Selecting And Accepting A Position

“Success is getting what you want…happiness is wanting what you get.” Warren Buffet

Soon you may find yourself in the enviable position of having more than one internship offer and wondering what to do and how to make a decision. Choosing which company to work for can be very exciting, but difficult too. You may feel a strong urge to accept the first offer you receive, thinking that you may not get another. You can expect to be pressured by some companies to decide quickly. Don’t succumb! Let us know if you are being pressured to make a decision in less than a week or two!

Be sure that you know and understand all of the details surrounding an offer BEFORE you accept the position. Remember, you are still allowed to interview for internships until you accept an offer. Once you accept, however, you must cease all interview activity and report your internship to the Program.

Remember, too, that accepting an offer and then later reneging, for whatever reason, will result in:

- Immediate and irrevocable termination from the participation to the Nittany Lion Careers system (this includes being blocked from the system as an alumnus as well).
- Your academic department and other Penn State Career Services Offices will be notified.
- Must schedule an appointment with Business Career Center Managing Director or the Assistant Director of Professional Development.

Evaluating a Position

Ask for the offer in writing, with the details outlined before you accept. Keep in mind that a verbal acceptance is still an acceptance. This will help you to be clear about each aspect. Here are some things you should think about:

Type of work: Is it challenging, satisfying, and a good match for your interests and skills? Is there assignment variability? Will the experience be hands-on? The last thing you
want is to spend the semester or summer observing others, doing clerical work, or not having enough to do.

**Company culture:** Are interns treated like valued employees or cheap labor? Is the work environment formal or informal, structured or unstructured and how do these things fit with your style and personality? Make sure the company’s values match your own so there is no conflict of interest.

**Training opportunities:** Will there be an orientation when you arrive? What kind of training is provided for interns? Training and instruction will help you be successful on the job. What kind of training opportunities and professional growth are offered for their permanent employees?

**Supervision:** Is your supervisor invested in the internship experience and interested in your professional growth? Will there be a mentor or someone to whom you can turn for guidance and direction? How will your performance be managed? The role of your supervisor can be key to your success in the internship as you learn your job and the way the company does business.

**Salary:** Is it competitive? Will it be enough to meet your needs while on the internship? Check the recruiting stats page on our website for the most recent average intern salaries for each major so you know what to expect. Learn what you can about the company’s compensation philosophy for permanent employees, should you be one of the roughly 50% of interns who are offered a full-time job after the internship. Your earning potential and how it is determined can be more important than your internship salary in the long run.

**Location, transportation and housing:** Does the company offer any kind of relocation assistance including help locating a place; hotel expenses till you find something, or covering your moving expenses? Some companies even offer paid housing or a stipend toward housing. Remember to include this as income along with the salary when weighing salary against other offers that do not include paid housing or housing compensation of some kind.

**Benefits:** Will you receive any sick days, vacation days, or holidays? Will there be paid time off? What about overtime?

**Starting and ending dates:** Be sure to work these out up front so there will be no confusion later. Will there be enough time for you to make the transition from school to work and vice versa?

**Geographic Location:** How does it fit in with your lifestyle and interests? What is the cost of living? Will you be able to live there and have a life outside of work? Will there be other people in your age bracket or other interns for you to socialize with? A
semester or two is a relatively short period of time in the grand scheme of things, but homesickness can be a reality for some students. Consequences for leaving your internship early as a result of homesickness or dislike of the location are severe. Make sure you can “live with” the location before accepting the offer.

If you haven’t already been provided with information on these items, make sure to ASK. It is really important to be sure about the offer before you accept. If you need help sifting through the information, contact the Business Career Center Office.

A final note: don’t pick flash over substance. A great company name does not necessarily mean a great internship. For example, working for a major company may impress your family and friends, but it may not provide the experience you are looking for. Working for a smaller, less recognized firm, may give more experience. Ultimately you should select a company based on your goals and where you feel the most comfortable.

**Deciding Among Offers**

You may be surprised to find yourself holding more than one offer for excellent internships. What is the best way to decide? To take a look at the pros and cons of each, try this:

- Construct a grid on a sheet of paper.
- On the left side, list your internship goals.
- Underneath your goals, list up to four additional skills you want to learn (e.g. building web pages, researching stocks, writing press releases, etc.).
- List what is important to you (e.g. being treated well, friendliness, working in an office, good supervision, dress down days, flex time, etc).
- After that, list other attributes (e.g. free lunch, lecture series, housing stipend, meeting famous people, access to top executives, social events, etc).
- End the list by answering the questions "Will I learn?" and "Do I think I will like the internship?"
- Across the top of the page, list the internships you’re considering or those for which you have received an offer.
- Under each, proceed down the page, noting each item that you listed on the left.
- Write “yes”, “no” or "not applicable” beside each item.
- Omit any internship that you think you won’t like or from which you won’t learn (the last two questions).
- Count the affirmative answers.
- Examine the internships that rate the highest on your scale and evaluate them. What are the most important criteria to you? How did each internship fare?
- Next, list the negative factors for each internship. Will it be too difficult to get there? Will the hours be too long?
- This should leave you with one or two internships. If you find yourself genuinely disappointed that another one wasn’t on your top list, add it.
If you’re still unsure about which to choose, we suggest that you:

- Talk to previous interns. Our office can help you locate student evaluations and possibly email addresses. Set up an appointment to get together and seriously consider any internship that students reported as being "excellent".
- Talk to people who currently work at that firm or MBA students who left there to come to school. We can help you locate those people.
- Discuss your decision with a close friend, relative, or one of our staff. It is amazing how clear your choice becomes when you discuss it, and lay out your options to someone else.

After the internship, you will definitely have an idea about what you do well, what you are interested in, and what you want no part of. Unless you are a graduating senior, there is time for you to do another.

**Extensions**

You may find yourself awaiting one offer (you are pretty sure you are going to get it) and nearing the deadline to decide on another offer. What now?

Ask for an extension on your first offer. Companies know the situation you are in and they are usually more than willing to offer you another week, maybe two.

Next, contact the company that you are waiting to hear from and ask if they have made a decision. Let them know you have an outstanding offer to which you need to reply. This should prompt them to respond to you immediately.

If you are really stuck and cannot get an extension or the other company is not responding, we may be able to help by contacting the company and getting more information. We will not ask for an extension for you, nor will we try to get the company to make a decision. But we can certainly call and get more information. Sometimes a call from our office lets them know they may be losing students to other companies if they continue to move slowly with their offers.

In this situation, you need to be respectful of the fact that people are busy, often traveling, and that recruiting may not be their only job. If they didn’t want you, they would tell you. If they continue to ask you to be patient and state that they are working on getting the offer, they are. If you let them know you have another offer and they still ask you to be patient, you know they want you and are doing their best to try to get you an offer. Since these folks know that you may have other opportunities, they will usually “fish or cut bait” rather than keep you in a holding pattern.

While it’s okay to call and check your status, it is not okay to harass people by making a pest of yourself. Once a week or every other week is fine to call. Eventually, if you are getting nowhere, you will have to be the one to make the decision to accept one offer and let another go. Just remember that once you accept, it’s a done deal. You are finished interviewing and
you cannot accept another offer later, even if it is with the company you coveted or a better offer. In this case, what’s done is done.

Accepting the Offer
The career services professionals at Penn State strive to build long-term recruiting relationships with employers, often with the assistance of our loyal alumni network.

In the job offer stage the expectation is that both parties will uphold the spirit of any verbal or written agreement of employment. Acceptance of an offer by a student is defined as: **verbal or written affirmation of a verbal or written offer of employment.** The United States operates under the legal and business tradition of "employment at will," meaning employers and employees may start or end the employment relationship at any time. It is less common for United States' employers or employees to work under a formal, contractual agreement that requires signed contracts and/or witnesses. In simpler terms, in most instances in the United States, your word is your bond. **Therefore, be very careful how you word your response to a verbal offer of employment.**

Once an offer is accepted students are required to cease all interviewing activity. Promptly inform the Business Career Center so that your name can be removed from all interview lists.

Any student, who accepts an offer (either written or verbal) and later reneges or continues to interview once an offer has been accepted, will be permanently blocked from the Nittany Lion Careers system.

Students reneging on accepted offers of internship employment seriously damage the reputation of the program as a whole and impair the ability to build lasting, corporate partnerships. You also damage your personal brand – recruiters talk to each other and change jobs frequently; you never know what bridges you may be burning when you renge. In the same respect, recruiters that renge on our students create lasting damage to their firm's reputation and ability to recruit the best students.

**In short, reneging is a breach of ethics.** Students who are considering reneging on the acceptance of an offer should contact the Business Career Center Director for a consultation prior to taking action to consider the consequences of doing so.

To Accept a Position:

- Consult with your parents BEFORE accepting any offers, NOT after. Make sure your decision meets with their approval.
- Notify the company to accept the position and review the next steps in their employment process.

To Notify the Internship Program and Report Your Internship:
- Cease all interviewing activity
• Complete the online acceptance form at https://php.smeal.psu.edu/corp/acceptance/index.php – by reporting your internship/co-op, you are automatically entered into a drawing to win a gift card

**Rejecting An Offer**
The Business Career Center and its employers understand that students often receive several offers of employment and will need to reject some opportunities. In this case, please remember that you are also representing Penn State University, The Smeal College of Business, and the Business Career Center. It is very important to our relationships that students conduct themselves both ethically and professionally during the job search and employment process.

After an offer has been extended, please respond in a timely and professional manner to the company and to our Program. This will provide time to find a suitable replacement for you on interview schedules and at the company. In the case of the company, you will not be “hurting the recruiter’s feelings”; this is business. Probably, there are as many people accepting offers as rejecting them. You will want to make sure that you thank the company for the opportunity, tell them you appreciated their time and the opportunity to learn more about their firm and that you wish them every success with the interns they have selected. You are not obligated to tell them what position you selected or with what company, although you may share any information with them that you choose to. It’s your call.

Rejecting a company’s offer for an internship will not destroy your chances of a full-time position with them when you graduate, as long as your rejection was handled professionally, respectfully, and promptly. You may make an offer to keep in touch. Again, that’s your call. Don’t make a shallow offer; do so only if you intend to and are truly interested in any future opportunities with the company.

**Drug Testing**
Sometimes employment is contingent on passing a drug test. This may take place in advance of or on the first day of work. Drug test failure means the offer of employment may be revoked. In this instance, there is nothing the Business Career Center can do to help you.