

# Creating or finding your own opportunities

Not all organizations list internships or part-time jobs on their website, but it doesn't mean that they are not open to offering these types of opportunities. This short guide will help you to "make a pitch" to create an internship or job where one may not exist (or find opportunities that may not be well marketed). Here are some thoughts for getting started:

## Make a list of contacts/organizations that interest you

The first step is to do research and figure out who you are going to reach out to. This is where you leverage your connections (professors, advisors, staff, alumni, clubs/professional groups, friends, family, the [Career Services team](#), etc.) to see who knows who and what they know. As you are making your list, keep having these conversations with your connections and support services, and keep an open mind. You never know who knows who, and how your list can grow.

In addition, research online, on social media, job postings, professional associations, etc. to learn more about your industry, the types of organizations you are interested in working for, and what kinds of entry level roles (or roles that fit your experience level) exist. Do some research to find the best contact person instead of just reaching out to everyone on the company contact page. It's worth your time to call the company main line (if that is all you can find) and find out who handles internship/job inquiries or by finding contacts on Handshake or LinkedIn to see if they can direct you to the right person. This part will take the most effort and will likely be the most time-consuming.

## Get specific on what you want experience in

What are you doing all this for? Why do you want this experience? Are you between different fields and want to narrow down what you're interested in? Is it required for your academic program? Do you want hands-on experience? In what? What particular skill or kinds of skills do you want to work on? It's okay to not know the answer to all of these questions, but getting clearer on what you are looking for will help you be clear with your goals when you make your pitch. You should have goals and ideas in mind about what you'd like to learn and get out of an internship, but remember to stay flexible and open to what potential employers have to offer and share with you as well.

## Make sure your resume, Handshake and LinkedIn profiles are updated

[Update your resume](#) and have it looked over by a few people who know you well. Make sure you have it reviewed by the professionals in Career Services (during [drop-in hours](#) 1 to 3 p.m. M-Th throughout the semester or by appointment during breaks) before sending it out to any employers. You won't need your resume for the first outreach, but if and when an employer responds to you, they may ask for a resume, and you will want to be prepared so you don't hold up the process. Once your resume is good to go, you can copy and paste its contents into your LinkedIn account and upload to Handshake – that way, if you are doing any outreach via LinkedIn or Handshake, or the employer is tech savvy, it is already viewable.

## Take the initiative and make the outreach

Once you know who you are reaching out to, what you want experience in, and you have your resume and LinkedIn updated, it's time to make the outreach. Depending on your research, you may have found that it's best to make phone calls to some places and send emails or Handshake/LinkedIn messages to others. This is your judgment call. Below is a sample of what the verbiage for this outreach could look like (either written or verbal). Feel free to personalize.

*“Hi, [insert name]. I’m a [insert your class year] [insert your major] major at SUNY Cortland and I’m exploring my career options in [insert specific industries/areas]. I am specifically interested in [insert your interests]. I am reaching out to inquire if you have any part-time job or internship opportunities for the upcoming semester. I can receive credit through my college and would love to gain hands-on experience in [insert field or area]. I would love to discuss this further and I’m happy to speak at a time convenient to you. I am also happy to share my resume with my experience and qualifications. Please let me know if you are interested and if so, when a good time for you to chat more may be.”*

The first few calls or emails may feel awkward, but the more you practice, the more comfortable you will feel. Remember not to be too discouraged if you don’t hear back or by a “no” response. Taking on an intern or new employee can be a lot of work for employers, and they may not have the capacity to hire you – that is not a reflection of you or your qualifications. Try to keep in perspective that the answer is always “no” if you never ask/never even started this process, so remember, you are looking for the rare “yeses” and opportunities here.

## **If the answer is no, see if you can have a career conversation**

If an internship or job isn’t available currently, ask if you can chat with someone in the organization to learn more about the industry and general career advice. This can help you to become more knowledgeable about the field and talking 1:1 with someone in person, over Zoom/video chat, or even via email or Handshake/LinkedIn messaging can provide you with valuable insight into what the industry looks for in its employees, typical career paths, what it’s like to work in the field, and other topics. [Harvard Business Review's 5 Questions to Ask During an “Informational Interview”](#) is helpful for navigating what the author calls “career conversations” (a more approachable term than informational interview). Key tips:

- Connect with the person/small talk about their day and thank them for their time.
- Share a short overview of who you are and why you are interested in speaking with them. Touch on the highlights of your education, work/internships, and be open about any decisions/uncertainty you’re facing.
- Ask questions:
  - What did your career path look like? What were you involved in during college? Did you have any experiences before your professional career started that helped you get there?
  - I understand you [share what you know about their job duties]. Can you provide more details about what your typical day/week looks like?
    - (If you don’t understand their role after researching, ask a question to clarify.) In my research, it was hard for me to tell what a [job title] does. Would you be able to describe what being a [job title] has been like for you?
    - What part of your job do you find the most interesting, as well as the most challenging?
  - Which skills are most important for a job like yours?
    - What skills do you think will be useful in the next 5 years for students entering the field?
  - What do you think is the best way to earn an internship (or job) in this industry (or company)?
  - I’m really interested in speaking with people [in X field / in Y role / at Z company]. Who else would you recommend that I connect with?
  - Ask a question based on your interests – don’t be afraid to stray from your list if you need clarification or if you are curious about an area that you didn’t anticipate.

## **Final thoughts**

This guide is just the start – you will learn more about networking and connecting with others as you go through this process, and you will hopefully be surprised by how gracious many people are with their time and energy. And remember, the answer is always no if you don’t ask. Take the initiative, be bold, and go out and create the experiences of your dreams!

*Information adapted from InterExchange’s [How to Create Your Own Internship](#) and Harvard Business Review Ascend’s [5 Questions to Ask During an “Informational Interview”](#)*