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

Traditionals (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

Millennials/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