



# THE 3 R'S OF EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIPS

BY TRENT RHODES

In past centuries, when someone wanted to develop a skill and had the opportunity, he or she would be introduced to a master craftsman. After an evaluation based on criteria including potential for the craft, discipline, overall “the right stuff,” the individual became an apprentice.

An apprentice was a direct understudy for the teacher. Involving many hours of practice, the apprentice was in a position to receive direct exposure to the inner workings of the teacher’s methods. Not only were the methods available but the internal qualities necessary to ascend to high levels of creation in the craft were also passed on, from the teacher to the apprentice in a process called direct transmission. Another term for it is entrainment.

## Internships Entrain with Training

Entrainment is an experience of harmonizing with something; two people who meet and become friends form a deep connection, eventually begin to resonate with each other. They understand each other without having to make their nuances blatant. Close friends and partners in relationship “just get each other” because of this deep understanding that goes beyond physical expression.

In a professional setting such as the apprentice and teacher, the teacher’s skills, experiences and ways of being gradually influence the apprentice, entraining her to manifest similar capacities. By learning how to “think like a painter,” to see as a painter would, to live as a painter would, the apprentice in all ways **becomes the painter**. This is a more complex description of “fake it ‘till you make it” and a key principle in my book, SAGE Mind.

We don’t have such direct apprenticeships in abundance today. This training system has been converted into a more distanced form of development we call the internship. An internship is an organizational-style apprenticeship where a learner enters the organization to gain development experiences. Rather than be under the direct study of one teacher, she could be working with entire departments. Because these can appear to look like “free labor,” with a number of situations rising over the years of company exploitation of interns, there tends to be an exchange: the intern receives school credit, monetary payment or some form of resource-compensation for the time invested.

## What separates an internship from a job?

The primary separation involves the internship **not creating direct profit for the organization**. Meaning, the intern’s work isn’t converted into work that one of their employees would do. An internship is supposed to include a supervisor or specialist in the field of interest, who provides the intern with projects that allow her to gain skills and

experience in a real-world environment. It is not designed to replace an employee's work. **Note:** This is speaking of the general process. As with all generalities there are outlier, outside-of-the-box situations that will not be covered here. A future post.

### **3 R's of Effective Internships**

There are 3 areas an intern should focus on at minimum to exit the experience with resources that can propel her forward. Both current employees and interns can benefit from these:

#### **Referral or Reference**

A referral is a contact given to you by someone you already know for a specified reason. If you perform well at the internship, someone there at the leadership level will be comfortable referring your name to a contact they know could utilize your skill set. Or, they could refer you to the right person within that same organization so you can be officially hired. A reference is a contact you receive who endorses you. The reference is sometimes seen as just a name and contact info, but a person saying "Yes" to being your reference is putting their name on the line by supporting you. This is an important resource. Ensure you exit your internship with at least 1-2 references. Place them on a reference document for future use.

When you're completing applications you'll be asked for references at some point. The last thing you want is to have to chase people and ask them casually if you can use them. If you cannot think of two people who could be your references right now, it means you have more relationship-building to do.

#### **Recommendations**

Recommendations take references a step further. A recommendation is an actual written statement by someone who endorses you. They are powerful resources because the words come directly from them, and you can use these in your creative endeavors. You can split a paragraph and use a few sentences as quotes throughout your work. A recommendation from your internship supervisor could be posted on your online applications, sent to new contacts and even posted on your websites, like this. Don't leave your internship without asking for one. How to ask?

*"Would you support me by writing a letter of recommendation?"*

#### **Recording**

Recording is a space I intend to give much attention to with another project, but it's important to mention here for interns. Do not work in your roles without taking down notes of your projects, especially those you brought to successful completion. Detail the programs you worked with if any, the skills applied, how many hours you worked on them, the departments you interacted with, and the problems you were solving. Your internship, typically a 3-month period, should look like a dossier with all of the work involved. That information will be useful for your resume and portfolio.

Keep a notebook with you and write of your experiences. Internship dynamics are vast but these three areas will help you complete the journey with plenty of resources that propel you to the next stage.