

## **The Mighty Intern**

By Catherine Lang-Cline

It starts with the need to have some paperwork filed. Then maybe you need to have a box of envelopes stuffed and sealed. Tasks like these often cause business owners to start to think about getting an intern.

At Portfolio Creative, we have used interns for years. We've found that interns are eager to gain experience in their field of interest and can also get some of the most mundane work done. As a business owner, my hourly rate is higher than the cost of an intern, but cost savings has not been the only advantage. We've discovered that interns have helped us identify staffing needs within our firm.

For example, as we adapted to using interns in our business, we decided to put a person in place with a specialty we needed. In our first year, we worked with an intern who was working on a degree in public relations. After the filing was done, she worked on PR for our company with our guidance, which was a win-win situation for all of us. After that intern had to move on, we realized we really liked having someone do that work. It led to our discovery that we needed someone in that role at least on a part-time basis. It was an easy decision to fill the role with an employee, something that might not have happened had we not had the internship first.

While we haven't replaced every intern with an employee, we've benefited from all our interns by being better able to see where our needs were. The process has also helped us write a job descriptions by starting with what the intern's responsibilities were and building on to them to create a true job description.

Bringing on interns can be a great tool for determining growth in your business without a lot of investment, and it helps a student gain real experience. You can find interns by contacting the school of your choice or by contacting a local Chamber of Commerce. In our town the Columbus Chamber has a fantastic internship program. You can tap into it at <http://www.columbus.org/about-columbus/find-an-internship.php>.

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