

# Student Interns and the Abuse of Free Labor

By: Harper Peterson

“I would love to be paid, but at the same time I don’t think I deserve compensation for my work quite yet because I’m still learning, and I haven’t even finished school” said student intern, Jon Laney. “Although it would be great to make some money for my time, I didn’t take this internship for the money, I took it to help build my resume, gain experience and ultimately prepare myself for the real world once I’m done with college”.

Many students take on an internship during their college experience. Some students do so in order to gain professional experience before entering the “real world”. Other students are required to do so to meet their major requirements. Whatever the reason, every year, companies all across the united states are taking student interns who are willing to work for no pay.

Internships are a great way for students to gain practical and professional experience before leaving college and entering the real world. An internship is a mutually beneficial thing for both the intern, and the company in which the intern is working for.

Some of the benefits a student can gain from an internship include: being able to build their resume, gaining knowledge of the industry they are working in, getting hands on experience in a professional setting, developing critical skills that can help them succeed in the future, and making connections for future career opportunities by networking.

When hiring a student intern a company benefits from this decision in multiple ways. Some of these ways include: getting a trial period without committing to something more, having a fresh and new perspective join their team, having an extra set of hands to help with projects and tasks, and potentially gaining a new employee in the future that has already had the necessary training and background experience.

As you can see both sides of a healthy intern-employer relationship benefit in numerous ways. But even with all of the amazing benefits a student gets by interning in the professional world, some still believe compensation should be added to the list. But others disagree with this idea believe that it is not ethically wrong for companies to hire unpaid student interns.

Student interns get many benefits when working in the professional world at a young age, but should compensation always be one of them?

According to Monsters' website, "Employers overwhelmingly point to internship experience as the most important factor they consider in hiring new college graduates for full-time positions, and they have a variety of self-serving reasons for feeling that way".

Since internship experience is such an important factor for companies when hiring college graduates, it is important for student interns to remember why they are working for no pay. It may not be ideal in the moment, but it will help them in the long run. An internship with certain companies could potentially open up with possibility of landing a full-time well paid job with them. It's all a matter of thinking long term.

Some believe a student intern should look at their internship as an opportunity to learn, not a way to make ends meet. The key word in the phrase "student intern is student". A student has not yet finished school and received their degree, so why should they be paid as if they have? These people do not see a need for compensation to be a requirement.

In contrast to this, some believe that companies have been, and should not abuse students' willingness to work for free. It is very important for companies to hire student interns for the right reasons. There are many reasons why a company should not hire a student intern.

For starters, a company should not hire a student intern as a source of free labor. A student intern should not be used as a way for a company to gain a full time employee without having to pay for it. Another reason a company should not hire an intern is if they are too busy to teach the student. There is no point in an intern working for a company if they are not actually working or learning anything of value.

"I believe I should be paid because the company I work for is working me just as hard as their other employers, if not harder", said student intern Cassidy Cornell.

In Cassidy's case I agree, she should be paid, or the company she is working for should stop abusing the young student's willingness to work for free. Cassidy is a prime example of a student intern being abused by a company for free labor.

A solution to this issue would be for companies to instill a program of some sort that gives their unpaid student interns a chance to move up the corporate ladder so to speak and be

rewarded for their hard work after so long. If companies gave their unpaid student interns the possibility of getting compensation once they have graduated this would help restore the value purpose of student internships.

When wondering if student interns not being paid is unethical, It is important to remember that an unpaid intern is working voluntarily. No matter which way one looks at it, the student is choosing to volunteer their time and hard work to the company in which they are interning for. No one is forcing them to do so.

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