STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Tips for Engaging and Developing Student Employees

Use these proven practices to bring out the best in your student employee.

- Familiarize yourself with generational strengths, and use these qualities as starting points to engage the student. See page 3.

- In managing the student employee, think of yourself as a workplace coach. Coaching is about one person helping another to excel.

- Maintain ongoing two-way communication with the student. Occasional touch-base conversations can answer questions, resolve concerns, clear up misunderstandings, uncover suggestions, find additional ways to connect the work to the student's deep interests and career goals, and strengthen student-supervisor rapport.

- Connect the student's work activities with their employment goals and career aspirations. The ideal job is one that will strengthen the student's resume/portfolio.

- Assign at least one meaningful project that makes great use of their skills, links to their goals and aspirations, and contributes to the work area's major priorities.

- Help them sharpen their current skills and gain new skills so that when the job ends and they move on, they have genuinely grown from their student employment experience.

- Allow room for the student to exercise creativity. If the student employee has a different approach and is getting the job done, try to let go of your own prescribed method.

- To manage student employee performance:
  - Set clear performance expectations early.
  - When assigning tasks, clearly communicate the intended outputs and standards. Discuss to ensure understanding. Every employee needs to know the target in order to hit the mark.
  - Provide ongoing feedback and coach them along – but avoid any urge to hover.
  - Always remember that there is a learning curve.
• **Let them know by your actions that they’re part of the team.** Involve them in meetings, ask for their input, and ensure that they have the work space and resources they need to do their job

• **Provide a copy of the evaluation used by the supervisor, so the student employee knows what is being evaluated and why.** Approach this as a learning opportunity, and discuss the evaluation criteria so they are well understood.

• **Make a point of expressing appreciation for your student employees.** As you see from the list below, acknowledgment and recognition can take many forms.
  
  • Introduce them to the people your work area serves.
  
  • Provide a certificate of appreciation.
  
  • Decorate office doors and bulletin boards with posters expressing appreciation for your student employees.
  
  • Have a special gathering to honor your student employees. Ideas include an open house, pizza party, potluck, sundae bar, sub sandwiches, popcorn machine, or a decorated cake.
  
  • Take your student employees to lunch.
  
  • Prepare “care packages” or “finals week survival kits” to give to student workers, with popcorn, trail mix, fruit, sticky notes, etc.
  
  • Send handwritten or electronic thank-you notes to student employees, letting them know you value them. Have staff sign a thank-you card for each student worker.
  
  • Make “pat on the back” awards by tracing an outline of a hand on paper, making copies, and writing a personal note on each that tells why the student deserves a pat on the back.
  
  • Create a fun special project that aligns with the student employee’s interests and goals.
  
  • Honor your student employees with a round of applause during a staff meeting.
  
  • Voice your appreciation with a sincere thank you.
Generational Differences at Work

Tradionals (born in 1922-1945)
- Plan to stay in organizations
- Generally respectful of organizational hierarchy
- Like structure and order
- Accepting of authority figures in the workplace
- Give maximum effort

Baby Boomers (born in 1946-1964)
- Hard worker
- Accepting of authority in the workplace
- Results-driven
- Plan to stay in the organization
- Retain what they learn

Gen Xers (born in 1965-1980)
- Technology savvy
- Like informality
- Learn quickly
- Seek work-life balance
- Embrace diversity

Millenials/Gen Y (born in 1981-1999)
- Tech dependent
- Goal-oriented, engaged, expressive
- Dedicated to learning and growing
- Desire to “do it all”
- Will sell their skills to the highest bidder
- Looking for meaning, concerned with ethics and organizational responsibility

Gen Z (born beginning in 2000)
- Competitive
- Like working independently while staying connected
- Demand learning 24x7
- Be judged on their own merits vs. depending on team members
- Like being held accountable
- Willing to trade pay for passion
- Very tech savvy
- Social media savvy
- Globally conscious
- Meaningful work and flexibility
- Rarely want a management job right out of college
- Quick access to learning 24x7, can learn anything online any time