Once you have landed your internship, the success of your experience largely depends on you. Your internship is a professional commitment and your behavior on the internship should consistently reflect professionalism. Here are some ways to make the most of your experience:

- **SET PERSONAL GOALS.** While some internships are very structured, others are not, so you need to spend some time before you start the internship setting goals that you want to accomplish. It can help you stay on-track and you will feel a greater sense of accomplishment once you achieve them. Hint: Setting unrealistic goals could make even a good internship seem bad, so make sure your goals are realistic and attainable in your internship. It is a good idea to confer your goals with your on-site supervisor.

- **UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE/EXPECTATIONS.** Make sure to clarify your duties and establish a work schedule with your supervisor. As an intern you are expected to be on-time, and be professional at all times, this includes attire. Hint: Ask your supervisor ahead of time what the work environment is like.

- **HAVE REGULAR MEETINGS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR(S).** Be sure to have regular meetings where you can share experiences and lessons learned -- both good and bad -- as well as give progress reports on any projects or assignments that you are given. Building this relationship is crucial as it sets the tone to provide feedback on your work and to get to know your supervisor better. Hint: While you want to keep your supervisor abreast of your accomplishments, remember to also be a good listener and learn as much as you can during these meetings.

- **DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS.** Always remember that an internship is a learning experience for you. While the employer expects to get a certain level of work from you, you are not expected to know everything. Seek advice and raise questions whenever you encounter something that is not familiar to you. Be open-minded about new ideas and procedures -- remember that you don’t know everything. Hint: It is better to ask questions rather than tackling the problem or issue at hand on your own.

- **AVOID NEGATIVITY.** This means avoid complaining, being rude, disrespecting coworkers, arriving late, leaving early, being closed-minded, missing deadlines, appearing arrogant, wearing improper attire, acting unprofessionally, appearing inflexible, and taking part in office politics. Hint: Know that there will be instances where you will be asked to do “grunt work” (i.e., photocopies, errands, etc.), and it never looks well to complain about these tasks. Remember there is always something more to learn in each assignment.

- **LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COMPANY/INDUSTRY.** Take every opportunity presented to you to attend company or industry meetings, conferences, and events; participate in training workshops; and read all company materials. Learn the trends in the profession and future outlook. Talk to different people in other departments within the company. Hint: Meetings may appear boring to you, but they can often offer a good chance to increase your knowledge, network, and build relationships.

- **TAKE INITIATIVE.** Employers love employees who dive into tackling tough problems and who think "outside the box" in finding solutions. Just make sure you work with your supervisor(s) so you don’t overstep your authority -- and make sure you share successes with...
him or her. Also, ask for things to do. Don’t wait for tasks, be proactive. Solving problems and taking imitative are the best ways to stand out from the crowd. Hint: There is a fine line between taking initiative and being perceived as a "know-it-all," and for interns especially, it is best to err on the side of caution.

- **FIND A MENTOR.** A mentor is someone at a higher level in the organization that looks out for you and makes sure you are learning what you need to know and accomplishing what you need to do. A mentor can be a good sounding board for you to discuss ideas, ask questions, etc. Hint: Your supervisor could be your mentor, but it could also be another person within the organization.

- **NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK.** One of the key tools of job-hunting is utilizing your network to find your next career step, whether another internship or a job upon graduation (and beyond). Build professional relationships with your supervisor(s) and other managers in the organization. These people are also a good source for getting other job-hunting advice and tips from their years of experience. Send a thank you note to your supervisor and/or others in the organization that have assisted you throughout your internship. Hint: Even if you have a bad experience on an internship, never burn your bridges because you never know when it could come back and hurt you. Always leave on good terms.

- **LEAVE WITH TANGIBLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.** One of your goals with any internship is leaving it with some tangible results - both for your resume and your career portfolio (if you use one). Maybe you developed a brochure, computerized an inventory system, organized a sales conference, met with clients, tracked industry trends, etc., keep track of your accomplishments. Hint: Keeping a journal may help you remember.

- **ENJOY YOURSELF.** Most internships are great experiences, so make sure you have some fun while you’re working and learning.