



## **Tips on How to Successfully Implement an Internship Program**

**Interviews and Profiles**

**Law Department Management**



In-house legal departments are uniquely positioned to provide 1Ls with a wide variety of different work, providing first-year law students with the opportunity to fine-tune their interests from an early stage. However, like all rewarding endeavors, running a successful internship program takes thoughtful planning and investment.

Internships provide opportunities that allow law students to get their feet wet in a lot of different legal areas through practical, real work. Internships also provide the company with expanded resources, opportunities for attorneys to gain leadership experience, and a unique avenue to promote diversity. It is important to understand that an internship program will be more work at first, but the work reaps great rewards.

## **Set goals**

First, the legal team should have a vision, understanding their needs and what they hope to accomplish through an internship program. Such an understanding provides guidance in curating and implementing the program. Hydro's vision was shaped by two aspects: the need to expand legal resources in a cost-effective way, and the goal of providing law students with valuable learning experiences.

With this in mind, the team generates a to-do list of projects that will free up space on the attorney's plates, while also giving interns substantive work experience. This past summer, some of these larger

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projects included coordinating with outside counsel, drafting HR policies, and creating training programs for the company.

## **Start small**

Second, legal departments need to understand their capacity when starting an internship program. Start small, tailoring the internship program to the legal department's needs. For example, starting with one intern will allow legal departments to gauge the time commitment of the program and whether they have enough substantive work to grow the program in the future.

Further, this approach will introduce the legal department to the skills and capabilities of student interns allowing them to better prepare projects as the program grows. On the other hand, hiring too many interns initially can stress a legal team's time and resources which likely will result in an unfulfilled experience for both interns and their legal team.

## **Stay invested**

Third, and perhaps most importantly, all members of the legal department need to be continuously invested in the internship program's success. If the entire legal team has a shared vision and a commitment to making the program a success, the investment will be well worth it. This past summer Hydro has taken this a step further by pairing each intern with an attorney mentor and scheduling bi-weekly meetings with the entire team.

Through this new approach, each member of the legal department meets weekly with their mentee to check-in on workload and possible areas of interest. During bi-weekly meetings, the interns share what they have been working on, their current workload, and what they have learned so far. This approach ensures that each member of the legal team is fully invested in the success of the program and that each intern is walking away with a fulfilling experience.

## **Parting thoughts**

An internship program gives a company the opportunity to pay it forward, spotlight their reputation, and promote diversity and inclusion, as well as pro bono, in the legal team and throughout their company. The return on Hydro's investment is clear in past intern's success and in the internship program's growth. It is a win-win, and something for other corporate in-house departments to consider.

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