

Internships

What Happens Next – 09.10.2022

Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein.

What Happens Next is a podcast which covers economics, finance, history, politics and current events.

I make this podcast to learn and I offer this program free of charge to anyone that is interested. Please tell your friends about it and have them sign-up to receive our weekly emails about upcoming shows.

This week's program is on internships.

Parents and kids spend a lot of time worrying about getting into college. But as soon as they enroll, their next concern is landing a big internship, because it may help in landing a job after graduation.

On today's program, I want to focus on three issues. How do kids get an internship? What would be an ideal internship for a particular individual? And what skill building should the inter focus on?

I want to discuss the topic of internships from both the young adult as well as the employer's perspective. Having a corporate internship program is very valuable because it can attract great young talent for future employment.

I had 10 interns this summer for this podcast. They were engaged in all aspects of production from content creation to social media marketing.

You will hear from 8 interns today about how they seek internships, developing skills, and how they plan to use this experience in their future work.

Internships are a critical part of a young person's development. I thought it would be entertaining to hear about this podcast's internship as a case study.

Each week, we have a zoom intern meeting. The first order of business is to review the last podcast to provide constructive criticism, good and bad. Each week an intern is required to read a book and then make a case as to whether the author should be on the podcast. Every few weeks, I invite an adult in the room. This is a friend of mine who actively listens to the podcast and then participates in the intern call. It is very helpful for the interns to engage with the adult world, and the feedback from my friends is very valuable.

I work directly with each intern to improve their editing skills, critical thinking, and oral communication. And the interns teach me stuff as well, particularly all things technology. As you might suspect, everything comes far easier for them.

Interns need constant feedback and direction. They don't know what to do or what is wanted. But they also love freedom of action, so I tried to give the interns choices. What books to read, podcasts to create, and which projects to focus on like website design or marketing.

Many of you have teachable skills that would be valuable for young people, and I encourage you to reach out and find interns. It is very satisfying to interact with intellectually curious and hungry college and high school students, and they will learn a lot from you.

Let's start with our first speaker Ross Perlin who is the author of the book *Intern Nation*.

Ross Perlin:

Every year, millions of young people do internships across the world, a gateway into the world of white collar work. In *Intern Nation*, my book, I set out to understand internships. Internships fit into a whole pattern of seasonal part-time, independent contractor, freelance work arrangements that bury the old notion of a stable career and work trajectory where you have a single employer.

People have been very slow to recognize the importance of internships. They're very different from apprenticeships. Apprenticeships have thousands of years of history. They are largely concentrated in the trades. And there is regulation around them as well, ensuring that real training is happening, that people are being paid. These are often arranged between employers and unions with an office of apprenticeship as part of the Department of Labor, helping to broker those arrangements, whereas internships have no one paying attention to them. There's a legal limbo that interns have fallen into around things like sexual harassment. Are they actually employees? Are they working?

Attention needs to be paid to those who cannot do internships. Those who cannot afford the pay to play system. In fields like media and politics, especially unpaid internships, internships that often turn on connections as well, what does it mean for those fields that many people simply can't do them in the first place? Internships have played a role in the widening equality of the last several decades.

Since the work I did with *Intern Nation*, there has been a real reaction. The Fair Labor Standards Act, which was a cornerstone of New Deal legislation that ended child labor and helped establish the minimum wage and overtime. Many unpaid internships, especially at for-profit employers, were actually illegal.

This led to lawsuits, most famously around the film, *Black Swan*, to reestablish the principle of a fair wage for a hard day's labor. Some employers have always seen internships as an

investment, a key way to source talent. Others have been less scrupulous about it. I don't think what we have is working.

Larry Bernstein:

Why do you believe that internships are exploitive, if young adults are seeking out or even begging for these opportunities?

Ross Perlin:

Somebody does work; they should be paid for it. Saying they're getting paid in experience or academic credit -- that just doesn't cut it, because money is the currency of our society. And it's unfair to those who can't pay to play. It's a different discussion when you're talking about paid internships. It's also a different discussion, if we're talking about, true volunteering at a nonprofit. There's a legal distinction there.

This loophole that the whole internship explosion came out of was that the Fair Labor Standards Act had an exemption for a bona fide training situation. You don't need to pay to train someone obviously, but substantial amount of work needs to be paid for.

Larry Bernstein:

Do you have interns that work for you?

Ross Perlin:

I don't. At the nonprofit that I am co-director of The Endangered Language, we've never had interns. We do have volunteers. Nonprofits, unlike for-profit companies, can have volunteers. A volunteer is somebody who essentially has control over their own schedule, who is there in a purely voluntary sense, not because they're looking for some kind of leg up.

Larry Bernstein:

I understand that there may be a legal difference, but I don't see the ethical distinction between volunteering and internships. Volunteers can put their work on a resume, use it to build relationships, learn about the adult world too. Does everything have to be viewed as transactional instead of mutual assistance?

Ross, you are an author and manage a nonprofit. You have a lot of knowledge that would be helpful for young people. But it takes effort. It takes love and thoughtfulness to create a worthwhile internship experience.

There are expenses to educate a young person about the adult world. What responsibilities do you and your fellow adults have to train the next generation?

Ross Perlin:

Many adults who have taken on interns take the responsibility very seriously as an opportunity to mentor and pass on knowledge, and model the world of work and their field for young people.

There's work shadowing, where young people shadow you. And resource-intensive formalized training that's seen at a larger corporate employer.

The question arises whether the person is doing actual work, can one not afford to pay them minimum wage? How many interns can one have at once and still be providing that mentorship? There's just been abuse where startup companies that started on day one and seeking out unpaid interns on day two.

Larry Bernstein:

My kid would love to work for a start-up and see the logistics of what it takes to open a new business.

Let's change topics to highly sought-after internships. Some internships have unlimited demand: working at the White House or on a major motion picture or working for Anna Wintour at Vogue, a role that was actually auctioned off for charity. These positions get thousands of applicants for every internship, because they are perceived to be very valuable. You have a scarce item – who gets it, how should society distribute it equitably?

Ross Perlin:

In the superstar system, absolute stars is the golden ticket.

It's more critical that we create more opportunities that are ordinary but solid. Fields like media and politics, fashion, film, television -- some incredible number want to be in the music industry.

The workforce will only support having a tiny percentage of people who want to get into it. Those hot fields with a relatively small number of actual openings, it has to come from the fields themselves. Having one of those internships go up in an auction is obviously a less just arrangement.

Larry Bernstein:

At least the money went to a charity.

Ross Perlin:

Yes, yes, that's right. But all in all, it's a less just arrangement than having it be an open application process.

Larry Bernstein:

Let's use my podcast internship program as a case study. In my introductory remarks, I mention that I am looking for interns and to contact me. I generally accept everyone that asks.

Ross Perlin:

Whenever someone applies, they're accepted, is that to say...

Larry Bernstein:

Working with me isn't as sought after as Anna Wintour.

Ross Perlin:

Sure, yeah.

Larry Bernstein:

This is how it usually works. "Hi. I'm a listener to your show. My child would love an internship" – "great, he's got the job."

Sure, it's unfair because it's a bunch of privileged children from wealthy listeners. Now this is super informal, it's completely unregulated. The Labor Department will never know about it. There are no legal agreements, no rights and no responsibilities.

You can quit at any time. The kid participates as long as he wants. Isn't this what you want? Individual choice?

Ross Perlin:

I think what you're describing is very common. There is a distinction in labor law, around much smaller employers, which I think makes total sense. You are almost the equivalent of the family friend who likes to go fishing and the mom is calling you and saying "can you take junior fishing?" Why not?

They want to call it an internship because they want to put it on a resume. And then that probably allows you to feel like you can ask a little more of them because it's been given this slightly more formal character. I would rather see it almost go completely back into the informal realm.

Do you feel like it all works very well for you? Are you happy with the whole arrangement?

Larry Bernstein:

I take my responsibilities very seriously. This is an opportunity for a young person to learn skills. Interns edit the show, decide who the guests are and what topics to choose. This is a real podcast and thousands of people listen, so the interns take it seriously.

My intern Thomas Triedman did three internships this summer. And he said he quickly realized that he doesn't want to work for a think tank when he grows up. That's incredibly valuable information. For example, working in a hospital for a couple weeks before applying to medical school that could save you time, money and misery.

Ross Perlin:

Yeah.

Larry Bernstein:

How about work with Ross for a few weeks to decide if you want to write a book.

Ross Perlin:

Mm.

Larry Bernstein:

Look at the pain and aggravation that Ross has to go through.

Ross Perlin:

It's true.

Larry Bernstein:

What kind fulfillment is that?

Ross Perlin:

None. Yeah. Some of the qualities of job shadowing, to see things you to just get a taste. It still doesn't get at the issue of people who can't afford to even contemplate working unpaid even for several weeks.

Larry Bernstein:

Let's say your dream is to direct movies and you have no skills. A kid asks a film director to shadow him. The director says, "sure and I'll give you some tasks. And the kid says, "Can I call it an internship, pretty please."

Ross Perlin:

Right.

Larry Bernstein:

And the kid puts on his resume that he worked for a famous director on a big film and that he made himself useful. Why is that exploitive?

Ross Perlin:

It may or may not be. If the director says, I've got all these kids coming to me. So, let me just fire my production staff and just use these kids, is that okay? Is that the point where there has to be regulation or there has to be shaming? The more we're talking about just shadowing short term, it's not displacing what would've been regular jobs.

Larry Bernstein:

Large companies have been shamed about internships. Now it can't be informal. They have to pay and make sure that the hiring process is done fairly. They have to invest in a staff to manage the interns, use HR and sometimes even provide housing.

Ross Perlin:

Right. It's a recruitment strategy. This is how companies like Google and Microsoft have been using internships. For companies that do have the resources to do it, those kinds of arrangements have a real logic to them.

Larry Bernstein:

In the old days, I would've called up a friend at a big firm to get my kid a summer job; now, they have a rigorous process focused on finding a qualified, diverse intern class, so a quick gig for a few weeks makes little sense.

Ross, you're an independent contractor. I could call you, no problem. You would be like, "love to do it. Send junior over." The ideas of *Intern Nation*, which is to shame big companies into having a reasonable, well-paid internship program – it shuts off these informal assignments from big firms. Now, the better option is for kids to go work for small operations like you and me.

Ross Perlin:

I don't know exactly what would be really stopping Goldman Sachs from having a shadowing, bring-your-daughter to work day.

I would like to see a de-escalation of all these things where fishing and lifeguarding are okay again, and it's not that you always have to be getting an internship.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Ross. I am going to move on now to Jay Greene, Greene who was my high school debate partner and who is now a senior research fellow in the Heritage Foundation's Center for Education Policy. Jay is the former Department Chair for Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. I've asked Jay to speak on inequality and internship programs.

Go ahead Jay.

Jay Greene:

Parents should be helpful in getting internship opportunities for their own children in the same way that they should be helpful in all respects for their children. A decent society is built on families where parents develop the full potential of their own children.

We've tried collective child raising by the state. And we have found that those are not the ideal way to help develop the full potential of young people into being decent and productive adults. An internship is just one of the many things that parents could do to help develop the potential of their children.

After all, if parents don't advocate for the wellbeing of their own children, no one else will to the same extent and therefore a good society is one where all parents are trying their best to

advocate in this way. But barring engaging in immoral or bad behavior, simply helping your own children is not immoral.

Now, there is something puzzling about why it is that this is an even a matter for your listeners.

Larry Bernstein:

There was a front-page article in the Financial Times a couple of weeks ago. An anonymous source informed the FT that Boston Consulting Group was offering its partner's kids an exclusive summer internship program in London where they were given interesting assignments. One young adult described aspects of her internship on her LinkedIn page. The source said this showed unfair nepotism and suggested that this kind of internship program needs to be abandoned.

Jay Greene:

No child has all of the same opportunities that all other children have. And so, fairness is not offering the same opportunities to all children. Fairness is everyone trying to offer as many opportunities for their own children as they can with an understanding that opportunity and human development is not zero sum.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentioned the failure of collective child rearing methods. What do you mean?

Jay Greene:

If your listeners want to imagine what collective child raising looks like, it looks more like a Romanian orphanage than an Israeli kibbutz. But even at an Israeli kibbutz, this didn't work out very well. Because human beings naturally have an affinity towards their own kin that's enduring and strong. We can simply observe that raising children in family units is the norm in human history across time and place.

Larry Bernstein:

You mentored many graduate students, what have you learned from the experience?

Jay Greene:

I've learned some hard lessons about the importance of family mentorship relative to non-family mentorship. I was the head of a department which had a PhD program that was its centerpiece. I would tell my colleagues that our graduate students were our intellectual children, they were our intellectual legacy. At the time I said it, I believed it was true. It's hog wash. They're not actually our children, they're just our students. There's really a fundamentally different relationship between your students or your intern and your children. There's a different relationship between boss and employee than there is between a parent and child.

Hillary Clinton says it takes a village to raise a child. She actually means the federal government; she's appropriating the language of family to talk about governmental programs. Mario Cuomo

gave a famous convention speech where he said, we're a national family and we need to take care of each other, but we're not really a national family. There is a fundamental difference between my obligations to my own family.

And we should recognize this difference in relationship as normal, natural, and good, and that anytime we try to appropriate that family metaphor for non-family situations, we are engaged in manipulation. I must have been guilty of doing that when I tried to motivate my colleagues to work harder, to help their students by suggesting that they were their intellectual children.

You could think of families as a series of commitments as opposed to transactional exchange.

Larry Bernstein:

Jay, what are you optimistic about as it relates to internships?

Jay Greene:

I'm optimistic that families are going to continue to seek these opportunities for their own children. Whether it's through formal internship opportunities or other informal mentoring arrangements, parents are going to find ways to expose their children to opportunities that will help them develop into productive and decent adults. Our purpose is to help our children by doing all the things that grownups are supposed to do.

Larry Bernstein:

Some are adamant that internships should be paid. This view relates to fairness because poor children cannot afford unpaid internships, or that employees shouldn't be able to profit from unpaid work. Do you think that requiring paid internships will increase equity or the number of internships available to young adults?

Jay Greene:

Obviously the more you raise the cost of having an intern, the fewer internships there will be. People who are motivated to advocate for paid internships, because they think that this is an equity promoting policy, it may very well backfire by reducing the total supply of internships, which may disproportionately negatively affect disadvantaged kids. There's also the problem that kids from more disadvantaged backgrounds may be less productive as interns. And if you require that they be paid, it's sort of like a minimum wage requirement where the compensation may exceed the possible benefit for that particular worker, making them unemployable in an internship because they simply lack those skills. But if it's unpaid, it might make sense for the employer to take on someone who has very low skills, which is equity promoting. So ironically paid internships are probably equity destroying as opposed to equity promoting.

Larry Bernstein:

When I worked at Salomon Brothers as an intern, I sat right next to senior Salomon professionals and listened to their phone calls with clients using a second phone handset. I

engaged with the adult world. It was completely foreign to me. How should we think about exposing kids to the adult world?

Jay Greene:

James Coleman the famous sociologist revealed in his book *The Adolescent Society* that adolescence is a modern invention. There was no such thing as adolescents, simply childhood and then working adulthood. Because of our higher knowledge-based economy, we have created this longer period of training in a kid factory known as the school. The parents would go off to where they worked and the kids would go off to school.

The problem with the adolescent society that we've created by concentrating children in school is that they are not learning adult norms.

The opportunity to be in a work environment for a young person can be very helpful because they learn about how adults handle problems. Internships help children transition into adulthood by exposing them to a higher concentration of adults. They would then learn adult ways so that they could be adults themselves. Thanks Jay. We are now going to hear directly from the interns on What Happens Next and we will begin with our first intern Justin Benjamin who is a rising sophomore at Yale. Go ahead Justin.

Justin Benjamin:

I chose this internship out of boredom. It was July of 2020, and my family and I huddled over our computer to tune into Larry's "What Happens Next" calls every Sunday at 3:00 PM. I was curious whether I could help, so I shot Larry an email asking if he needed an intern. I was looking for some intellectual stimulation during COVID. Little did I know I was kick starting Larry's internship program and embarking on my favorite work experience.

The best part of my podcast internship was the exposure to current events and ideas. I was required to read the latest issues of the New England Journal of Medicine, Lancet, Foreign Affairs, and various new books. Larry also taught me to evaluate content critically and determine what was show worthy. Understanding the most important points made by a speaker and cutting out the fat has become a skill of mine. I am so happy that I sent Larry that email two years ago.

Larry Bernstein:

How do you know what speaker or subject is worthy of being on the podcast?

Justin Benjamin:

There has to be a novel takeaway. I knew you did not want a rehash of ideas from last week's New York Times. You were always looking for a new perspective. Something provocative and entertaining. We had to look for speakers who can communicate their position in a lively and engaging manner.

Larry Bernstein:

You sent me an email and got the job. How do you think that success will impact your future job search?

Justin Benjamin:

It really speaks to the old saying “there's no real harm to trying.” The upside by these cold emails has inspired me to look for unorthodox employment opportunities and state clearly why I want that specific job.

Larry Bernstein:

Have you recommended anyone to be an intern on the program?

Justin Benjamin:

There have been quite a few recommendations. It was obvious that several of my friends would enjoy the intellectual stimulation. I recommended one of my close friends from high school, Teddy Foley, who interned for the program during his gap year. Then I recommended a couple of my Yale classmates: Ross Armon and Thomas Triedman who both joined the intern program and will speak later on this podcast.

Larry Bernstein:

What are your suggestions for kids looking for internships?

Justin Benjamin:

There's often a focus on resume building and less on skill building. Think more holistically about internships and not about finding your next job.

Larry Bernstein:

How did you find your next internship?

Justin Benjamin:

I was able to leverage my What Happens Next position to obtain an internship with Josh Haghani who had been a previous guest on the show. I emailed him emphasizing our mutual connection and I got the job. I worked at his educational finance startup Mia Share which specializes in income share agreements with college students.

Not all of my internships have been intellectual. I worked over the summer at Levain Bakery which taught me a different set of skills. I had to be punctual and ensure that every customer was treated with respect.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Justin, let's move next to your buddy Thomas Triedman who is a classmate of yours at Yale. Go ahead Thomas.

Thomas Friedman:

This summer I've had an interesting experience with internships mainly because I had three of them. I worked at a think tank, a macro hedge fund consultancy, and this podcast. It was a discombobulated summer. I'd switch from researching energy policy to looking at the shape of the Eurodollar curve before editing a transcript for Larry. Some days I'd barely do any work. Another day, all three jobs collided at the same time. But I'd much prefer to be busy than bored. Internships are about trying new things and crossing potential careers off my list. This summer, I scratched off working at a policy think tank.

Three jobs were too much, but I learned how to balance responsibilities and prioritize work. The vast majority of interns are somewhat useless and I'm sure everyone knows that. But these internships are extremely valuable for people my age, who are trying to figure out what to do with their life.

Larry Bernstein:

Thomas, you got three internships, how'd you get these jobs?

Thomas Friedman:

The first job I got applying through an application portal online for the think tank. The second one I got online through LinkedIn. And the third through my friend Justin who was also an intern at your podcast.

Larry Bernstein:

Why were you successful at these internships?

Thomas Friedman:

Offering to do extra work, sticking my neck out and making sure people knew I was available that helped me get exposure to different things. It's hard for full-time employees to figure out how to use interns effectively. Usually, interns can't really help them with much, so it's easy to go unnoticed. But making sure to interact with people, talking to people at the water cooler, sending emails, allowed me to get projects and interesting work assignments.

Larry Bernstein:

What skills did you learn?

Thomas Friedman:

I learned was how to use a Bloomberg terminal. I learned about markets that I didn't even know existed—swaps markets, futures markets, option markets. The Bloomberg has lots of information that I can't find in textbooks. It is how finance professionals follow the market.

Larry Bernstein:

What did you learn in your What Happens Next podcast internship?

Thomas Triedman:

I learned a lot. We're lucky to have incredibly talented guests on the show across different disciplines: international affairs, economics, politics. We have weekly intern calls and all the interns are required to give constructive criticism about last week's podcast. We'll also present suggestions for potential speakers. We are forced to put our own ideas on the table and defend it.

Larry Bernstein:

What suggestions do you have for employers who have internship programs?

Thomas Triedman:

I learned the most when I was listening in on a meeting. Having interns shadow meetings, or even interact with clients or industry experts is really valuable. Internships are about interacting with professional with decades of experience. They can impart a lot of wisdom in just 30 seconds of their time that would require hours of time to learn from other sources.

Larry Bernstein:

How did your peers get internships?

Thomas Triedman:

It's more through friends and family or reaching out to colleagues. It's less meritocratic than one would expect. Kids apply to a whole host of internships online. Some are great and others are duds. Applying to something random online could end up being a bad experience that you're stuck with for the rest of the summer, while if you're working for someone that your parents know, you'll be able to speak up if you're not having a great experience. When working for a parent's friend you'll likely have met your boss and know if it will likely work out.

Larry Bernstein:

What are you optimistic about the future of internships?

Thomas Triedman:

I think LinkedIn has made it easier for people who aren't connected to get internships. I don't know how people did it before. Job postings on bulletin boards seems like a very ineffective system. Now, the internet exposes kids to so many more opportunities that they might have not even known existed. This technology will just get better as they find easier ways to line up talent with employers, even if you don't attend a fancy school or have personal connections.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Thomas. Our next speaker is the hardest working intern at What Happens Next, Carly Brail.

Carly Brail:

I wanted to become a What Happens Next intern because I was fascinated by economics, love podcasts, and was simply bored at home. After a few months of online school, my dad, David

Brail who is close friends with Larry, spoke on the GameStop episode. I sent Larry an email expressing my interest and he called me five minutes later. The next Monday I was on the intern call. We would meet once a week to go over the previous episode and evaluate new guests. I read two books a week and decided if the author should be invited onto the show. I have matured as a thinker and this experience prepared me for college. Larry helped me develop and hone my analytical skills, taught me how to think independently and made me comfortable challenging experts. I'm much more familiar with economics and many other fields and can even impress my dad on current events. Larry wrote an external college recommendation letter, and I called him 10 minutes after I got into Harvard to thank him.

Larry Bernstein:

For nine months, you were my only intern. There was a lot of responsibility because you had to make critical decisions.

Carly Brail:

It was definitely a lot of responsibility. I would call you every Thursday and I would have a pit in my stomach.

Larry Bernstein:

How is it different now that there are more interns?

Carly Brail

There's a lot more debate. It's not just my opinion. It's much more collaborative.

Larry Bernstein:

You had a substantial influence on programming. I remember the first show you planned was on industrial labs with speakers on Xerox Park and Bell Labs. What happened?

Carly Brail:

I read both those books in the same week. And I thought they would work very well together. And then you took the idea and ran with it. We had a panel and it was a big deal.

Separately, I read John List's book and I loved it and then we had him on the show. He's on the short list to get the Nobel Prize in Economics. And I read his book and recommended him on the show, and it turned out great.

Larry Bernstein:

Describe how you got the internship?

Carly Brail:

I wrote you an email. And you emailed back, "call me." So, I called you and you picked up, you said, "Hey Brail, just like you respond to my dad." It was very funny and it made me realize that things are much more accessible than you realize.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Carly. Our next speaker is Nick Ragde who is a math major and rising sophomore at Georgetown.

Nick Ragde:

What Happens Next was my first internship experience. I'm at the age where summer internships help determine your future career. Some kids have planned out their whole life, with each summer internship progressing in prestige and compensation until they've landed an offer from a boutique firm where they can climb the ladder or jump ship for an even more lucrative opportunity.

I have not figure out my career path so the internship process feels daunting. Seeing other people my age land fancy internships that help their career path makes you feel like you're behind. But these feelings are very self-imposed.

On one of my macro midterms, kids I knew who had landed these prestigious internships did not do particularly well and their scores were distributed arbitrarily along the curve. Very few were near the top. I realized that who gets the best internships was completely arbitrary. Seeing the macroeconomics curve results reduced the pressure of comparing myself with others.

It was time for me to go out and find an internship that interests me.

Larry Bernstein:

Why did you apply to be an intern for this podcast?

Nick Ragde:

My parents were pressuring me to do something this summer. The summer after freshman year is when students get serious about doing work. No more busing tables or volunteering. I heard your pitch on one of the episodes to apply for an internship, so I did.

I sent an email to you. I attached my resume and wrote a cover letter explaining why I'd be a good match. Later that same day, Larry called me. I didn't pick up because I didn't know who it was, but he left a voicemail, saying, "It's your new boss. It's Larry, call me back."

Larry Bernstein:

What did you expect?

Nick Ragde:

I figured that my role would be to read books and write targeted questions. I realized pretty quickly that there's a lot more going on. I joined the website team with two other kids to improve the aesthetics, making the site look younger and more professional. The website became my big project.

Larry Bernstein:

What skills did you develop from this internship?

Nick Ragde:

Learning how to work with others and be a leader on a team. Working on the website, managing my own work and delegating to others—I hadn't done that before.

Larry Bernstein:

How will you pick your next internship?

Nick Ragde:

I'm gonna look for an internship where I can work with other people my age. Not a structured internship where you follow someone who's been working at a company for a couple years, and they tell you what to do. I'd hope to find some freedom, where I can learn from my experience instead of just sitting around and passively listening.

Larry Bernstein:

How would you advise an employer on setting up an internship program?

Nick Ragde:

Letting interns meaningfully contribute is really important. All the interns at What Happens Next can see the final product after each episode. They know they've contributed.

Larry Bernstein:

What advice would you give your peers about internships?

Nick Ragde:

If someone has figured out a career path, kudos to them. For the rest of us that haven't, it's not the end of the world.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Nick, our next speaker is Dylan Partner who is also a rising sophomore at Georgetown.

Dylan Partner:

Working for the podcast has given me the opportunity to hone my skills in research, editing, social media, and marketing. I dive right into subject areas that I'm passionate about. I made a greatest hits compilation episode on academic freedom from fabulous content from the What Happens Next archives, as well as an interview with Ilya Shapiro that was new content for the episode.

I read a book every week for the podcast to evaluate whether the authors should be guests on future episodes. I had a great deal of freedom to choose the path that I wanted to take.

You'd think that podcasting is an idiosyncratic field, but in reality, the skills you learn from podcasting are quite broadly applicable.

Larry Bernstein:

What advice would you have for structuring an intern program?

Dylan Partner:

You should consider the incoming intern's interest areas, passions, preexisting skills, so that you can ensure that this intern is productive and engaged.

Larry Bernstein:

What advice would you give a peer on choosing an internship?

Dylan Partner:

Every year it's getting more and more competitive, to find good internships. It's a struggle, but I think that this internship showed me that you don't have to work for some renowned law firm or on Capitol Hill to get experience. It can be any work environment, including a podcast, as long as the people there are passionate, experienced, and willing to collaborate. A good internship has less to do with its setting than with the quality of its interns and supervisors.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Dylan, our next speaker is Ryan Claffey who is starting a master's program in international relations at Columbia. Ryan,

Ryan Claffey:

On Day 1 on What Happens Next, Larry informed me that editing is, first and foremost, the process of turning shit into gold. As a summer intern, I learned firsthand the painstaking process of converting over two hours of guest recorded content into a 20-minute segment.

I got full discretion to determine what was show worthy. A great leader trusts his team. And Larry always upheld that oh so sacred covenant.

I had the confidence to take initiative and launch our podcast on various social media platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube. I chose the video and edited two minutes of each speaker's content to be shared across all media platforms. I'll probably be reviewing and editing these remarks.

During my first intern call with Larry, he immediately labeled me the show's China's czar. I was tasked with reading and listening to all things China. That's my primary focus.

Larry Bernstein:

How did you like being the China Czar?

Ryan Claffey:

I thought it was great fun. I'm passionate about it because the future of global relations depends on the ongoing China-US relationship.

Larry Bernstein:

You were tasked with making a special podcast episode on a possible invasion of Taiwan. What is your plan for that podcast?

Ryan Claffey:

The invasion of Taiwan is the most important issue in the world today.

The What Happens Next archive has several important speakers on China such as Admiral James Stavridis and Navy War College Historian James Holmes who focused his presentation on a potential Taiwan invasion. I've culled the most relevant information.

But we need fresh material to converse with these past insights. And I selected Richard Fontaine from the Center for a New American Security who recently led a war game over the fight for Taiwan with congressmen and former defense officials. I think this will be a fantastic program.

Larry Bernstein:

Ryan, your dad is an active listener. What is it like to have a consumer of your podcast living in the same house?

Ryan Claffey:

I absolutely love it. I get feedback instantaneously. There's a no holds barred policy. He tells it to me like it is. If there's a segment we could have done better, he'll let me know. Pops loved the Top Gun Maverick discussion, especially when call sign "Planter" described his experience flying jets. He'll chew my ear off about it and how much he loved that program. It brings us closer together. It's great to have somebody who listens to what we're doing, gives great feedback, and genuinely loves the show.

Larry Bernstein:

Ryan, what are you optimistic about as it relates to internships?

Ryan Claffey:

I'm very excited about the next wave of interns who hopefully will pick up the mantle of using social media to spread our podcast's content. I've had my friends listen to the show driving on a road trip and they love it. I'm optimistic that we can keep getting more listeners and share great content with everyone.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Ryan. Our next speaker is Griffith Pool who is a rising senior at the University of Illinois. Griffith, how did you get your internship at the podcast?

Griffith Pool:

I wasn't getting any responses back from any other places I had applied for an internship. I think COVID has a lot to do with that. My sister told me that her boyfriend knew someone who was looking for interns for a podcast. I've been DJing at my college's radio station for three years. And my minor is in critical film production. So, I've done some sound editing for shorts and exercises.

Larry Bernstein:

What tasks for the podcast interested you the most?

Griffith Pool:

Larry's always making sure that we're working on some aspect of the podcast. For example, some other interns complained about the lack of music. So, Larry got me in contact with a musician, and now we're working on getting music on the show.

I thought we should be making advertisements for Spotify and Apple podcasts. Larry tasked me with writing ads out of some juicy sound clips.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Griffith. Let's move to Dora Wedner who was previously an intern with What Happens Next and is now working at Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila company with my friend Mike Novy. Go ahead Dora.

Dora Wedner:

Hi, Larry. I'm so excited to be on the podcast. My name is Dora Wedner. I graduated from Harvard in 2019, and I took my first job with the US Department of State in DC. I had had some reservations about taking the job beforehand, but I, I took it and I realized, the lifestyle really isn't the one that I wanted to commit myself to at this point in my life.

I ended up leaving the State Department, mid-pandemic and pivoted to applying for a Master's in Fine Art at the New School in fiction writing. I got in, and I was all set to enroll and start in New York City in fall 2021. In the meantime, my dad Marcus is a friend of Larry's and they were hanging out down in Miami in the winter. And Larry was telling my dad about the podcast and that he needed interns who could read. And my dad said, well my daughter reads all the time. So given that, that I was hired on the spot.

One of the benefits at this internship was that it was so flexible and it allowed me to follow a lot of disparate interests. I was able to read up on China and Russia and the science of aging and psychology. And it really allowed me to expand my viewpoint beyond just foreign policy and fine arts. At one point, Larry asked me to edit the audio of an interview, which I'd never really done before. I was a little bit familiar with Garage Band, but not anything serious. I ended up learning how to use the technology and really enjoyed editing audio for Larry under a tight

deadline. Something that I had never anticipated. And my takeaway from that was that I can do anything.

That's a great segue to my current job. I'd love to tell the story. I currently work with 8-1-8 Tequila, and the way I got the job was directly thanks to this podcast. So, here's what happened. Larry was doing a podcast on the alcohol industry with the panel of industry leaders and Mike Novy, who had been the president of Casa Dragones and was a buddy of Larry's, had just taken over as President of 8-1-8 Tequila. He was set to come on the show. I was extremely excited that Mike was coming on because I knew that the brand was launching. I had seen it on social media. I really admired Kendall Jenner, who is the founder of it. And I love tequila. So in all aspects, I was very, very excited. So Larry offered the interns the opportunity to join the prep call.

Once I was on the call, I mentioned to Mike how excited I was about the brand launching. And Mike wanted to just pick my brain on what about the brand really drew me in. Mike and I ended up chatting for about 30 minutes and at the end of the call, he said, I'll send you some 818, once we launch. And I said, you know what? I don't need any tequila, but I would love to work for you. And he was like, you know what? We're a small team.

We would love to have you come on board. We'll have you focus on international expansion since that's kind of where your expertise lies. And I was like, oh my God, this is an incredible opportunity.

The idea that I would've abandoned my career in the State Department, the idea that I would've ended up not doing my MFA and that I would be working in the liquor industry was just totally inconceivable to me. I never considered it before. It wasn't even within the realm of possibility if you had spread out a tableau of careers and asked me to pick one, I don't think that the liquor industry would've even been on the table. So that was how far outside of my own imagination it was. I ended up starting with 8 1 8, just two weeks after it launched in June, 2021. Today I work on marketing and sales and I also help with our international market launches.

I was in Toronto earlier this summer by myself, opening up the market there. The job is fantastic. I love it so much. I love working with Mike who is so invested in every one of his employees and in us learning and seeing how the business works, go to market strategies and all those amazing things. My own boss used to work at Anheuser Busch and has an incredible wealth of knowledge in the liquor industry about marketing. It's just been a real joy to continue learning in a way that in an industry that I never would've previously considered.

I'm a type-A person. And I thought I had my life all figured out. I had applied for the State Department when I was a freshman in college. That was my life for four to five years.

That was part of my identity. To leave that was a pretty big undertaking. And then in the interim, I was like, I really like to write, I was writing a 200-page novel. I'm going to be a fiction

writer. But through the internship and through Larry's guidance and working with a team, it became very clear to me that I work best with other people. I like to be constantly busy. I'm not a solitary person. I'm very extroverted. And I like to feel the fulfillment that a team creates. Larry's internship also added the factor of lower stakes. So it's a much safer environment to take risks. You're able to succeed in ways that you hadn't even anticipated. As somebody who is used to doing things that are familiar to them, that they're good at, it's also really instructive that you can take a risk and potentially succeed at something that you never previously considered. That was my biggest takeaway from Larry's podcast is that if you take a risk, you might end up doing something that you truly, truly love. So thank you, Larry. I really, I owe you and the podcast quite a bit.

Larry Bernstein:

Our next speaker is Ross Armon who is a rising sophomore at Yale. Take it away Ross.

Ross Armon:

During the last few years, I felt burnt out because of the stress of homework and extracurriculars all the while trying to figure out what I want to do with my life. And I don't mean to sound like a cliché, but I've lost the passion for learning. This internship has let me rediscover my own intellectual curiosity. And for that, I wanna say, thank you.

Each week I read at least one book of my choosing to determine whether or not the author should be on the show. One book, the Language of Cities by Dejan Sudjic sparked my interest in urban studies. I produced my own greatest hits episode on urban planning, where I combined segments from previous episodes to create a dialogue between different speakers. I got to hear from economists, sociologists, museum curators, and professors about the challenges to using public spaces, how they change over time and what can be done to make the city more affordable and enjoyable for everyone.

This internship taught me how to be an independent thinker, how to ask probing questions, how to be a leader, not just in a work environment, but in life. It's been an incredible and meaningful experience, and I honestly cannot recommend it enough.

Larry Bernstein:

Tell us about how you structured your greatest hits episode on urban economics?

Ross Armon:

You get to really own one specific topic, and you dive deep into the archives. I learned stuff that I had never thought about. It's really challenging to splice together different speakers. You're listening to a podcast and it's telling you a story, a narrative about the subject. It requires a lot of creativity and that was fun.

Larry Bernstein:

I empowered you to make your own podcast. What happened?

Ross Armon:

I mean, it's huge. You take ownership and responsibility for a product that you make. I feel like these well-respected internships that my friends have at different banks, they're not actually doing anything most of the time. They might be helping someone with a bigger project, but at the end of the day, there's no personal responsibility for anything.

There was one week at the podcast where it was literally responsible for the episode from start to finish. You get to take ownership and I think that's unique and really valuable.

Larry Bernstein:

If you were advising another young person about how to choose an internship, what advice would you give them?

Ross Armon:

Make sure you feel like you're doing something that matters. And what matters is up to you. If you're just filling out spreadsheets, you're not really learning anything. You can put a fancy line on your resume, but it doesn't make a difference.

Larry Bernstein:

What advice would you give to someone charged with managing a corporate internship program?

Ross Armon:

Having constant communication with your boss is critical. You call me four, five times a day and we'd just spend an hour talking about what the plan for the podcast would be for that week. A lot of internships, you're not actually interacting with higher ups. There are no real opportunities to find a mentor. For someone in your position, just being there to teach the interns how to interact with people, how to manage people is such a valuable skill.

Larry Bernstein:

How did you enjoy speaking with adults on the intern call?

Ross Armon:

Every few weeks, you would invite an adult to join the intern call to give us a different perspective. I really enjoyed meeting Dora Wedner, she was an intern and got her job because of this podcast. It's inspiring and you learn from them how to best approach this job and what you're trying to get from it. John Johnson was thought provoking. He spoke to us about how to be a leader. Most times interns are not considered leaders in any way, shape or form, but I hope to be a leader some day and I found the topic to be really useful.

Larry Bernstein:

Ross what are you optimistic about?

Ross Armon:

Oh, I have no idea. <laugh>, I'm optimistic that I gained a lot from this internship and it's gonna help me achieve things that I want to do in the future. I'm optimistic that you will find more of Justin's friends <laugh> and my friends to fill our shoes. That's what I'm optimistic about.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks to Ross Perlin, Jay Greene, and the What Happens Next Interns for joining us today. That ends this session.

If you missed last week's podcast, check it out. The topic was You Can't Teach That, it was about the growing trend to censor some of the classics in the American literary canon in high school and college English classes. Our speaker was John Ellis former Graduate Dean at the University of California Santa Cruz and the author of the Breakdown of Higher Education. This was a greatest hits episode where we raided the What Happens Next archive for discussions with Brown literature professor Arnold Weinstein about Huck Finn, Penn Sociology Professor David Grazian about *Bonfire of the Vanities*, and Emory History Professor Patrick Allitt on *1984*. I would like to make a plug for next week's show.

There will be two provocative topics. The first is whether we should abolish the FBI. Our speaker is the famous criminal defense lawyer Harvey Silverglate who is the author of *Three Felonies a Day*. He will make the case that the FBI was corrupt at its founding and needs to be torn down and reestablished.

Our second topic is about men who do not work. Our speaker is AEI Senior Fellow Nicholas Eberstadt who is the author of the book *Men Without Work*, and his second edition is coming out this September 19th. We will discuss why so many men voluntarily decide not to be employed.

You can find all of our previous episodes and transcripts on our website Whathappensnextin6minutes.com.

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I would like to thank our audience for your continued engagement with these important issues, good-bye.