

I Love Interns...and So Should You!

By Mindy Ferrentino Wolfle

I love interns. If you haven't engaged the services of an intern, you are missing out on one of life's "win-win" situations. Not only do students gain real-life, on-the-job experience, but you gain a certain intangible that can only be felt in a bright, young person's aura.

My experience with interns dates back about ten years. The father of a Long Islander entering her senior year at the University of Maryland worked with a colleague of mine, which brought about a summer internship with me. What a delight working with this dynamic, motivated and clever intern. She took on every job without complaint - stuffing envelopes, conducting research, helping to keep me organized - you name it. I satisfied my "mentoring spirit," and together, we got the job done.

Several interns have followed, all at the ready to learn and work. University at Albany graduate Lee Peretz, who earned the title "Intern for Life," is now the New York marketing manager at J.H. Cohn LLP, the venerable accounting and consulting firm. In 2007, Lee was honored by the Public Relations Professionals of Long Island (PRPLI) with its Rising Star Award. This was followed by Lee's receipt of the Association of Accounting Marketing's "Rookie of the Year" Award at the organization's 2007 Summit in Savannah, Georgia. Lee is now serving his second term as president of PRPLI. I'd like to think that Lee's experience as a law firm intern helped him to become the professional service marketer he is today - someone who exhibits exceptional talent and professionalism.



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Intern Jessie Osborne came through the volunteer services office at Family and Children's Association. Jessie sought to incorporate her charitable spirit with her career goals in the field of marketing, communications and public relations. This multi-talented Hofstra grad is now the public relations associate at the Alzheimer's Foundation of America in New York City. And how did this opportunity come about? Through Lee Peretz!

Most recently, I received an unsolicited email from another Hofstra grad, Michael Scro, who reached out to me after reading an article in Newsday. How smart of Michael to ask not for a job, but for advice on advancing his career goal in public relations. Michael and I have met several times; he's taken advantage of business seminars being offered through a program I am hosting; he's attended PRPLI meetings; and now, he is interning with me on a special public relations project for a not-for-profit client.

So, how do you secure an intern for your business?

- ◆ Contact any of Long Island's colleges or universities where internship programs are often incorporated into class work credits. These internships are at no cost to you, or for a small stipend. Many high schools offer internship programs, as well.
- ◆ Speak to colleagues with college-age children. Even an unpaid internship is a vast improvement on a student's resume than a paying job which leads to no tangible experience in the student's field of choice.
- ◆ Contact the Long Island Works Coalition (www.liworks.org), Long Island's first comprehensive effort to forge collaborative working relationships between employers and the educational community.

In the words of a student at Texas A&M University, "I doubt there is any other college experience that can prepare you for the work environment like a good internship. It is kind of like a test drive for your life's work."

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