



Business Orientation for Cushing Intern Program

ORIENTATION - INTRODUCTION

An internship program can be a valuable resource for your company or organization. Structured properly, internship programs can increase your company's access to a competitive workforce, be a pipeline to keep skilled individuals here in Cushing and may enhance the work of your current employee base.

Developing and maintaining a qualified workforce for Cushing is a key factor in ensuring economic stability and viability for the future. Through this Intern Program, the Cushing Chamber of Commerce and Cushing Public Schools assist local businesses with an internship program for their company, as well as helping locate potential interns and helping train them.

This Guide will provide you step-by-step suggestions and guidance on how to effectively establish a new internship program, and how to ensure any current internship programs you have are reaching full potential for your company, the interns, and Cushing.

The Cushing Chamber of Commerce has partnered with Cushing Public Schools to be a liaison to our local businesses in order for this program to happen. The participating interns are also Junior Chamber Members, so in addition to this internship, the Chamber provides monthly lunch and learns, volunteer opportunities and professional development opportunities to the students. These sessions offer "soft skills" training to your interns equipping them with knowledge on customer service, professional dress, social media etiquette in the workplace, how to communicate effectively, and other topics.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS

A. The first step to deciding whether an intern is right for your business, and whether or not you need an intern working with you, is to assess the internal needs of your company or organization.

1. Do you have difficulty finding new employees who have the qualifications or skill sets you need?
2. Does your organization or company require skills or talents that are typically not learned in the classroom?
3. Do you provide goods or services that set your business apart from the competition?
4. Could your employees use interns to help with research or special projects?

Interns can be utilized in various capacities that will help fulfill the needs of your company, as well as give them vital work experience and training. Their fresh perspective may provide new ideas and strategies for your business as they also develop into potential, valuable employees for you.

B. After you have identified that an intern will help meet the needs of your business, make sure your business can meet the needs of an intern.

1. Will your existing resources, equipment, and accommodations be sufficient for the intern; or will there be additional expenditures, workspace expansion, and other accommodations that need to be made?

Having proper workspace and tools is essential for success. Don't put your intern in a broom closet with no access to resources and expect them to produce positive, productive results for your company.

2. Do you have adequate and appropriate personnel to oversee or manage an intern?

The employee who will be supervising the intern should be trained and engaged in the process. Make sure you give thought to who is the best person to supervise the intern. The supervisor should be knowledgeable about your company and the purpose for the intern, have leadership skills that can be utilized to help the intern learn and grow, and who can/will dedicate the time to provide proper supervision and assistance.

If you will have more than one intern, consider appointing an intern coordinator or manager of your intern program. This person does not have to be the intern's supervisor but rather the representative that manages the details and ensures the company's and the intern's needs are met.

3. Should an intern for your organization / company be part-time or full-time?

Lucky for you this decision has already been made because these students will be interning during their school day. Be sure you have an appropriate amount of qualified work for the intern to do before hiring them and preparing a job description. The amount of time that an intern will spend with your organization / company will likely be determined by things such as the intern's school requirements, the intern's current school or work schedule, and minimum requirements of other certifying entities.

4. Is the work you do, or the structure of your company, best suited for an intern during a specific time of year or a specific time-period?

Many interns, especially students, will need internships during a specific time-period (semester or summer) in order to fulfill a requirement to receive school or certification credit. Keep this in mind when you develop your internship program and job descriptions, as well as when choosing an intern to hire. Make sure the company's needs and timeframes are flexible enough to adapt to the intern's needs. If not, you may want to look for an intern without those time constraints.

C. Human Resource Issues & Compensation

In the process of implementing an internship program, your company should evaluate whether or not an employment relationship will be created between your company / organization and the intern. Because these students will be receiving school credit for their internship hours, compensation from the employer is not accepted.

The Department of Labor uses six criteria to determine if a position is a legal, unpaid internship.

- 1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment.*
- 2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern.*
- 3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff.*
- 4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded.*
- 5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship.*
- 6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.*

E. Intellectual Property & Confidentiality

In some cases, interns may work on projects where intellectual property rights are a concern for the company/organization. Typically, if new employees would be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement, a confidentiality agreement, or are subject to such policies, an intern may be asked to sign those documents and be subject to those policies as well.

F. Dismissal of an Intern

In many cases, because the period of an internship is brief, dismissal is unnecessary. However, it is best to be prepared and to take steps that are consistent with your company / organization's employment policies. This also includes having direct communication with the student intern and Cushing High School.

Dismissal of interns should only occur in cases of major misconduct or instances of significant willful violation of organization/company policy. Interns, for the most part, are young people who may not have the same level of maturity and judgement as those in your regular workforce. Accordingly, there should be a high level of patience for their adjustment to the workplace during the internship.

If an internship period is brief (i.e., one semester or a summer internship) students should be given fair opportunity to become part of the organizational culture. The intern's supervisor has a responsibility to give clear, accurate direction and following up on corrective feedback if the work is unsatisfactory.

STEP 2: DEVELOP A JOB DESCRIPTION

Just like each of your employees, an intern should have a thorough job description to explain the position they are considering. A good job description will attract the best candidates for the position by establishing required qualifications and outlining responsibilities of both the employer and the intern.

Build an Intern Job Description

A. List the basic duties of the internship.

When listing duties consider the importance of interns understanding and participating in the day-to-day operation of the organization. They should be given tasks that teach them important processes and procedures and give them skills that are valuable to employers. The intern should have the opportunity to interact with other employees and departments of the organization / company. This will help give the intern a solid understanding of the organization's operations, as well as give them interaction with other employees. It will enhance the experience for both the intern and the employees.

B. Provide a special project or specific assignment.

If possible, create a special project that is relevant and can be accomplished during the time-frame of the internship. Seek projects such as research or in-depth analysis that use the talent, skills and enthusiasm of the intern, and that regular employees don't have time to tackle. On the job description, outline the specific project or assignment you will have the intern complete; or provide examples of a typical assignment an intern will be asked to work on.

C. Explain what skills and level of education are required for the internship.

As an employer, you will need to determine the importance of grades, course requirements, and classification in school in relation to your specific business. Some employers have specific requirements for grade point average and some require that the student have completed specific courses or levels of education. You may choose to accept only certain majors or grade classifications. This should all be clearly stated on the job description. D. Who will be the designated employee responsible for supervising the intern?

Designate an employee who can manage well, but also provide guidance and support to mentor the intern. Interns need regular, ongoing supervision so ensure it is someone who has the time and desire to put into the task. Also consider designating a mentor for the intern. A mentor should be someone other than their supervisor.

E. Clearly state that this internship is an unpaid position.

These students must participate in an unpaid internship to receive credit for school or training, or as a graduation requirement. This will be conveyed to them on our end but will also need to be stated from you as the employer.

F. Specifically outline how success and performance will be measured and evaluated.

A job description can be a good place to set goals and objectives the intern will need to achieve to meet your expectations. Whether it is on the job description or provided separately, this is a very important piece of a strong internship program. The Chamber will provide an evaluation sheet for your convenience.

