



Internships: How to Make the Most of the Experience

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When I took my first management job in the events industry, I asked the general manager of the company why we didn't have any interns. He thought that they were too much work to manage and that they didn't really help much. I knew I disagreed and I told him I'd like to hire an intern and manage them; and since then I've had at least two a year.

Internships can be a rewarding experience both for the intern and the person managing them. The key to a win/win experience is following some important steps.

The Perfect Fit

Internships are often thought of as a summer job, but many colleges require students to take internships during the year. Check out local colleges and place job descriptions with the career development office.

Review resumes carefully just as you would for any other employee. Wait for the cover letter that knocks your socks off!

Interview them carefully. Ask good questions. Ask them to write something for you on the spot. It can be anything from sign copy, a fake sample menu to a press release. This can help you to gauge their ability to work quickly under pressure. Also, have them make a phone call. It's great to see how they are on the phone before you get them in the office. Have them check the status of a shipment; have them order an office supply. It will tell you how timid they are and if they can jump to the task at hand.

Found One!

After you have found the right candidate, make their first day special. It will set the tone for the rest of the experience. Write a nice note to them. Take them to breakfast or lunch and talk about goals.

Put the goals in writing. Have them write their goals and you can write some as well and then get together to compare and make a final plan. This will help guide you and them while they are working for your company.

Most importantly, discuss your expectations. What should they wear, what time should they be to the office and what time do they leave, when is lunch, how would you like them to interact at internal meetings—all of these items and more should be discussed on their first day.

On the Job

If your intern is good, allow them to take on as much as they can handle. Don't just have them make coffee runs and answer phones. Learn to trust them just as any other employee. Bring them to some client meetings. Explain to your client in advance and ask them if they mind. Before you go to the meeting, set your expectations. Do you want them to interact or just listen?

On their last day, plan something special. Have a surprise lunch in the office with the staff or give them a gift card.

Following these steps will lead you on your way to lots of help in the office!

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