Are You Ready for an Intern? 5 Things You Need to Consider Before You Hire One



It’s that time of year when businesses start thinking about summer help. Could you use an intern this summer? Here are several things you need to consider before bringing on your first intern.

## 5 Things You Need to Know About Hiring an Intern for Your Business

1. **Times have changed.** If you were an intern before 2000, you may remember interning as something akin to being a pledge in a fraternity. You did the grunt work for little recognition and no pay. Times have changed. Interns want valuable experience these days, not a summer of making copies. They also expect to be paid, and maybe not even minimum wage. Check with the employment laws in your state or ask anyone from [Conde Nast what they learned](https://www.businessinsider.com/conde-nast-settles-unpaid-intern-lawsuit-2014-11) about unpaid interns.
2. **Interns bring things other employees don’t.** Interns can be amazing company cheerleaders, have a vast following on social media, and bring a new perspective. This last consideration can be incredibly valuable if you are courting their demographic.
3. **Interns come with a cost.** In addition to paying them, you are expected to train them or at least communicate your needs on the projects you’re assigning them to. That means someone in your business will lose productivity time while they train the intern(s)…at least initially. Your intern may also not have the long-term success of the company in mind, especially if they’re “only” summer help. That’s why it’s important to make them feel part of the bigger picture and outcome to get their best work.
4. **Intern programs should have a goal.** If you’re going to hire an intern, don’t do so simply because you need an extra set of hands to cover summer vacations. Have a direct goal in mind for them. Do you have a special project or research? Can they run point on something you don’t have the bandwidth to do? Know what it is you want and how you will measure success.
5. **You need a plan**. In addition to a goal, you’ll want a plan. Determine the following:
   * How long will the internship be?
   * How many interns do you need?
   * How much will you pay them, and will you work with their college or high school to provide credit or hours toward a desired program?
   * How will you recruit?
   * Will the program be for internal candidates only (like children and friends or family of employees) or open to the public?
   * What requirements are important in the role and what tasks will they be responsible for?
   * Does your state have a program that matches interns in a specified field with qualified companies? If so, some of the planning may already be completed for you.
   * Who is your ideal candidate? What skills should they have? How will you evaluate them during the program?
   * What’s the screening process? Who will review the applications and who will notify the applicants?
   * Is there the possibility for the summer internship to become something more?
   * Who will oversee the training and evaluation once the intern is in place? You’ll want to provide consistent, effective feedback so interns will gain valuable work experience. You may also need to provide constructive criticism and chart a path for growth when they do not meet your expectations.
   * Have you reviewed the labor laws of your state regarding interns?
   * How will you address professional development? Remember interns are with you to learn. If you can help them grow into a valuable employee, you are contributing to the future workforce even if they don’t become a star for you. Your guidance could shape them through their future career.

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