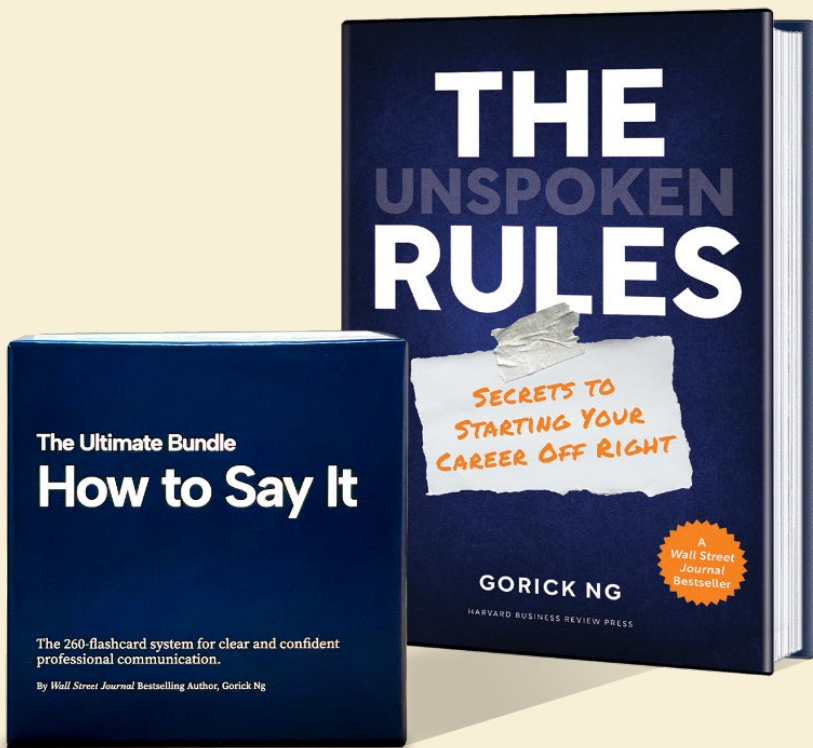


ICF CONVERGE

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The Unspoken Rules:

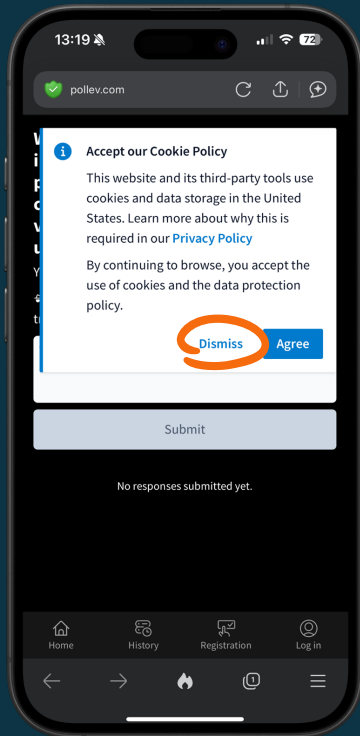
How to Help Early Career Professionals Perform not Just “Okay...” but “Great!”



10/24/25

Please open this page on your smartphone:

pollev.com / gorick



All responses are anonymous!

What's your role / organization?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



What brings you to this session? (What topics are you secretly hoping we'd cover today?)

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



What are the biggest challenges you're seeing in your work with (or as an) early career professionals?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



About me



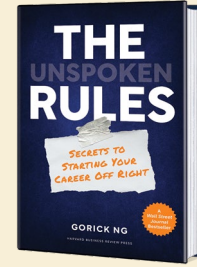
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Know what to say in every professional situation with pocket-size fill in the blank templates from Harvard career adviser Gorick Ng.

Get decks at gorick.com!

Created by

Gorick Ng

888 backers pledged \$64,981 to help bring this project to life.

📅 Last updated [November 1, 2024](#)



Organizations I've engaged with...

Companies such as...



Educational Institutions such as...



Non -profits & Platforms such as...



But this is what you see on
LinkedIn.
What you don't see is this...



Layoff Notice

As Director of Personnel, it is my unpleasant duty to inform you that as of the end of this week your services will no longer be required at our company.

Please be assured that this action in no way reflects upon your value as an employee or your job performance, but is strictly a result of the severe economic downturn that our company, our industry and the country at large is currently experiencing.

While no guarantees of rehiring can be made, it is the intention of management to bring back furloughed employees as soon as economic conditions improve. In the meantime, our Human Resources Department will



Danforth Coxwell Branch
1675 Danforth Avenue



REJECTED

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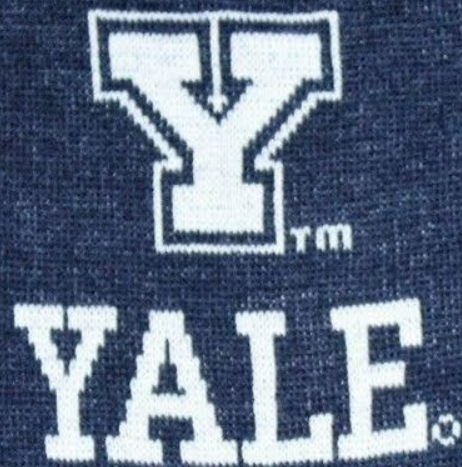
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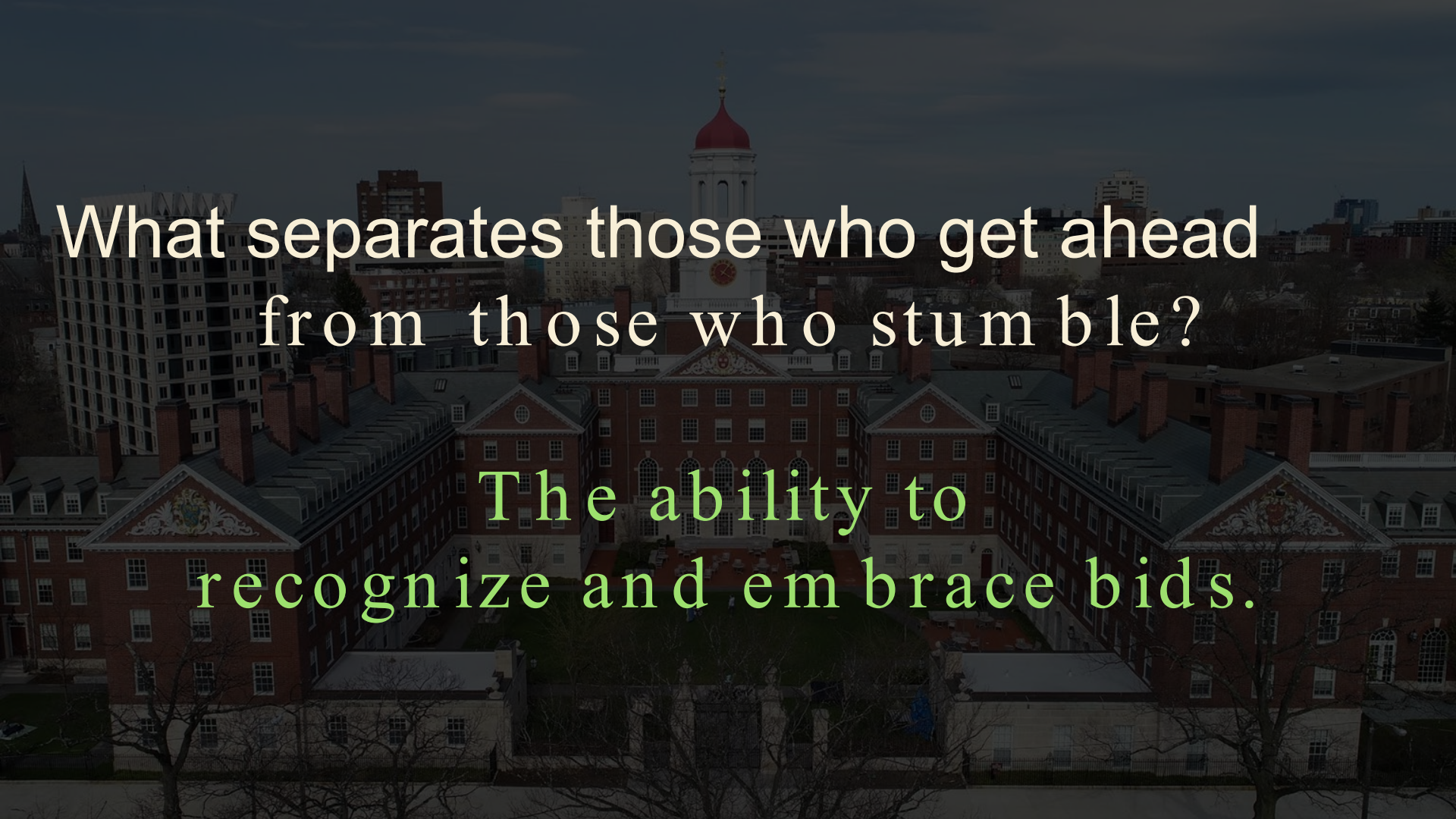












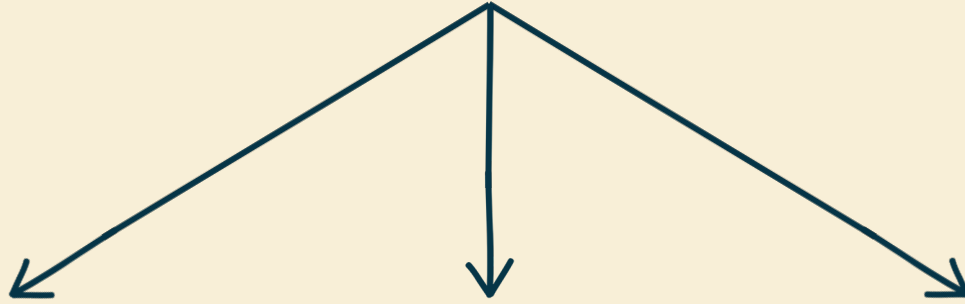
What separates those who get ahead
from those who stumble?

The ability to
recognize and embrace bids.



“bids”

“I’m hungry”

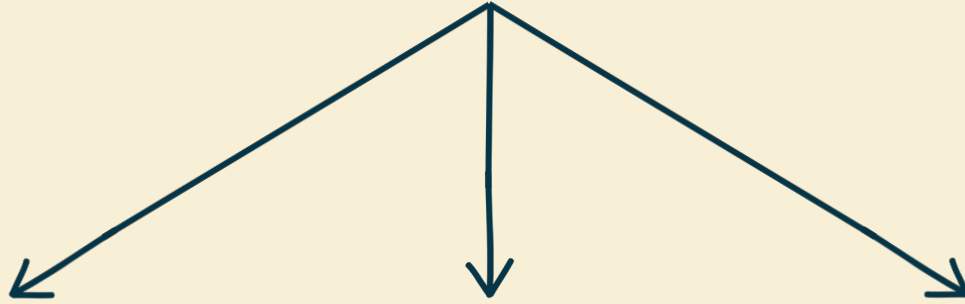


Ignore
the
bid

Ask,
“What would
you like?”

Say,
“Didn’t you
just eat?!”

“I’m hungry”



Ignore
~~the~~
bid

Ask,
✓
“What would
you like?”

Say,
~~Didn't~~
you
just eat?!”

“bids”

=

requests for human connection

“bids”

=

opportunities

every email...

every meeting...

every assignment...

every exchange of eye contact...

..is a bid.

every email...

every meeting...

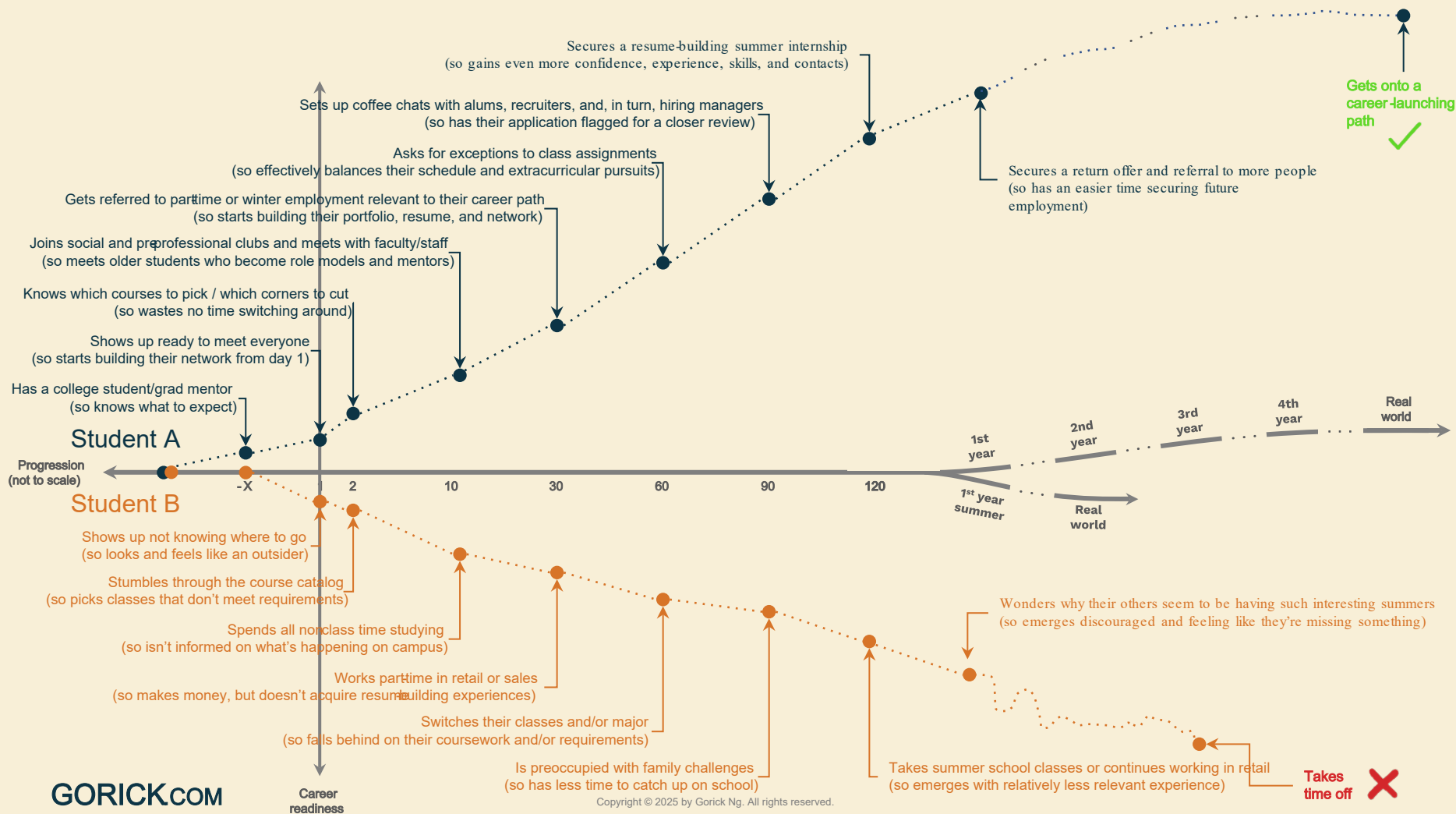
every assignment...

every exchange of eye contact...

..is a ~~bid~~ an opportunity



The tale of two students



What is student A doing?

“SEMESTER ZERO”

1. Understand the role of college in your career and life

(so effectively

Gets referred to parttime or winter employment (so starts building their

Joins social and professional clubs and meetings (so meets older students who become role

Knows which courses to pick / which corners to cut (so wastes no time switching around

Shows up ready to meet everyone (so starts building their network from day 1)

Has a college student/grad mentor (so knows what to expect)

Student A

Progression (not to scale)

Student B

Shows up not knowing where to go (so looks and feels like an outsider)

Stumbles through the course catalog (so picks classes that don't meet requirements)

Spends all non-class time studying (so isn't informed on what's happening on campus)

(so makes money, but doesn't actually build experiences)

(so falls

Car

readi

“MONTH ONE”

Secures a return offer and referral to more people (so gains even more connections)

1. Build as many relationships as possible

Asks for exceptions to class assignment deadlines (so has their application flagged for review)

1. Pick classes strategically

Chooses relevant to their career path (so starts building their

1. Pick extracurriculars strategically

Chooses with faculty/staff mentors (so gets

1. Pick jobs strategically

Shows up ready to meet everyone (so starts building their network from day 1)

Has a college student/grad mentor (so knows what to expect)

Shows up not knowing where to go (so looks and feels like an outsider)

Stumbles through the course catalog (so picks classes that don't meet requirements)

Spends all non-class time studying (so isn't informed on what's happening on campus)

(so makes money, but doesn't actually build experiences)

(so falls

Car

readi

“SEMESTER ONE”

Secures a return offer and referral to more people (so gains even more connections)

1. Spend your time strategically

Asks for exceptions to class assignment deadlines (so has their application flagged for review)

1. Pick classes strategically

Chooses relevant to their career path (so starts building their

1. Pick extracurriculars strategically

Chooses with faculty/staff mentors (so gets

1. Pick jobs strategically

Shows up ready to meet everyone (so starts building their network from day 1)

Has a college student/grad mentor (so knows what to expect)

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Car

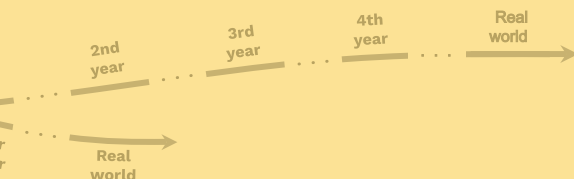
readi

...and beyond...

1. Build on the momentum

Secures a return offer and referral to more people (so has an easier time securing future employment)

Gets onto a career-launching path



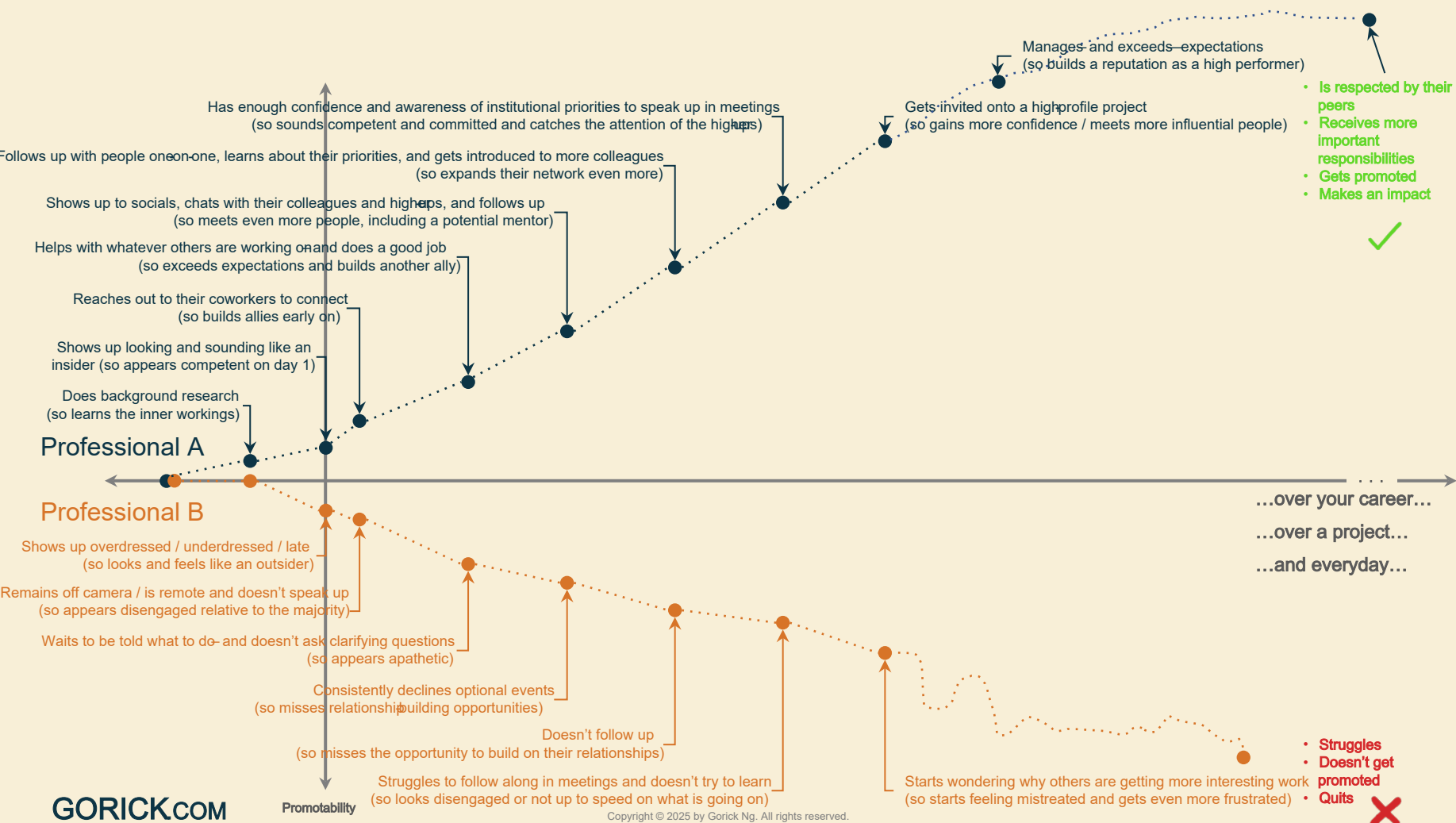
Wonders why their others seem to be having such interesting summers (so emerges discouraged and feeling like they're missing something)

Wonders why their others seem to be having such interesting summers (so emerges discouraged and feeling like they're missing something)

Takes time off



The tale of two graduates



“DAY ZERO”

1. Do background research

1. Embrace networking calls

1. Research your coworkers :)

1. Reflect on what you want

Professional A

Shows up overdressed / underdressed / late
(so looks and feels like an outsider)

Remains off camera / is remote and doesn't speak
(so appears disengaged relative to the major

Waits to be told what to do- and doesn't ask
(so appears apathetic)

Consistently declines optional events
(so misses relationship-building opportunities)

Doesn't follow up
(so misses the opportunity to build on their relationships)

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Procrastinates

“WEEK ONE”

1. Know the expectations

1. Spark conversations

Has enough confidence to sound confident and competent and catches the attention of the higher ups

Shows up in meetings the higher ups are in

Gets invited on a high profile project

Confidence grows (so builds a reputation among potential people)

Shows up to socials, chats with their colleagues, so meets even more people

Helps with whatever others are working on and (so exceeds expectations and

Reaches out to their coworkers to connect and (so builds allies early on)

Shows up looking confident and sounding like an insider (so appears competent on day 1)

Does background research (so appears to be a pro)

Professional A

Professional B

Shows up overdressed / underdressed / late
(so looks and feels like an outsider)

Remains off camera / is remote and doesn't speak
(so appears disengaged relative to the major

Waits to be told what to do- and doesn't ask
(so appears apathetic)

Consistently declines optional events
(so misses relationship-building opportunities)

Doesn't follow up
(so misses the opportunity to build on their relationships)

Struggles to follow along in meetings and doesn't try to learn
(so looks disengaged or not up to speed on what is going on)

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“MONTH ONE”

1. Take ownership

1. Stay on track

Shows up in meetings the higher ups are in

Gets invited on a high profile project

Confidence grows (so builds a reputation among potential people)

Shows up to socials, chats with their colleagues, so meets even more people

Helps with whatever others are working on and (so exceeds expectations and

Reaches out to their coworkers to connect and (so builds allies early on)

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Struggles to follow along in meetings and doesn't try to learn
(so looks disengaged or not up to speed on what is going on)

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...and beyond...

1. Show your potential

Shows up in meetings the higher ups are in

Gets invited on a high profile project

Confidence grows (so builds a reputation among potential people)

Shows up to socials, chats with their colleagues, so meets even more people

Helps with whatever others are working on and (so exceeds expectations and

Reaches out to their coworkers to connect and (so builds allies early on)

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Struggles to follow along in meetings and doesn't try to learn
(so looks disengaged or not up to speed on what is going on)

- Is respected by their peers
- Receives more important responsibilities
- Gets promoted
- Makes an impact



...over your career...

...over a project...

...and everyday...

- Struggles
- Doesn't get promoted
- Quits



The following are slides I recently shared with a group of first -gen, low -income college students before their summer internships...

*My question to you
as we walk through the slides together:*

Which lessons should we pass
along to the early career
professionals we support? How?

What does success look like in this Internship for you?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



What are you most anxious about when it comes to your upcoming Internship?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



What are you most anxious about when it comes to college / your future?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



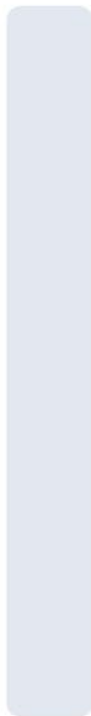
Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my Internship if I can... (Select all the options that apply to you)

0%



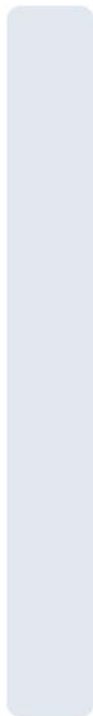
—Establish a good reputation

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—Build relationships

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—Find a mentor

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—Acquire skills and knowledge

0%



—Do a good job

0%



—Have a good time

0%



—Figure out why



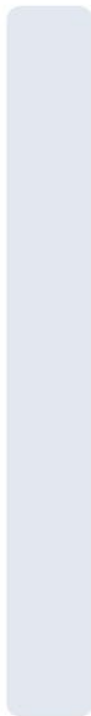
Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my Internship if I can... (Select your top 1)

0%



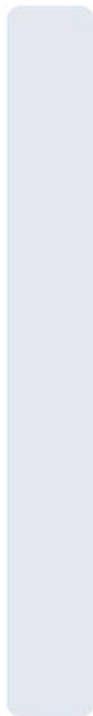
—Establish a good reputation

0%



—Build relationships

0%



—Find a mentor

0%



—Acquire skills and knowledge

0%



—Do a good job

0%



—Have a good time

0%



—Figure out why



When did you make up your mind that this probably isn't an organization you'd want to stay in long-term?



Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

- Get a return job offer
- Establish a good reputation
- Build relationships
- Find a mentor
- Acquire skills and knowledge
- Do a good job
- Have a good time
- Figure out what I like/dislike

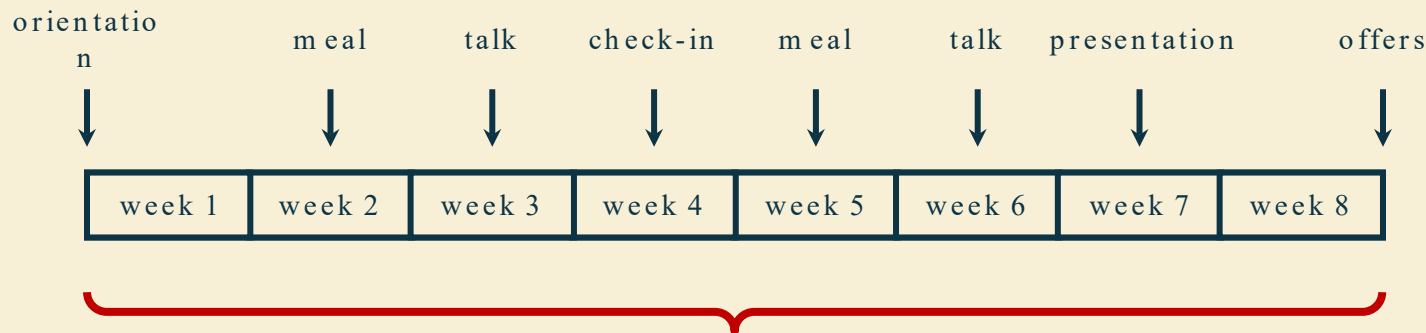
the anatomy of an internship

type 1: the disorganized kind



the anatomy of an internship

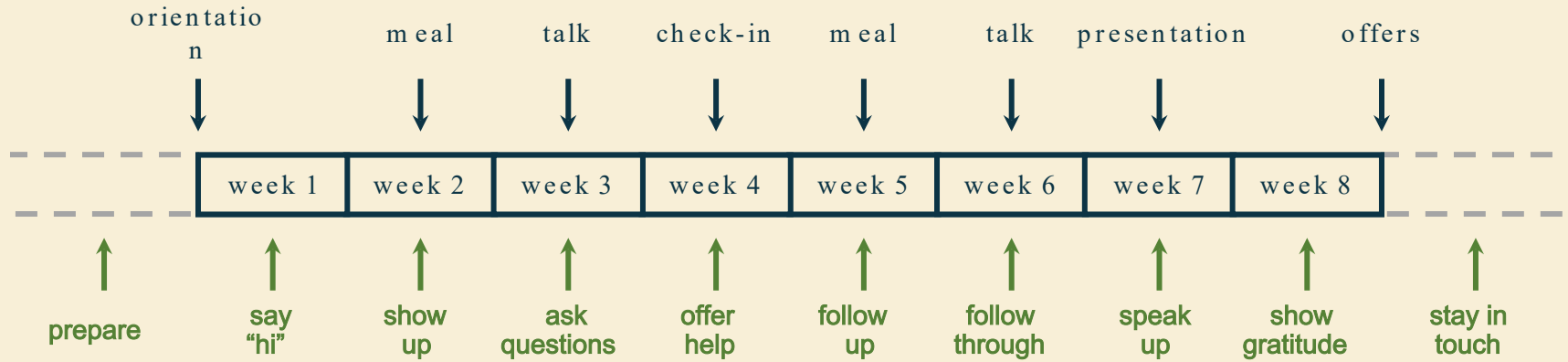
type 2: the organized kind



what the heck
do you want from me??

the anatomy of an internship ship

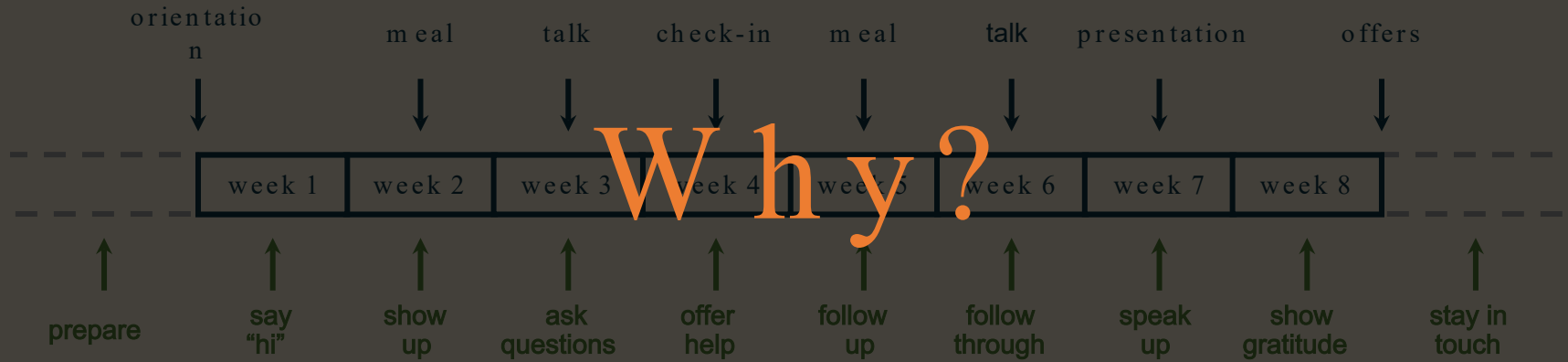
...what no one tells you...



+ you'll be doing this everywhere,
all the time

the anatomy of an internship

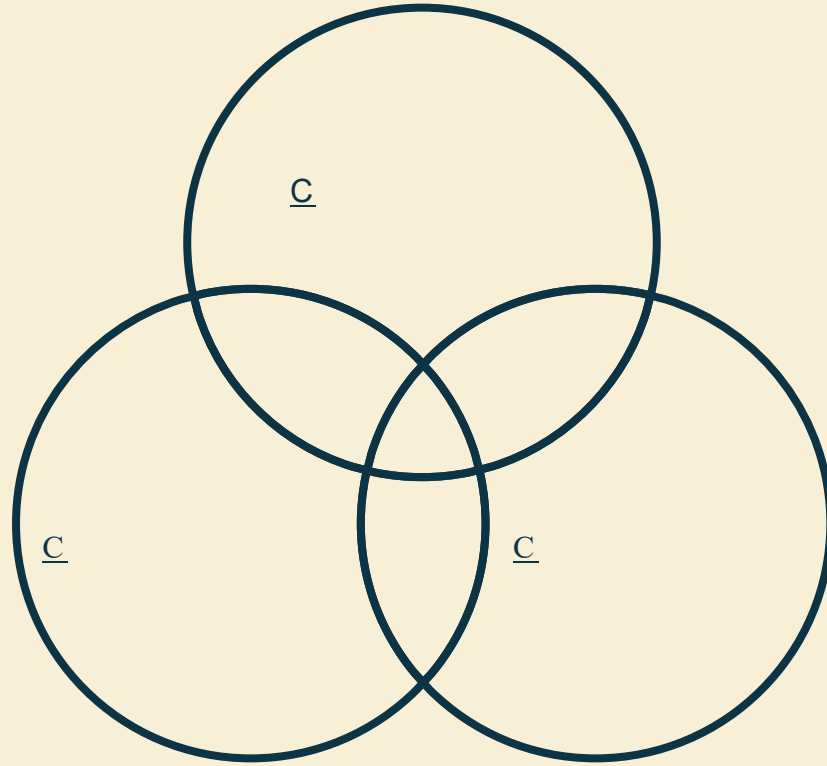
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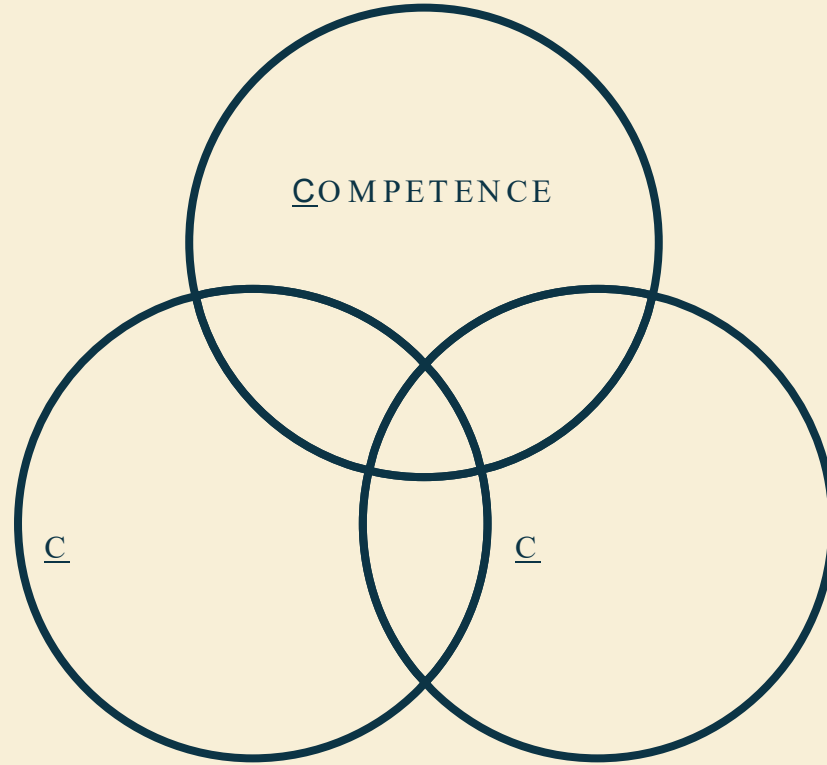


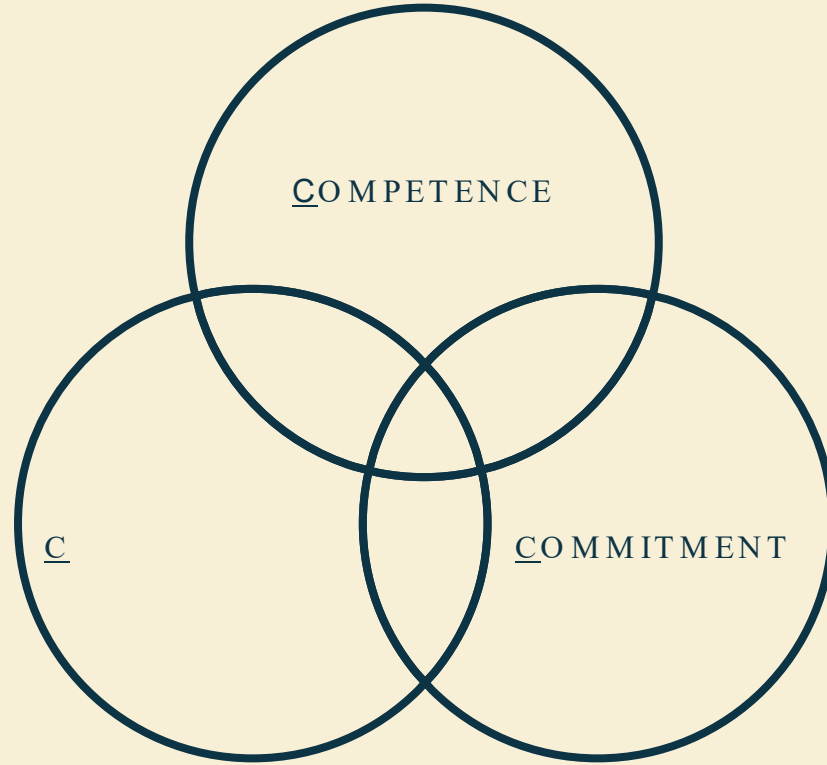
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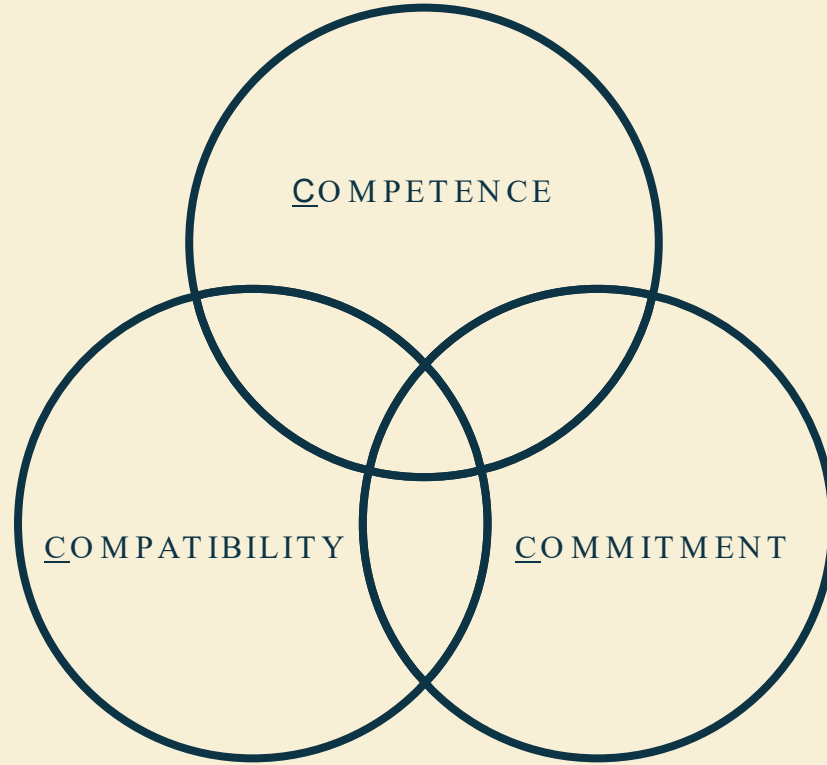
“The hardest part of being an intern is figuring out what my job is.”

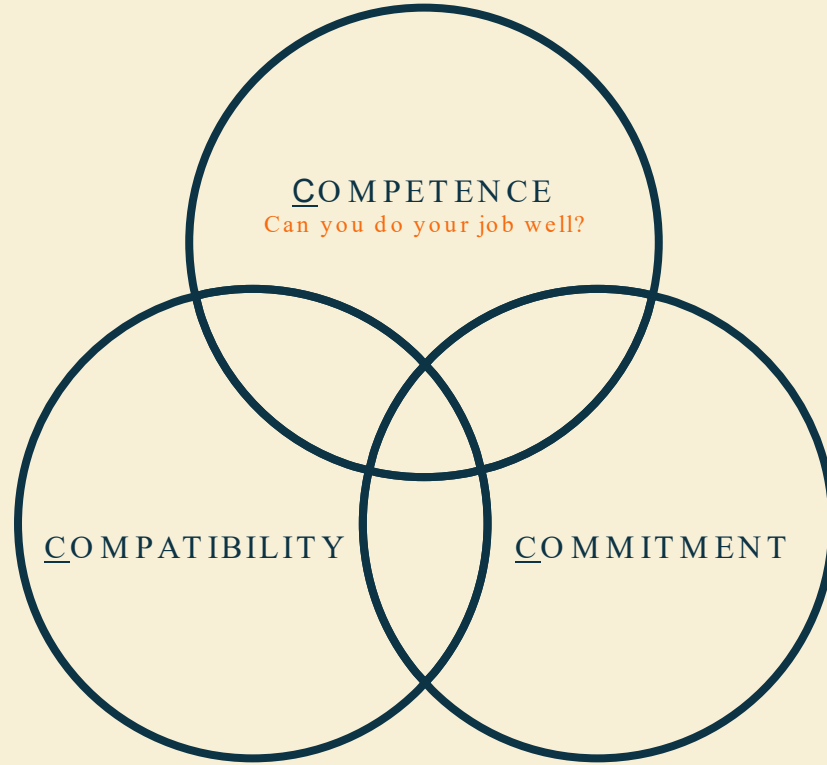
People will be evaluating your
Three C's...

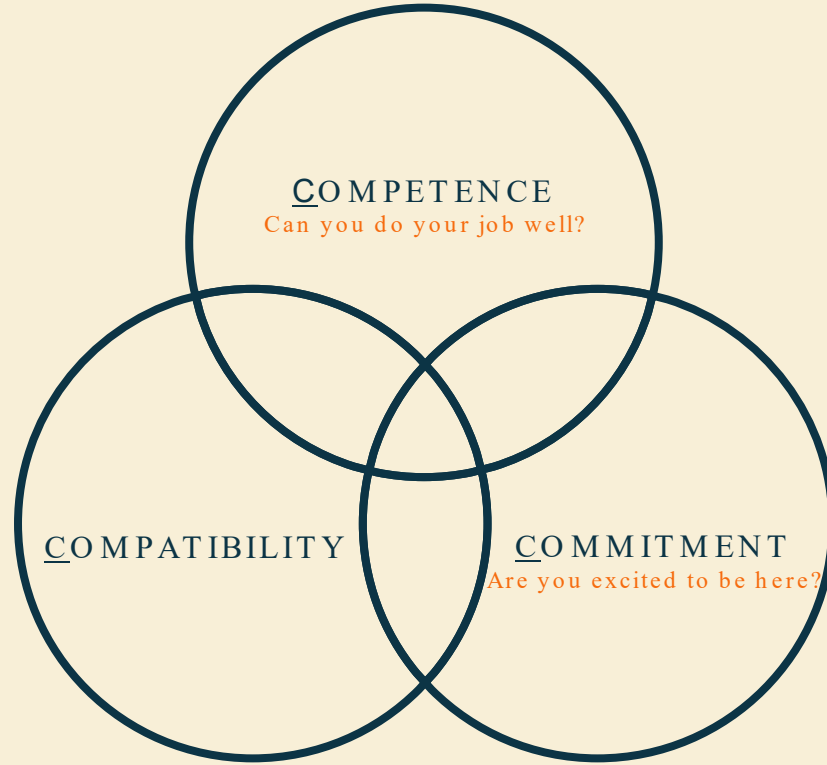


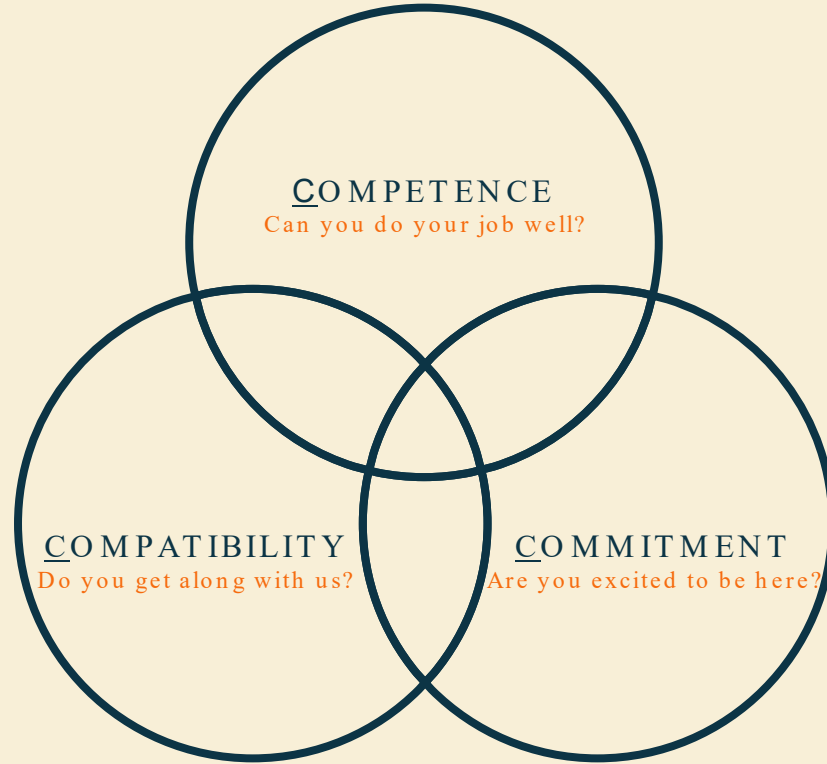




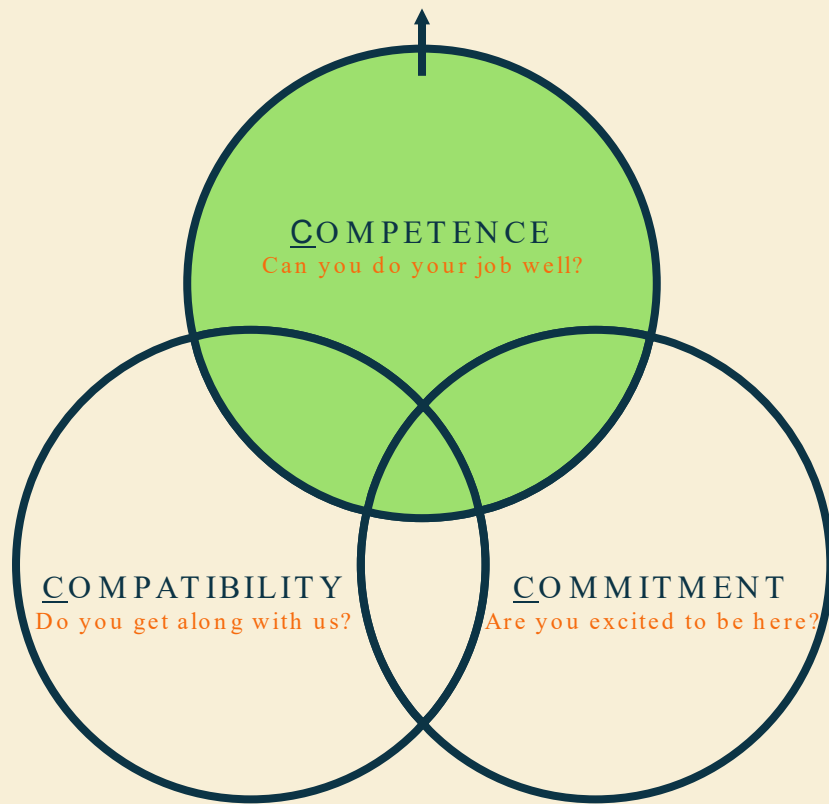


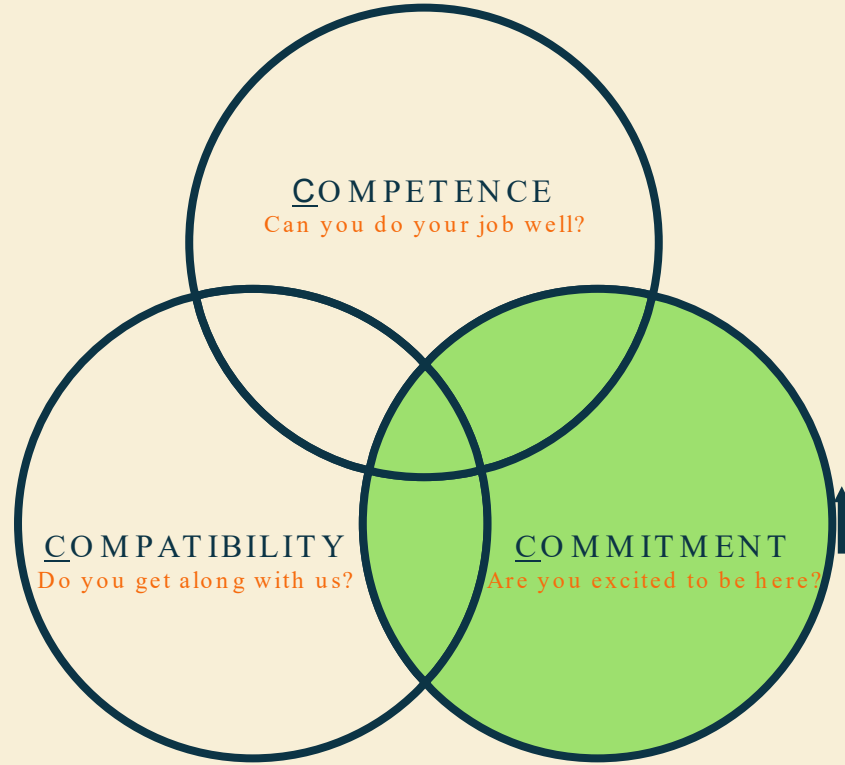






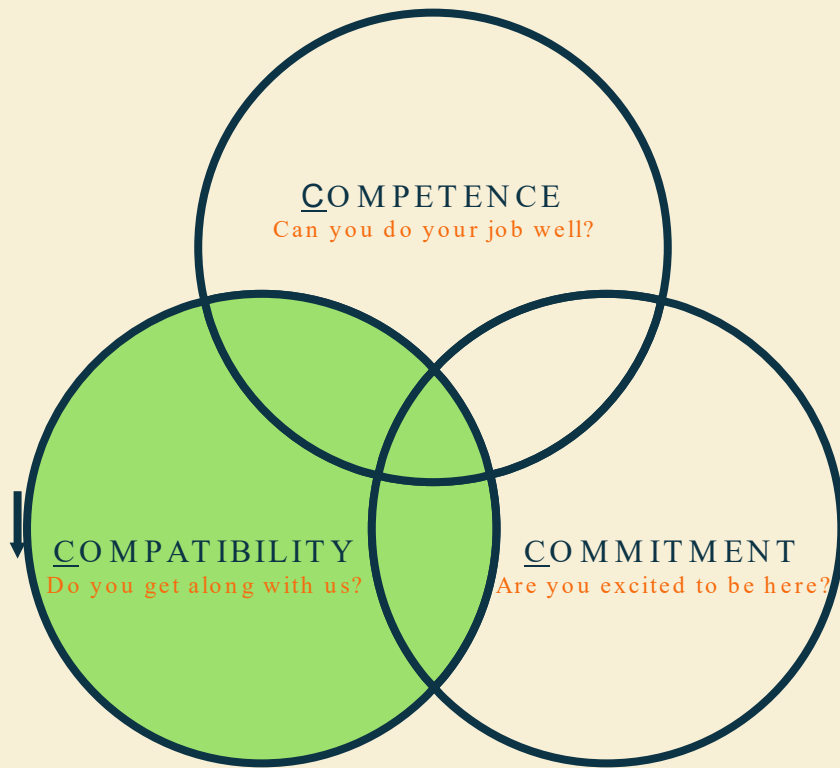
“I trust you
with more important responsibilities.”





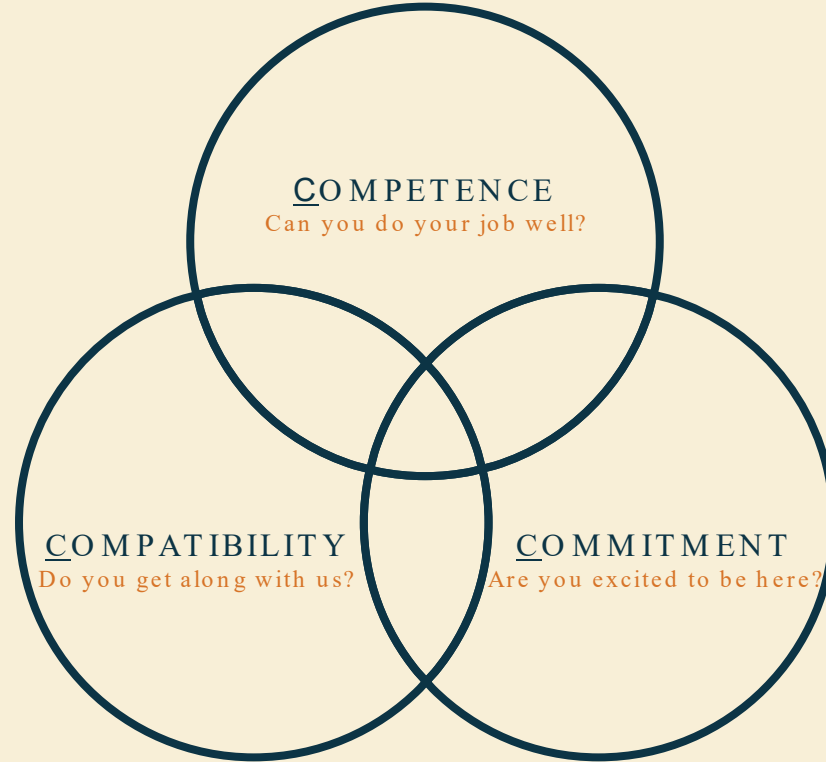
“I want to
invest in you.”

“I want to
work with you.”



Life hack!

*Use Google / LinkedIn
to your advantage !*



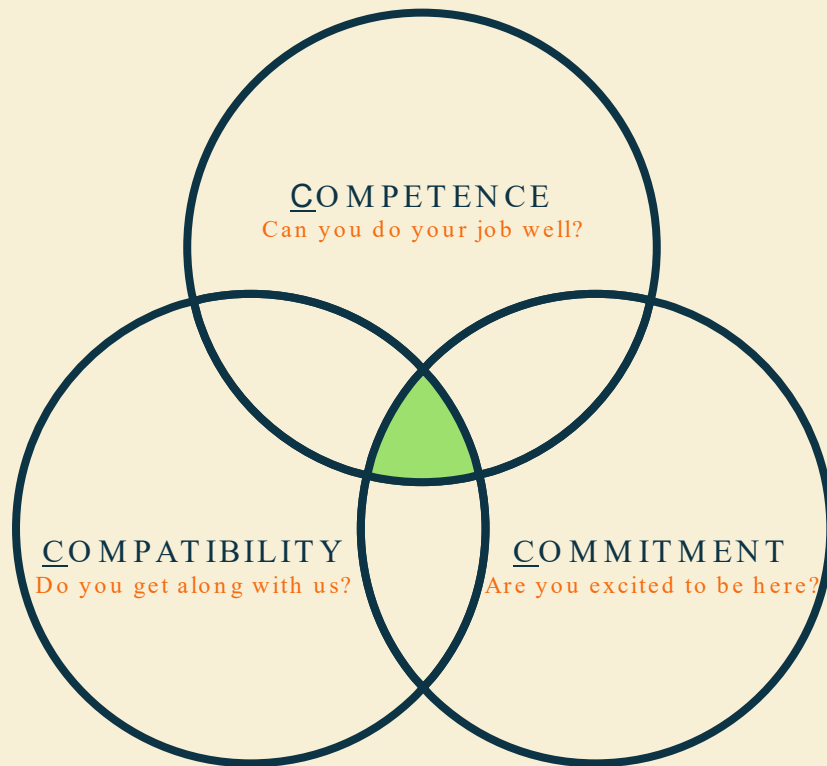
Life hack!

*Use your presence
to your advantage!*

Life hack!

*Use being on camera
to your advantage!*

“I trust you
with more important responsibilities.”



“I want to
work with you.”

“I want to
invest in you.”

"I trust you
with more important responsibilities."

This will be relevant for the rest of your career!

So...

1. Know how to talk about your
experience

1. Keep a brag sheet of what you've done

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

- Get a return job offer
- Establish a good reputation
- Build relationships
- Find a mentor
- Acquire skills and knowledge
- Do a good job
- Have a good time
- Figure out what I like/dislike

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

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Show up a few minutes early.

or

Stay a few minutes late.



Look left.



Look right.



Say, "Hi! I'm _____."



Say, "Hi again!"



Say, "Yes!"

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

- ✓ —Get a return job offer
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- Figure out what I like/dislike

What to do when you have someone you seem to get along with:



Ask for their
input

*"I'm working on _____
and would love your
perspective on _____
since you are the
expert on _____."*

Ask for their
advice

*"I'm trying to _____
and could get your
advice on _____. Might
you have a few
minutes to chat?"*

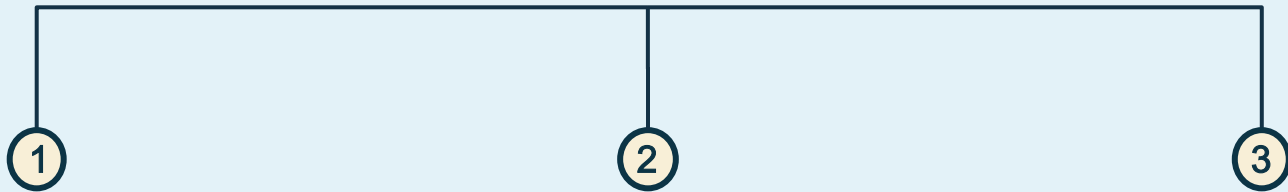
Ask for their
story

*"I'd love to follow in
your footsteps given
_____. Might you have
a few minutes to chat?
I am available ..."*

Ask for their
involvement

*"I am recruiting
advisers to guide the
direction of _____. I
immediately thought
of you."*

What to do when the person who believes in you is also above you:



Share your
goals

"As I reflect on where I'd like to be 5 years from now, I'd love to _____. What's your advice on what I should start doing, stop doing, and keep doing to get to such a goal?"

Share your
progress

"I had my performance evaluation and, all thanks to you, was told _____. Next quarter, I plan to _____." No need to reply unless you'd like to—just wanted to keep you in the loop."

Share your
struggles

"I was reflecting on _____ and feel like I could have done a better job of _____. Am I thinking about this the right way, or what would you do differently if you were in my position?"

Remember: You're joining a powerful lifelong community.

1
Share your goals

2
Share your progress

3
Share your struggles

*So...
"As I reflect on where I'd like to be 5 years from now, I'd love to _____. What's your advice on where I should start doing, stop doing, and keep doing to get to such a goal?"*

"I had my performance evaluation and, all thanks to you, was told _____. Next time, I need to reply unless you'd like to—just wanted to keep you in the loop."

"I was reflecting on _____ and feel like I could have done a better job of _____. Am I thinking about this the right way, or what would you do differently if you were in my position?"

1. Get to know each other
1. Don't be shy about contacting alums

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

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In school...

We learn by

listening
+
reading
+
cramming

In the real world...

We learn by

Googling
+
meeting others
+
asking questions

The unspoken rule of *asking questions.*

“I noticed _____...

Here's what I know...



“I'm unsure about _____ and tried _____...

• Who / what / where / when / why _____?”

Here's what I don't know...



3 smart ways to *ask* questions:

Give a hypothesis, an attempt, or a partial answer.

- “I’m unsure about _____. I suspect hypothesis given _____. *Am I on the right track?* ”
- “I’m trying to _____ but can’t find _____ despite attempt. *Whom should I speak to? / Where is it?*”
- “I’m struggling with _____. I know partial answer but I’m not as sure about _____. *What am I missing?*”

When in doubt...

1. Ask: “How can I be helpful?”

1. Offer: “Would it be helpful if I _____?”

1. Invite yourself: “I’d love to learn . Could I be a fly on the wall?”

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

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- ✓ —Establish a good reputation
- ✓ —Build relationships
- ✓ —Find a mentor
- ✓ —Acquire skills and knowledge
- Do a good job
- Have a good time
- Figure out what I like/dislike

What school teaches

If something's due on
Friday at 11:59pm...

*...no one has to know that I
started at 11:30pm.*

What the real world expects

If something's due on
Friday at 11:59pm...

...that's the spoken
deadline. My job is to
uncover and meet the
unspoken deadlines!

What I used to think
(and what I often hear)

It's all about
doing your job well.

What I now think
(and what I want you to remember)

It's about
doing your job well
and demonstrating that
you can be trusted with
more important
responsibilities.

What I used to think
(and what I often hear)

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you can be trusted with
more important
responsibilities.

High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential

Low
performanc
e

Medium
performanc
e

High
performanc
e

High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential

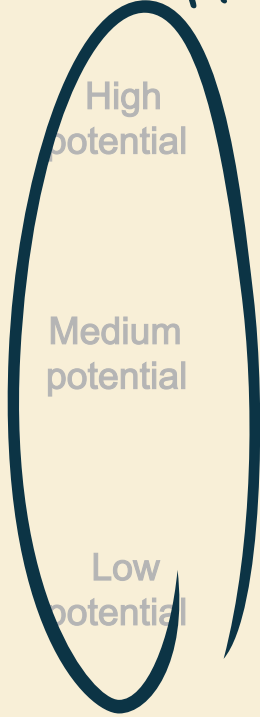
Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

Reliability

Promotability



Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential

Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

High
potential

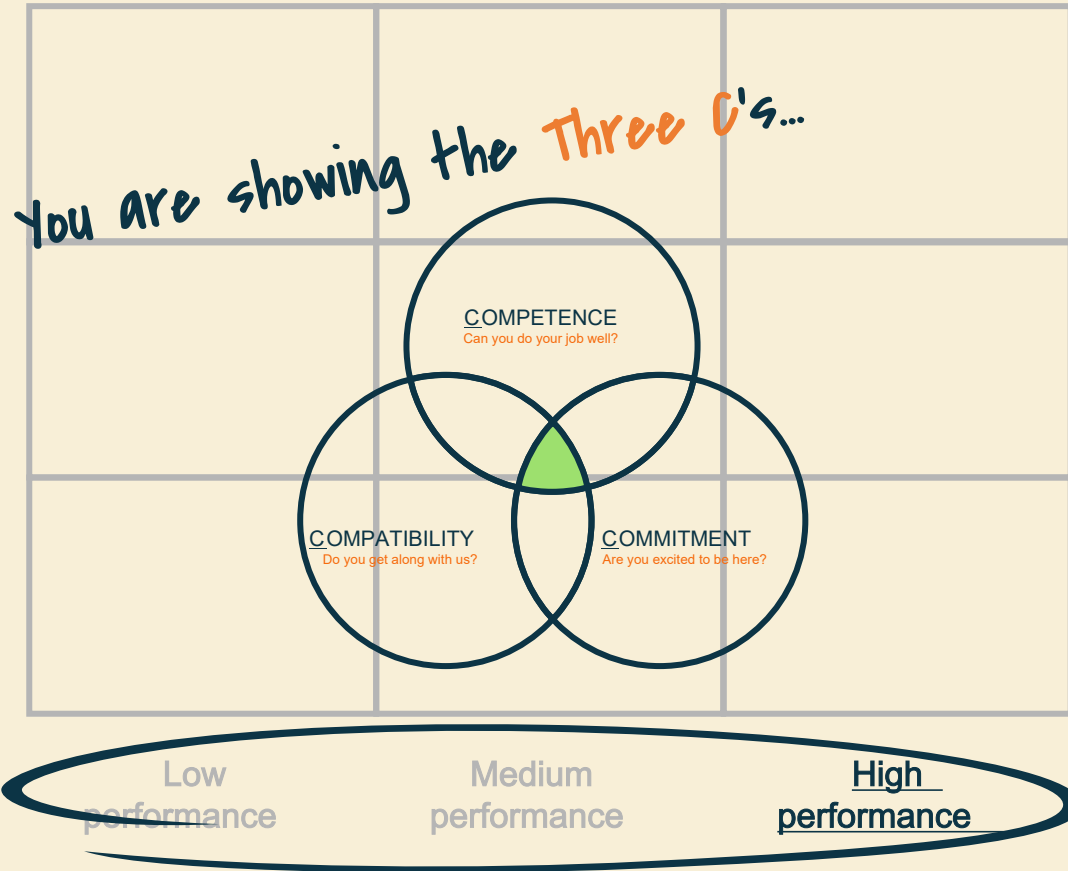
Medium
potential

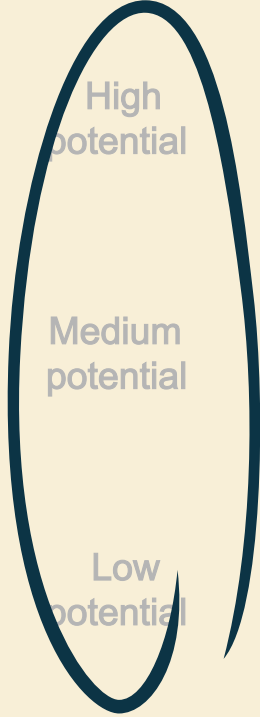
Low
potential

Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

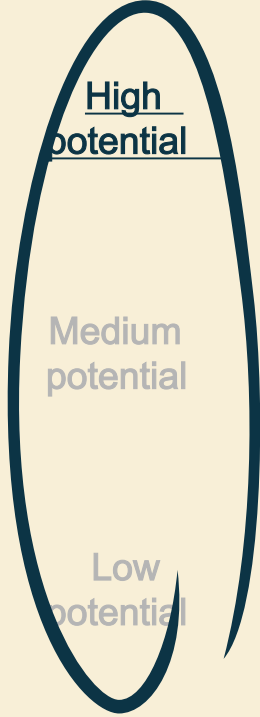




Low
performance

Medium
performance

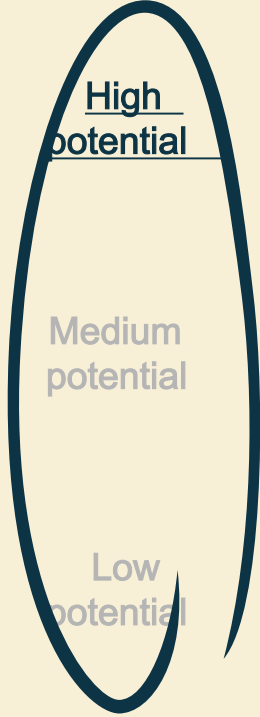
High
performance



Low
performance

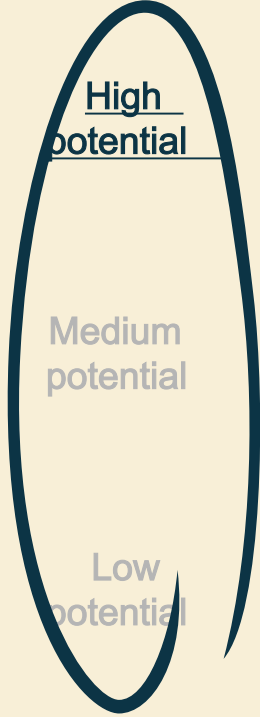
Medium
performance

High
performance

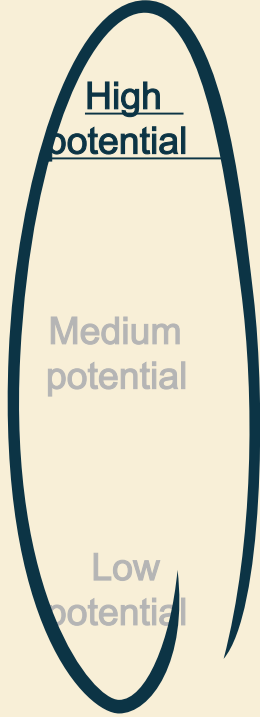


You are ON **T.R.A.C.K.**:

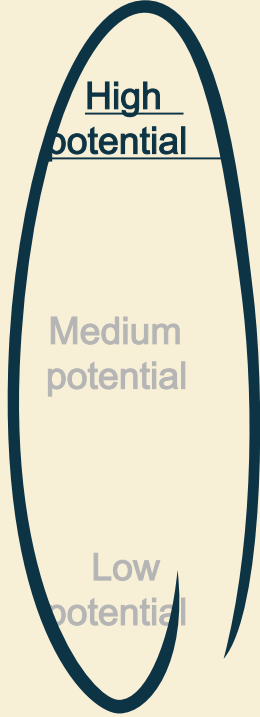
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance



You are ON T.R.A.C.K. : Thinking: 1.		
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance



You are ON T.R.A.C.K. : Thinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing		
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance

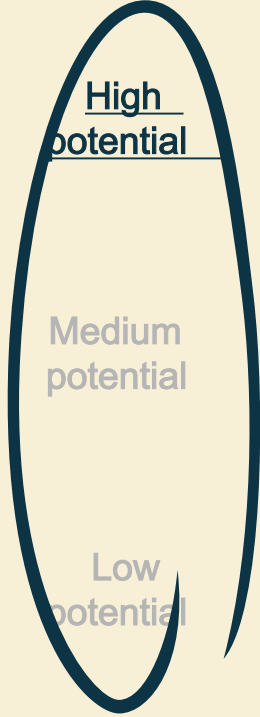


You are ON **T.R.A.C.K.**:

1. **T**hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing

2. **R**esponding:

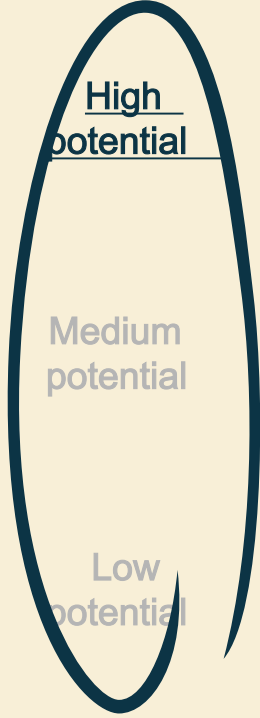
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance



You are ON **T.R.A.C.K.**:

1. **T**hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing
2. **R**esponding: You have an answer + a point of view

Low performance	Medium performance	High performance

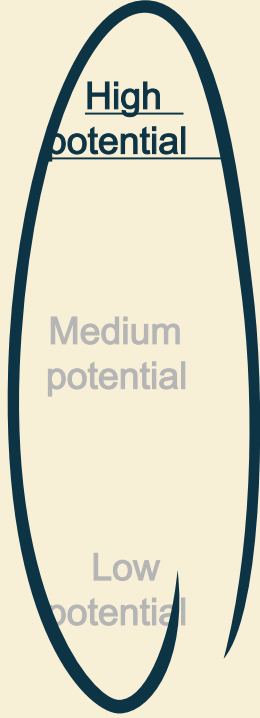


You are ON T.R.A.C.K. :		
1.	T hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing	
2.	R esponding: You have an answer + a point of view	
3.	A nticipating:	

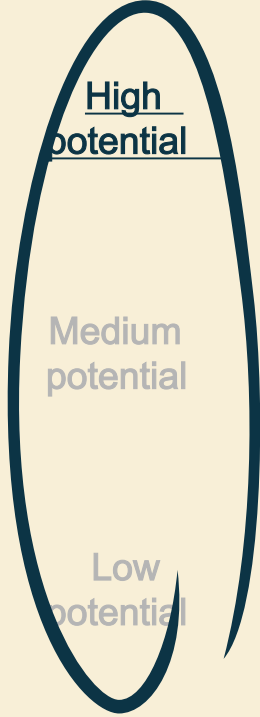
Low
performance

Medium
performance

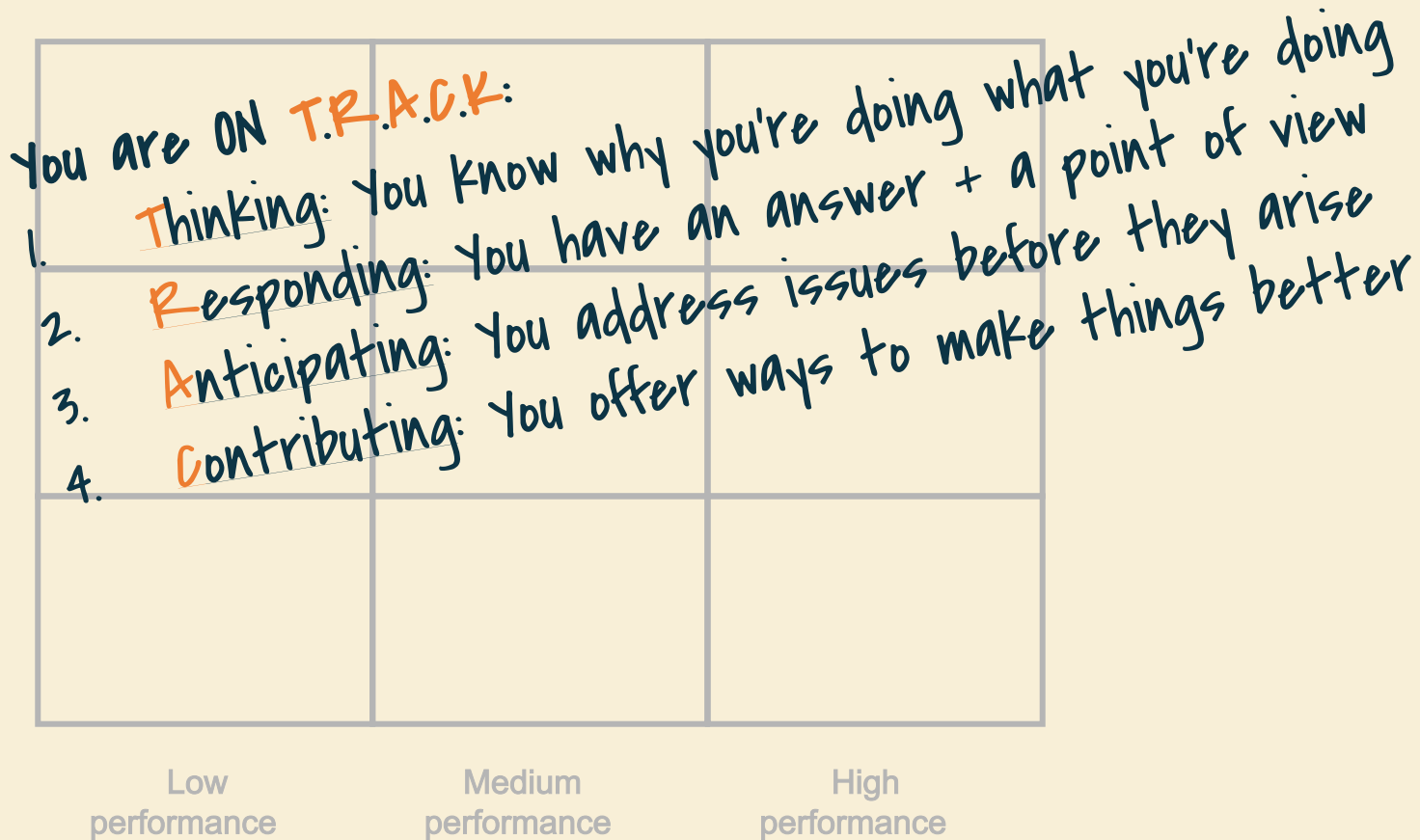
High
performance



You are ON T.R.A.C.K. :		
1.	T hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing	
2.	R esponding: You have an answer + a point of view	
3.	A nticipating: You address issues before they arise	
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance



You are ON T.R.A.C.K. :		
1.	T hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing	
2.	R esponding: You have an answer + a point of view	
3.	A nticipating: You address issues before they arise	
4.	C ontributing:	
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance





High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential



High potential

Medium potential

Low potential



High potential

Medium potential

Low potential

You are ON **T.R.A.C.K.**:

1. **Thinking**: You know why you're doing what you're doing
2. **Responding**: You have an answer + a plan
3. **Anticipating**: You address issues before they arise
4. **Contributing**: You offer ways to make things better
5. **Known**: You are known for your contributions

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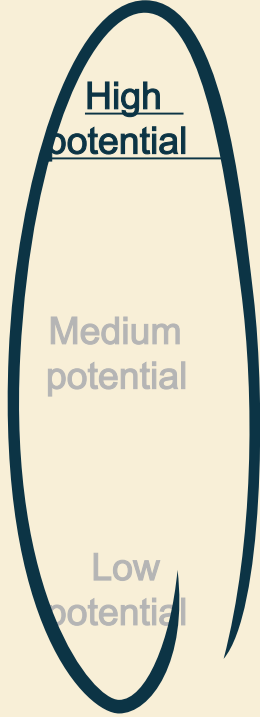
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You are ON **T.R.A.C.K.**:

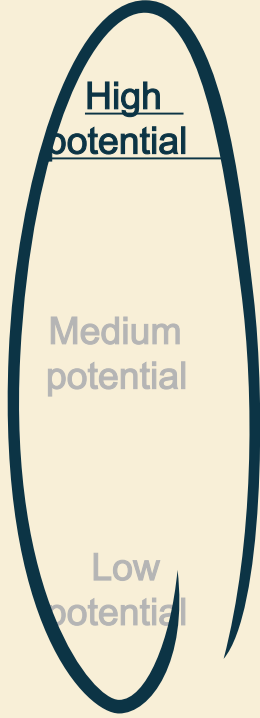
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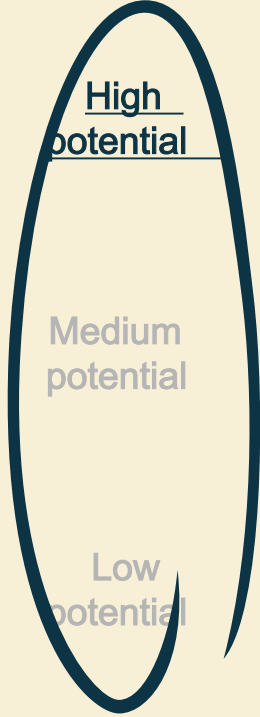
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1. T hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing		
2. R esponding: You have an answer + a point of view		
3. A nticipating: You address issues before they arise		
4. C ontributing: You offer ways to make things better		
5. K nown: You are seen and heard by leadership		
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance



1. T hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing		
2. R esponding: You have an answer + a point of view		
3. A nticipating: You address issues before they arise		
4. C ontributing: You offer ways to make things better		
5. K nown: You are seen and heard by leadership		
...so you leave people thinking,		
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance



1. T hinking: You know why you're doing what you're doing		
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3. A nticipating: You address issues before they arise		
4. C ontributing: You offer ways to make things better		
5. K nown: You are seen and heard by leadership		
Low performance	Medium performance	High performance

...so you leave people thinking, "Wow, this person could run this place one day."

High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential

		Let's keep you in your current job and maybe have you train others.

Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential

		Future leader! Let's give you more important responsibilities!

Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

High
potential

Medium
potential

Low
potential

	Wow! Let's develop you Clearly you have what it takes.	Future leader! Let's give you more important responsibilities!
	You're a solid teammate. Let's continue to see how well you do.	You're awesome! Let's keep challenging you.

Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

Be here!



High
potential

Wow! Let's
develop you
Clearly you have
what it takes.

Future leader!
Let's give you
more important
responsibilities!

Medium
potential

You're a solid
teammate. Let's
continue to see
how well you do.

You're awesome!
Let's keep
challenging
you.

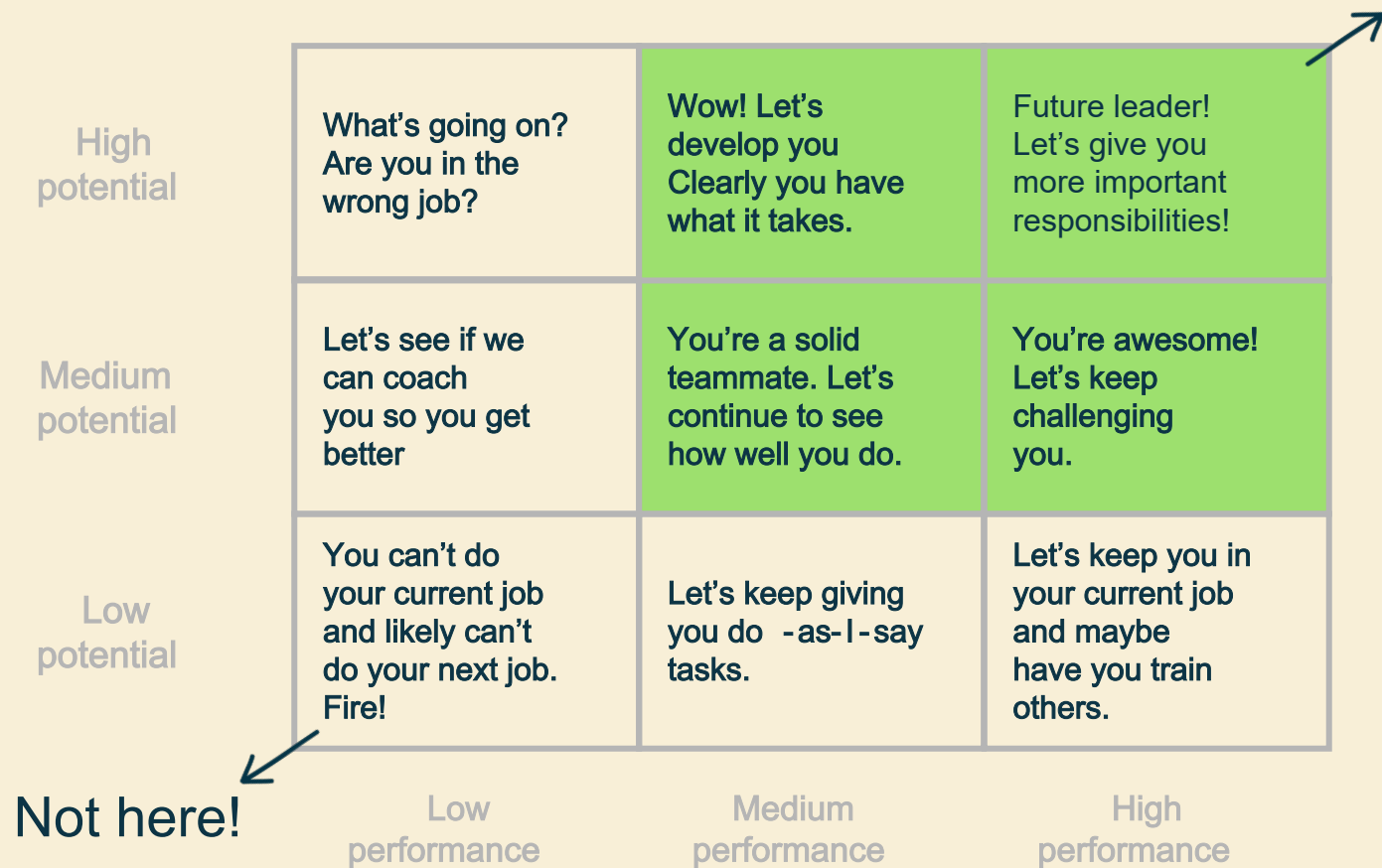
Low
potential

Low
performance

Medium
performance

High
performance

Be here!



Be here!

High potential	What's going on? Are you in the wrong job?	Wow! Let's develop you Clearly you have what it takes.	Future leader! Let's give you more important responsibilities!
Medium potential	Let's see if we can coach you so you get better	You're a solid teammate. Let's continue to see how well you do.	You're awesome! Let's keep challenging you.
Low potential	You can't do your current job and likely can't do your next job. Fire!	Let's keep giving you do -as-I-say tasks.	Let's keep you in your current job and maybe have you train others.

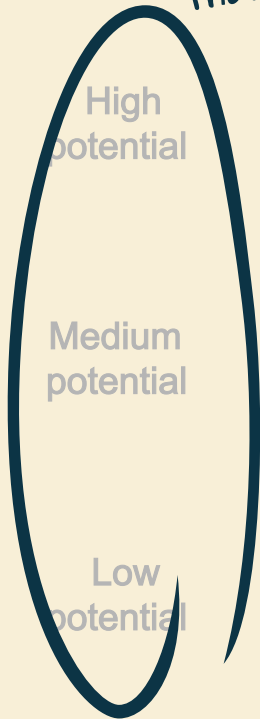
Not here!

Low performance Medium performance High performance

start here

Be here!

Then move here



What's going on? Are you in the wrong job?	Wow! Let's develop you Clearly you have what it takes.	Future leader! Let's give you more important responsibilities!
Let's see if we can coach you so you get better	You're a solid teammate. Let's continue to see how well you do.	You're awesome! Let's keep challenging you.
You can't do your current job and likely can't do your next job. Fire!	Let's keep giving you do -as-I-say tasks.	Let's keep you in your current job and maybe have you train others.



start here



Not here!

what's
urgent

what's
important

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

- ✓ —Get a return job offer
- ✓ —Establish a good reputation
- ✓ —Build relationships
- ✓ —Find a mentor
- ✓ —Acquire skills and knowledge
- Do a good job
- Have a good time
- Figure out what I like/dislike

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

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 - Have a good time
 - Figure out what I like/dislike

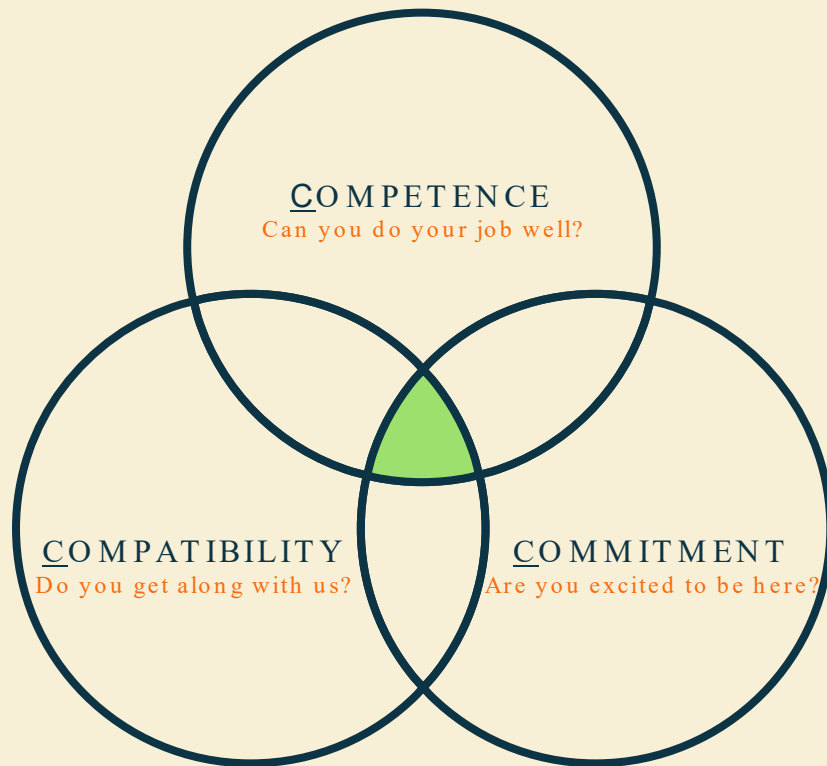
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 - ✓ —Acquire skills and knowledge
 - ✓ —Do a good job
- Have a good time
 - Figure out what I like/dislike

What (and
who) **gives me**
energy ?

What (and
who) **drains**
my energy ?

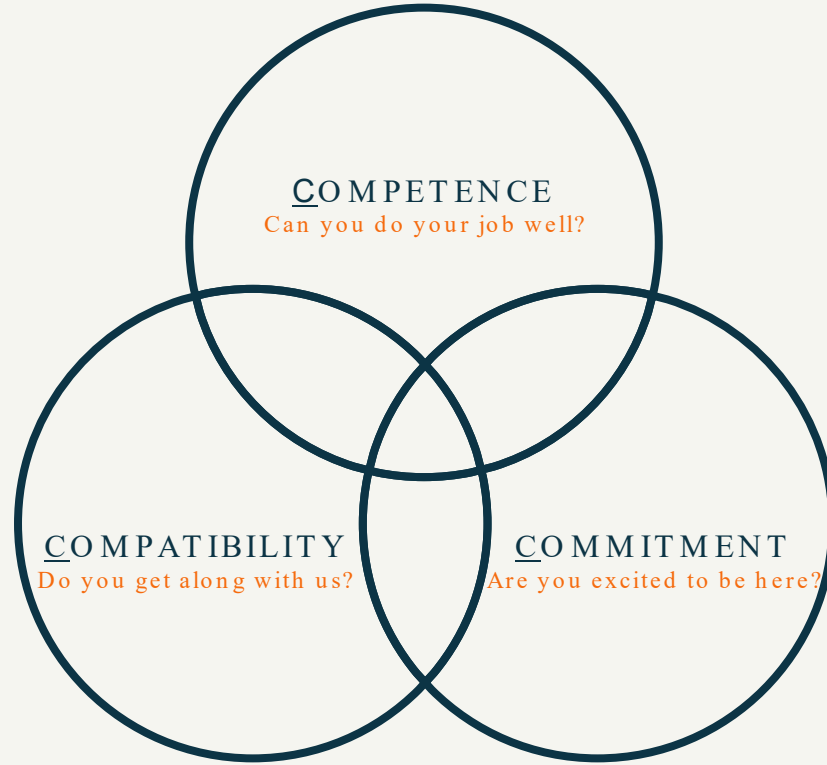
“I trust you
with more important responsibilities.”



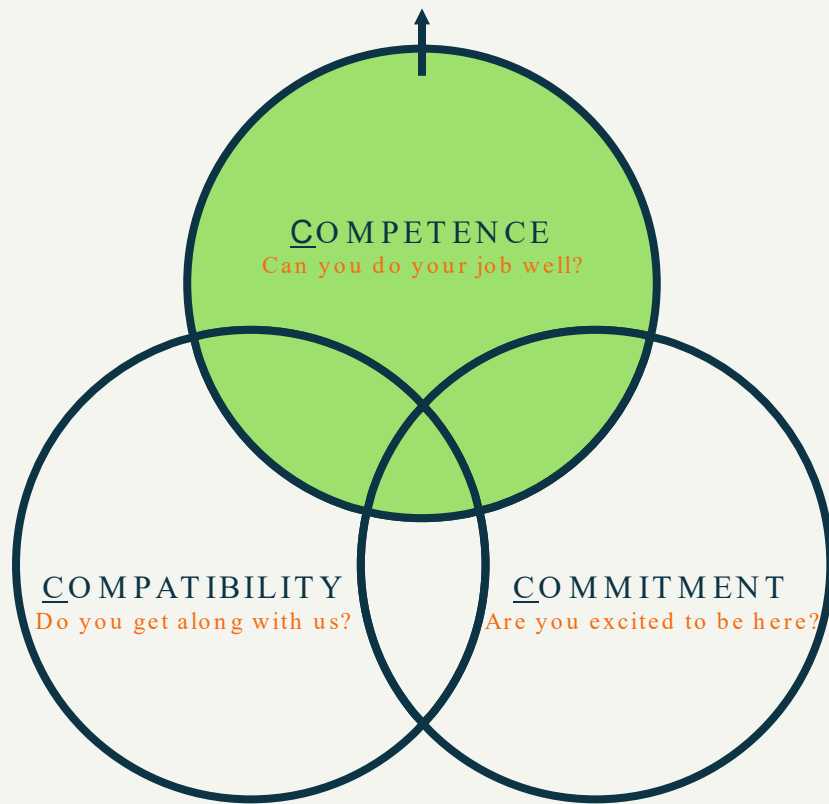
“I want to
work with you.”

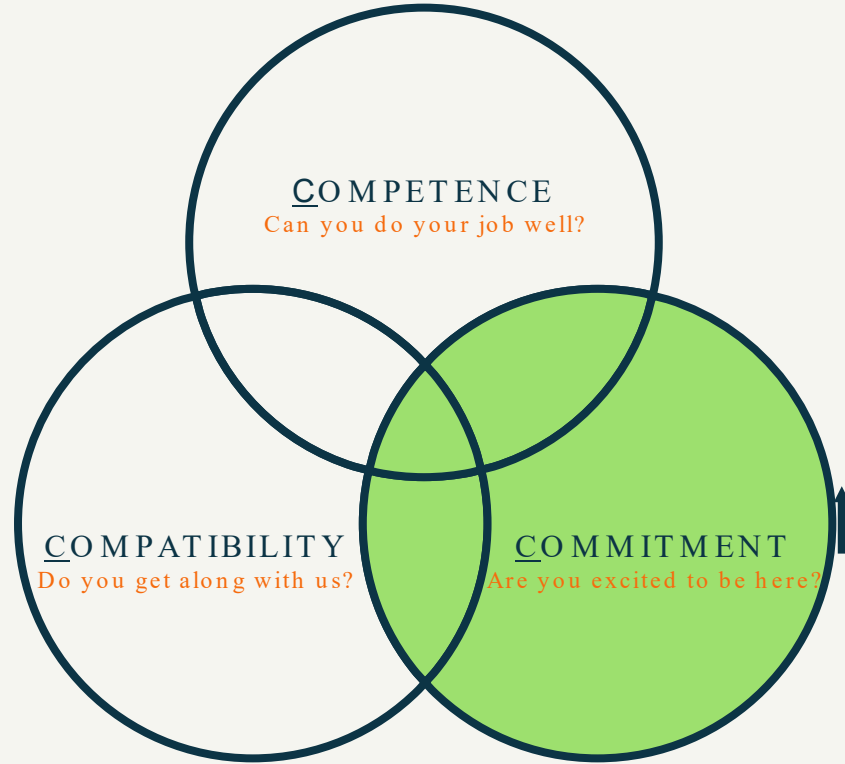
“I want to
invest in you.”

Don't forget to
evaluate others'
Three C's!



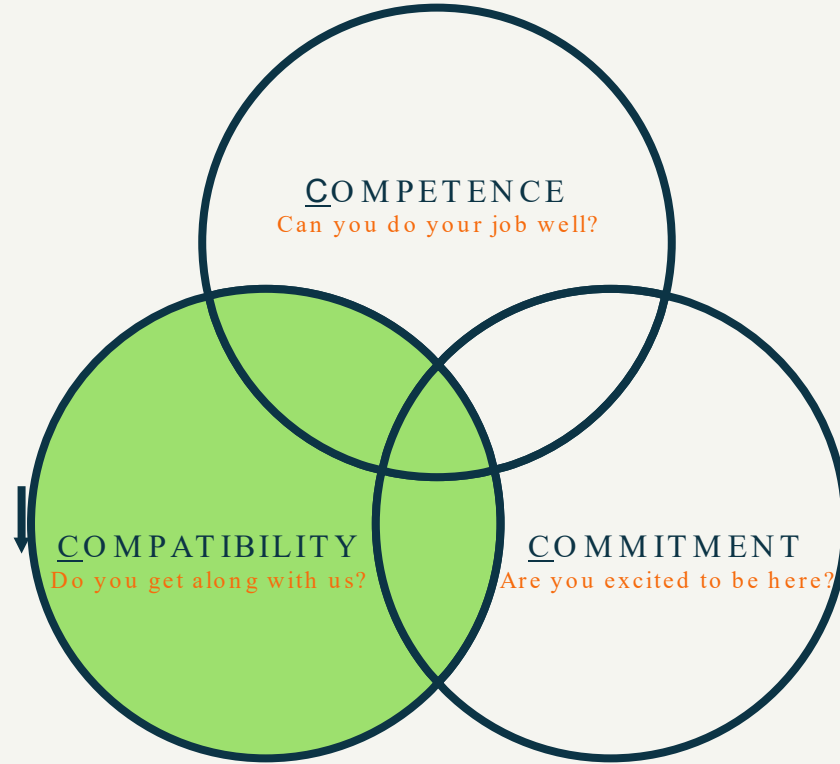
“I look up to and can learn from
my colleagues.”



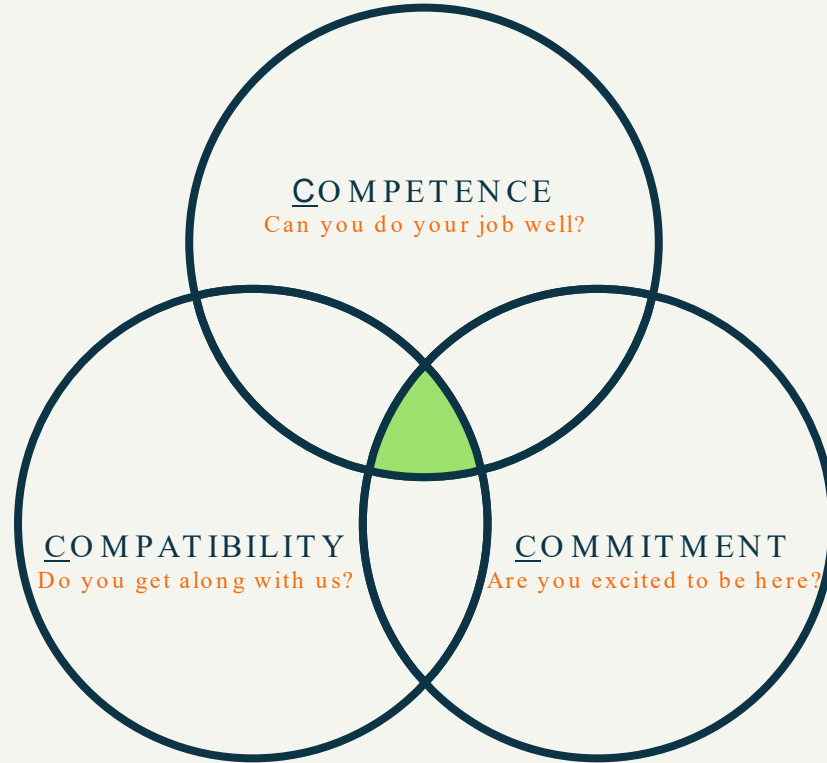


**“The team is
invested in my
growth and career.”**

“I feel comfortable
around my
teammates.”



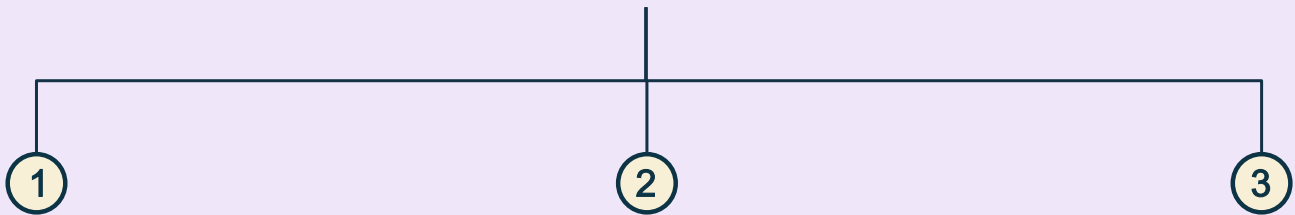
“I look up to and can learn from
my colleagues.”



“I feel comfortable
around my
teammates.”

“The team is
invested in my
growth and career.”

Know what you want to run away from... and what you want to run towards!



the
people

- My managers
- My coworkers
- My clients

the
position

- My day-to-day
- My growth potential
- My comp / benefits

the
place

- Where it's going
- How it's run
- What it cares about

Finish this sentence: To me, I will have succeeded in my internship if I can...?

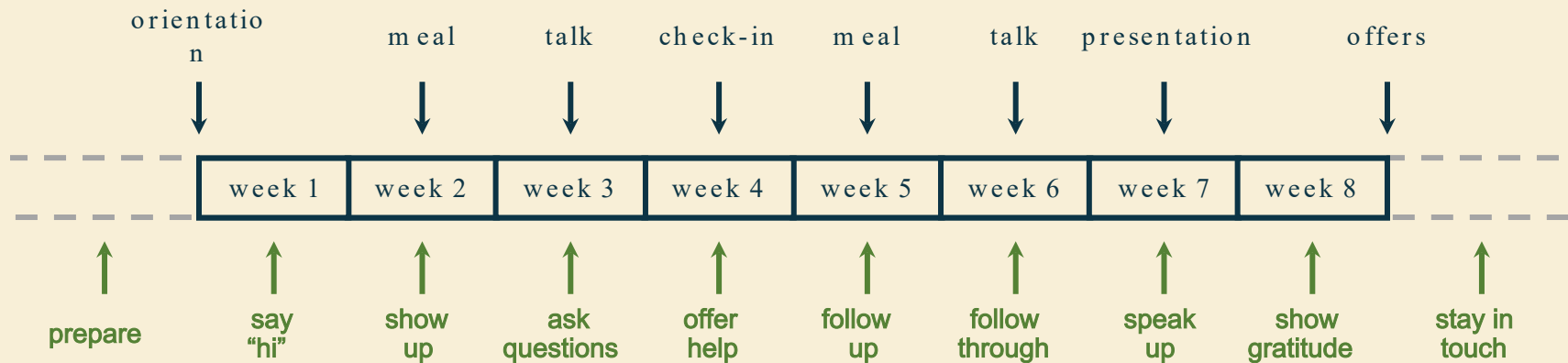
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 - ✓ —Find a mentor
 - ✓ —Acquire skills and knowledge
 - ✓ —Do a good job
- Have a good time
 - Figure out what I like/dislike

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- ✓ —Figure out what I like/dislike

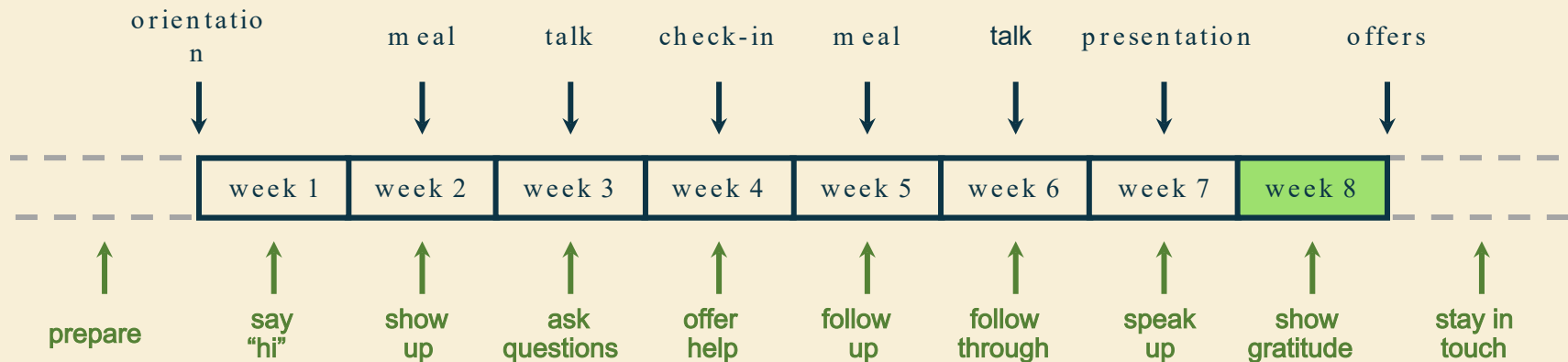
the anatomy of an internship ship

...what no one tells you...



the anatomy of an internship

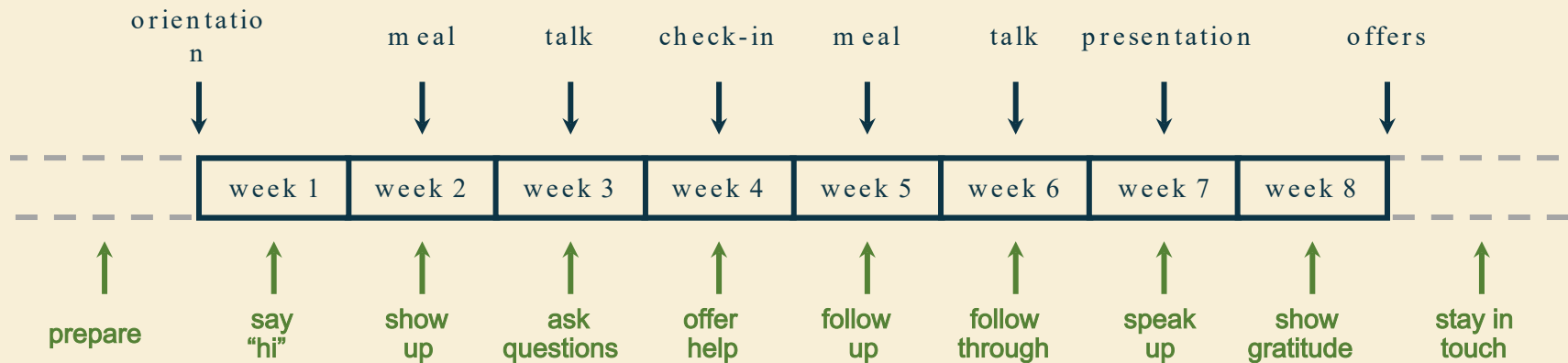
...what no one tells you...



- “Thank you for _____.”
- “It was great working with you on _____.”
- “I appreciate _____.”
- “I will always remember _____.”
- “I am grateful for _____.”

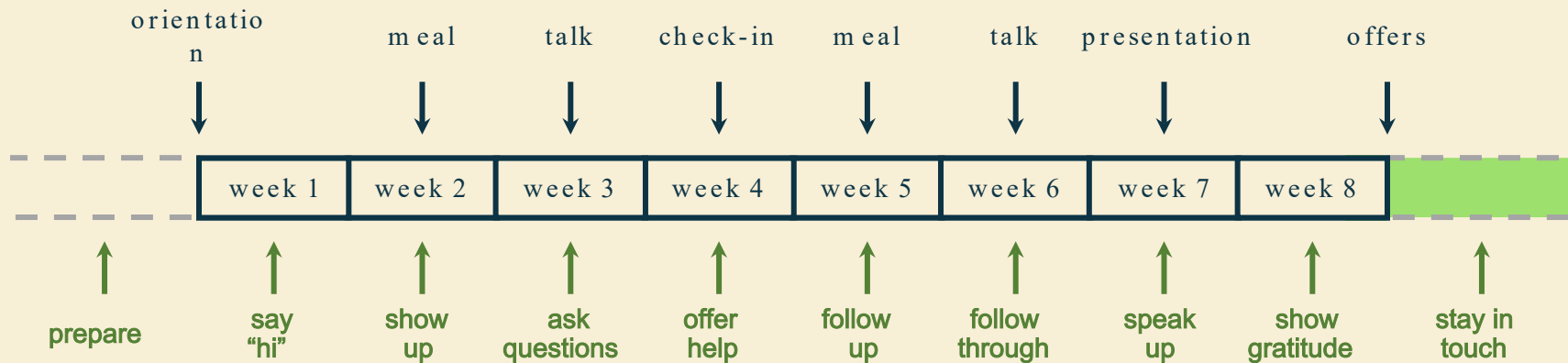
the anatomy of an internship ship

...what no one tells you...



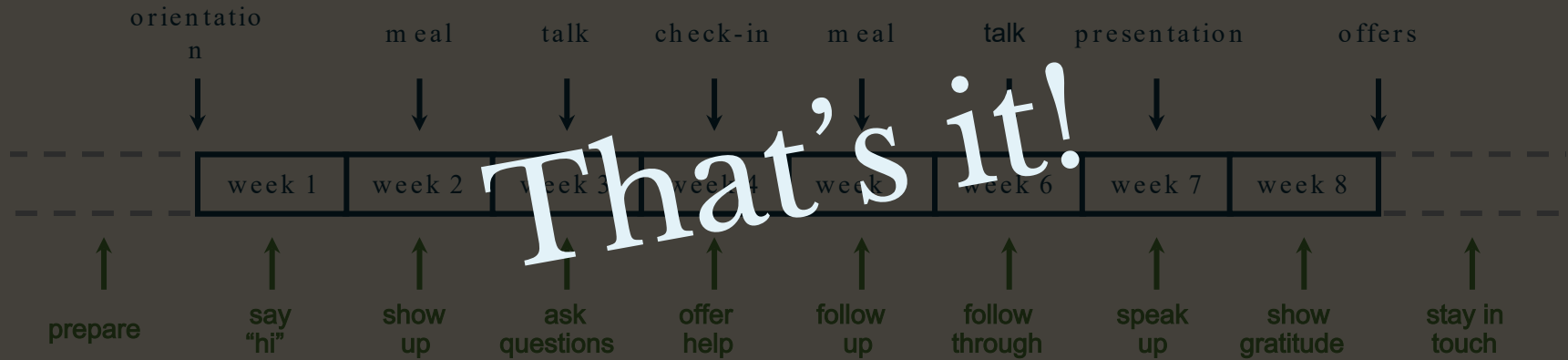
the anatomy of an internship ship

...what no one tells you...



the anatomy of an internship

...what no one tells you...



What is one thing you plan to do differently starting tomorrow?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



Not my quote,
but still my favorite quote... :)

“The best time to plant a tree
was 20 years ago.
The second best time is now.”

What seeds will you plant?

What's your immediate next step with the information we covered today?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.



Stay in touch with me!

0 surveys completed

0 surveys underway





What Ed Sheeran can teach us about joining forces with others...



What Barbie's director can teach us about finding (and becoming) a role model...



What Stephen King can teach us about having a cheerleader...



What the first woman to summit Mount Everest can teach us about being vulnerable...



What Chicken Soup for the Soul can teach us about finding conviction...



What Denzel Washington can teach us about changing your mind...



What Taylor Swift can teach us about making (literal!) career moves...



What Charles Darwin can teach us about taking a break...



What Maya Angelou can teach us about having a mentor...



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