Summer Job Options for College Students

I am very blessed with wonderful Grandchildren. Now doesn’t that sound like a true Grandpa? But for those grandparents with college age grandchildren, you may know about the struggle that these young people have finding a summer job that will not only give them a good income to help support their college costs, but also a job that will provide a valuable work experience, hopefully related to their chosen field of endeavor. Many look for internships and others look for any job, while others create their own experience. Today, I will give you my thoughts on these three options.

Two of my wonderful Granddaughters have now graduated from college and are happily employed in business. They used the option of finding a summer internship because their colleges really stressed that strategy (University of Iowa and University of Northern Iowa). In some cases these internships also provide part-time opportunities throughout the school year. This worked so well because it helped Natalie and Brianna to not only get practical experience in their chosen field and earn income while doing it, but it also was a wonderful partnership for the business as they had an opportunity to observe their work and then they hired them when the girls graduated. I urge businesses to think about this option of finding part-time help. It can be a great source of help, but also an excellent way of finding very qualified potential employees.

My next oldest is a Grandson that will be a senior at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He has found that there are not a whole lot of companies that offer internships in music production and music business/management so Joey is now focusing on any job that will give him some related experience in the field. This option is also fitted for my next college age Grandson who will be a sophomore in the school of business at the University of Michigan next fall. Danny just needs some work experiences. This “any job in the field” option is a viable strategy for a college student and like the internship strategy is also a good source of part-time employees for a local business. I suggest that the business find out what the college student is majoring in and try to place that student in jobs/tasks/experiences that would give some valuable experience. That will help the chances of a successful placement because the student will be more interested in the job.

Realistically, summer internships aren't the best route for all students. Some with an entrepreneurial side and a business-savvy mindset just need more—both in terms of real-life experience and dollars. For students who want a high return, low barrier to entry, freedom to be their own boss and something that will look great on an MBA application, here are just a few low-cost starter businesses that college students can start.

Food cart. There are only a few things you need to create a food cart: a cart/kiosk, a license to sell and food to cook. Sites like GigMasters.com offer food carts for rent across the U.S., or you could set up your own table. The key is to finding a good location such as near a college campus or shopping area. Permits range depending on the location.

Company sales rep. If you're good with sales and you want to be your own boss without the added costs of starting your own business, being a sales rep for Avon, Mary Kay, or some other established product company is a good bet. With just a few dollars, you're on the way to getting things started and some of these direct sales companies, include the starter kit in this fee. Set your own hours, a space for yourself in your house and run your business as you please.
SAT tutoring. No one is more qualified to tutor prospective college students on the SATs than a college student who did well on it. SAT prep books cost between $20 and $30. Set aside money for advertising in your local paper and put up your own ads in public places. Set your hourly rate at a reasonable price. I observe charges ranging from $85 per hour while others go as high as $200 per hour.

Arts and crafts. If you're an artist, selling your work can be the perfect entrepreneurial venture for you. You can set up a profile on Etsy and sell your work there, as well as at arts and crafts festivals and school campuses. Summer is filled with these kinds of venues. It might be helpful to have a website you can direct people to for photos of your work and contact information. Look at the most popular items on Etsy and at craft fairs, such as jewelry, hats, clothing and other objects. And to keep costs low, look for materials that can be repurposed (and possibly even donated by local businesses—"reclaimed" is hot these days).

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Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904
*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Mentor and District Director of SCORE Minnesota