

Unpaid Interns may be Interred

By Reg P. Wydeven
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This summer I plan to see a lot of movies with my family. I still need to see 'Star Trek Into Darkness.' 'Despicable Me 2' is the movie my kids are asking me to take them to. My buddies and I will probably catch 'Man of Steel.' I'm hoping to convince my dad to come to 'The Lone Ranger.' Finally, my wife and I will watch 'The Internship.'

Starring the dynamic duo of Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson, 'The Internship' focuses on the two comedians whose jobs as salesmen become obsolete in the digital world. Luckily, they land highly sought after internships at Google. According to the film's official website, the pair have to compete with "a group of the nation's most elite, tech-savvy geniuses" for a full-time job with the Internet juggernaut.

While the concept of these two interns IN a movie sounds hilarious, two actual interns working ON a movie is far less amusing.

Eric Glatt and Alexander Footman sued Fox Searchlight Pictures because the studio failed to pay them while they worked as interns on the production of the 2010 movie 'Black Swan.' Apparently, working alongside Natalie Portman and Mila Kunis was not enough, as the interns demanded payment because they provided a benefit to the studio, just like paid employees.

Glatt and Footman performed administrative tasks such as organizing filing cabinets, tracking purchase orders, making copies, drafting cover letters and running errands, for which they felt they should have been compensated. U.S. District Judge William H. Pauley III, the federal judge in New York who presided over the case, agreed with the interns.

Pauley held that Fox violated minimum wage and overtime laws by not paying Glatt and Footman, who did the same work as regular employees, provided value to the company and performed low-level tasks that didn't require any specialized training.

In his decision, Pauley wrote that, "Undoubtedly Mr. Glatt and Mr. Footman received some benefits from their internships, such as resume listings, job references and an understanding of how a production office works." However, he went on to say that "those benefits were incidental to working in the office like any other employees and were not the result of internships intentionally structured to benefit them."

In turn, 20th Century Fox disagreed with the decision. Spokesman Chris Petrikin claims the decision was erroneous and Fox intends to appeal. While the studio concedes it got assistance for free, Fox argues that the interns benefited more from the arrangement because the opportunity opened many employment doors for them.

Jacob Turner, the interns' attorney, lauded the decision, claiming it established that "interns have the same wage and hour rights as other employees." Turner elaborated, saying, "You can't just call something an internship and expect not to pay people when the interns are providing a direct benefit to the company."

Because of the federal decision, legal experts believe many employers will do away with unpaid internships out of fear of getting sued. They are reportedly outwaged.

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