**An Intern’s Survival Guide – 10 Tips for Getting Ahead**

1. **Be prepared**

* Come to all meetings prepared – at minimum always bring a pen and notepad and take notes. Ideally read the agenda in advance and be clear on what the purpose of the meeting is. You’re probably not expected to speak but make sure you follow what’s going on in case you’re called upon to give a view
* If you don’t understand everything that’s ok. Jot down jargon so you can look it up later to make sense of everything. (Keep a list of key-words for future reference)

1. **Keep a to-do list and prioritise**

* You’ll likely be given lots of different tasks to complete. Keep a running to-do list and make sure you clarify what the task is so you’re clear on what you need to do.
* Always ask when the deadline is. This will help you prioritise and plan. If you’re not sure what the priority is, always check with your manager.
* Ask your manager what the top three priorities are for the team and try and understand how your work contributes to this. Knowing this will help you to see how everything fits together.

1. **Always give an extra 20%**

* Turn up early. This shows your enthusiasm and that you are keen to be there.
* Build a reputation as someone who always goes the extra mile. People who go beyond what’s expected of them have an opportunity to learn more and also impress people with their attitude.
* People at work can be under enormous pressure. What tasks can you offer to help with - offering to grab your manager a coffee or pick up lunch? - Proof-read a document? Do a piece of research? Volunteer to help out.

1. **Look after yourself**

* The workplace can be tiring. Try not to schedule after-work commitments for the first couple of weeks as you’ll be tired and it allows you the option to stay late if you need to without feeling pressure to leave at a certain time
* Get enough sleep – at least 7-8 hours a night
* If you do go out with the team, treat the pub as an extension of the workplace – don’t get drunk – there’s nothing more embarrassing the next day. Consider limiting yourself to one or two drinks only.
* Try and build in some exercise. Evena brisk 10 minute walk at lunch can be a way to liven up. Eating well and exercising can give you the stamina you need to complete your internship. Some companies may have a gym and shower facilities – maybe ask whether you can use these before/after work.
* Figure out when you’re most productive – for some people the mornings can be when they can focus best and get stuff done, others work better in the afternoon. Figure out your own pattern and work your tasks around it, schedule the hardest tasks for when you feel more focused and the easier tasks for say the 4pm afternoon slump.

1. **Read between the lines**

* Companies have a concept of “emotional intelligence” or EQ. Learn to read the mood of your boss – is this a good time to interrupt? If someone looks like they have their head down it might not be the best time. It is helpful to identify a “buddy” who might be less senior that you can ask little questions to. Or batch up your questions for your manager and ask them in one go.
* Think like the boss – how can you prepare a short, concise email that gives the information but is easy to read? How can you make it easier for your boss to look at data – is there a graph you could use?
* Take ownership of your work and how others see you– it’s not like school where your teachers often tell you what to do. In the workplace you’ll be treated like an adult and expected to take responsibility for your work.

1. **Actively take time to learn**

* Look up concepts and words that you don’t understand – Start to get familiar with the jargon, this will help you follow what’s being said.
* Try and be commercially minded – How does what your team do ladder up to the wider organisation? What are the CEO’s priorities? What is the company as a whole trying to do? Normally this will be articulated on the company’s website.
* How did your boss handle that meeting? Figure out how people influence each other in the workplace or manage conflict elegantly.
* Take time out each day reflect and jot down your learning. At the end of the internship write down a few bullets covering what you did and what you learned (see our CAR framework worksheet for how to structure these bullets).
* In future interviews, you’ll be asked what you did and what you learned - It’s easy to forget the details so by writing it down this will help you remember

1. **Don't be a resource drain – bring solutions not problems**

* Managing new interns and helping them learn can be a “resource drain” for companies – investing in coaching interns takes time away from busy people, so be grateful for the time spent with you.
  + Key suggestion: When bringing a problem to your manager, bring possible solutions or recommendations as well.
* Be proactive – if you don’t have anything to do, offer to help others. If they don't want help set yourself a task e.g. read the FT online to learn about what’s going on in business, or do some research on your company’s competitors, or take yourself off for a short walk – don’t just sit at your desk feeling useless

1. **Be positive and enthusiastic**

* Some days will be boring and you’ll do things that you feel are “beneath” you but don’t complain. Be positive. Most companies are looking for people who will muck in and roll up their sleeves – we all have to do grunt work sometimes
* Manage your body language – try not to look bored. Find what helps you, even just having a cup of tea in a meeting can make you feel better and give you something to do, look for the learning, find a way to make it interesting
* If you want to return to the organisation in the future, remember to be enthusiastic – tell people that you’d love to come back and work there permanently – don’t assume they already know that!

1. **Respect everyone and respect confidentiality**

* From the PA to the security guard, ensure you are polite and friendly to everyone – these people are more experienced than you are and they fulfill important roles. Acting superior is the quickest way to ensure you won’t be invited back for a job
* Confidentiality is critical – be discreet, don’t mention sensitive things outside of your team or the workplace, and if in doubt check in with your manager what you can put on your CV or mention in future interviews. They will appreciate your awareness of confidentiality.

1. **Grow and maintain your network**

* During your internship, invest in growing your network – Ask people for coffee and learn about what other teams do. Building relationships maximizes your chances of success. These individuals might be able to help you with tasks or teach you more about how the company works.
* Before your internship ends, figure out how stay connected with the people you’ve worked with. Make sure you add them on LinkedIn.
  + Key suggestion: if there’s someone you’ve really got on well with, could you ask them to give you a reference in the future? Could you ask them to mentor you? Perhaps offer to buy them a coffee in the university holidays and ask for some careers advice… it doesn’t hurt to ask.
* A handwritten note of thanks at the end of your internship can be a tiny gestures that people remember – being grateful for the opportunity and thanking people goes a long way.