

# INTERNS. WHY YOU NEED THEM, HOW TO LEAD THEM, AND WHAT MOST LEADERS GET WRONG



## Key Concepts with Timestamp Ranges

*(Timestamps from Lead Ministry Podcast Episode 307)*

### 1. The Real Reason to Have Interns: Building the Future, Not Just Handling Tasks

**05:45–08:12**

Interns are not primarily to reduce your workload. They exist to build the next generation of ministry leaders. This forces you, the leader, to articulate and pass on skills. Teaching others sharpens your own leadership.

### 2. Where to Find Interns

**08:41–10:20**

Sources include

- College students coming home for the summer
- High school students already serving
- Former students of your ministry
- Strong adult volunteers who want deeper involvement

The pool is wider than most leaders think.

### 3. Roles for Different Seasons: Not All Internships Look the Same

**10:27–13:25**

Internships can be

- 12-week summer intensives
- Year-long, part-time high school internships
- Event-specific roles (VBS, fall festivals, youth trips)
- Administrative or logistics-based roles tied to major ministry cycles

Each season requires different strengths.

### 4. Interns Are Not Grunt Workers

## **16:00–17:20**

Cutting name tags and doing setup cannot be the core of the internship. These tasks are fine, but only if you connect their work to kingdom impact. If tasks have no meaning attached, you are crippling their development and your leadership capacity.

## **5. You Must Actively Train Them**

### **21:29–23:35**

Training is part of the job.

Internships take time. Give leadership content, assign books, model decision-making, show your thinking, and connect dots between task and mission. Do not insulate them from real ministry work.

## **6. They Should Leave Better Than They Came**

### **24:31–26:52**

Interns should receive more value than they give. Even discovering that vocational ministry isn't for them is a win. Many interns later serve in local churches or other vocations with a much stronger foundation because of their exposure.

## **7. Die to Perfectionism**

### **27:00–29:26**

If you cannot tolerate mistakes, you cannot develop people. Let interns try, fail, learn, and try again. Give away the keys. Your standards stay high, but your grip loosens. Leaders who silently “fix” everything sabotage growth for everyone.

## **How to Teach This to Your Team**

### **1. Use the Succession Lens**

Ask your team, “If we vanished tomorrow, what would continue?”

This reframes interns from “extra hands” to “future leaders.”

### **2. Show the Productivity Exchange**

Teach your staff:

- Leading an intern costs 20 percent of your short-term productivity
- But multiplies your long-term leadership impact

Use Josh's language. A leader without the capacity to guide an intern is not ready for a staff person.

### **3. Teach the Dot-Connection Skill**

Train your team to articulate

- What the task is

- Why it matters
- How it connects to discipleship or mission

Interns need meaning, not mindless tasks.

## **4. Normalize Imperfect Development**

Tell stories from the episode.

- The disgruntled staffer
- The students who became medical or counseling professionals
- The football analogy about “playing the freshmen”

This helps your team accept slower, messier development as part of leadership.

# **Exercises and Implementation Guidelines**

## **Personal Application**

### **1. Define Your Internship Philosophy (10 minutes)**

Write two sentences.

- Why your ministry should invest in interns
- What value you want them to walk away with

### **2. Identify Your Next Intern (5 minutes)**

List three potential people. One high school. One college. One strong adult volunteer.

### **3. Choose One Training Input**

Pick: a book, a course module, or a weekly discussion topic.

### **4. Audit Your Perfectionism**

List the top three tasks you grip too tightly. Circle one to release in the next month.

## **Team Application**

### **1. Build a Seasonal Internship Map**

Using the year ahead, identify windows where interns could be effective.

- Summer
- VBS
- Fall festival
- Youth retreat season
- Administrative planning periods

### **2. Create a “Value Path” for Interns**

Map out three things every intern will learn, three things they will experience, and one leadership moment they will own.

### **3. Establish Training Cadence**

- Weekly 30-minute meeting
- One leadership resource or book
- Clear goals for each month

### **4. Normalize Feedback Loops**

Teach your team to use the formula:

“Great job on \_\_\_\_. Next time try \_\_\_\_.”

No silent corrections. Everything becomes a teaching moment.

## **Action Oriented Closing**

Interns multiply your ministry. Not tomorrow, but long term. They force you to slow down, articulate your process, and give away ownership. That is how leaders grow. It is how ministries grow. It is how the kingdom grows.

If you are waiting for the perfect moment, you will never start. If you are waiting to feel ready, you won't. Leaders get sharper by leading. Interns get better by trying. And your ministry gets stronger when you stop doing everything yourself and start developing others.

Start the internship program. Keep it simple. Keep it intentional. Do the work that multiplies leaders, not just tasks. Your future ministry will thank you. Your current stress level will thank you. And the people you invest in will carry those lessons for decades.