

What Jobs Should You Never Have Interns Do?

By Young Entrepreneur Council

Managing Employees

Q: What is one job that you should never have one of your interns do for the company?

The following answers are provided by the Young Entrepreneur Council. Founded by Scott Gerber, the YEC is an invite-only nonprofit organization comprised of the country's most promising young entrepreneurs. The YEC promotes entrepreneurship as a solution to youth unemployment and underemployment and provides its members with access to tools, mentorship, and resources that support each stage of a business's development and growth.

A: Only Use Interns for Project-Based Work

Interns are temporary by definition, but many companies make interns integral to their business's processes then are left in a lurch when they leave. Know that interns are temporary and only give them stand-alone projects with clear ending dates. Don't give interns ongoing work, give them a project that they can start and finish.

Laura Roeder (<http://www.twitter.com/lkr>), LKR (<http://www.LauraRoeder.com>)

A: Financial Reporting and Bookkeeping

Not only is it not smart to grant a temporary employee access to important financial documents, but these reports also need to be flawless. Unless you have an amazing finance intern that you know you will hire on full-time after his stint, leave the heavy numbers out of his sight.

Logan Lenz (<http://www.twitter.com/loganlenz>), Endagon (<http://endagon.com/>)

A: Social Media and Interns Don't Mix

A lot of companies have brought in interns with the hope of getting free labor for all the many aspects of creating a social media campaign. But an intern is the wrong person for a variety of reasons: he likely doesn't have the experience to make good judgment calls, he doesn't know your company well enough to be an effective representative and may not be around long enough for a real campaign.

A: Don't Give Interns Busywork

Interns are best utilized by explicitly challenging these ambitious and pursuit-oriented students to excel in independent research projects with a definitive, report-based outcome. Set clear expectations. Assign a project due date. Help them. And, for not making them sort useless contact info or stack books, you'll win hearts who will rave about your organization.

Dave Ursillo (<http://twitter.com/daveursillo>), Lead Without Followers Ltd. (<http://www.daveursillo.com/>)

A: Customer Service

If there's a fire burning, a member of the management team should be putting it out, not an intern. Avoid using interns as the face of the company; besides being temporary, they're rarely able to appreciate the company's vision the way a key team member does.

Lisa Nicole Bell (<http://www.twitter.com/LisaNicoleBell>), Inspired Life Media Group (<http://www.lisanicolebell.com>)

A: Interns Shouldn't Set Up Strategic Alliances

When it comes to formalizing or setting up new business partnerships or alliances, it's best to leave interns out of it. Such decisions usually have important brand and financial implications and you want to make sure you're allying with the right people for the right reasons.

Charlie Gilkey (<http://twitter.com/#!/CharlieGilkey>), Productive Flourishing (<http://www.productiveflourishing.com/>)

A: Don't Delegate Sales

It may be tempting to use any new additions to your team for revenue-generation, especially if you're a smaller firm or a startup. However, it's not advisable to put interns in customer-facing sales roles as these jobs require cultivating relationships and fine-tuning negotiation styles over time. If you need sales support, consider using interns for sales qualification or lead generation instead.

Doreen Bloch (<http://www.Twitter.com/DoreenBloch>), Poshly Inc. (<http://poshly.com/>)

A: Talk to Your Clients

Interns should almost never interface with your clients/customers directly. Clients should be building relationships with you, not building relationships with your temporary staff. Rather than give interns too much autonomy, have interns draft content and communication and send it to you for review first. Once you confirm the quality of the work, you can send it to clients.

Lucas Sommer (<http://www.twitter.com/audimated>), Audimated (<http://www.audimated.com/>)

A: Clean the Bathrooms

Your interns are there to learn while providing value for the company. They are not your slaves, personal assistants or janitors. Give your interns interesting tasks that will help them grow, while helping the company. The quickest way to lose quality interns or ruin your reputation for future interns is to take advantage of them.

Nathan Lustig (<http://www.twitter.com/nathanlustig>), Entrustet (<http://www.nathanlustig.com>)

A: Pitch New Clients

It doesn't matter how competent it seems like they are, you should be the one that talks with potential clients and seals the deal. Later on you can introduce the intern to the team, or even have a highly regarded intern at key meetings or on key calls, but make it very clear that this is your territory and don't try and hand that off.