



Volunteers and Interns: When Free is Too Good To Be True

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Clarence Belnavis' article "Volunteers and Interns: When Free is Too Good To Be True" was featured in *The Vancouver Business Journal* on October 17, 2014.

In the article, Clarence cautions organizations to weigh carefully when deciding whether or not to accept volunteers or interns for "free", as a way of gaining experience. The Washington Minimum Wage Act and the federal Fair Standards Act both make it clear that if you "suffer" or permit someone to work on your behalf, they are entitled to be paid for their time. A failure to do so may result in you being liable for at least the minimum wage, and perhaps overtime, associated with the work at issue plus additional penalties and/or liquidated damages.

There continues to be a rise in wage and hour lawsuits whether as individual or class claims. These are expensive cases and normally entitle a successful plaintiff to attorneys' fees as well as the lost wages and penalties/damages. Clarence advises employers to take the time to properly investigate and set-up any volunteer or intern relationship. Otherwise, that "free" help may cost employers dearly.

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Related People



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