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Live Learn and Intern events

Free summer events
for college interns:

Bowling and Pizza:

June 8, 6 p.m., at
Indiana Tech

**Botanical Conser-
vatory:** June 15, 6
p.m.

**Grill & Chill in the
Park:** June 22, 6
p.m., Shoaff Park

**Rivercity Sand
Volleyball:** July 1, 6
p.m.

Tincaps: July 7, 6:15
p.m.

Sweetwater Sound:
July 12, 5 p.m.

**Fort Wayne Chil-
dren's Zoo:** July 17,
1 p.m.

**Sycamore Hills Golf
Club:** July 27, 6:30
p.m.

Sign up at www.fwchamber.org or call
for more information
at (260) 424-1435.

Teaching professional skills through internships

So often, employers do not see themselves in the role of teacher/mentor during an internship experience with a student. The relationship is viewed more as an employment opportunity rather than a teachable period.

If you find yourself leaning more on the employment side of the fence, I'd like you to consider the tremendous chance you have with your internship program to teach students valuable, life-long employment skills that could benefit them throughout their entire careers.

Let's Start with the Basics

The types of skills we're talking about here are often called "soft skills." These include skills like communication, time management, problem-solving, critical thinking, team work, flexibility, and the ability to work under pressure. It also includes work ethic, a positive attitude, and self-confidence.

Each of these skills creates value not just for the student, but also to any employer they may work for in the future. More and more, employers are looking for candidates not just with the technical skills to do the job, but also the skills that let them effectively interact with those around them.

A Model Company

I am always very excited about companies who really take their role as teacher/mentor seriously. One such company is Group Dekko in Garrett, Ind.

Making a recent decision to have an internship program this summer, and proving that it's not too late to find great students, in the last month they posted, interviewed, and hired close to 20 interns. During this time, their CEO has created a culture that stresses the importance of being good mentors to their student interns.

It's not only about what the students will be doing for the company; it's also about what the company will be giving these young people throughout their experience at Group Dekko.

To get everyone up to speed, 30 supervisors and mentors have gone through training to understand their interns' needs, and come up with strong strategies to manage their experiences this summer. What is great about this internship program is that each student has both a supervisor *and* a mentor who will teach and train them.

Trust me when I say, this is a company who gets it. They know exactly what their job is this summer. They want to create awesome future employees, even if they don't end up being their employees. That's the kind of attitude that helps make all of Northeast Indiana successful.

If we can develop the kind of future employees that we all want, pretty soon, companies outside of Northeast Indiana will take notice of it and we'll become a model region!

Where to Start

Well, if the above story has inspired you to take on the role of teacher/mentor this summer for your intern, then it's time to roll up your sleeves and get busy.

You won't be just idly sitting back this summer and watching what your intern does for you. You're going to become a partner in their success and develop ideas and strategies to help them develop into a superstar employee.

You'll start with choosing a supervisor and mentor who has the desire and patience to work with your intern. Take the time to develop projects that provide the intern with a chance to interact and communicate at a high level.

Remember, it doesn't matter if they become your employee or someone else's. What truly matters is that they develop the skills and competencies necessary for their future careers.

Oh, and by the way...when you take the time to help your intern develop great soft skills, you get an amazing return on your investment in the form of a happy, high-performing student. It's most definitely a win-win...win!