

Five Good Projects for Summer Interns

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Got summer interns? High school and college students can be enthusiastic, tech-savvy, and **inexpensive** resources for your company. (Here are three articles about hiring a summer intern: [“Why Hire Interns?”](#), [“Should You Hire an Intern This Summer?”](#), [“5 Tips for Hiring and Managing a Summer Intern”](#).)



We recommend that you assign to your interns **projects**, not regular work expected to be done by full-time employees. By having them work on projects, your company will gain benefits on things that you have put off for too long, and your interns will gain valuable experience on how your company works, and how to make it work better.

For these projects, your intern should possess these skills:

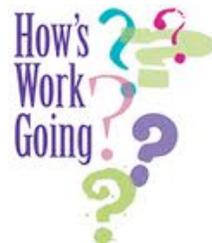
- ✓ accomplished user of Microsoft Excel
- ✓ Good writing and communication skills
- ✓ attention to details; accuracy

Here are five good projects that any distributor can assign to a summer intern:

I. Conduct an Employee Survey

You can learn about your company's strengths and weaknesses, simply by asking your employees. One of our favorite employee surveys is the [“Start-Stop-Continue”](#) survey, in which all employees are asked to respond to these three questions:

1. “What should our company **start** doing, that it currently does not do?” (What are we missing?)
2. “What should our company **stop** doing, that it currently does?” (What are we doing badly?)
3. “What should our company **continue** to do, that it currently does?” (What are we doing well?)



For easy survey implementation, we like these on-line tools: [Constant Contact](#) and [SurveyMonkey](#).

II. Conduct a Customer Survey



When is the last time you polled your customers for feedback? If you have never conducted a customer survey before, do it this summer. For starters, consider a “[Start-Stop-Continue](#)” survey described above. Or resurrect questions from a previously conducted survey. Or find good customer survey questions on-line. Be bold: conduct a phone survey, to get more responses from customers.

III. Launch Your Internet and “Social Media” Presence

Using inexpensive services such as [Network Solutions](#) or [GoDaddy](#), register a domain name for your company and create a company web site. A simple, non-transactional web site is good enough for now, if you do not yet have any web site at all today. Include this information in your new web site:



- ✓ A description of what your company does
- ✓ List of products you sell, perhaps with images
- ✓ List of manufacturers you represent, perhaps with their logos and links to their web sites
- ✓ Contact and location information



Create a company page at [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#) too.

Do not expect to increase sales simply because your company has a web site. But the reality is that the next generation of decision-makers at your customers expects your company to have a web site. And a LinkedIn page. And a Facebook page. Just because.

IV. Do a Competitive Cost Analysis of Warehouse Consumables and Office Supplies

Why do you buy shipping materials and office supplies from your current source(s)? When was the last time you compared prices for these items from at least two alternative suppliers? A good price comparison project may reveal easy-to-capture savings opportunities. Implementing those savings may actually cover the cost of your summer intern.



V. Automate Your Inventory Data Uploads to WarehouseTWO



Increase your company’s sales territory by making your inventory available to peer distributors at [WarehouseTWO](#). Best practice is to upload fresh inventory data every night, via scheduled scripts. Does setting this up sound daunting to you? Or perhaps you just have not made this a priority? We

would bet that any tech-savvy millennial would welcome this challenge. If he/she can be shown how to extract data from your company's ERP system via your available report generator, he/she should be able to automate your inventory data uploads with these [step-by-step instructions](#). Contact us for help getting started.

About the Author



After a successful career in sales and operations management in the wholesale-distribution industry, Mark Tomalonis is now principal of [WarehouseTWO, LLC](#). He amuses himself by writing articles, such as this one, to help wholesaler-distributors execute their operations better. Mark's articles and tips are published in WarehouseTWO's monthly e-newsletters. [Click here to subscribe.](#)

About WarehouseTWO

WarehouseTWO, LLC is an independent "inventory-sharing" service created exclusively for durable goods manufacturers and their authorized distributors, and for any group of durable goods "peer" wholesaler-distributors, such as members of a buying/marketing group or cooperative. To learn how inventory-sharing with WarehouseTWO can help your business, visit the WarehouseTWO [web site](#), or email info@warehousetwo.com.