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Maximizing Student Worker Contributions
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Overview

I just finished my 12th year at DeSales University and in all 12 of those years I have been a one-man shop, relying strictly on student-workers to help me get thru a year covering 16 sports and often times 2-3 games at the same time on the same day. I have found great success relying on these students, have had a few continue in the profession, and several others find great success in another field (more geared towards their major). I don't consider myself a genius when it comes to the hiring and tutoring of student-workers but I do think I have found things that have worked year in and year out and translate over to the success I have had. Below is a list of some things (with brief explanation) that I have tried to implement over the last 12 years.

1. Make your student workers “feel important”

- a. This may sound corny but it is my number one belief in the success of my students. When I first interview a student for a work-study job, I tell them in the very beginning how important they are. And I hammer home this point all the time before, during, and after a game or a job is complete. I tell them this isn't a desk job at the library where all you are doing is checking IDs. You are doing my job either with me or while I am doing it somewhere else and I am counting on you to do it better than I would.

2. Trust them

- a. I admit that I love certain portions of my job more than others...and giving up those tasks at a game are harder than others. But I have learned that if you want to gain a student's trust and be able to count on them in situations where you can't watch over them, you have to give them the keys to the Ferrari and “trust them”. It is the best, and sometimes only, way they'll learn.

3. Have fun

- a. No cheering in the press box? But you can have fun. I haven't had many but a few that liked to cheer (or voice their displeasure at a ref/umpire) in my 12 years. I have had to gently explain why this can't happen...but I've never told a student to stop having fun. And often times I've told students to talk and laugh more. My #1 priority is to have fun. It creates a good working environment and promotes a “team” atmosphere in our press boxes.

4. Recruit/advertise your positions.

- a. One thing I've had a great deal of success with is having my top student-workers recruit other students that they think would fit in with our group, have commented on “how they wish they worked for me”, etc...when my staff is low I will also advertise the positions I have open and routinely I will get several emails or phone calls immediately inquiring about the position.

5. Be Honest/Show loyalty

- a. I tell my students all the time that they need to be honest to me and I will be honest back and that I am a very loyal person. I continue to ask the students who make time to work my first phone call when needing help and when students routinely say no to helping, they move down the chain of phone calls till they eventually just don't get called again. Those students often run back to ask why they haven't worked and I simply tell them because you never said yes to working when I called and others did.

6. Hire an Intern

- a. I have had some good ones and some bad ones but will often hire an intern in the office. This is basically “free work” as the student gets credit for the work done and could also get paid, assuming he/she has a work study allowance as part of their financial aid package (or however your school handles work study pay). My #1 priority with an intern however is that this person genuinely wants to either find out about the profession or has an interest in the profession because interns that just need 3-6 credits late in their college career tend to be more of a headache than a help.

7. Feed/Reward your students

- a. The men's lacrosse team has a tailgate after every home game and I always invite the students to that for some free food. When/if we have 4-6 hour days on a Saturday/Sunday in the Fall/Spring, I will buy them food for the long hours. Just do little things to show your appreciation and food is often times enough of a reward. If you run home tournaments, have the coach make extra tournament t-shirts for your students...t-shirts are like gold to a college student.