

**We are interested in increasing our sales staff and wondering if bringing in interns, may be one way of doing this. i.e: We would hire on, full time, any interns who worked out. But...We have never utilized internships before, so we know little about them, and are wondering if this is a good option or not. Does anyone have any experience with this? Does it work? What are the pros and cons? etc. etc...**

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We've only brought in an intern for administrative positions & it worked very well. Never thought of it for sales staff.

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We have no experience with hiring interns for the sales department.

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We have had great luck with college interns.

They are smart, appreciate the business experience, tech savvy, willing to work for less money (typically \$10/hour). And very creative and productive.

While I have not had one switch to full time yet (they are still in school, I hope to hire when they graduate).

I typically have 2 working on odds times/days at 20 hours per week each over the summer months.

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We do not have an internship program. However, we have three local employment agencies and we have utilized them to find us qualified applicants to assist our customer service department.

We have hired two full-time CSRs through the agencies. They are responsible for finding the best suited applicant based on the job description we supply. We have done this on two occasions and were fortunate enough to hire both of the individuals they sent to us.

We utilize the same agencies to find part-time help for our bindery department, unfortunately the success rate is not as good in that area. For each successful candidate we find, we probably go through 8-10 candidates. The good news is, we're not spending time interviewing and hiring individuals only to find out they are not capable of making it to work on-time for 5 consecutive days.

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I have hired interns for other areas, but never Sales. I am always nervous about letting people have customer contact who are not yet proven employees and my intern experiences in other areas has ranged from Very Good to marginal.

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We participate in internships with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Milwaukee School of Engineering but these are for writing editing and proofing students. We have successfully engaged them and hired 50% as long term employees. As to sales, we are trying an entry level program for cold calling to screen and set up appointments, leading to sales calls with the team and learning the business.

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We have never brought on interns.

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We recruit interns at college fairs with the same intention you are speaking of. The nice thing about working with an intern is that you get to observe work ethic, abilities...etc before hiring them. There is some risk that you will invest in time and resources into them only to find out that they take another job at graduation.

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Printing is intricate and can be complicated. I find it hard to envision a buyer - buying from an intern. Recommend that you bring them in as sales assistants and let them learn the business (specifications, scheduling, production and communication) and then provide them with sales training, focus and direction.

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I have been involved in several different hiring protocols. My inclination is that young people, interns, succeed when the goal is short term. They cannot stay motivated if it is a long sales cycle or a long term, stacked, pay off schedule. It takes seasoning to succeed in that environment. With a reasonable salary and shorter sales cycle they can be effective. Young people are more technologically advanced and typically, if inclined to sales, more aggressive in the short term.

Best of luck.

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We have used students who are studying in a Graphics Arts program either at a High School or Technical School. Some of them have worked out so well that we have offered them a full time position. You are going to have to train them on the job and accept that they may not be very productive at the start.

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We have had great success using interns in all areas of our operation. The big advantage to an intern program is you get to see what type of work ethic the person has before you make a long term commitment. The down side is that you have to have someone that will mentor the person and follow up on all of their training to make sure they are being taught the things you are expecting them to learn. The mentor will make or break this program.

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Yes, we have experience with interns.

A large part of our employee population came through local school apprenticeship programs. Unfortunately, these programs are drying up and are leading people into graphic design which has a very limited market. But this is not an “internship” as proposed but is a model to use for a true internship. We have used sales interns from both University of Wisconsin-Stout as well as Waukesha County Technical College who have been led to believe that experiential knowledge is inferior to learned knowledge. Many are unwilling to go through a two to three year practical experience being mentored through a planned progressive personal development program.

However, we do have a very long history of the development of turning sales interns into Sales Account Executives. We have always been better served by developing a Sales Account Executive rather than hiring externally as they know our systems, our players, and our workers so they can better serve their future clients. The alternative is to re-train an experienced sales professional in our systems, players, and workers – how does that work?

What it requires from the intern is a strong work ethic, the ability to take constructive criticism and direction, to pick the brain of their mentor and production team members, to retain the knowledge they acquire, and to be patient as their knowledge base grows. What it takes for the mentor and company is to be patient throughout their training, to allot training time for Mentors to prepare the intern, and to constructively redirect or support the intern’s development.

The negatives are –

1. Interns have a tendency to think they “know it all” while the reality is that the one thing we can guaranty is that no two clients are the same AND no two projects are the same. My father used to say that “when you stop learning, you are dead” is certainly true in the sale of print.
2. Interns, Mentors, Managers, are equally impatient expecting interns to hit home runs on the first day. Experienced managers/mentors sometimes forget that at one point they knew less than the intern does now. It is not easy to remain patient throughout the training.
3. Use of an intern, to some extent, adds overhead to operations and the possibility that interns are dumped on is a real possibility. This requires constant vigilance on part of the Mentor to keep the intern focused on the prize of being a skilled Sales Account Executive and the intern’s willingness to forego the inherent financial risk of skilled Sales Account Executives.
4. Placing an inexperienced Sales Account Executive in front of a skilled buyer before they are truly prepared is effectively suicide.

The positives are –

1. A fully trained Sales Account Executive is able to get work out more efficiently because he knows the process, players, and co-workers who have participated in his training. He has “paid his dues.”
2. The intern recognizes that the company has invested countless hours of training in his development. His loyalty cannot be discounted.
3. His mentors and Co-Workers share in his success.
4. Newer graduates are more efficient in the use of technology as buying groups diminish the need for “face to face” time of traditional print buyers. This cannot be underestimated!

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We tried getting interns from the local university. We were required to pay them and give a grade. It was not a fruitful investment for us. The interns were just there to get an easy "A" credit and had no intention of trying to get a job with us when they graduated. I think interns are becoming a thing of the past...

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YES<I have used interns many times, Summer months : college students who were marketing majors helped us to put together a multi-hit awareness program. Then one of them would ask to be an outside sales person. With some basic training a few became top sales people.

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I have used interns in the past and found out the safest way to use interns is to pay them for the time they are with you as interns.

If you plan to see if they have a capacity to effectively work for you, they would no longer would be simply training and they must be paid. So unless they are coming to your Company just to learn and "not" performing any productive work that would benefit you, then and only then you would not need to pay them.

This is the single biggest mistake that employers make.

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We do utilize interns/co-ops. We recruit for our customer service dept. at a local college and technical school with a print/graphics program. We typically like people close to graduation (w/in 1 year) and use them during our busy season from June through December and then we contact them if we have a full-time opening before we look elsewhere outside the company. We have had good response with doing college job fairs to recruit the interns.

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We used to have a "Management Trainee Program" that would route a new grad through all areas of the company, learning the operation as they go. It was an entry-level paid role. As the program rotation continued we would get a feel for the direction they might like to head: Sales, Production and the like. Of course candidates were initially selected based on their interest in the industry as well as their studies and potential fit for our environment. This program was in place at a time a few years back when we had regular additions to staff in our Sales and Sales support areas and could easily absorb into our production roles as well. We've backed off of the program as we are more stable right now, without a lot of ongoing openings.

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We have been very successful at hiring interns for the past 3 years.

We post jobs at the local colleges (most have a free posting site for employers) and complete an interview process. During the summer we hire full-time positions and during the school year, we hire part-time positions flexible to the student class schedule. We have had a student come back the following summer. And we had one student continue with us after graduation, until an out-of-state move.

The experience is great for both the students and our company. We plan to continue the program.

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