

The Internship Landscape

A Deep Dive into Internships by Job Function

Key Insights

- In the United States, internships are a major pathway for learning and full-time employment. However, its relevance greatly varies by job function. In 2023, the job functions having the most entry-level talent with internship experience are consulting (33.7%), legal (32.5%), and business development (31.4%). The ones with the least are real estate (5.4%), customer success and support (8.7%), and operations (8.8%).
- The months in a year with the most internship job postings greatly vary by job function. In job functions such as accounting and engineering, it is best to start applying in the early Fall (August to September) while for others, waiting until January makes more sense.
- In some job functions, it is more common to do internships after graduating from a degree program as opposed to during one. 31.8% of internships in human resources started after graduation followed by 30.8% for accounting and 28.7% in media and communications. Job functions where it is least likely to do internships after graduating are legal (11.9%), consulting (16.6%) and real estate (17.5%).

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Internships are more relevant for some job functions than others

Internships has long been beneficial for both students and employers. For students, internships give them their first taste of what work would be like in a potential career path and gain them valuable skills. For employers, internships help them determine whether a student may be a good fit (culturally and in terms of skill-set) to hire for a full-time position.

In our research, however, we found that some job functions value internship experience more than others. The job functions with the most entry-level talent with internship experience are consulting (33.7%), legal (32.5%), followed by business development (31.4%). And while skills are important across the gamut for new employees, the job functions that have the least entry-level talent with internship experience are: real estate (5.4%), customer success and support (8.7%), and operations (8.8%).

Navigating the Internship Landscape

Job Function	% of 2023 Entry Level talent w/ Internship Experience	Job Function	% of 2023 Entry Level talent w/ Internship Experience
Accounting	18.6%	Information Technology	12.5%
Administrative	12.1%	Legal	32.5%
Arts and Design	17.9%	Marketing	25.6%
Business Development	31.4%	Media and Communication	23.0%
Community and Social Services	20.1%	Operations	8.8%
Consulting	33.7%	Product Management Program and Project Management	23.8%
Customer Success and Support	8.7%	Purchasing	12.6%
Education	15.6%	Quality Assurance	16.0%
Engineering	23.0%	Real Estate	12.4%
Finance	22.0%	Research	5.4%
Healthcare Services	13.6%	Sales	19.7%
Human Resources	11.9%		10.4%

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph

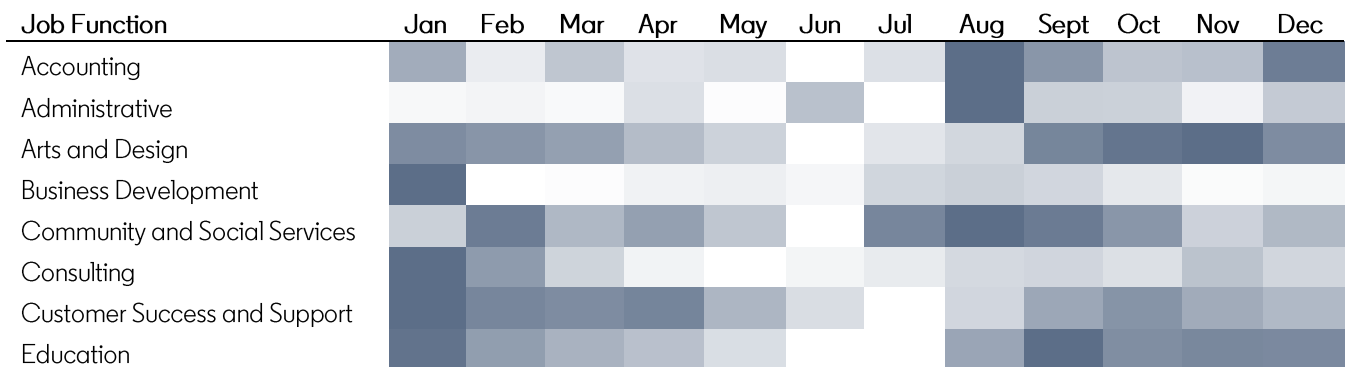
The Internship Recruiting Process

There is a wide variation in the timing of when internship job postings are released during the calendar year and when in a student’s education an internship is usually done. The next few sections examine these differences by job function.

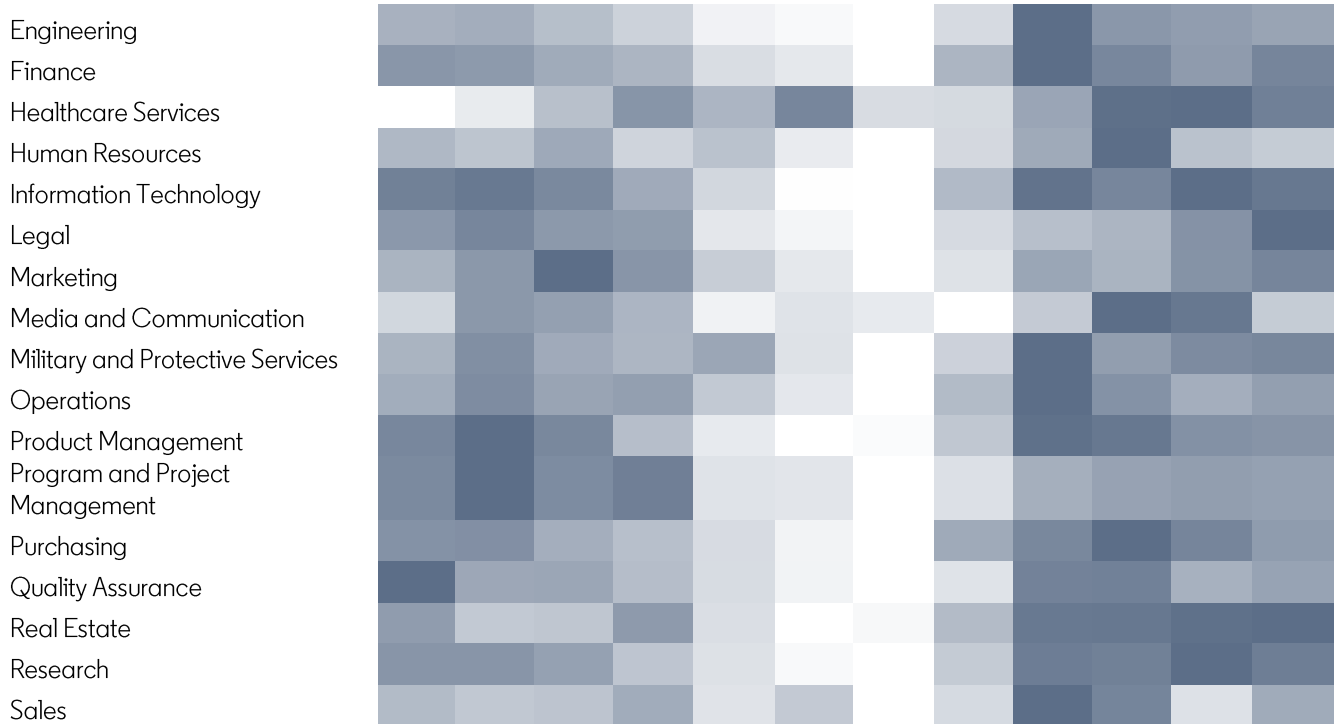
Seasonal Patterns in Internship Job Postings

The time of year when job postings for internship positions start appearing on LinkedIn greatly vary by job function:

Heatmap of Intern Job Posting Availability by Month (2021-2023)



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Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph

For most job functions such as accounting, finance, and engineering, it is best to start the recruiting application process for internships at the start of the school year -- around August and September. Many employers want to lock in the best students for their internships as early as possible. However, for other job functions such as business development, consulting, and project and program management, internship job postings peak at the start of the calendar year in January.

Most Common Times to Do an Internship

In most job functions, internships are during the summer months, starting around May or June, and ending in August or September. This is especially the case if the internship is meant to take place while a student is still enrolled in school and is scheduled to return to their studies in the Fall. However, many internships also start at the beginning of the calendar in January. If the student is still in midst of their degree program, this type of internship expects them to work in their internship part-time or full-time by pushing their studies to later. The latter is typically seen in cooperating education programs, more informally known as “co-op programs,” in which a degree program requires students to intern/gain work experience during alternate academic semesters to graduate.

However, another reason why internships may start in January is because these internships are meant for those who *already* graduated. The job functions with the most internships taking place after completing a degree are human resources (31.8%), accounting (30.8%), and media and communications (28.7%). Breakdowns of other job functions are seen below:

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% of Internships in 2021-2023 that Occur During or After a Degree Program

Job Function	% During Degree	% After Degree
Accounting	69.2%	30.8%
Administrative	76.5%	23.5%
Arts and Design	71.9%	28.2%
Business Development	77.8%	22.2%
Community and Social Services	74.3%	25.7%
Consulting	83.4%	16.6%
Customer Success and Support	74.7%	25.4%
Education	74.2%	25.8%
Engineering	76.1%	23.9%
Finance	80.5%	19.5%
Healthcare Services	75.6%	24.4%
Human Resources	68.2%	31.8%
Information Technology	72.3%	27.7%
Legal	88.1%	11.9%
Marketing	75.1%	24.9%
Media and Communication	71.3%	28.7%
Operations	74.9%	25.1%
Product Management	78.3%	21.7%
Program and Project Management	74.5%	25.5%
Purchasing	75.5%	24.5%
Quality Assurance	74.8%	25.2%
Real Estate	82.5%	17.5%
Research	76.2%	23.8%
Sales	77.7%	22.3%

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph

Another factor to consider is what *kind* of degree most interns already have or have in-progress when starting these internships. From the breakdown below, we see that the vast majority of interns are working towards at least a Bachelor’s Degree or above. Some job functions heavily skew towards graduate degree students or holders such as Legal (77.5%) while others heavily skew towards Bachelor’s including Sales (89.9%) and Marketing (89.5%).

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Most Recent Degree for Internship Job Functions in 2021-2023

Job Function	% Sub-Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	% Graduate Degree
Accounting	0.7%	80.4%	18.9%
Administrative	1.6%	71.1%	26.7%
Arts and Design	3.7%	79.3%	17.1%
Business Development	0.7%	78.4%	20.5%
Community and Social Services	0.8%	60.9%	37.2%
Consulting	0.4%	62.3%	37.1%
Customer Success and Support	1.1%	82.3%	16.0%
Education	2.0%	69.1%	27.2%
Engineering	0.9%	77.9%	21.2%
Finance	0.4%	85.3%	14.3%
Healthcare Services	4.5%	23.0%	43.8%
Human Resources	1.7%	77.5%	20.7%
Information Technology	2.1%	75.8%	21.9%
Legal	0.4%	21.7%	77.5%
Marketing	1.4%	89.5%	9.0%
Media and Communication	1.1%	88.6%	10.2%
Operations	1.3%	82.3%	16.1%
Product Management	0.6%	67.0%	32.1%
Program and Project Management	1.3%	78.7%	19.9%
Purchasing	0.6%	83.5%	15.8%
Quality Assurance	1.1%	79.8%	18.5%
Real Estate	1.0%	89.9%	9.1%
Research	0.8%	66.4%	31.2%
Sales	1.0%	89.9%	8.7%

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph

Final Thoughts

Even though there is variation in the internship recruiting process for different job functions, it is clear that internships are highly valuable pathway for students to find their first entry-level positions. In the appendix of this report, we provide extra insights on the most common internship job titles and locations by job function from 2021 to 2023. In future reports, we will explore internship outcomes including how much faster former interns find their first jobs after graduation and if internship experience affects company retention.

Appendix

Top Internship Titles in 2021-2023

Job Function	Top Title	Second Title	Third Title
Accounting	Audit Intern	Tax Intern	Accounting Intern
Administrative	Office Intern	Administrative Intern	Student Assistant
Arts and Design	Design Internship	Graphic Design Intern	Architectural Intern
Business Development	Business Development Intern	Analyst	Account Management Intern
Community and Social Services	Social Work Intern	Legislative Intern	Community Specialist
Consulting	Consultant Internship	Student Consultant	MBA Intern
Customer Success and Support	Service Specialist	Department Specialist	Client Services Intern
Education	Development Intern	Student Teacher	Management Intern
Engineering	Software Engineer Intern	Engineer Intern	Mechanical Engineer Intern
Finance	Finance Intern	Wealth Management Intern	Financial Analyst
Healthcare Services	Student Physical Therapist	Pharmacy Intern	Student Clinician
Human Resources	Human Resources Intern	Recruiting Intern	Training Specialist
Information Technology	Information Technology Intern	Data Analyst	Data Specialist
Legal	Legal Intern	Judicial Intern	Student Attorney
Marketing	Marketing Intern	Social Media Marketing Intern	Digital Marketing Intern
Media and Communication	Communication Trainee	Public Relations Intern	Editorial Intern
Operations	Operations Intern	Supply Chain Intern	Production Intern
Product Management	Product Management Intern	Product Development Intern	Product Manager
Program and Project Management	Project Management Intern	Project Manager	Program Manager
Purchasing	Procurement Intern	Purchasing Intern	Sourcing Specialist
Quality Assurance	Quality Assurance Intern	Quality Specialist	Test Engineering Intern
Real Estate	Real Estate Intern	Commercial Real Estate Specialist	Property management Specialist
Research	Research Intern	Student Researcher	Research and Development Intern
Sales	Sales Intern	Sales and Marketing Intern	Product Specialist

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph

Navigating the Internship Landscape

Top Internship Locations in 2021-2023

Job Function	Top Location	Second Location	Third Location
Accounting	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area	Greater Boston
Administrative	Washington DC-Baltimore Area	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area
Arts and Design	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area	San Francisco Bay Area
Business Development	New York City Metropolitan Area	Washington DC-Baltimore Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area
Community and Social Services	Washington DC-Baltimore Area	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area
Consulting	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area	Greater Boston
Customer Success and Support	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area	Greater Boston
Education	New York City Metropolitan Area	Washington DC-Baltimore Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area
Engineering	San Francisco Bay Area	Greater Seattle Area	New York City Metropolitan Area
Finance	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area	Greater Boston
Healthcare Services	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Boston	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area
Human Resources	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area
Information Technology	New York City Metropolitan Area	San Francisco Bay Area	Washington DC-Baltimore Area
Legal	New York City Metropolitan Area	Washington DC-Baltimore Area	Greater Boston
Marketing	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area	Greater Boston
Media and Communication	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area	Washington DC-Baltimore Area
Operations	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area	Greater Boston
Product Management	San Francisco Bay Area	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Seattle Area
Program and Project Management	New York City Metropolitan Area	San Francisco Bay Area	Greater Seattle Area
Purchasing	New York City Metropolitan Area	Detroit Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area
Quality Assurance	San Francisco Bay Area	Greater Boston	New York City Metropolitan Area
Real Estate	New York City Metropolitan Area	Los Angeles Metropolitan Area	Washington DC-Baltimore Area
Research	New York City Metropolitan Area	San Francisco Bay Area	Greater Boston
Sales	New York City Metropolitan Area	Greater Chicago Area	Greater Boston

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph

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Methodology

Percent of 2023 Entry Level Talent with Internship Experience. Entry level talent is defined as all LinkedIn members in the U.S. who added a position on their LinkedIn profile in 2023 that maps to an entry-level role. Those with internship experience listed at least one internship position that ended prior to the start date of the entry-level role.

Months with the Most Internship Job Postings in 2021-2023. All internship job postings on LinkedIn from 2021-2023 were aggregated by month for each job function. The top 3 months per job function were shared.

Percent of Internships in 2021-2023 that Occur During or After a Degree Program. Each internship listed in 2021-2023 on U.S. LinkedIn profiles is labeled as occurring during a degree program if the internship started in or after August of the starting year of the degree program and ended before or in May of the ending year of the degree program. An internship is labeled as occurring after a degree program if its start date is in or after May of the year of the degree program.

Most Recent Degree for Internship Job Functions in 2021-2023. Each internship listed in 2021-2023 is grouped by the most recent degree completed or in-progress at the time the internships started. This is then broken down into distributions for each job function. A sub-bachelor's degree refer to any degree obtained typically before a Bachelor's including an Associate's Degree. A graduate degree refer to any degree obtained after a Bachelor's including a Master's Degree, PhD, or professional degrees such as an MBA, JSD, or MD.

Top Internship Titles and Locations in 2021-2023. All internship positions added to U.S. LinkedIn profiles in 2021 to 2023 for each job function by the dimensions of titles and locations. The top 3 titles and locations were shared.