Maintaining Professional Relationships

4 Things to Do Immediately After Your Co-op/Internship

1. Express your appreciation to everyone who has helped you along the way.
   - Send a thank you card to your supervisor and thank you emails to your co-workers, peers and everyone else who’s helped you along the way.
   - Write a LinkedIn recommendation to your supervisor/manager and anyone who you think deserves it, stating a key skill they possess and how they have helped you as a co-op/internship student.
   - A little appreciation will go a long way in maintaining the professional relationships you have built. Did you have a friend/family member/family friend/HR Recruiter who helped you get your co-op/internship in any way? Was there someone who helped you while you were working? Your main supervisors/managers deserve a thank you card, take the time to get one and personalize each card with specific things you are thankful for. For your colleagues and fellow co-op/internship students, send them a thank you email expressing your gratitude for anything they may have helped you out with. Whether it is helping you find out where the best place to get take out, or giving you tips on how to be more efficient, people will appreciate the gesture!

2. Make a plan to keep in touch
   - Connect with your colleagues through LinkedIn. Start with your peers then with your supervisors and managers.
   - Maintain relationships by making a note in your calendar about special events/holidays your colleagues celebrate and be sure to send them a quick note; schedule a check-in email at least once a month and follow through on plans you agree on

3. Help your current team manage your transition out and/or help transition your tasks to a new co-op/intern. Think back to how it was like when you first started. Did you ever wish someone had walked you through what you need to know? Were you trained and mentored during your first week(s) by staff or other co-op/interns? What are some ways you can help your supervisor/manager/team feel at ease about you leaving?
   - Offer to train the new student (if possible)
   - Make or update a training package or “need to know” booklet for the new student/employee. Some ideas to include could be:
     - How to dress appropriately
     - Which materials to bring (laptop, notebook, phone, ID, etc)
     - Effective ways to make use of downtime
     - Who to contact about questions or in case of emergency
     - Nearby places to get coffee or lunch
     - Daily tasks and longer-term projects

4. Update your résumé, LinkedIn profile and/or e-portfolio
   - Do this as soon as possible. You want to have all the information fresh in your mind, not months later when you’re more likely to forget important details, contributions and key achievements. This prep work is important and will help you save time and frustration when you’re ready for your next co-op/internship or new graduate job search.
   - Make a list of skills you enhanced, new skills learned and the skills you know you need to improve on (reflect on your supervisor evaluation)
Ways to Maintain Your Professional Network

Now that you have a professional network, it’s important to know how to manage and maintain these relationships that you have built. Students often ask us, “How do I keep in touch?”, “What are some ways I can maintain my relationships with my colleagues?”. Here are three easy ways to keep in touch:

1. Ask for an update on a project you worked on and/or update them on how you’re applying the skills and knowledge you’ve gained from your co-op/internship into the classroom or in co-curricular activities.
   - Check in with your supervisor, your project team and other colleagues on how your project has progressed or evolved. This shows you care about your work but also the outcome.
   - Similarly, telling your supervisors/mentors/colleagues about how something they taught you, or how your co-op/internship experience is helping you succeed in the classroom or in co-curricular activities is an excellent way of reaffirming to your supervisors/mentors/colleagues that the time they spent with you has made an impact. This is another way of showing gratitude and is most appreciated by employers.

2. Utilize LinkedIn or other social media platforms to engage your network
   - Depending on how you’ve developed your professional relationships, you may have some of your network on LinkedIn and others on Instagram or Twitter, or other social media platforms. LinkedIn and Twitter are more professional in nature compared to Instagram or Facebook. Share an article you see on LinkedIn or news on Twitter to remind your network you are thinking of them. Ask them for their opinion or bring something you know they will be interested in to their attention.

3. Follow-up and follow through
   - This is often the one and only rule that is really needed when it comes to building and maintaining professional relationships. Checking in with your network, showing genuine interest and doing what you said you would do such as meeting up for coffee during your academic year, or visiting the workplace, or sending them updates when you said you would – is the best thing you could do to foster your relationships. Following-up and following through shows you care and goes a long way towards building trust with your network.