

Program L.I.F.T. – Leaning Into the Future Together

Purpose:

To provide real-life work experience to teens and college students ages 16 to 22 who are actively enrolled in school. To mentor applicants while providing on-the-job training in office etiquette, business technology and responsibility.

Qualifications and Considerations:

- The program initially is open to children of company employees but can be expanded to nonemployee applicants if spots are available.
- Applicants should be enrolled in school but are eligible to participate while on summer break or out of school due to unforeseen circumstances such as COVID-19.
- Applicants will be selected, in part, based on their grades to ensure they understand opportunity comes with hard work.
- Consider giving opportunities first to applicants 18 or older who may be preparing for college or the workforce and will benefit most immediately from this program.
- Ensure all applicable labor regulations are followed, particularly for participants ages 16 and 17, including monitoring work hours and mandatory breaks. Consult your human resources manager or attorney for specific guidelines.

Do's and Don'ts:

Do:

- Encourage every day. Remember, most, if not all, aspects of the business world will be new to Program LIFT participants. Nurture their curiosity and build their confidence.
- Evaluate what's working well and what needs improvement. Change what needs changing.
- Ask questions regularly Young employees may be hesitant to speak up, so foster discussion and listen.
- Monitor work quality daily. Positive feedback will produce improvement - and reduce your stress.
- Evaluate performance against guidance and effort. Does the employee understand the task? Is the effort up to par? Is the employee qualified for the position? Do coaching and instructions need to improve?
- If a young employee is unhappy with the job, speak with them empathetically. Can changes be made to the role? Is there another position available? If a resolution isn't possible, encourage them to find other employment before leaving. This helps teens and young adults learn to manage emotions and avoid overreacting.

Don'ts:

- Don't belittle. It's a simple premise but important to remember as young egos are fragile.
- Don't be quick to judge. Remember why you made this commitment: You're working to improve young people's knowledge and self-esteem.
- Don't forget young employees likely have no frame of reference. What they experience at your company can help guide their educational and career paths.
- Don't forget you're a mentor. You may be their first impression of how a leader educates. Make it a positive experience - this first impression will never be replaced.

How to start the program:

Compile job duties by department, including entry-level tasks and the hours required per week for those tasks.

- Interview and select applicants using your normal hiring process. This will help young participants learn how to conduct themselves in business settings.
- Ensure the selected applicant has a direct supervisor and/or mentor. The employee will have questions and should always feel comfortable voicing their concern. From there you will learn where to improve your hiring practices.
- Specify job tasks, descriptions and expectations in writing. Highlight any time-sensitivity and or potential liability considerations.
- Determine work schedule options, including hours and days worked. Offering minimum 2- to 4-hour shifts, with flexibility for family and study responsibilities, may help your Program LIFT attract a larger talent pool.
- Identify equipment and technology requirements for the role. If the employee will be working remotely, do they have adequate internet access, computer hardware, a smartphone and a dedicated workspace? How will company data and personally identifiable information be protected on-site and/or remotely?

In announcing Program LIFT to your staff, consider the following template:

Good day! We are proud to announce the development of Program LIFT, a new initiative to provide real-life work experience to teens and college students actively enrolled in school.

The program initially will be available to your daughters and sons, ages 16 to 22, but may be expanded to nonemployee dependents based on available positions. The goal is to provide talented and hard-working youngsters with real-life professional experience as they prepare for college or the workforce. At the same time, Program LIFT can boost our efficiency by freeing up more of our time from routine tasks and allowing us to better focus on primary client functions.

To help guide our planning, please provide me with a list of departmental tasks that could be handled by employees with minimal training and experience. This could include tasks such as data entry, scanning, sorting and uploading. Please also provide an estimate of time spent on these tasks weekly.

I'm sure you'll have questions and suggestions, so please feel free to reach out.

Thanks in advance!

Interview Questions to Consider:

Job applicants, even experienced professionals, are often uncomfortable talking about themselves. Questions such as “What is your greatest strength?” or “What is your favorite thing about yourself?” can be tricky to answer. This may be particularly true for young applicants. The following questions are designed to guide the interview process and make applicants more comfortable in their ability to answer. Follow your municipal guidelines with respect to asking questions as some may not be allowed based on local or state laws. It’s a good idea to speak with an attorney who specializes in employment law to ensure you’re above reproach.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want to work here?
3. What are you passionate about?
4. What is your dream job?
5. What is your favorite thing about yourself?
6. How would your friends describe you?
7. What is your greatest weakness?
8. What is your greatest accomplishment?
9. What do you want to learn while you are here?
10. Have you ever had to work or learn remotely?
11. Do you have any questions for me?
12. What is your favorite subject in school and why?
13. What is your least favorite and why?
14. Do you participate in any volunteer activities? What are they and why?
15. Do you participate in any other activities outside school? What are they and why?

New Hire Welcome Email:

Hi _____, it was such a pleasure speaking with you today and we are thrilled that you’ll be joining the RISC team!

We covered a lot of ground on our call, so I want to provide you with documents summarizing the Program LIFT highlights, as well as additional information (attached) about RISC and the various tasks our team members perform. Also, as I mentioned, the next steps you can expect include:

- I’ll send you an email with a link and instructions to get you added to the payroll system.
- Once you complete your portion, please send me a copy of your passport (I use that for my portion of Form I-9 to verify employment eligibility).
- You’ll be provided with a company laptop and an additional monitor for your work with RISC.
- IT staff will provide guidance on the software programs you’ll be accessing, and you’ll be given a RISC company email address.
- Once you’re up and running, we’ll schedule a quick Zoom meeting for introductions to the management team with whom you’ll be.
- You’ll receive instructions on setting up and using your time clock.
- The office manager will coordinate with you on your training and work schedule.
- You will be designated a direct supervisor to speak with if you have questions or concerns.

We’re all looking forward to working with you! If you have questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at any time.

Welcome to the RISC team!

HR Director

Exit Interview Survey

These questions can foster open communication to improve the hiring process, employee experience and overall program:

- What was your favorite experience or memory from your job or job duties?
- What was your least favorite job duty or experience?
- Is there something you believe we should add to the process?
- Did you gain valuable skills here?
- Can you name a skill that you developed while here?
- Can you name a skill you wished you had time to focus on?
- Did working here help you identify an area of study you'd like to pursue or technology you'd like to learn more about?
- Did you receive enough support to do your job?
- How did your job differ from your expectations?
- What expectations were or were not met? (time, office environment, type of work, etc.)
- What advice would you offer a young hire like yourself?
- How would you improve Program LIFT?
- Would you recommend Program LIFT to others? Why/why not?