for. If you can demonstrate that you chose to do work experience in order to develop the skills and experiences they value, and how your work experience did precisely that, then you will be a strong candidate for any future role.

5 This week's quiz

Now that you've come to the end of the course, it's time to take the Week 8 badge quiz. It's similar to previous quizzes but this time, instead of answering five questions, there will be 15.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

[Week 8 compulsory badge quiz](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

6 Summary of Week 8

This week, you've reflected on and consolidated your learning from the whole course and considered your next steps in your work experience journey.

You've identified some key goals and worked out the actions you need to take to achieve them. You've also considered how to maximise your work experience once it is finished and you are taking your next step, and you've looked at the importance of personal resilience in dealing with rejection.

You should now be able to:

- develop an action plan for your next steps
- use your work experience to your advantage in the future
- reflect on your personal resilience and how to deal with rejection.

Congratulations! You have come to the end of the course. Don't forget that to finish the course and get your badge you will need to pass this week's quiz.

Where next?

If you've enjoyed this course you can find more free resources and courses on [OpenLearn](#). If you have not already done so, you might be especially interested in looking at our other [badged courses on employability](#).

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Tell us what you think

Now you've come to the end of the course, we would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete this short [end-of-course survey](#) (you may have already completed this survey at the end of Week 4). We'd like to find out a bit about your experience of studying the course and what you plan to do next. We will use this information to provide better online experiences for all our learners and to share our findings with others. Participation will be completely confidential and we will not pass on your details to others.

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