

10 Rules for Hiring Unpaid Interns

There are government rules that need to be followed. Here are some tips for both sides.

By **Bridget Mintz Testa**

Unpaid summer internships can benefit businesses and students, but only if all parties follow the rules.

Jay Zweig, partner and chairman of the employment group in the Phoenix office of global law firm Bryan Cave, is an expert on the Department of Labor's rules governing unpaid internships.

Here are his tips on how businesses can avoid legal problems when engaging a student for such positions:

- Training received by the intern must be for his or her benefit.
- Training must be general, not for the immediate advantage of the business, and it may even slow normal operations.
- Interns can't be used to replace paid employees.
- Interns must be closely supervised or mentored.
- Interns can do real work as long as they are closely supervised, are learning and aren't necessarily creating a final product.
- Both the intern and the business must agree that the internship will be unpaid.
- Both parties must agree that no job is promised at the end of the internship.
- High schools, technical schools and colleges can partner with businesses to set up compliant unpaid internships in which the student receives course credit. This lends credibility to the internship's benefit for the student.
- Decide beforehand if the business has the time and personnel to closely supervise and mentor an unpaid intern.
- When in doubt, businesses can avoid legal problems by paying interns at least minimum wage.

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