Why Hire Summer Interns? Because They Know More About Mobile Than You Do.

It’s the question you probably ask yourself every time summer rolls around: “Should our startup hire summer interns?”

And, to be fair, it’s not an easy question to answer. The concept of hiring interns for a well-established small business is divisive enough. But I’m sure I don’t need to tell you just how integral startups are to the small-to-medium-size business ecosystem.

Related: Looking for a Summer Internship? Here’s What You Should Know.

There are a variety of perspectives and viewpoints to consider, and since spring is almost here — and companies will be debating the annual intern decision — it’s a good time to plan for how you will incorporate summer interns into your company culture.

Incorporate new perspectives.

Every entrepreneur is well aware of the pressure to attract and retain talent. Employing interns offers a strong gateway for your company to land on the radars of eager students and young professionals looking to break into the working world.

The reality of working with interns, however, is that it’s a good fit only if it’s beneficial to both parties. For business owners, the opportunity to obtain an extra set of hands is often welcome. But the nature of internships is changing.

While interns may have once been considered as glorified office gophers or baristas, now more companies are asking them to delve into actual client- and consumer-facing work.

Bringing in a fresh perspective at the start of the summer months gives you the chance to rejuvenate the energy circling within your company. Interns, more often than not, bring an infectious enthusiasm and energy that can spark a positive effect among your entire team.

Furthermore, Gen Z interns offer unique perspectives on technological platforms and consumer trends. Millions and millions of dollars across every line of business are dedicated to attempting to break down what it is that this elusive generation wants. While market research can certainly be helpful, employing the actual source material —Gen Z-ers themselves — offers you unparalleled insights into the types of products and messaging that younger consumers actually crave.

Related: Paying Interns Is a Good Investment In the Future of Your Business

Another perk of hiring interns? They can help you explore the development of technology peripheries you otherwise might be unable to prototype. It should come as no surprise that someone who has grown up with a smartphone permanently (seemingly) in hand is decidedly more proficient at navigating mobile platforms and applications than an employee who's adapted to a mobile lifestyle later in life.

So, if you're in the business of forging connections with consumers and audiences through digital content, the Gen Z interns you bring on board can intuitively determine the strengths and weaknesses of your content and engagement strategies.

Last, but certainly not least, is the underappreciated value of evangelization. When summer interns have a great time

working for your startup, they'll tell their entire community about their amazing experience. And that will involve a lot of social media "likes."

Then, whether these young people become an employee, customer or just a fan of your brand, you'll be able to rely on their positive experience and the power of their word of mouth.

Just remember: In order for any of this to work, the arrangement has to be just as beneficial to your summer interns as it is for your startup.

Decide whether to pay or not pay.

Intern expectations are largely derived from your business and industry. Unpaid internships have always been common, but in recent years the U.S. Department of Labor has taken a hard look at the internship culture.

A test that went into effect under the Obama administration in which companies had to meet six criteria to offer unpaid internships has recently been revoked. The Obama-issued test prompted companies to rethink their intern strategies – many then moved to a paid system. Now, the Department of Labor is relaxing those regulations.

Although there is still room for unpaid internships, so long as organizations prove the academic or professional value of the internships they offer, they may actually continue payment because it incentivizes applications from high-caliber candidates who could become future full-time employees.

Regardless of which route your business takes, it is paramount that you communicate the nature of the internship from the start. Clearly indicating whether or not the position is paid is necessary if you want to avoid legal ramifications.

Prioritize your interns’ learning.

Next, it’s important that you actually take the time to discern where an intern will fit into your organization. Figuring out projects on the fly and slotting interns in at random will not likely facilitate a positive working experience. Students and young professionals are coming to your company because they want to learn and establish strong connections in your field; and you will be doing them a disservice by not considering how they can support specific company initiatives.

Additionally, as internships are learning experiences, it is helpful to provide your interns with a mentor who can not only serve as a day-to-day resource, but also offer candid feedback to help them grow.

Related: 5 Ways Your Small Business Will Benefit From Hiring Interns

If you take the time to plan for and support your interns’ inclusion in your company, you will be successful at creating a working experience that benefits both the interns as well as your current employees. Remember, summer internship programs offer learning opportunities for both sides, and if implemented strategically, they can spark new ideas to help your company progress. On the interns’ side of the equation, these summer jobs can create new inroads for these Gen-Z-ers to pursue professional paths, which just may lead back to your door.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/308418