

# Guru Quest

## Milking the cash cow... and just milking cows

I think I have the most highly qualified work-experience student in the world. She has Graduate Diploma in Business Admin (which is half an MBA in the Australian curriculum) and has almost finished a Diploma in HR. She speaks fluent Mandarin, has about six years solid work experience internationally, and anything you throw at her she'll catch. Oh, and she's happy filing and doing grunt admin work! (Yes, her shirt tag says 'Made in Heaven'.)

When staffing is tight—as it has been for some of us post Global Financial Hissy-fit, this kind of resource makes all the difference. Hence, my 'Top Tips for Resourceful Resourcing' below. I was going to call it 'Top Tips to Effectively Exploit Work Experience Students'—but some HR types might not get that I'm actually joking when I write it. (They get serious, those HR types—we L&D types are MUCH more fun:)

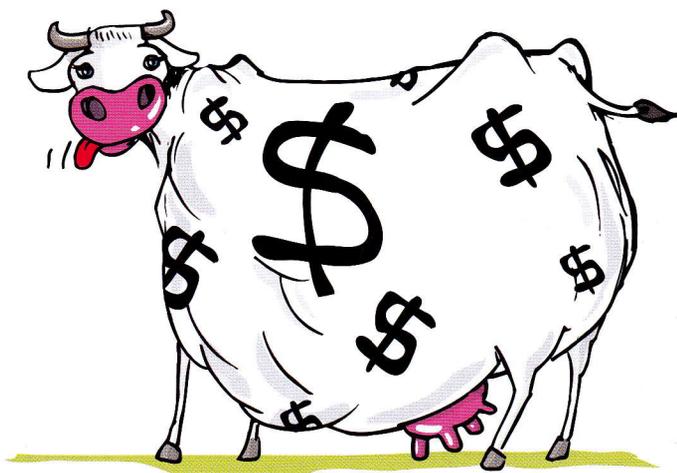
### Six Top Tips for Resourceful Resourcing

1. Expect a lot from your work experience student/ intern and select on that basis.
2. Have them create clear goals of what they want to achieve during their time with you.
3. Give them a full orientation—this will drastically improve their productivity and engagement. AND it is a great example of best practice onboarding. They're here to learn, remember.
4. Have regular one-on-one chats with your student to discuss their study assignments, review their goals and to give them feedback about their work.
5. Grab your team member who is on the lowest pay scale and make them mainly responsible with you for creating work for the student and monitoring their progress. (Don't worry, it will be fine! They may need a little coaching but who doesn't?)
6. As your team member hands over more and more work, hand over more and more work of a higher level to them. And create that expectation with them before engaging a student. I even involve my team member in the

interview. It's great exposure for them in interviewing and selection as well, and they can type up any notes:)

You see, it's an amazing developmental opportunity for both of them, and a very easy model that leaves you more 'hands free' in that situation. Not rocket science—it is all commonsense.

It's always much easier when you help your manager discover the idea as their own.



But here's the kicker; I used this model once with an HR manager who really couldn't see the value in it. She constantly reminded me that the student wasn't perhaps the option we should be going for, despite an absolute ban on recruiting any more contract or permanent staff. Why? Perhaps because it wasn't her idea? This was my fault really. I should have known better (now this is the gold—sorry, shameless Olympics plug): It's always much easier when you help your manager discover the idea as their own. Duhhhh! But I seemed to forget about it the higher up the ladder I climbed. I forgot that what was true 10 years ago for frontline managers is as true today for

C-level executives. Nice to know some things never change. Work experience students will always be available, as will managers with control issues. It's how I milk them both that makes the difference. ■