



## **DON'T BLOW IT WITH YOUR INTERNS**

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I remember the first year we had the budget (and enough students) to warrant an intern. I was excited! We were now "multi-staff." We could have staff meetings instead of me talking to myself on the way to campus! The only problem was I had no clue what I was doing. Literally, no clue. I had little direction therefore I gave little direction. And by the end of the first semester our intern was burned out, feeling overwhelmed, and unsupported. I blew it. Interns are a great way for us to shepherd the next generation of collegiate ministers. They are also great ways to multiply our ministry and the gospel footprint on our campuses. We have to get this right! Here are a few thoughts when thinking about interns and what to do with them:

### **USE RECENT COLLEGE GRADS**

I suggest to you that it's better to have interns who are recent college grads instead of students. Why? If you pay a student to do ministry than you have a harder time helping other students understand that everyone is expected to do ministry on their campus. If you pay one student leader to do the work that others may be doing for free it will be counterproductive. Also, recent college graduates are typically more mature and are not riding the crazy train of classes like an intern who is still a student and in class.

### **THEY ARE NOT MINISTRY ASSISTANTS**

You have recent college graduates who have more energy than you, they blend in on campus, they can go to places you can't, and connect with people you wouldn't. Please, for campus' sake, don't stick them in your office making copies and doing clerical work. Seriously, make your own coffee, hire a ministry assistant to answer the phone and a janitor to clean the building! You should have to go out on campus to find your interns! Spend their time and their energy on campus doing discipleship and evangelism. Ask your interns to lead an outreach weekly on their campus, spend the majority of their time on campus, and disciple as many students as they can handle weekly. Have them spend their semester investing in students instead of propping up your programs.

### **DON'T TREAT THEM LIKE A STUDENT OR YOUR STUDENTS WILL TOO**

The transition from being a student to being on staff can be very difficult. One semester they are a peer and the next they carry the weight and authority of staff. It always helps when you can give them authority in front of your students. One of the ways we've been able to do this is by giving them a piece of our ministry pie and having them run it. They are the chief and the rest of us are Indians. Just because I may be the "Director" doesn't mean I'm always the chief. There are parts of our ministry where I'm on the team serving under our Intern. They may ask me questions in private on what they should do, but in public I direct everything to them. Once your students see you deflecting questions to the interns and trusting their leadership, they will follow suit.



### **NO INTERN IS BETTER THAN THE WRONG INTERN**

Nothing is worse than having a staff person who is a wrong fit. Maybe they aren't spiritually, emotionally, or socially mature enough for the job. Don't bring them on. It is harder to get the wrong people off the bus once it's going than keep them from getting on in the first place. You want people who multiply and add to your ministry not take away from it. The wrong person will cost you time and relationships. Two simple questions you can use to help screen potential candidates: 1) Are they F.A.T.? (Faithful, Available and Teachable) and 2) Are they a Disciple-Maker? (Check out the Discipleship Ladder in Chapter Four of *The Fuel and the Flame* by Steve Shadrach for a great outline of this.)

### **START RECRUITING EARLY**

Start mentioning coming on staff to your students as early as their freshmen year. Don't make promises, just ask them to consider it. As you see students grow in their relationship with God and exhibit the qualities you want to see reproduced into your students, begin talking to them about it. Plan for it. In fact, this week our current intern and I sat down and made a list by graduation date of all the students we thought would make great interns! Over the next few weeks we are going to make it a point to ask them to consider it and begin praying about it - graduating seniors all the way down to our freshmen! Start early.

### **TRAIN THEM TO DO YOUR JOB**

Let your interns lead out. Let them be in situations that are way past their capabilities and their pay grade. We ask our interns to plan and lead a mission trip on their own. This past Christmas our intern led 35 students to do ministry on six campuses in the Northwest! Let them in on meetings where you have to make tough decisions. I want my staff to feel the weight of a decision without the pressure of having to make it. If you do this it will allow them to begin to process information like a campus minister. But don't just let them loose and never touch base with them about it. Coach them and train them. Meet with them often.

### **CREATE A SAFE PLACE TO FAIL**

Interns are going to make mistakes and fail. They need to have confidence that you aren't going to give them the boot the first time they say something wrong or offend the pastor, the deacons, or the alumni. Use your influence and your authority to create a safe place for them to learn, try, and fail. Chances are, you made some dumb mistakes early on and look how you turned out? By God's grace and some coaching from you, your interns will be the ones who will go farther than you ever could and start ministry in places you've never dreamed of.

Interns are a lot of work and it's not necessarily easy work, but it is multiplying work. It's worthy work. And we are not called to what's easy, but to what's worthy.

What are some ways you select, train, and deploy interns for ministry?