

Chapter 9: Recognition and Evaluation

Just as ongoing experiential learning is key an intern's development, recognition of their hard work and accomplishments can be one of the most valuable rewards. Though recognition is discussed in this final chapter, recognition should not be relegated to the end of an internship. Rather, good recognition should be ongoing; the more it happens, the more likely you are to have a dedicated, motivated, and excited intern on staff.

Similarly, individual and internship program evaluation are not just meant for the end of an internship experience. Instead consider evaluation to be the informed culmination of your findings from meetings, benchmarks, and other performance assessments (including such things as a mid-internship evaluations) completed along the way. At the same time, serious feedback provided to an intern throughout their experience with your library demonstrates that you value and take both them and their work seriously.

Recognizing Your Interns

Recognition should be a regular practice for any good supervisor and certainly doesn't need to be laborious.

Frequent, varied, and, most importantly, honest gratitude and thanks can be invaluable in motivating your intern to do their best work. Ongoing recognition strategies and principles might include:

- Personal recognition: Acknowledge outcomes ("Nice report") but also be sure to praise the specifics of the intern's work ("I'm really impressed with all of the research and dedication you put into this report"). Learn what motivates them and how they best receive praise. Call out their strengths, challenges they overcame, and new knowledge that they acquired.
- Public recognition: Publicly acknowledge the intern's work as well as their vital contributions to your team.
- Recognize appropriately: Small successes warrant small recognitions. Don't hold a banquet to recognize meeting Friday's deadline (this goes back to honest recognition) but do be sure to express your gratitude for their hard work and reliability.
- Recognize constantly: A sincere thank you and a smile can carry a lot of weight.
- Recognize immediately: Don't wait for two weeks to acknowledge how well

Internship Management Checklist¹

- Determine methods for ongoing informal recognition*
- Determine methods for formal recognition*
- Recognize your interns!
- Develop strategies for ongoing evaluation of your interns*
- Create a Mid-Intern Evaluation*
- Craft a formal evaluation for your interns, supervisors, and internship program*
- Conduct formal evaluations of interns and supervisors at the end of each internship
- Conduct a formal evaluation of the program at least once per year.
- Share the results of your evaluation internally and/or externally.

1. Tasks in italics are those that you may only need to do when you are first setting up your internship program (although you should certainly plan to revisit these tasks at least once per year to confirm that they are still relevant).

the intern did when presenting to library staff. Instead take a minute or two to express your impressions as they happen.

- Recognize what you want: If it is important for you and for your intern's professional growth to perform their work in a particular way, praise it. Reinforcement of positive actions can mean greater chances of that action reoccurring.

Types of Intern Recognition

Informal recognition is about how you and your library make people feel on a daily basis. The tone is set by how paid staff, interns, volunteers, and patrons interact. Do you practice the same level of professional courtesy with your interns as you do your library patrons or staff peers?

The following are some informal ways to recognize your interns:

- Say "Thank You"
- Give specific praise ("I'm really impressed with how you've ____")
- Smile
- Ask their opinion
- Remember important information (birthdays, anniversaries, spouse or partner's name, kids' names, hobbies, interests, etc.)
- Acknowledge their work on a report or project by prominently featuring their name
- Give them a shout-out via staff emails or other internal communications so that you help to create a culture where staff can approach an intern and say, "I heard about the work you did on that project. Nice job!" (it also helps to encourage fellow staff to acknowledge the accomplishments of interns!)
- Invite them to lunch or a coffee break (with you, with colleagues, with library leadership)
- Invite them to participate in internal trainings as well as staff meetings and other important decision-making conversations in order to demonstrate how much you value their time, opinion, and ongoing education
- Ask them to help train or show the ropes to a new intern
- Introduce them in terms of their accomplishments ("This is Jane Smith, she's the one who designed our terrific new children's reading hour.")
- Contact whomever sent them your way to let them know how thankful you are for their contributions
- Set aside a public place in the library to mention great contributions by volunteers and interns.

You should also consider incorporating at least one kind of formal recognition into your internship program. Here are a few different forms it might take:

- Write a strong letter of recommendation. Your interns are budding library professionals who are actively seeking connections and networks in the field. Help them get started with a letter of recommendation that provides detailed

praise for all that they have accomplished and what they have ahead of them.

- Present the intern with an award, certificate, plaque, and/or public acknowledgement in an external newsletter or bulletin board to help them feel connected to and recognized by the community
- Host an official or ad hoc celebration of your intern's accomplishments. These can be a formal recognition event, perhaps paired with efforts to recognize library volunteers, or something that takes place during a staff meeting, training, or other internal gathering
- Take them to lunch to celebrate their accomplishments with the library. Be sure to invite other staff and volunteers with whom the intern has interacted.
- Other ideas? The world of volunteer management is flush with ideas for formally acknowledging the contributions of volunteers. Check in with staff members responsible for engaging volunteers at your library – or seek out volunteer recognition materials online – for additional recognition ideas.

Evaluation: Interns, Supervisors, and Programs

Evaluating interns

Effective evaluation begins with realistic, challenging expectations, a thorough orientation, and clear channels of communication and feedback. In fact, in a perfect world, nothing that emerges from an evaluation process should come as a surprise to either the intern or the supervisor. In previous chapters, we have discussed several of the ways that you might conduct this kind of regular, ongoing evaluation as part of your communications and supervisions strategies. However, you will also want to implement more formal evaluation methods. Some characteristics of a good evaluation program might include:

- Opportunities to revisit and redesign internship position descriptions
- A periodic scheduled evaluation meeting between the intern and their supervisor to discuss job performance and satisfaction (this can be part of your regular weekly check-ins or something more formally scheduled)
- A Mid-Internship Evaluation (see the next section)
- A method for reviewing commitments to change made during evaluation meeting
- An exit interview to discuss how things went and how they can be improved for future interns

The Importance of Up-to-Date Position Descriptions

Without good position descriptions that outline the goals, objectives, and performance measures of internships, supervisors will not know what they are asking of the intern and the intern will not know what is expected. Avoid this problem by updating descriptions annually to reflect new strategies as well as feedback from previous intern and supervisor experiences.

This system should be explained to each intern during their initial orientation session, and should be reviewed with each staff person who will be participating in the supervision and mentorship process.

Mid-Internship Evaluation

Mid-Internship Evaluations offer a chance to discuss whether goals for the first half of the internship were met as well as potential modifications for the second half. This evaluation may end up taking the form of an everything-is-going-well meeting but can also offer a chance for some mid-internship corrections (reassessing goals, work/communication styles, realistic outcomes, etc.). An internship is a fluid, evolving experience and a dedicated time to reflect and plan in the middle of the internship will help ensure that the program is a success from start to finish. Here are a few questions every supervisor should consider asking their intern during a Mid-Internship Evaluation (based on those developed for Idealist.org's internship program):

- What parts of your internship do you most enjoy?
- What parts do you enjoy least?
- Are your tasks, responsibilities, and projects what you expected? Why or why not?
- Are you currently experiencing any challenges that are hindering your ability to do your best work? What can we do to support you and/or overcome these challenges?
- Are there any areas where you feel you need additional training, resources, or support?
- Do you feel that the remaining work and associated timelines is feasible? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that you are receiving quality opportunities for ongoing learning and professional development? If so, which have been your favorites? If not, what can we do differently to improve the quality of future opportunities?
- What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishments thus far?
- What would you like to achieve with the remainder of your internship?

Here are a few questions to consider an internship program manager might consider asking the intern's supervisor as well (again, based in part on Idealist.org's internship program):

- What have you observed to be this intern's greatest strengths?
- In what if any areas would you like to see improvement? How might we be able to help them improve in these areas?
- What would you consider to be the intern's greatest accomplishments thus far?
- What would you consider to be their greatest challenges? Any ideas for how we can help them overcome these challenges?
- What would you like to achieve with this intern with the remainder of their time at the library?
- Do you feel that the remaining work and associated timelines for the internship are feasible? Why or why not?
- Are there any areas where you feel you need additional training, resources, or support to manage your intern?
- Do you feel you have a good working relationship with your intern? Why or why not? If not, how can we help to improve this relationship?

Intern Portfolio

Another excellent way for an intern to track and reflect on their own experience is to have them keep a portfolio of their work. This can consist of documents created by the intern, written evaluation forms from supervisors and library staff, and memorabilia from their experience (newsletters, thank-you notes, programs from trainings/events, etc.). A partial list of items that might be included in this type of portfolio includes:

- Their internship position description
- Submitted reports or documents
- Project or program materials
- References, letters of recommendation, and other praise (internal emails, newsletters, etc.)
- Key correspondence (internal and external)
- Awards, certificates and recognitions
- Training materials
- Brochures and other print materials
- Manuals and surveys
- Press releases and other media mentions
- Supervisor, personal, and/or program evaluations

Fun with Paperwork

While it's a great idea for interns to create their own professional portfolios, keep in mind that you should also keep an *official* file on all interns engaged; this would preferably be housed with your library's HR staff (and should be subject to any and all relevant HR policies regarding confidentiality.) Items to include might include intern application materials, position descriptions, acceptance letters, internship agreements, exit interviews, evaluations, and letters of recommendation.

Final Evaluations: Staff and Interns

If regular check-ins and Mid-Internship Evaluations are in place, the final evaluation should generally not be a difficult process. Instead this should be an opportunity to reflect on the course of the internship and gather feedback and ideas from throughout the term.

Supervisors might consider answering some of the following questions in preparation for final evaluation of their interns (based on Idealist.org's internship program):

- Did the intern complete their internship goals, objectives, and deliverables? Why or why not?
- How well did they accomplish their tasks and deliverables?
- How has the intern's accomplishments contributed to the library's overall goals and objectives?
- What do you think the intern's greatest strengths were? Areas for continued improvement? Suggestions for how they might do this going forward?
- Are there any areas where you have witnessed marked improvement or skill development on the part of the intern? If so, what was it?
- Has there been any aspect of the intern's work where you were particularly impressed? If so, please describe it.

Academic Evaluations

If you are partnering with an academic institution – or your intern is affiliated with a college or university – check to see if they have a standard evaluation form for use with their student interns. Not only can this potentially save you the step of developing your own evaluation, it will also prepare you to fulfill this institutional obligation when the time comes.

- Are there any aspects of supervision that you might do differently with a future intern? If so, please describe.
- How can we best support you as an intern supervisor in the future?
- What if any changes or additions might you make to this internship's current position description? Are there any additional trainings or resources we should make available to increase their chances of success?

Interns might be asked questions like the following (again, based on Idealist.org's internship program):

- What parts of your internship did you most enjoy?
- What parts did you enjoy least?
- Were your tasks, responsibilities, and projects what you expected? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that you completed your internship's goals and objectives per the discussion with your supervisor at the start of your internship?
- Do you feel that you received adequate training, support, and/or resources to do your best work? If not, how might we better support a future intern in this type of position?
- Do you feel that you received quality opportunities for ongoing learning and professional development? If so, which were your favorites? If not, what can we do differently to improve the quality for future interns?
- What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishments? What are you most proud of?
- What was most challenging?
- Did you discover anything new about your professional self that you didn't know before this internship?
- How do you feel that this internship contributed to your longer-term goals of a career with libraries?
- What did you wish you'd known before you started your internship? What advice would you have for future interns with our library?
- Do you feel that you had a good working relationship with your supervisor? Why or why not? If not, how can we help to improve this relationship for future interns?
- How can we best support future interns in this type of position?
- What if any changes or additions might you make to your internship's position description? Are there any additional trainings or resources we should make available to increase future intern chances of success?

Designing Exit Interviews and Evaluations

Please see the appendix section of this toolkit for sample exit interview and supervisor evaluation forms to help inform your own.

Note that these questions can be asked in-person or using a format that provides some or total anonymity such as web-based surveys (sites like SurveyMonkey.com offer free albeit sometimes limited online survey tools). Whether these responses are shared in full with both supervisors and interns is up to your library; on one hand, candid information

on performance is good to have but can also be difficult to take. If you have established a culture of ongoing learning and improvement though, this should ideally be something that is expected and beneficial. Talk to human resources staff to determine if and how much evaluation information to share with supervisors, interns, leadership, and others.

Final Presentations

Another useful method to gauge the success of an intern's experience (as well as offer opportunities for public recognition and public speaking skill development) is to have each intern present their accomplishments to staff. This presentation primarily serves three purposes: 1) codifying the work into a form that can be incorporated into a program review, 2) recognizing the hard work of the intern with and to staff, and 3) informing staff about the work of interns, thus building institutional knowledge of and buy-in for the internship program.

Evaluating the Program

Intern and supervisor responses should be recorded and sent to the Internship Program Manager to compile and use in a formal annual review of the internship program. Feedback, ideas, and suggested changes can then be considered, compiled with evaluations of other former and/or current interns, and potentially incorporated into such internship program documents as policies and procedures, internship position descriptions, internship handbooks, and orientation and training materials.

Sharing Results

Finally, consider ways in which you might share the findings of your evaluations. Internally, you might write up a brief report of the internship program achievements, opportunities for improvement, and acknowledgment of the contributions of staff, volunteers, and interns to the process. If your library has a board of directors or other leadership body outside of staff, you might do a presentation for them highlighting the successes of your interns and overall internship program as well. Externally, you might consider sharing what worked well for you with your peers in the field via presentations at regional or national conferences, sharing written feedback with academic and community partners, or possibly even writing articles for publication in industry publications. ●

Tracking Internship Stats

You'll also want to keep track of internship statistics including such things as how many interns your library has engaged, how many hours they contributed, and tangible accomplishments and outcomes achieved by interns; you can track these kinds of data in a formal database or something as simple as a spreadsheet document. Not only can this information inform the continual improvement of your internship program but it can also be handy information for future grant or other funding applications and opportunities!

About this book

Looking for more info about this book? Visit <http://libraryinterns.blogspot.com>, where you can download individual chapters or the entire book, and find other related resources (all free of charge).