

EPISODE 4 – Day One

Buffy Gorrilla: This is Starting Somewhere - a ten episode podcast from the University of Melbourne all about internships - finding one, landing it, and making the most of the experience.

I'm Buffy Gorrilla, and at my very first full-time job, I had to ask someone what the company actually did...and now I'm host of this podcast!

Ben Pawson: I'm Ben Pawson, I missed the bus on one of my very early first days, got totally lost and rocked up at lunchtime! And now I'm co-host of this podcast.

Buffy: So, we're clearly the best people to help you start somewhere.

Mix of voices: (Crosstalk) It was very exciting and a little bit nerve wracking...I was so excited...I called my mum...I got the internship!...My mum told all of her family members...I rang my dad....I was really excited to change my title on LinkedIn, because it was a proper professional job...

Buffy and Ben: Congratulations!

Buffy: Picture the scene, you've just got a call, an email, perhaps a text, and/or a snapchat, that you've got the gig! Congrats you, good work! Take a minute, be proud of yourself!
Alright, that's good... you've got an internship to do. In this Episode of Starting Somewhere we get down to the practical tips to help you get through your DAY ONE.

Alex Alvaro: Okay, so I just got home from my first day of my internship, I am so, so, so tired. Getting up before 7:00 is very gruelling when you've had so many weeks of holidays. I spent an hour yesterday running through outfits with a friend who had done the internship previously, and when I got there I felt extremely overdressed, so there's that.

Ben: That's Alex Alvaro, clearly exhausted, and as we'll learn later she probably won't regret being overdressed on her first day. We'll share more from Alex's Intern Diary that she recorded during her internship at The Age throughout this episode.

Buffy: If you've already decided what to wear on day one and how to configure your landline phone, our next episode will cover office politics, business maturity and getting the most out of your internship. But for now, onto day one!

Buffy: Preparation actually starts before day one.

Ben: We asked Hayley Smeding of Tandem Partners HR what advice she would give to someone preparing for their first day.

Hayley Smeding: I would tell this person to be prepared or as best prepared as you possibly can be, and for me that starts with research. If you've successfully gotten to the point of being offered the internship, you've gone through the recruitment process, you should know a little bit about the background of the organisation, the team that you're walking into, and I would say definitely hone in on that. To even the individual level so I would suggest ...

Buffy: Good old LinkedIn stalking?

Hayley: Yeah, 100%, and have some sneaky questions up your belt so that you have that background information that you can pull out to have that conversation like knowing somebody's career history and then, perhaps asking them about that in a casual networking setting so you have those conversation starters to kind of pull out, I think is really handy.

Ben: It sounds like Alex Alvaro did exactly as Hayley suggested and it almost went perfectly.

Alex: I walked in to The Age Building, and The Age sits within a building that hosts a lot of other organisations, so you kind of have to scan yourself in. And I saw Michelle Griffin at the desk, and I've never met her before, but I recognised her, so I went up to her and I thought she was there to pick me up, so I went up to her, I super puppy dogged her, I was like, "Hi Michelle, it's nice to see you.", and she just had no clue who I was but that didn't really register with me. Then I had to be like, "I'm the intern", and she was like, "Oh, I haven't been here for two weeks", yeah, so that was a little bit embarrassing, but at least I looked super keen.

Buffy: Start thinking about how you can break the ice - absent a pack of prepared notecards, I once heard if you ask someone where they grew up and what their parents did for a living you are guaranteed to find something in common. But that might not be totally appropriate, so here are a few options, free of charge:

Ben: "When did you start with the company?"

Buffy: "Any tips for the intern?"

Ben: "What did you study at university?" Or if all else fails:

Buffy: "How about that local sports ball team, eh?"

Ben: Good questions. But back to research. Identify who at the organisation to follow and study what they have done online - google the living daylights out of them. But pull your out factettes judiciously when you meet them so you don't creep them out.

Buffy: That's a great tip, I always feel like I am creeping people out. Another way to prepare: become a customer! Dan Silver is a founder and Chief Operating Officer of Stake, a fintech company that is helping Australian investors buy American listed shares. He offers some good advice to their incoming interns.

Dan Silver: We also encourage them all if they're not already, to sign up for an account, so that they've actually experienced the process end to end. Most of them are already existing customers of ours who reach out and basically say, look you know how can I get more involved? As in we get requests every week from new customers who've seen what we're doing and want to be part of it.

Ben: If you are a customer or user, you will have a much better idea of what the company is about before you even get there. If that's not possible, back in episode 2 Warren Frehse, a senior advisor in the experiential learning and employability area of the University of Melbourne, gave us another way to get a look inside a company:

Warren Frehse: There's a website called Glassdoor, for example, and it's one of many that they can actually look at past experiences of graduates who have worked in different organisations and they can get the raw truth about what it's really like to work there.

Buffy: So dive in deep, that knowledge will come in handy, and save you having to ask too many questions. A good read of a company's annual report will give you the knowledge to sound like you've done your research. Charities and listed companies have to publish some information annually on the internet.

Buffy: Now you know about the organization, your confidence is probably rising. But how to dress seems to be a question that our interns spend a lot of brain power on.

Ben: So what are you gonna wear?

Michelle Lau: God, I don't even know. I need to plan this all out tonight. I think I went a bit too much in my interview if I have to be honest. I did the whole red lip, kind of looked really professional, and I walked in there and they were so casual, so I think just some nice little Zara pants, nice top, we'll get through it.

Ben: That was Michelle Lau who is considering what to wear for her internship at a PR firm. What to wear is a universal concern.

Buffy: It's even an issue for the sartorially superior interns in France. Here's how Patrick Omiari, a very stylish French-Brazilian Intern suggests we play it:

Patrick Omiari: My first day, I went - since it was a startup...I wouldn't even say company, it was just two rooms and there was just me and my boss. I've been there one time before, and I saw that he didn't dress formal in anyways so I just went normal, jeans and a t-shirt. So I didn't overthink it back then. But now, since I'm, in my internship that I'm doing right now, things are different, because it's a bigger enterprise, and I really didn't know what to wear for the first day. So I just say, "Okay, let's go, try to go a little fancier for the first day and see how other people are doing." So the first day I go with a polo t-shirt and...I don't know, it's not a sweater, is it a cardigan?

Ben: Yeah, with the buttons at the front?

Patrick: Yeah, a polo and a cardigan. And turns out everyone was dressing nicely with polos and cardigans and even suits sometimes. So I kind of just been doing that ever since, but I think it really depends on the company you're working at, you have to kind of know there's a company culture. I'd say play safe for the first week or so, to get a feel of what everyone else is doing, and then just follow everyone or whatever you like.

Buffy: Two HR professionals are better than one here's Hayley Smeding and Rebecca Ashton from Tandem Partners HR.

Hayley: I always think that it's much better to be overdressed than what it is to be underdressed. I think that especially come the first day, it's first impressions, first impressions, so important. I would say to go a little overdressed.

But I think on that as well, you want to make sure that you've done your research. If you're going to, for example, we have a client who's in the digital marketing media communication space, really cool environment. It's very modern and laid back for example. You wouldn't show up there in a full suit.

You would look completely out of place, so it's a matter of knowing where you're going. If you're going to a Deloitte or a PWC, it's always best to be a little more polished and professional in a traditional sense.

You want to be able to show your personality when you're in the workforce, but that first day is quite important to really get the layer to land. Understand where do people push the boundaries, but maybe don't do that on your first day.

Ben: Our collected wisdom from talking to everyone so far is this: Never be afraid to be the best dressed person in the room. Dress up, but read the room when you get there. That's exactly what Michelle Lau did - here's her take on dressing for Day One, after Day One from her Intern Diary.

Michelle Lau: Other things I was nervous about was things like clothes. What on earth do I wear? What shoes do I wear? Will they be comfortable for me for the whole day? It turns out it's literally so chilled. Everyone's just wearing what they want. A few girls just came in their workout gear, even. And it's nice to know that you can just kind of wear whatever you want.

Buffy: You're dressed. But what time should your perfectly dressed self arrive?

Ben: Rebecca Ashton followed her own advice when she came to the Starting Somewhere Studio for her interview.

Rebecca Ashton: There's a fine line I think. You want to get it right. You don't want to be too over eager when people aren't ready, and I think there is a balance there where you do want to show that you're still respecting somebody's time because showing up too early can also be not as convenient I suppose for want of a better explanation. We did discuss this and I think a good 10 minutes beforehand. That gives you time to settle in, find out where you're going. If there are other people who are also there on the internship, getting to know them beforehand as well and possibly building a little bit of rapport. If it's for a larger business, you could all be starting together say hello, having a bit of that casual conversation just to break the ice can be really helpful, but you're also showing that you are prompt. It does mean a lot.

Buffy: So you look the part, you've arrived at the perfect time, and your phone is on silent right? I know mine is. We want you focused on the job. But should we have a pen and notepad?

Rebecca: A hundred percent.

Hayley Smeding: We're both big pen and note paper people.

Rebecca: Yeah. No one else can see that right now, but we did bring our pen and notepads.

Buffy: You are very well equipped.

Hayley: It all boils down to that basis of coming prepared. You know, looking like you're ready to hit the ground running and if somebody throws something at you, you can do it, jot it down and you're good to go. It also says that you don't have to rely on somebody else. That you've kind of pre-thought and you're like one step ahead. So I think always come pen and paper, absolutely a minimum.

Ben: You look great, you are there at the perfect time, with a notepad and pen, what should you expect?

Buffy: I feel a spectrum coming up.

Ben: Right. So a startup for example won't have time to give you a three day induction like you'll hear about in a bit, but we did hear some common themes about day one. Here's Hamish Taylor who interned at The Herald Sun.

Hamish Taylor: I was hosted by the editorial assistants and the office manager of the newsroom so they were all incredibly lovely. So it was new year's day which was my first day and I had very responsibility gone to bed at about 10, but was so nervous that I probably didn't get to sleep until well after one in the morning. I arrived, I was a bit tired as were a lot of the people in the newsroom, it was quite empty but they were super friendly and they showed me the different parts of the newsroom ,and then they explained to me this vox pop activity that I had to do. They really emphasised that you can make this internship what you want and you should just go out there and ask a lot of questions and pitch a lot of ideas which I did. And I was totally rewarded for that.

Buffy: An element of day one is about setting expectations. It's about outlining what your time together will look like. Here's Cholena Orr from ANZ bank, she oversees their internship program, and tells us what the first day looks like from their point of view.

Cholena Orr: There'll probably be a few teething issues, as any first day has, because we need to set you up with your computer, et cetera. However, we try to have quite a structured process for the intern, so a good mix of time with their line manager, time with their team, and a little bit of formal training as well, just to give them expectations around, again, what we can provide them versus what we expect of them.

I would say what we really expect is proactivity, asking for feedback, because I said before, trying to really understand what their line manager is expecting

and working closely with their team. Their first day should really be about understanding those expectations, about getting themselves set up and getting to know the people and the environment that they're working in.

Ben: Banks are definitely at the formal end of the day one spectrum. Rem Tzambazis, who manages Strategic Partners and Programs for NAB explains.

Rem Tzambazis: Across all of those types on internships, there is a level of corporate induction. Some is more formalised I guess, particularly under the FICC internships. They have a very kind of structured and formal programme, and then others come down to business unit specific needs, and also I guess the length of the engagement has a reasonable level of influence over that. But in any case, when interns join us, we want them to have and get a good understanding and introduction to our business. What's important to us, where our priorities are, and essentially how things work around here.

Buffy: What about this epic, three-day orientation? That is what EY (the company formerly known as Ernst and Young) requires of its interns, but with good reason. Grace Chen a former EY intern gives us the skinny.

Grace Chen: Seeing that all my other friends are just as nervous as I was, that was quite comforting in the sense that it wasn't just me. But they didn't straightaway chuck us into the teams. We all sat in the room and they had a debriefing on what to expect. Actually it happened for three days.

Buffy: So three days of orientation?

Grace: Yes.

Buffy: That sounds quite intense.

Grace: Yes. Actually, it was much more intense than we were actually working. There was a bit of information overload, but it was still quite good. It was good to get to know the environment before you actually really started.

Ben: Travelling to the other end of the Day One spectrum. Tess interned at a Community Legal Centre, which has fewer resources, which suited her goals, because she wanted to get a lot of client experience. We still see Day One similarities but it was very different:

Tess: It's not like a very structured internship experience like I know other people have experienced. When you get there there is actually very little training on the ground that you're given before you start. Of course, the first day is orientation and they do make a very good effort to introduce you to the culture

and the type of work you're doing. But from the first day I remember I was about 45 minutes in, sitting at my desk setting things up and one of the lawyers came out and said "who would like to come in and sit in on this interview with me?" and I got the opportunity to do it and from there it was just go, so I hit the ground running.

Buffy: If the place is used to interns wandering the halls, you'll probably find everyone is going to be very nice about it. That was certainly Dr Laura Raiti's experience. She starts at a new hospital every few months as a part of her super formal medical internship.

Laura Raiti: You just introduce yourself to everyone on your first day at a new place and just apologise profusely that you haven't worked out where Radiology is, or where you're supposed to go, and just expect to know nothing about the logistics of a place and people are understanding. The nurses are like, "Oh, a new doctor day. Okay. Yeah, this old day." Everyone in the health services are very used to this process. You feel like you don't know what you're doing, even if you are more senior into your junior doctor training years, so everyone's very supportive. It's just a matter of getting to know the systems of the new place that you're at.

Buffy: If you've never worked in an office before, there are certain tools you need to do your job. If you have they are probably the same all over the world.

Ben: I bet they would sound weird if we just said them all together.

Buffy: Let's try.

Both: Outlook, Slack, water fountain, printing, filing, fridges, stationary cupboard, passwords, recycling, Office 365, chair, desk, Dropbox, phone, sandwich shop!

Buffy: I even had to ask where to find batteries just last week!

Ben: Weird, but oh so familiar. So getting your office's 'stack' setup will probably take up most of your first day.

Buffy: Oh Ben...English please...Your nerd jargon is killing me...

Ben: I'm sorry. A stack is just the different combination of software tools each organisation uses. You're going to have to get your head around it if you want to be productive.

Buffy: Which is what Hayley and Rebecca found, but grab your notebook - it's going to come in handy again.

Hayley Smeding: I feel like in my experience with the internship was we had an induction day and they went through all of that with us on the induction day and that's why have your pen and paper ready and write down those passwords. Write down that number that you call if you do experience a problem so you don't have to follow people up, you've already got all of that information.

Ben: Those sound like great tips if you're going it alone, but what if you don't have to? Alex Alvaro, a masters of Journalism student at the University of Melbourne and also one of our diarists, found she was working with someone else who was starting somewhere.

Alex Alvaro: I was really happy to see that there was another intern there when I rocked up, so that meant that I didn't really have to ask my superiors very silly questions, so that was good. So, he helped me set up my phone, and my laptop, and that was all good.

Ben: Having a point-person or people that you can rely on to help you navigate the early days of your internship can increase your confidence and make you feel you are not alone. Kate Mellot, an intern from ANZ recalls her Day One:

Kate Mellot: I was quite nervous. I was very scared. But I came in, my line manager was fantastic, really supportive, set me up, had to get the laptop, get onto technology, set everything up. And then a lot of training at the start, online.

Ben: Did you meet some of the other interns that were hired at the same time?

Kate: Yeah. Before we started, we had a networking event, so all the other interns, and all the grads as well, came together. We just had a chat, so that was really good, to get to meet them before I started. And there were a couple of events that the graduates organised, where the interns were invited, so we could come along, have a chat, see how each other is going. Yeah, there were a lot of opportunities.

Buffy: The Nerves - the ones Kate described from her first day? Unless you are some sort of Avenger type character, you probably cannot avoid them - and even Tony Stark probably gets a bit nervous. But you can manage them and maybe even combat them.

Ben: It's just like your first day at Uni, think back...you needed to find out where the basic stuff is, like classrooms and libraries and doing that is a great way to get to over those first day nerves. It's just the same in a new workplace: Asking around for the basics, just talking to people, is a great way to make your Day One a success.

Natasha Tan: It was overwhelming I was actually at the CASE conference. I was meeting so many people from all over the country who knew what fundraising was.

Buffy: That's Nastasha Tan, a media and politics graduate, with an interest in communications. She's from Singapore and is an intern/trainee at the University of Melbourne in the Advancement Office with CASE (or, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, in 'case' you didn't know).

Natasha: There was so much coming at me, and I think I just did what I knew best I could do, which was to talk to people. Get to know as much about their country, or their industry, and their profession, and their role. I think ever since then it has always been the same. I'm going out to meet donors, and I've always had to have very open conversations, and I never really know where I'll end up with the conversation, but just to be myself. And as I went along, my confidence grew I would say, and at the end of the meeting, I have to ask if they would like to donate to the university, and it's always a very touchy subject. I really learned to ease into my role by being myself, and being authentic.

Buffy: But what if your authentic self is just a hot wet mess of nerves? I know mine is most days.

Ben: Don't worry, we've all been there, and there are ways to deal. Remember from episode 2 the calming voice of Neil Wilson, from the University of Melbourne's Counselling and Psychological Services? In that episode he equipped us with tools for dealing with rejection. Now he helps us cope with our day one nerves - thanks Neil.

Neil Wilson: For getting very anxious and very nervous, that's as I was saying it's a build up of carbon dioxide in your brain. We need to get as much oxygen in as we can. We need to have eaten food beforehand. That's all basic. If you need to ask wherever you are where the toilets are. Go there. Shut the stall. Calm down your senses a little bit. Cut out a lot of different sensory input, because we've got eight and they get quite distressed.

Buffy: What are the eight?

Neil: There's the normal five, plus proprioception, interoception, and vestibular. Proprioception is the grading of movements or coordination of vestibular balance. Interoception is understanding your body on the inside. When you are sleepy. When you need to eat. Stuff like that.

Buffy: So when you are anxious all of those eight can get a little bit out of whack?

Neil: Yeah. They can become overstimulated which leads to - it spreads out throughout the whole nervous system and we get the jittery external symptoms like yucky tummy, change in heart rate, jittery limbs. If we are getting as much oxygen as we can that'll calm it down. If we are cutting out actual just sensory input, that'll calm it down a little bit too. If our muscles are really causing an issue, you tense them up as hard as you can until you can't hold it anymore. That will release. You'll actually notice that you'll breathe out quite heavily at that point in time releasing all carbon dioxide. Or you can just squeeze for three seconds all the muscles in your body that you are aware of and release for three. Squeeze for three. Release. That's a really easy exercise to do in the toilet. You can just sit there and do it and no one is looking at you like you are a complete weirdo 'cause the door is shut.

Buffy: And it's day one and you don't want to look like that just yet.

Neil: Yeah.

Buffy: That's for day two.

Ben: It's important to understand on Day One, that your feelings are normal. Everyone has a Day one - even Tess.

Tess : For the first day, the first week I would say you feel like you have no idea what you're doing. Like most new jobs you feel really stupid at the start because you don't know the shorthand, what's an FOI, how do I write a file note, what's a memo and especially when the lawyers have so many cases of their own they don't have a lot of time to guide you, so for me it was really beneficial to have more senior volunteers there who volunteer there on a regular basis who would be my first port of call with any questions that I had.

Buffy: You may swing from worrying about what to wear to sitting in the bathroom stall deep breathing, to trying to discover where you fit in and how you can make an impression. But remember even your boss had a day one - it does get easier, there's day two, three, four... and in the next episode of Starting Somewhere, we take you past that day one: to setting goals, finding a mentor and getting the most out of your internship, now that you've Started Somewhere.

Starting Somewhere is brought to you by the University of Melbourne External Relations team. The producers and editors are Buffy Gorrilla and Ben Pawson. Our supervising producer and original concept is from Dr Andi Horvath. Thanks to everyone who has made Starting Somewhere a reality. Stay tuned for future episodes.

