

You're Hired! 4-Steps to having your own Apprentice

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by Beth Schneider

We've all seen or heard of the show the Apprentice. People work themselves to the bone with the hope of working for one of Donald Trump's companies. But you don't have to be Donald Trump to have an apprentice. Have you ever wished you could be in two places at once?

Ever say no to a great project because you just didn't have enough time or energy?

If you have, you are certainly not alone. It may be time for you to utter the magic words "Your Hired" and explore adding an apprentice, protégé or associate program to your business. Here are 4 steps to get you started.

Dish out the Dough

Although it would be nice if people agreed to come on board and work for peanuts, they will more likely be looking for some green. Decide how you want to pay people. Are they contractors that will bill you? Are they employees? Do they buy a license? Do they simply get a referral fee? There are a lot of different ways to consider how you want to bring someone in. Before you start looking for people, have a nice chat with your accountant to see what makes the best sense for your business.

Finding and qualifying the right people

Many people are interested in an opportunity where they can just practice their skill of choice and not have to worry about finding clients and running a business. Think about the doctor who works for Kaiser so she doesn't have to market a practice and fill it with patients. Think about the attorney who goes to work for a firm that provides all the clients, or the mechanic who works in a garage rather than opening their own.

The people you need are out there. It's just a matter of finding them. Make a list of specific skills, traits and qualification you are looking for. What kind of experience do they have? What school did they go to? Who have they worked for in the past?

Then put your recruiting hat on. Contact the right schools. Hang out at association meetings. Ask colleagues who they know. Think about where the people you need hang out and then go there.

Let the training begin

Some people will want to work with you because they want to learn from you. Others will be looking for the opportunity you are offering. In either case you are sharing your skill, time and systems (we all know how important that system is). Create a paid training program, figure out a buy-in or set a licensing fee. You worked hard and paid to learn what you know, right? So why give it away. A fee ensures the people working with you are serious.

Not sure how to write a training program? Contact the American Society of Training and Development. They can put you in touch with an instructional designer who can create something for you.

Client involvement

Just because you have people working with you doesn't mean you have to put them in front of your clients. Decide how much face time they get. One of my clients keeps her protégés almost completely behind the scenes. Another introduces her apprentices to the client immediately and then steps out of the picture. Yet another is somewhere in between. Each business is different so you need to decide what makes the most sense for you.

Which ever route you choose, build in a check in system so you know how your company is being represented.

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