

AOL



Business Outcomes

- Successful entry-level recruitment strategy
- Reinforce diversity strategy
- Pipeline of vetted skilled talent source
- Risk-free talent exploration

Student/Employee Impact

- Gain corporate experience
- Earn college credit and stipend

Year Up™

- Corporate internship
- Technical training
- Career entry opportunity
- Nearly 2000 participants
- 29% of graduates enrolled in postsecondary education

Diverse and Productive Entry-Level Talent Accessed at Competitive Cost AOL and Year Up™

The Year Up Organization provides guaranteed successful intern match to the company at a fixed-price, offering cost competitive opportunity to explore entry-level talent on a risk-free trial basis.

Celebrating their 25th anniversary this year (2010), AOL, like so many corporations in the current economic climate, has experienced contraction in the past two years. However, it remains a leading global web services company, including a network of premium and niche content sites, and an extensive offering of world-class tools and platforms. With the imperative to provide innovative products and valuable services to multiple customer lines, AOL looks for skilled talent to join their workforce of over 5,000—particularly among technically savvy youth. Since partnering with the outside organization, Year Up, AOL has been able to draw from a pool of vetted, enthusiastic, trained, and diverse young people who come to them first as interns.

High-Tech Companies Need Technically Skilled Talent Pool

One of the difficult challenges for many employers is finding skilled entry-level talent. According to AOL Senior Technical Director, Todd Alston, they “go through quite a few candidates before finding young people with applicable abilities and the will to succeed.” Since 2007, AOL has partnered with Year Up and the new Chief Technology Officer, Alex Gounares, is the executive sponsor for the engagement. AOL has recognized the opportunity to access a pipeline of future talent.

AOL contracts for a fee with Year Up annually for a specific number of interns based on organizational needs. When the young people show up for their six-month internship they have already completed six-months of rigorous classroom training that includes essential technical skills needed to meet basic skill requirements of AOL. They step into entry-level positions with the expectation that further internal training will quickly make them productive, contributing members of a

technology team in areas such as IT, network operations, desktop support, or operations analysis. AOL supervisors find Year Up interns to be “smart people who want to work,” and they vie for incoming candidates.

PERSONAL STORY

At 23 Colby Reece was working a dead-end retail job, having withdrawn from Morgan State College after two years. The pressures of both work and school were too much. When he heard that Year Up offered the opportunity to earn college credits and gain a corporate internship while receiving training and a stipend, he applied and was accepted into the program in northern Virginia. After six months of classroom instruction with Year Up, Colby was matched with AOL. At the end of his internship, Colby was offered a full-time entry-level position with the AOL Search Engine Optimization (SEO) team. With AOL for nearly two years, he credits Year Up with instilling in him the professionalism required to “get in the game,” and, he is thankful to AOL for continuous mentoring and training. Colby is now back in college at Northern Virginia Community College, with the intent of earning a bachelor’s degree, made possible by the flexible work schedule and living wage at AOL.

Leveraging the Investment

Once interns are on board, AOL makes strategic investments in these young people that mirror the Year Up experiences of, “High Support, High Expectation.” AOL created the “Year Up Success Program” that taps managers to provide interns with a range of developmental experiences along three well-defined pillars: mentoring, training, and consistent feedback.

Contact Peggy Walton with Corporate Voices to learn more about this learn and earn program or join the “Learn & Earn” Business Leadership Team at 202-467-8137 or pwalton@corporatevoices.org

The internship period allows AOL to observe both the hard and soft skills of the interns and to determine if there is a good fit within the organization. AOL considers the per intern fee of approximately \$21,000 to Year Up a fixed price, cost-competitive training and entry level talent exploration.

At the end of the internship period, interns who prove to be a good match for available openings are offered entry-level positions with annual salaries beginning at \$35,000. As regular, full-time employees, the young people gain access to AOL's online training portal, AOL University, which provides instructor-led training and thousands of learning resources, and to AOL's tuition assistance program to support completion of postsecondary credentials.

AOL has extended the Year Up partnership to their New York City office and are currently fielding inquiries from their Mountain View, CA office.

■ A Partnership that Serves Multiple Constituencies

In the partnership with Year Up, AOL has found a diverse pool of skilled and highly-motivated young people, who are proving to be a source of vetted, entry-level workers. This comes at no risk beyond the one-time fee as Year Up "guarantees" employers a successful intern match. Year Up maintains close communications with AOL. Early on AOL noted that interns needed basic skills in LINUX systems and Year Up quickly integrated the LINUX training into the curriculum. To date, AOL has converted many interns to full-time employees and plans to continue that practice.

During the first six months of rigorous classroom training at Year Up, National Capital Region, interns are co-enrolled at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), earning 18 hours of college credits. Interns also earn a weekly stipend to off-set living expenses during the entire year. Considering that most

interns come from difficult life situations, the majority make the most of their Year Up to develop the skills and connections needed to embark on a path to economic self-sufficiency.

"Students come in with some technical skills and a proven desire to succeed. These are sharp students that we can train [further]."

— Todd Alston
Senior Technical Director
AOL

■ Partners

Year Up is a one-year, intensive training program that provides urban young adults 18-24, with a unique combination of technical and professional skills, college credits, an educational stipend and corporate internship. Year Up operates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, National Capital Region, New York City, Providence, and the San Francisco Bay area. They partner with a post secondary institution to award 18 college credits to interns for work accomplished during the six-month classroom training period. In the National Capital Region, Year Up partners with **NVCC** and **The Community College of Baltimore County** to create an on-campus learning experience for interns. Nearly 2000 young adults have completed the Year Up experience with 85% obtaining a job earning \$30,000/ year within four months of completing the program. Approximately 29% of Year Up graduates are enrolled in post secondary institutions.

For more information about Year Up, visit www.yearup.org

For more information about Northern Virginia Community College, visit www.nvcc.edu

For more information about The Community College of Baltimore County, visit www.ccbcmd.edu

For more information about AOL, visit www.aol.com

SECTOR: Global web service provider

EMPLOYEES: 4,500+

HISTORY: 25+ years

Funded, in part, by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

About Corporate Voices

Corporate Voices is the leading national business membership organization representing the private sector on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policies that reflect collaboration among the private sector, government and other stakeholders.

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Find Out More

Corporate Voices is committed to identifying and spotlighting businesses supporting postsecondary completion while making significant contributions to internal company goals. "Best practice" talent development models that increase access to career opportunities through education and training are being examined for characteristics that are transferable and replicable to other employers. This research is being conducted with the guidance of the Corporate Voices Learn and Earn Business Leadership Team consisting of business executives leading promising models and those interested in peer-to-peer learning. If you are interested in joining, contact Peggy Walton at pwalton@corporatevoices.org. Team members include:

- Northrop Grumman
- Expeditors
- Yum Brands, Inc.
- Accenture
- Marriott International
- UPS