

Dear HR Knowledge, My company wants to create an internship program; what should we consider?

Summer brings college students home and, in most organizations, that means bringing interns into the office.

Internship programs can have many benefits, from creating a pipeline of potential hires, to injecting fresh ideas and energy into your organization, and, of course, providing a lower-cost temporary workforce. However, creating a *successful* internship program takes some thought and effort. What should you consider before beginning a program?

- ✓ **Know the [legal requirements](#).** [Unpaid internships](#) are less and less common, thanks to more regulation; paying at least minimum wage is the safest route for most employers. There are also other ways to compensate interns, such as college credits, but we recommend you keep the program simple to manage.
- ✓ **Have clear goals.** When defining the goals, think about which departments you want interns to work in and why; what types of projects would be suitable and who would direct them; and are you looking to find candidates for eventual regular employment? The intern may also have goals or academic requirements to be considered and incorporated, which should be reviewed in the interview process.
- ✓ **Make it beneficial for the intern.** If you are looking to hire someone to stand at a copier for three months making copies, filing, and scanning, you would be better served hiring a temp. Most interns are looking for work experience in their field and want to gain an understanding of your organization; if you plan to hire these folks after the summer, you want to make the internship fulfilling.
- ✓ **Hire and onboard interns similarly to regular employees.** Especially if you are hiring interns with an eye to future employment, it makes sense to seek the best candidates with a thorough search process and to make a great first impression with a professional onboarding experience.
- ✓ **Have these forms ready to fill out on Day 1:**
 - Form I-9
 - Federal Form W-4
 - State Form W-4
 - Direct Deposit Authorization Form, *if authorized by the employee*
 - An Employee Information Form, which should include emergency contact information
- ✓ **Establish a check-in schedule.** Arrange to check in with the intern and his or her manager, to ensure everyone is benefiting from the internship and sticking with the established goals.



- ✓ **Have your managers be mentors.** Consider offering guidelines or training to help managers work most effectively with interns when establishing a new internship program.

At HR Knowledge, we have employed interns over the years and have found that applying a few basic principles helps make the most of the experience for both the intern and for us. Many of our interns are now employees, and some have moved into team leadership roles as they have grown with our company. The above list of guiding principles can help you turn internships into a pipeline of talent for your company.

About HR Knowledge

Founded in 2001, HR Knowledge, Inc. provides integrated outsourced HR services tailored to our clients' needs. Our full array of offerings includes managed payroll, employee benefits administration, and HR consulting and support services, such as training, compliance, and Hiring Process Management™, our comprehensive recruitment service that takes you from finding to onboarding new talent. Our major markets are fast-growing small- and medium-sized businesses, many of which are venture-capital-backed; foreign companies expanding into the states; and charter schools. Partner with us to reduce your administrative costs, minimize your legal risk, find and develop talent, and alleviate the HR burden so you can focus on your core business.

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