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# INTERNS:

## An Asset to Every Business

With guest panel Autumn Outlaw, Greater Waco Chamber • Kacey Darnell, TSTC Career Services • Evan Hebert, CampusTown Waco

## The 10–Step Program

For a smooth and successful process, companies should plan the entire internship before it starts—job description, team and supervisor assignments, hours, compensation, projects and tasks and evaluation. The Talent Development Network can help you throughout the process, and we even have sample job descriptions for internships.

### STEP 1: Identify Internship Coordinator

At each organization, one person should coordinate all internships. This could be a human resources representative, an office manager or project or team leader. Whoever it is, he/she should have the capacity to implement the following steps.

### STEP 2: Assess Needs

The internship coordinator may work with various departments to determine the company's needs. Answer questions like, "Do I experience a 'busy time' when I could use support?" "Are there any upcoming projects that will require extra staff time?" "Is there a project that I've wanted to do, but I just haven't had the time to begin?"

### STEP 3: Assign Mentor, Supervisor & Project Team

A **mentor** acts as the "intern buddy." He/She will be the student's go-to source for questions. The mentor can be the supervisor, fellow team member or simply a longtime employee. The **supervisor** is the student's boss, assigning work and monitoring progress. Regular feedback and structured evaluations can help the intern understand his/her strengths and the areas that need improvement, promoting growth during the internship. The **project team** is comprised of the people with whom the student will work most. The best interns are those who are fully integrated into a team.

### STEP 4: Write Internship Description & Solidify Pay & Hours

Internship descriptions should clearly state the company background, goals of the position, hours and necessary skills, plus required coursework or majors. The internship coordinator and the supervisor should determine pay (if any) and how many hours they expect the intern to work.

### STEP 5: Post Internship Opening

Publicize your open position. Encourage referrals from your internal team, share it with career office representatives at nearby colleges and share it across any marketing platforms (i.e. emails or professional social media pages, including Facebook, LinkedIn and/or Twitter).

### STEP 6: Evaluate & Interview Candidates

Because students have less experience than other candidates you may have interviewed, you should prepare appropriate questions beforehand, like "Why did you choose your major?" or "What extracurricular activities are you involved in?" or "What coursework have you completed that will help you succeed in this position?"

### STEP 7: Complete Day-Before Prep

Be sure that your intern has everything he/she needs to start off right. Set up time for the intern to meet his/her mentor, supervisor, team and other staff members; designate the intern's workspace, along with computer and office supplies; alert the appropriate person that the intern will need a phone number and email address; and set time for an office orientation.

### STEP 8: Provide an Orientation

This may be the student's first office experience. On your intern's first day, ensure that he/she gets to know the office – people, layout, equipment, policies, procedures and etiquette.

### STEP 9: Get to Work!

Your intern's work will boost your bottom line in a few different ways: His/Her work contributes to the company's total output, and other employees may enjoy extra time to start new projects or further invest in current ones. You'll notice that in time and with your support, the intern will become a valuable member of the team, contributing work, sharing ideas and bringing enthusiasm to the office every day.

### STEP 10: Evaluate the Intern & Internship Program

You may find it useful to set up an employee review halfway through the internship to discuss successes and areas for improvement. At the end of the internship period, you should reiterate the student's accomplishments and give advice for the future. You may want to offer to be a reference for them as they seek new internship positions or full-time jobs. (Or, hire them!) In addition to evaluating the student, the internal team should evaluate the internship program: Did the hours work? Did the project or company benefit from the student's work? What could have improved the experience? Would other departments benefit from an intern?

# ? FAQs

## ▶ How do I know if I need an intern?

Many different types of organizations – large, small, non-profit, for-profit, technical, non-technical – benefit from internship programs. Talk to managers in your company to assess your needs. Could you use help with a specific project, task or research? Would a new, fresh perspective boost an area of your organization? Do you have a technical need, such as updating your website? Would any employees be more productive if they had some assistance?

## ▶ My organization can't afford to pay for an intern. Are there alternatives?

Sure! Not all interns are paid an hourly wage. As you're determining the resources needed for your internship program, be sure to explore all options. For example, some employers are surprised to find that they actually *can* afford to pay their part-time interns. Others choose to offer a stipend.

## ▶ Do I have to provide healthcare for interns?

No, most students are covered by their parents' or guardians' health care plans, or they obtain it through their schools.

## ▶ I've heard about changes in non-paid employee rules – could I get in trouble for having unpaid interns?

Because of the increasing need for students to gain real-world experience to graduate and land a job and the pressure on employers to produce more with less in the current economy, non-paid internships have been on the rise and have gained the attention of some watchdog groups. The simple answer: Unpaid internships must meet stringent regulations. Discuss the issue with your human resources representative and/or lawyer.

## ▶ Interns are young, inexperienced and don't have real company ties. Are they more trouble than they're worth?

On the contrary - most interns prove to be enthusiastic employees who bring new life to projects or procedures. After all, when they aren't working at their internship, they're learning the most up-to-date information about their chosen field of study.

## ▶ How long should internships last?

Typically, internships last 10 to 12 weeks and run on the same timeline as semesters: fall (August through December), spring (January through May) and summer (May through August). However, your internship program can be customized to fit your needs. For example, if you have a two-month project that calls for additional help, search for students who want to work in that timeline.

## ▶ Can I hire an intern as a full-time employee at the end of their internship?

That's one of the great advantages of an internship program. It gives employers the opportunity to find talented young professionals before they graduate. Once they get their diploma, feel free to offer them a permanent full-time position at your organization.

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## \$ Paid vs. Unpaid

### ▶ Levels of Compensation

Typically, internship wages for non-technical majors range from \$8-12 per hour, while students studying technical majors may pull in \$15-20.

### ▶ Alternatives

Many companies that cannot pay interns an hourly wage choose to compensate them in other ways—a monthly, semester or project-based stipend.

### ▶ Making the Decision

Discuss internally what your organization can afford to offer an intern. Ask other companies in your field about their policies, and inquire with college career offices. If you cannot afford "the norm," consider adjusting the hours of the internship. Most importantly, be sure that your internship would be perceived as a value to the student through experience.

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## Questions? Contact us!

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