

“If you want to make the most of your Better Futures internship, you need to be brave enough to speak up and share your ideas!”

Claudia Gwinnutt
CEO & Founder at [Circla](#)

In 2019, Claudia interviewed for an intern to join her start-up sustainable beauty company, Circla. With the company in its infancy, Claudia wanted to find a candidate who could help do vital research that would lay the foundations for Circla going forward. In intern Charlie, she found a high-quality candidate who was determined to impress. Here she shares their story and advice for young people wanting to join the Better Futures Internship Programme.

Hi Claudia, what made you decide to take part in the Better Futures Internship Programme?

For me, there were two main reasons. Firstly, I was a solo founder and to go out to hire somebody at that stage of the journey was too big of a commitment. With an internship, it's a fixed period, and you can dip your toe in and see if you do need to hire somebody in a non-committal way. Secondly, the great thing about this programme is the high quality of candidates. You feel as though they've been pre-screened before you interview them.

You eventually hired Charlie to join you, what was it about her that stood out to you?

Charlie had reached out to me independently of the internship programme to express an interest in working for Circla. Once I met her in the interview, I could very clearly and quickly see her energy and passion, plus she had the right skills that I was looking for. It was important that her values aligned with the brand because it meant it would be a better experience. I didn't need to hire an eco-warrior, necessarily, but an interest in sustainability was important. This is a mission-led business, so it makes sense to hire someone who is interested in that mission.

Can you tell us more about the work you do at Circla?

We reduce single-use packaging waste from people's daily beauty routines by making the responsible choice the convenient choice. On the site, customers can shop from a curated selection of fantastic beauty products and then when they finish them, we come and replenish their supply with a refill. They just leave the empty bottles out for us, and we collect them and deliver the refills.

Did you have a clear idea of what Charlie would be doing at Circla?

I asked her to begin with a particular project which was to do with environmental analysis. She'd studied that at Imperial, so she'd done a lot of the theoretical work before and could apply it to Circla. With interns, these are people who probably haven't got a great deal of experience in the world of work and could be a little nervous. So, to start them out with a particular project is a good idea, and then, like Charlie, hopefully, they'll quickly move on to doing all sorts of things.

How did the placement develop after that first project?

Charlie delivered that first project to a very high standard, and the trust grew between us. From there, she'd be seeing some of the work I was doing, and we'd talk, and she would offer to help with different tasks. In the end, we got to the point where she was making recommendations as to what we could do, which is very impressive. Charlie created a piece of work to help us assess the brands we partner with, and we've tweaked it a bit, but the foundations were solid. It still runs in our business now, over a year later, so it was very meaningful work.

Do you think the Better Futures Internship Programme gives candidates opportunities to do the kind of meaningful work they might not do elsewhere?

100%. I did internships when I was younger, and the biggest difference I see between then and now is that young people are looking for roles in small companies where they can get stuck in. If you are working for a company like that, you are closer to where the decisions are being made, and you can be present and have an influence on those decisions. For interns, I think they can get pushed in the deep end and then get to see the output of what they're doing in a company like Circla. That's not often the case if you intern at a big company.

What advice do you have for future candidates?

The job market is tough, so you need to accept the environment you are in and understand that you might not get your first choice of placement. Be kind to yourself and be open-minded about opportunities. Secondly, if you see a company you really want to work for, you need to show that enthusiasm in your application. It's not enough to throw your CV out there, it won't stand out. I've just gone through a recruitment process, and the successful candidate made a holding page website as her application for a marketing job, and it caught my attention and showed off her skills. Think about how you can show yourself most effectively.

How about when they begin the internship? What advice do you have for making the most of it?

Be really open-minded and be ready to learn as much as possible. You need to show initiative, energy and passion. Bring your full self to the role and throw yourself in. Don't be afraid to ask questions, but also try to find solutions yourself first. There's a balance there because you should give it your best shot before asking for help, but also don't suffer too much. It's the attitude and approach, more than your skills, that makes an impression.

Are you excited about the young people joining the sustainability revolution through programmes like the Better Futures internship?

Yes, there's a real buzz around sustainability and some cool opportunities. There is a massive drive in the younger generations towards clean-tech and the businesses providing

jobs for the future. They are so much more aware and want to see change happen. I think young people should go out there and try as much as possible to figure out what interests them and then find a role in that industry. If it's something you really believe in, go for it!