

Hiring an intern: 6 things to know before saying 'you're hired!'

[Psychology](#), [Motivation](#)



In life and in business, we're faced with tough situations where there is no clear-cut answer. A week into my first high school relationship, I learned that the woman I had begun to date had withheld that she would soon be moving away. Her father took a job out of town and was left with a tough decision: Do I end things now and miss out on two potentially good months of a relationship, or give it a shot?

As I learned through hiring my first intern this summer, internships are a lot like soon-to-end high school relationships: They can be rewarding, but also challenging, time consuming and a little awkward for both parties.

Because I'm a glutton for punishment and willing to make mistakes in order to learn from them, I jumped into an internship relationship before I was ready, just as I decided to date the woman who would soon move far away.

I've learned from both of these mistakes, and while I'd love to give you relationship advice, I'll stick to sharing lessons I learned first-hand and through peers and mentors on hiring an intern for your startup or small business.

Related:

Here are six things you should consider before saying "you're hired."

1. Define why you need an intern.

I knew I was too busy to handle all of my daily responsibilities when I started looking for an intern, but I didn't consider all of my options or question my assumption that an intern would be the best short-term solution. It may

seem obvious that you're seeking an intern to get help with your business, but what help are you looking for, why is an intern the best fit to provide this help and what type of intern will fill this role (paid, unpaid, for-credit, etc.)? "The same position with a different why could attract very different people with different career goals," says CEO Michael Somers.

2. Think about your primary motivation.

Understanding why you need an intern will help you detail the position and properly vet candidates based on what their motivation for applying is.

Knowing why a candidate wants to be a part of your team can be as important as their skillset and work ethic. Does he or she want to learn how to start their own business, learn more about your industry or just collect a paycheck? "Why are you interested in this internship?" should be your first or second question when interviewing an intern, but it's something I failed to ever ask. I focused on my needs with the business instead of digging into their reasoning as to why they wanted the internship.

3. Dig into their skillsets.

I took the optimistic views and passion for learning of my intern as a sign of a perfect fit. At the start of his internship I didn't realize how talented he was, but his skills were in different areas than what I was searching for. Internships are short in nature, and it's difficult for the intern to develop new skillsets to fill the needs of your company if they aren't already well-versed in what they will be working on during their internship. Hiring full-time employees is different, as you have time to develop their skillset and give a driven and eager to learn employee proper training.

Related:

4. Determine if there is the potential for a future relationship.

The future prospects of an alliance should be considered when entering into an agreement for a fixed period of time. Just as I should've considered my long-term potential with the high school girlfriend that was soon to move away, I should have better gauged the future want and my need to work with the intern before hiring him. It's perfectly okay to hire an intern for a short and specific period of time, but if the relationship is going to end permanently after a month or two, you're going to invest in them and structure the internship much differently than you would if there's the possibility of them transitioning into a full-time employee. Fortunately for me, I will need his help in the future and he's interested in providing this help, but it shouldn't have been left up to luck.

5. Assess how the person will fit with your team.

While my team consists of just a handful of contractors and clients, an intern has to fit the style and complement the skillset of the rest of the team. "Your team is everything in a startup, and a bad fit can be a big drain on your company. Be selective. It is better to have no fit than a bad fit," says Somers, and he's right. There's no reason to spend money, waste time, and risk your team's culture on an intern who you have yet to properly vet. Every hire, even an intern, will change the composition of your team.

Related:

<https://assignbuster.com/hiring-an-intern-6-things-to-know-before-saying-youre-hired/>

6. Measures and clearly define goals.

“ So how am I doing?” Hearing that question without a good answer doesn't leave you with a warm and fuzzy feeling. It leaves you with the stark realization that you haven't set goals and created ways to measure the work of your intern. It's not fair to your intern or your business. Use several reasonable goals as the basis for your internship, which will help them define their accomplishments on their resume, guide their work, and make sure you can tell them how they're doing.