

Creating and Profiting from Internships

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Let's define what is an internship? It is a period of apprenticeship where one person works for another with a goal of learning a trade.

Here's kind of an official definition: A learner of a craft, one who is bound by legal agreement to serve an employer in the exercise of some handy craft, art, trade or profession for a certain period of time with a view to learn its details and duties in which the employer or expert or teacher is reciprocally bound to instruct him. An internship is intended to be a win/win situation.

My dad was a brick mason and he actually started to learn his trade when he was just 13 years old. He went to work for a man who lived up the street who was an experienced brick mason. He started working in the summers and actually ended up never going back to school because he enjoyed the work and the man had plenty of work for him so he just dropped out and that was that. He worked his tail off day in and day out for small wages but he learned the skill of brick masonry.

Skilled trades like brick mason work, construction; they lend themselves really well to apprenticeships. You can't really go to college and learn how to be a brick mason. You could certainly go to college and learn engineering and construction to a certain extent but brick masonry is an art as much as it is a construction trait. During my fathers apprenticeship he learned the art of brick masonry. He could pick up a brick, heft it in his hand and pick up a big ole gangly trowel and smack that brick and it would break off right in exactly the spot he wanted it to. He could take that big ole trowel and tap it and tink it and shape the brick to exactly the curve or angle that he wanted from it.

A brick mason, a talented brick mason, has a little bit of sculpture in them and that's not something you just go to work one day and say oh I'm going to be a brick mason. Sure, you can lay some brick with a little bit of training but creating something beautiful takes years of experience and that's why an apprenticeship or internship is such a great way to learn.

There are a lot of internships and apprenticeships out there in the professional world. Doctors, lawyers, psychologists, veterinarians, accountants, they all do some form of apprenticeship or internship where they study under someone who is more experienced. Apprenticeships are really well suited for any kind of career where as a newcomer there are common mistakes and that can be said of a lot of things but when you are an intern working under an expert you have a far greater chance of learning quickly from your mistakes because the person you are learning from can catch what you are doing and explain and help you learn the lessons from your mistakes far quicker than if you were doing it on your own.

Now let's think about an internship from the perspective of internet marketing or your business. Most of you, if you have been doing business on the internet for very long realize that there has been quite a learning curve and some of you may be on the upward

side of the learning curve, you may be on the downward slide. You may have conquered it, you may feel like you know it all but in truth the web is always changing so much we never know it all, we are always learning a little something new. I feel like I'm always riding some kind of learning curve about something.

What if you had been able to apprentice with somebody else, what if you had been able to learn quickly the ropes of the business that you are doing today? What if an expert took you under their wing and taught you everything they knew and showed you the inner workings of their business, how they make decisions, how they attract clients, customers, JV partners, affiliates, etc? Or in my case what if I had been able to apprentice with someone who understood internet radio inside and out? Oh how I wish that had been available to me.

An internship is a wonderful way to learn by doing. Let's consider for your business, some reasons that you would want to create an internship but before we go there I've put a lot of thought into at what point is someone ready to take on an intern? So let's explore that.

I feel that you're probably ready to take on an intern when you have an excellent grasp of your trade, when you know your business inside and out, you know why you've been successful and you feel capable of teaching it to others. When you are ready to grow your business beyond what you personally have time for, when you are ready to add to your staff because many interns will be hoping that an internship will turn into a position. Or perhaps you just really ready to share your expertise with others even if you don't wish to grow your own team, you like that your business can prosper from teaching someone else and having them do work for you for a period of time for free.

Internships are really attractive but don't take on an intern before you are ready. If you still have big gaps in your knowledge, if you still feel like your business is struggling you have to really be honest with yourself and admit that you aren't ready to teach someone else. You could mentor someone up to the level where you are at but an internship is not just a mentoring relationship, they are there to learn your trade and to take someone on an intern when you don't have a full grasp yourself is probably pretty close to

misrepresenting. Really be honest and take a good look and to be truthful if you are going to attract an intern who is willing to work for you for free in exchange for growing in their own knowledge and experience you really need to have a perceived position as an expert in your field or you are probably just not even going to be able to attract someone to do that.

Let's take a look at some reasons to create an internship. Maybe you are, like I was, looking to add somebody to your team. An internship is a wonderful way to train a new staff member. I chose a period of 10 weeks and I asked for up to 20 hours a week. I figured that in between 100-200 hours I could completely train someone to do everything that I do in regards to podcasting and really have her understand why we do the things that we do and to be able to, at the end of the 10 weeks, release her to serve my clients. That's what I asked for.

What if you don't really want to add to your staff but you would really like to try an internship. You've got all the skill, you've got the ability to teach it; how could you benefit from an internship if it's not to grow your own staff? What if you thought of it as a way to recruit an awesome affiliate? What if there were someone out there who says you know I want to serve this same target market, I want to learn to do the things you do but my approach would be this, they do something completely different from what you do. It does serve the same market and it's very complimentary and they would promote your products to their people. That would be an excellent candidate for your intern. If you could show your intern how to do everything that you do to serve the market that you both serve and then when the internship is over she is released to go do this with her market, she knows your products intimately, she knows what you do, why you do it, she's going to be able to communicate that to her people and make recommendations about your products and services and she's going to become an awesome affiliate for you. If you've taught her how to do everything you do, she's going to be growing a huge list, she's going to be running a popular blog, she's going to be creating wonderful relationships and partnerships and you're going to benefit from that.

What if you took an intern on like every 60 days for the next year or so? What if you are always training someone, you always have someone doing the brass tacks of your business for you for free and at the end of that period they go off to do their business and still promote you as an affiliate and expose you to their markets? That's win/win.

Think about it along the same lines of an internship that perhaps grows into a joint venture. Someone comes to you and says I love your market, I want to reach your market, I want to learn to internet market like you do and they have a particular skill that you just covet greatly, a season of internship with that person could then turn into a joint venture partnership. You've taught him how to do everything and now you can guide them through the creation of their first few products as a joint venture partner.

These are really great reasons to have an internship and they are giving me ideas. Let's say you have a huge project to tackle, massive, maybe you've spent the last three years developing a big wonderful popular website and you created it in Microsoft Front Page and now you want to move it over to WordPress, this is a monstrous task. What if you could take on an intern for the next three months and teach her how to do this and walk her through all the steps of why you do what you do, spending time touching base but letting her do the massive chunk of the work because she's learning as she does it. When the internship is over she can go off now and convert her own website into WordPress, she can offer that service to somebody else. This would be a great internship training opportunity for a brand new Virtual Assistant.

Lots and lots of projects come to mind. Perhaps you want to create a membership site and there's going to be a lot of work in that, you could take on an intern to assist you in that process. One of the things I did with my intern was I used the internship to create some manuals for my learning products. I gave her access to all of the resources that I have about podcasting and I invited her to listen and study and take copious notes and then use those notes to create a manual, a workbook that now accompanies those products. So I benefited in a multitude of ways from one internship. Those are just a few ideas, I think if you take a moment and think about your business and the people who come to you and suggest that they are interested in what you do how could you take advantage of that?

How could you teach them something, be their teacher, their guide yet have it prosper your business?

Let's take a look at the risks of having an intern. Many people that I've spoken to in recent months that have asked me about my internship, they ask me am I afraid that my intern will learn all of my trade secrets and then go off and compete with me. I can tell you I didn't worry about this for two reasons. One, it comes down to choosing the right person which we will talk about that later in the frequently asked questions section. Primarily if you are at the point in your business where you can take on an intern, if you choose that person carefully you are not going to really have to worry about the whole competition thing. If you are a recognized expert in your field, if you've reached that point, anyone who you would be interning, anyone that you would be teaching and speaking into their lives and forming their business knowledge even if they did go right next store and open up an almost exact same business you're still so far ahead of them in the game that they can't realistically be called competition. I don't mean that arrogantly because there was a time when I was brand new and now I am a recognized expert in my field and so my intern five years from now she may very well be a recognized expert in our field and that will be ok because remember I subscribe to the sweetie way of doing things. I don't believe in competition, I believe in cooperating with my competition, I believe in opportunities to joint venture and learn from each other and encourage one another.

If you live in fear that someone else is going to do something just like what you do, an internship is probably not for you because you are going to be really conflicted about teaching your intern everything that you know about your field which is what an intern has a right too, seriously. My intern had a right to know everything I know about podcasting and promoting a podcast and profiting from a podcast because she was giving me free time, free work. She did everything I told her to do for 10 weeks. She has a right to get answers to every question.

If I had been really afraid that at the end of the 10 weeks that she would go off and start a Moms Radio Network clone and compete with me then when she asked me questions about why you do this, why do you do that, how did you do this, how did you do that I would be afraid to answer those questions. I would be really hesitant – why did she ask that, is she going to compete with me? If you are conflicted you are going to be holding back and that's not fair.

Now, many of us have segments to our business. Podcasting is just one area of my business. I didn't feel the need to tell my intern every single thing I know about everything else I do because that wasn't part of our arrangement. If you do have areas of your business that are very private that you hold very close to your chest that's ok, just make sure that the internship is clear that you aren't offering to mentor her and teach her in that area.

Is it possible that your intern would compete with you later? Sure it is. Absolutely. We'll talk about that later. You're risking trust. You are trusting somebody with how your business runs, how you do things, your secrets, your clients, your websites, your passwords. I've never given an employee or my intern access to any financial data but I've given them access to just about everything else but my money and that is a risk. It goes

back to choosing the right person and being careful. I would not take a brand new intern and turn them loose on my email account and my clients.

In my case the first several weeks of the internship was just me and her, it was her learning, her asking questions, her practicing. It was in the last half of the internship that she began to serve clients through me and then at the end she was serving clients directly with my supervision so it was a transition. I think if someone is going to put up red flags where you would fear security issues or fear your clients being at risk you would know it before you got to that point. I don't worry about that too much.

There's always a risk when you put someone between you and your customers or clients. Will there be miscommunication? Will they try to steal a client? Will they try to undercut you? You hear stories about this on the web. Again if you plan your internship carefully so that you really get to know your intern well and that you place yourself between your client and intern through a significant portion of the training period I think you won't have any problems.

Communication is absolutely key. You have to have a system in place that lets you monitor everything that they are doing. We did this through; I'm a big fan of Gmail, I love using Gmail for my business email because I can share access to it with my intern or my Virtual Assistant and we have access to the Google Documents and calendar. Everything that they are doing I can observe and all of their interactions with the clientele I can observe. Set up systems that let you keep your hands on things.

An internship is not about you teaching them how to do everything in one week and then setting them loose to run things for the next nine weeks. No no no. You are talking about training them deeply, intensely and monitoring their progress and giving them feedback on their progress throughout.

Those are some of the risks so what are some of the benefits? Obviously free or low cost labor is really awesome. For me the benefit was that I had a resulting employee who didn't have any bad habits carried over from previous knowledge. My new employee now thinks like I think, they understand the process, they understand why they are doing the things they are doing. It wasn't just a matter of learning a checklist it was a matter of learning why and how and what to look for and to be able to trouble shoot. These are all wonderful benefits to me.

Let's talk about, let's cover some of the frequently asked questions that people have had for me as I have been preparing to do this learning resource.

A common question is how do you find an intern? I'll tell you how I found my intern – I went to Nell Taliercio and I asked her if she would place an ad for my position. Advertising it right up front that this is an internship with no guarantee of employment at the end in which I was going to ask for up to 20 hours a week of hard work in exchange for zero money. I was really blessed. She was test driving some things, she didn't just post the ad for me, she actually previewed the applicants for me and I do not know if this is something she would be willing to do for anyone else. All I could say is maybe ask her because it was wonderful. I know Nell, Nell knows my business, she knows my style and I was able to sit down with her for a few moments and say this is what I'm looking for,

these are the characteristics that I'm looking for – someone who will learn quickly, someone who communicates very well via text and via voice, someone who has a genuine interest in podcasting and this is very key for me that it was someone that was looking to join someone else's team. I did not want to attract an intern who wanted to learn what she could and then go off and do her own thing. I didn't want that, I wanted someone whom at the end of 10 weeks I could say this was a great experience, I really like this person, she learned everything to my satisfaction now let's work together, here's a job. That's what I wanted.

Nell previewed the applications and she did short interviews with them to kind of feel them out and so she saved me a lot of time. I didn't have to review the applications of people that weren't well suited and weren't very good communicators. Of the people that she spoke to, three passed through to me and one of them was Christina. Christina was a perfect fit, I felt really great about her and it was a fantastic internship and now she is a great part of my team. I'm excited about the whole thing.

So how to find an intern – place an ad, write a job description letting them know right up front that this is what to expect, this is what you have to offer and let them know how long it will be and see if somebody applies. If you are a recognized expert in your field I guarantee you there are people who will respond to your offer. If you were to say; let's say you opened up a coaching program and said, like for me if I was going to open up a coaching program where I promised the person would know everything I know at the end of the coaching program what would I charge for that? To spend 50 hours teaching and talking with somebody, gosh let's just do the quick math; even at my really affordable rate of \$40 an hour, that's \$2,000 dollars. Shoot, \$2,000 dollars.

There is value in what you have to share. If you are a recognized expert there are people who will respond. If you can find someone to preview your applications that would be a great time saver but if you don't that's alright, just be really clear in your ad how you want them to present themselves to you. Give them several instructions to follow because that will be key – can they follow instructions? If they can't follow instructions in an internship ad they aren't going to be much of a potential candidate for your internship. You can post that ad all over the place. You can post it at Just Online Jobs, you can post it on Craigs List, you can post it on Kijiji, and you can post it on forums in your community. Just put the word out and people will be really excited about it. Blog about it, ask your friends to blog about it to spread the word. Set out and say that we are going to accept letters of inquiry with the attached required information until this date, just as if you were advertising a paid position.

How to choose the right person? Remember I said I wanted someone that wanted to join my team and honestly I feel like I've gotten pretty good at recognizing people who are team players and people who are mavericks. It can be difficult from the front to pick this up, to recognize people who are mavericks. I personally find mavericks very disappointing on multiple levels, not just in relationship to trying to build my own team but from the perspective of being an internet marketer, of being a sweetie. I want to find a way to work with people, I want to find a way to co-promote and when you find someone who no matter how many ways you offer them a way to work with you about something you find a month later they've gone and done their own thing on the same exact topic. That's a maverick.

I really, honestly I think it's a character flaw more than anything but probably it's related to being afraid of joint ventures or mistakenly believing that if they go do it themselves they will make more money, which is definitely not true because the mavericks in the community that I've identified are not very successful. They are going here and there and releasing this and that but they aren't very successful as opposed to the other people who look for a way to play nice with others, be a sweetie, joint venture, they do very well. They understand that by partnering they have greater potential for income even if they are going to split that income they are still going to make more than if they are always trying to do everything themselves.

I was looking for signs of the maverick mentality in my interns. Again, it really depends, if your goal is to train joint venture partners or to train affiliates you're not looking for someone to join your team per say but you are looking for someone who plays well with others, who has the understanding of what it is to be a sweetie in internet marketing. So look for signs that they are always going off and doing their own thing. Look for signs that they are constantly trying something new, that they flit around to this and that. That was the issue with one of my applicants. I did not believe that this person would stay in one place for very long. I just didn't believe that that person could do that so they obviously weren't going to be the right person for me.

Kind of make a list of the attributes that you are looking for in the perfect intern. Do you want great writing skills? Do you want somebody with a great speaking voice? Do you want a people person or do you want a geeky techie person? What combination and how is that important? Do you want them to be outgoing, aggressive, full of suggestions and ideas or do you want them to just do what you tell them to do? Think about all of that. If you find it difficult to decide whether someone is a good fit for you or not, ask someone else for some feedback. Bring on a third person whom you respect for a second interview. For example, if you know me pretty well and if you are a Mom Masterminds member I hope you do. If you are trying to hire an intern and you are not sure and you would like a third person to sit in on an interview, I'd be thrilled. I'd be glad to sit in as a silent partner and listen to your discussions and give you my perspective or maybe I could even like be on instant messenger with you and IM you some provoking questions to really get a feel for the person. I'd be totally down with that.

Alright, how to make an attractive internship offer? I think that when you write up that ad for your intern you need to let them know what it is you are offering them in return. In my case, I was able to promise that at the end of the internship she would know everything about doing podcast production and hosting a podcast and promoting a podcast. That in itself was pretty attractive to those that applied for the internship. You have to make a list of the skills you are going to impart to them. If you do do one on one coaching let them know that if someone were coaching with me, it would cost them this much but I'm offering this for free to my intern. Don't lie; don't puff it up to make it sound pretty, just tell them exactly what it is that you are going to be delivering to them on a regular basis. What it is that you promise to teach them?

Here's a great question – how long should an internship last? I went for 10 weeks. I wanted it to be a summer internship because at the end of the summer I knew I had the summer to lay low if I wanted to or I could use the summer to train someone and then

have more of a laying low fall because now she would be doing a lot of things I used to do. So for me it was 10 weeks. I think you need to sit down and think about, kind of plan out your training – what will you teach her in week one, what will you teach her in week two, how much time do you want to benefit from what you've taught her?

I think 10 weeks is probably a pretty short internship. I think I could have easily gone for three months or four months. In my case, I didn't want to take advantage of Christina but I wanted enough time to see that she was accurately applying what she learned before I had to make a decision about whether to go ahead and take her on as part of my team. So think about that, how long is it going to take you to teach them and then how long do you think it's going to take to really observe them and provide feedback and correction if they are making mistakes? So whatever you think.

If at the end of the rainbow there's a full time position, I think you can stretch a little bit longer internship. With Christina there was no promise of hours, it was just that there would be work at the end and the work would consistently grow but there were no guarantees or promises. I didn't want to take advantage of her time.

If the internship is not tied to a position at all, it's just tied to learning; I guess it also depends on how many hours a week you are looking for. If you want an intern to serve you, if you want to spend an hour mentoring them personally and you want them actively practicing what you're teaching them, four or five hours a week an internship like that can last a really long time. You can have an intern for an entire year on a schedule like that and they would not feel taken advantage of they would be thrilled to have your mentoring and be wonderfully happy to trade their hours for that. So it's really what you want from it is what you are going to include. But definitely don't put yourself in a position of taking advantage of somebody.

Should you pay or should you not pay? I vote for no pay. I vote for free internship but I could definitely see where it would be appropriate in some circumstances to have a paid internship. Let's say you want someone to intern with you full time, 40 hours a week, let's say for example you are a graphic designer and you want to intern and teach someone graphic arts. If you hired a new graphic artist you would probably be paying \$30 to \$40 an hour on the low end so what if you were able to hire an intern for \$10 an hour and say I'm going to employ you 40 hours a week for a year for only \$10 an hour but I'm going to teach you and mentor you and guide you so that at the end of the internship you can go start your own business with great success and lots of experience and real world work under your belt.

That's a very attractive internship. It is going to cost you money but you are going to save a fortune. In this case you are probably going to pay a third or fourth of what you would pay someone else. You can break this down into lots of things, maybe you are going to ask for an intern and you are willing to pay the intern \$5 an hour to do the work. \$5 an hour is a pittance but when it's accompanied by expert teaching then it's just icing on the cake.

Here's another question – who pays for the resources and tools that the intern needs? You do. Absolutely. I provided my intern with all of the learning resources. When she needed some software I paid for that software. So if your intern needs expensive software to do

what you do, you need to pay for that. It's not at all fair to ask the intern to give you their hours and buy their own stuff. That's my opinion on that. If it's a paid internship I think it depends on how well it pays. If you are paying \$5 an hour you should still be buying the tools but if it's more of a traditional internship where they are getting a fairly decent income, I don't know maybe then it's fair to ask them to equip themselves. It really depends on what the situation is at the end of the internship.

Here's another question – should you and your intern sign a contract? I would say definitely. My intern and I. We printed up an internship agreement and we both signed it and faxed it to each other. Basically agreeing that this is what she was offering, this is what I was offering, there was an element of a non compete agreement in the contract and that's only safe.

How complicated your contract is is really up to you and your business. If you have a really big complicated business and you think that there is a high risk that your intern would steal a bunch of your clients or compromise your privacy, I would get some legal assistance with the contract for two reasons. One, you want it to be iron clad. Two, you want the intern to know that you are serious enough to involve a lawyer. That way they know that should they break the contract, you're serious enough to hire a lawyer then too. It sends a powerful message. If on the other hand you were like me and I just don't have that tough of a nut to crack and I felt really confident that Christina was committed to joining my team so we just did a very simple contract that we both signed, no lawyers.

Do you have to promise a job at the end of the rainbow? No. No, the learning experience on its own can be adequate. In fact, you should not promise anything! You should say that at the end there will be consideration of a position and make it really clear that you aren't making any promises because the internship could go very well yet you might not personally like the person. In 10 weeks you could say you know what they do a really good job but I can't stand them. You don't want to have to hire someone you don't like. So at the end if you decide you know what, it's been a pleasure but I'm not feeling it as far as you joining my team so well wishes to you in your endeavors, you are released from the internship, although remember you did sign a non compete, you will not attempt to offer the same services to my market, whatever the legal ramifications of that that you required. Just don't make promises period. Things could change between here and there especially if it's a long internship.

My final question is really good – what if things go badly? How do I end it?

It's a great question, I really find myself asking what would I have done if a couple of weeks into the internship Christina wasn't doing everything I had asked her to do. What would I have

done? I'm pretty sure if something had happened in the first weeks I would of said if you can't follow my instructions here in the learning stage I can't have confidence that you'll follow my instructions when you are actually doing something for me so let's part ways and thank you very much. I would be really comfortable with doing that. I think that you would be smart to even build that into the contract, that there will be weekly reviews to determine whether the internship is fulfilling both your needs or not.

Too often we moms turn on mommy mode where in an internship likely you will get to know your intern and you will grow to like them and you will want to nurture them but you guys have an agreement. They give, you give. If they stop giving you need to stop giving. If you detect poor character, lack of follow through now is the time to nip it at the bud and go back to the drawing board with a new intern.

I've never feared that my intern would turn on me personally, compete with me, I never feared that she would snipe a client or do anything like that. If there was anything I feared way back at the beginning was what if she flakes out and everybody knows she was my intern and she was a flake? That concerned me more than anything and I don't know if you can understand that but people flake out and I don't want somebody who is associated with me to flake out because I didn't want them to be concerned about the other members of my team.

If things go badly, deal with it. Deal with it at the first sign of trouble. I don't mean that the first time that they don't do something on time that you have to drop them but address it immediately. Let them know that you noticed it. We have a right to accountability in our businesses. We have a right to hold our team accountable.

There is a big word that you should never say, it's not a word, it's three words or it's two words, it's a contraction and a word – never say it's ok or that's ok. If your intern was given a To-Do list to be done by Friday and it had ABC on it and they call you on Friday and say well I got A and B done but C isn't done yet, I had a problem, moms want to say that's ok – don't say it! Bite your tongue, bite your lips, do whatever you do don't say that's ok. It's not ok. They are your intern; they had three things to complete by Friday. Friday is not the time to be telling you that they didn't complete something. If something came up during the week that would have been the moment to communicate that I've got A & B done but I'm running into some trouble, I might not have C done by Friday, how should I proceed? That is an acceptable situation to me. Coming to me on deadline day and saying I didn't have a chance to get it done because I had a problem; sorry that's not how we communicate in business. So hold people accountable.

If I say to you I'm sorry I wasn't able to get it done, you know that instinct is to say oh that's ok, don't say it. Say, alright tell me what happened. Well let's look at how that could have been handled differently. Give them some constructive feedback; convey clearly that this is disappointing. If you give someone permission to have failed, if you tell them oh that's ok then that's sending a really clear message for the week's ahead. Oh Kelly she's not going to flip out if I'm a little late, yes I will. I will flip out. You know what? If the dog died, if somebody got hit by a train, for heavens sake it's ok but communicate! Communicate, communicate, and communicate!

Internships managed well can be an amazing tool in your business. If you have something of value to leverage, I hope you're inspired to find a way to work with an intern one day soon.

- Kelly McCausey, [*Solo Smarts*](#)