

## **Intern early...and often**

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by Heather Huhman, Entry Level Careers Examiner

Interning early – even as early as high school – and often is valuable to students in nearly every industry. Perhaps due to the struggling economy and intensely competitive market, “entry-level” is being redefined. Employers now expect graduates to have more than a degree – they expect them to have experience.

I was never without an internship in college – even during breaks. Actually, I attribute the fact that I initially made more than others entering my field to having had more internships while still in school. But, there are more benefits to interning early and often than just money.

**1. Help choose your college major.** “With an internship, students may start college able to make more informed decisions about their college majors,” said Tara B. Malone, NCC, LMHC, assistant director of internship and diversity programs at Purchase College, SUNY. “The decided student, even if the decision is tentative, may be more likely to stay in college and graduate on time.”

**2. Opportunity to test the waters.** “Internships provide students with the opportunity to see if their field of interest is right for them,” said Kurt Praschak, vice president of Success Communications Group. “It might provide them with insight that leads them to rule out a career field.”

**3. Give employers a taste of your work ethic.** “Internships show prospective employers that college students are ambitious and hard-working and provide a way to differentiate themselves from the competition, most of whom are not doing internships,” said Dr. Rachelle J. Canter, president of RJC Associates.

**4. Start building your network.** “If you like the industry that your internship is in, you build a network of advisors,” said Kyle A.C. Rosenbaum, an “early intern” and senior at Columbia College.

**5. Get a leg-up on future internships.** “The preparation I had was a competitive advantage, as I learned how to interact in a business environment, understood how to formulate a sales pitch and worked on real-life projects that made a difference,” said Dan Schawbel, another “early intern” and publisher of Personal Branding Magazine. “This experience helped me mature at the same time, while relieving any corporate anxiety for future internships.”