

ARE YOU AN INTERN OR AN ARCHITECT?

By Shelli Warren

When you are just starting out on your leadership journey it's worthwhile to take a moment and ask yourself: is my purpose here to learn, trial, get noticed, and contribute? Or is my purpose here to be innovative, stay out front, and be a leader worth following?

Often the excitement of a new role, launching a new business or product, or leading a new team can overtake the need to STOP and consider which role is more important to play; the Intern or the Architect? Understanding your desires and checking to see if they cohesively match the expectations of your role will ensure you will be motivated and delivering during that critical first 90 days.

Interns are brought in to provide a fresh set of eyes, ask key questions to learn about processes, and take on work that others cannot or do not want to do. Often Interns are also brought in for breakthrough work and special projects that require a concentrated effort for a short period of time to reach a particular goal or metric. If you can easily make the connection of WHY and HOW your role fits into the overall process you will make smarter decisions and ask insightful questions. Your level of ownership for the outcome will also increase leading to brand loyalty and enthusiasm for the work.

A lot can be said for organizations who embrace the leadership philosophy of "the people closest to the business should be making decisions about the business." But, are you ready to make an impact? This broadening assignment can provide real life work experience that can lead to confirmation or re-direction of the chosen career path. Your contribution and results

can also confirm or deny a long-term job offer or promotion.

Embrace that Intern role, regardless of your age or experience. Take the opportunity to shine, collaborate, absorb, offer insight, and grind out the work. Your character, work ethic, and flexibility won't go unnoticed. There have been many a successful leader who looks upon their Intern assignments as those where they first earned their chops, made a name for themselves, and became known for way more than being "just an Intern."

Architects are people who attract followers and support through their creativity and their ability to set the course for the future. Just as the Intern decided to show up on day one as an asset, so should you. Your ability to spot trends and incorporate them into an existing business, product, or process when it makes sense, will inject new enthusiasm and create momentum for those around you. Your ability to see what's coming around the corner and through agility, shift direction, will instill confidence in those you serve.

People like to follow leaders who are consistent, aware, approachable, and who have mastered the art of collecting the right tools and resources required to get the job done. Selecting team members, metrics to focus on, milestones to hit, and knowing when to course correct (including

streamlining the team) speak volumes for your ability to lead.

The Architect can build something that will stand the test of time by focusing on using every chance available to share a message of continual improvement. Improvement for the business, products, customer experience and of course, focusing on how best to incorporate ideas directly shared by the teams who execute and produce.

Both the Intern and the Architect add value. Both roles can be held by anyone, at any age, at any point in their career. Each role offers the opportunity to stretch as a leader, contribute at a high level, and show up ready to disrupt the status quo.

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