How to find a summer internship or entry-level job during Covid-19

Donna Gaspar Jarvis, University of New England Career Advisor
Written and adapted from College Recruiter Zoom Panel (April 10, 2020)
https://www2.CollegeRecruiter.com/FindingJobInCovid19World

In this world of Covid19, what do you do if you have not yet applied for a summer internship position, or have not found an entry-level job yet?

- **Hold off applying right now.** If you have not started the application process for a summer internship (have not sent in an application prior to Covid19), you may want to hold off on applying at this point as your paperwork may get lost in the shuffle. As there are still many unknowns, unless you have a concrete sign from the employer that they are hiring right now, you may not want to send in your materials. Instead, use this time to continue to research/network and put together your best application materials and tools for when you do apply (resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, etc.)

- **Be flexible and nimble about what “opportunity” looks like.** There may be other ways to gain professional experience that doesn’t require what a formal summer internship/work experience has looked like in the past. Be creative and think of other ways you can gain experience.

- **Be a solutions-provider.** College students and their familiarity with technology and social media are poised to be good “solutions providers” for remote and online working. Let an employer know how you can do to help them. Approach them with a solution: “I know a summer internship won’t look the same as last summer and I’m okay with that. Here are three things I believe I can offer you in a remote capacity to help with your mission and goals.” Come to the table as a solutions provider rather than someone looking for an internship and waiting for them to tell you what you are going to do. Make that mental shift and propose solutions – **Here is something I can do for you.**

- **Brainstorm projects/tasks you are qualified to do.** Think about all the valued added projects or tasks you might be able to do remotely and highlight this to an employer:
  - Build or update their website
  - Support content development for social media (blogs, videos)
  - Take on an independent project that uses skills and abilities from your major as applicable

- **Know your value.** Do not send a LinkedIn or resume and ask the employer/recruiter “What am I qualified to do?” Find out what the employers’ needs are from reading a job description or researching their business/organization and tell them what you think you are qualified to do. “This is why I think I’m a good fit for your job or company and how I’m qualified.” It is not the employer’s job to tell a student what they can do by looking at their materials; it’s the students job to present themselves in their materials to tell the employer what they are qualified for and can do for them!

- **Conduct informational interviews.** This might be a good time to reach out and practice your networking skills to see if people are willing to answer questions about their career field, company, or give feedback on next steps in your career. But, if you do reach out to ask for an informational interview, be respectful of time – people might be willing to speak to you for a 10-15 minute phone call, but now is not the time to ask people to mentor you for an hour long meeting.

- **Reconsider your timeline:** Realign and apply earlier in the year. Many employers beginning recruiting and hiring summer interns in the fall. If you haven’t applied yet, realign your timeline so that you begin your summer internship search and applications earlier in the fall for next school year.
What do you do if you have already started the application process, but you have not had an official offer yet and things are on hold?

- **Keep communication lines open and offer to help.** Reach out to your employer contact at the company. Send a short message about how you understand this is a difficult time; show empathy and understanding for the complexity employers are going through trying to figure things out. Then, ask if there is anything you can do to help or even better, offer 2-3 remote projects that you could do for them.

- **Revise your plans.** Use this summer to increase your skill set in other ways (take an online course at udemy.com or coursera.org or a number of other MOOC style online learning platforms). There are lots of free trainings and other things being offered right now – so take advantage of this time to hone your skills or learn something new!

- **Don’t stop searching.** Keep your eyes open about other opportunities. In the event the employer cancels their summer internship program, you want to already be thinking about other plans. Something might not come through with your first choice, so stay active and attentive to other opportunities.

- **Be proactive.** Reach out and make suggestions to an employer about how you might work with them virtually over the summer. Take initiative and determine what your “value added” offer will be and make suggestions on how you might be able to support them remotely with an internship opportunity.

- **Be as flexible as possible.** Consider your intentions for wanting to do the internship in the first place. What were your primary goals? Did you hope to network, to gain or apply certain skills, to earn money, to learn more about a particular industry? Then consider if there are alternative ways to reach that goal (is there a boot camp or course you can take instead, or is there an independent project, freelance gig or volunteer project that might meet the same objective?)

- **Look at the big picture.** These circumstances are training you to be nimble, resilient, creative and resourceful – all necessary qualities for the job search process! What students/applicants are going through right now is a masterclass in the fundamentals of finding any internship/job: How do you effectively network? How can you think broadly about what you want to get out of an experience? How do you self-reflect on your “personal brand” and what you have to offer? Thinking broadly is really important. You can learn a lot in this process about prototyping. Do something, see what works and doesn’t work, and try it again or do something differently.

- **Stay positive.** Realize everything is uncertain and we are all going through this together. Try to focus on what you are learning from this experience and how it might help you down the road about the internship/job search strategy process.

What do you do if you have accepted an offer, but have not actually started working in the position yet (and you’re afraid the job might not be there when you are supposed to start)?

- **Stay connected.** You know who your main points of contacts are at the company through the application and interview process. Be sure to reach out and stay connected with them; communicate and ask questions, stay in touch.

- **Show empathy.** Keep in touch with whomever made you to the offer; be respectful of their needs and challenges during this time as well. Show support and empathy for what the employer/company is going through as well.

- **Follow professional etiquette rules.** Send thank you’s when applicable for people’s time, support, feedback. Be respectful of communication etiquette in all your emails, phone calls and communication. Respect time boundaries.
What do you do if you have already started an internship or new employment position, and you are currently working in a remote capacity, but you are afraid about losing your job.

- **Practice self-care.** This time is anxiety inducing so do all the things necessary to practice self-care: mindfulness activities (meditation, yoga), creative outlets, exercise, get outside in nature, journaling. Do things to take care of yourself and help alleviate anxiety.
- **Be a rock star on the job.** Be as visible as possible: communicate with people, meet every deadline, contribute to the best of your ability, follow through on responsibilities, be transparent about how you’re spending your time and what you are doing.
- **Broaden your skills.** Look for ways you might broaden your skills or how your skills could be transferred to a different industry. Where else could your skills and abilities be used in other employment?
- **Stay alert to other opportunities.** You must become a passive job seeker at all times and always keeping your eye out for another opportunity should this one fall through. Spruce up your LinkedIn profile, create multiple resumes that focus on different skill areas/different industries. Look for skills that you can transfer over or develop new skills that you might need in the future.
- **Volunteer to do work nobody else wants to do.** Offer to take on other tasks or responsibilities outside your job description to help out and make yourself useful and invaluable. Be noticed.
- **Relinquish the need for control.** Think about what parts of your life you can control, and those you can’t, and try to focus your energy on things that you can control and let go of the rest. You may not know everything that is coming in the future. It is hard to predict what will happen. Do your best to prepare for worst case scenarios, but trust the process that things will work out in the end.
- **Remember you’re not alone.** This is happening to EVERYONE. How you respond to covid19 makes a great interview story someday. How can you be the hero of your own story? How will you talk about how you responded to this time and what you did during Covid19? Make it a hero’s story!
- **Go after it.** At the end of the day, you are responsible for your own career path and journey. Take initiative. Be proactive. But most of all believe in yourself – you can do this!

**Host and Moderator:**  *Faith Rothberg*, College Recruiter's Chief Executive Officer

College Recruiter is an interactive recruitment media company used by college students and recent graduates to find great career and internship opportunities. [www.collegerecruiter.com](http://www.collegerecruiter.com)

**Panelists:**

*Pam Baker*, CEO for Journeous

*Martin Edmondson*, CEO for Gradcore

*Lorenz Esposito*, Digital Marketing Specialist for Potentialpark

*Susan Kennedy*, Director of Internships and Career Placement for Regis College

*Grace Kutney*, Associate Director of Career Services for Lawrence University

*Alexandra Levit*, Co-Founder for PeopleResults

*Jillian Low*, Director of University Partnerships for CRCC Asia

*Cristin Rigney*, Campus Programs Manager for New Relic

*Robert Shindell*, CEO of InternBridge

*Bruce Soltys*, Head of Talent Sourcing for Travelers Companies