

Ten guidelines to managing teenaged employees

By Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

Chances are one in five that the next employee you hire will be the workplace enigma known as a teenager. By following 10 simple guidelines, roller skating rink operators and managers can turn the teenaged assistant into a valuable team player.

Scout talent. Roller rink owners have a distinct advantage when it comes to recruiting because teens are frequent customers. Josh Lenty, co-owner and director of operations at RollerDrome Skating Rink in Nampa, Idaho, notes, "Most kids who come here often envision working for us. We pick teenagers that we think will be great employees based on their attitude, willingness to work and do what is needed. Most of our teenagers have helped around the rink with cleanup and picking up skates before we actually hire them."

A teen employee who has a passion for skating can convey that passion to customers and co-workers. Other sources for teen employees are activities where young people can demonstrate character and responsibility. High school vocational training programs and cooperative education programs are often excellent sources for high-caliber teen employees. Ask for referrals from coaches, high school faculty, current customers and current employees.

Invest time in interviewing. Don't judge teenagers on appearance. Consider their personalities and the ways they

express themselves, rather than just how they look. Look for a positive attitude and communication skills.

For a teen employee, a job may represent independence, maturity or just necessary cash. When they realize that they can satisfy their goals and yours by doing a better job, they become better employees.

Know the score. Utilize social media tools when recruiting teens by posting the jobs online. Use facebook and other sites to check out a teen's profile. You can learn about an employee's attitudes from what he or she posts on his or her wall and can determine whether the teen you are considering is a serious person or a rowdy partier.

Communicate. A teen on his or her first job may be reluctant to ask questions or clarify instructions. Build a positive working relationship by communicating in clear, caring and respectful ways. Build credibility by dealing with each person one-on-one. Don't talk down to teens or treat them as children. Be fair and consistent. Avoid showing favoritism.

Criticize constructively. Avoid



August Henning helps Torri Valentine with her skates at RollerDrome Roller Skating Rink in Nampa, Idaho. (Photo credit: Kearney Thompson)

being overly critical. Use tact when correcting. Reward the positive rather than criticize the negative. It never hurts to say "You're doing a good job and I want you to know I know that." When giving feedback or educating, remember what it was like working for older people when you were a teen. Emulate those bosses you liked when you were a young employee. "Build their self-esteem by telling them what they are doing well," advises Lenty.

Set clear expectations and consistent, attainable goals. Because teens may not have any prior work experience, you have to define all aspects of the job including punctuality, scheduling and how to work with customers. Make sure they also know what you don't want them to do on the job such as texting, talking on the phone and chatting with friends that stop by.

Teens are used to constant praise and immediate rewards. Make expectations, requirements and milestones clear, and be consistent with rewards or consequences.

Vary tasks and motivate by adding more responsibilities or conferring a title. Teens resist routine tasks and often have short attention spans. If a teen employee demonstrates aptitude, let him or her participate more. You may be surprised by your employees' performance when you entrust them with more responsibility. Teens like to deal with customers and are good salespeople. Managers who don't use teens on the sales floor are short-changing their business. Teen salespeople bring in friends and increase business.

Ask teen employees their opinions, especially in areas such as social media and the pro shop's window displays. Teens provide another perspective and are often creative.

Cross train. Understand that teens will likely have other commitments, such as school or maybe another job, that will affect their availability. Be flexible in

scheduling work hours. Scheduling can be affected by laws, work permits and homework or social functions, which may take precedence over work. To prepare for a high absenteeism rate, train all employees in every task in your operation – including assisting customers with skates or stocking the snack bar. Cross-training helps build team work, a sense of responsibility and loyalty, and reduces friction. Supervise closely. Some teens have not yet developed strong listening skills. Reinforce directives, follow up assignments and repeat instructions frequently. Teens often lack focus. "Teens are distracted easily by cell phones, computers, etc. They need accountability," said RollerDrome's Lenty. "We have checklists and an employee manual that states exactly what is expected of them."

Take time to coach. The teen worker sometimes acts like a child but wants to be treated as an adult. You are more than an employer – you're also a teacher. "The biggest challenge in managing teens is getting them to understand that the customer comes first," observed Lenty.

Cheer them on. Working with a teenager can be a mutually beneficial experience – a roller skating rink manager with a positive attitude will gain the respect and cooperation needed from the teen worker. If the teen's first supervisor is a positive role model, the teen will become a valuable team player. Remember, you have the opportunity to influence the teenager's work attitude for the rest of his or her life.

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is a freelance writer, speaker, recruiter and career coach. You can reach her at PamRecruit@q.com. Photographer: Kearney Thompson. Facebook page: Kearney Merritt Photography, <http://www.facebook.com/kearneymerrittphotography>.

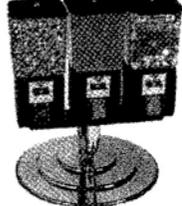
Smiles

...We Know How to Get Them

Wide Selection of Equipment

- ★ Bulk Vending Machines (Northwestern, Oak)
- ★ Kinetic (Coaster, Sports Ball, Kinetic Kid, Kazoom Sports Blaster, Kinetic Pinball)
- ★ Giant Bulk Vending Machines (Spiral Track Roadrunner, Wizard)
- ★ Sticker Machines (2, 4, or 6 Column)
- ★ Kiddie Rides (U.S. Distributor for Jolly Roger, R.G. Mitchell)





Best Selection of Product

- ★ Scrumptious Bulk Candies, Jawbreakers, Gum
- ★ Hottest Capsuled Novelties
- ★ Exciting Stickers and Tattoos



One Stop Shopping
Delivered to Your Door
www.theisenvending.com

THEISEN VENDING COMPANY

2335 Nevada Ave. N. Golden Valley, MN 55427
(800) 633-3436 • (612) 827-5588 • FAX (612) 827-7543

SATISFACTION
—at the drop
of a coin!

★ Serving America's Children for 40 Years ★