



# 10 Ways to Get Free & Cheap Help for Your Small Business

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By Carol Tice

When you're a small business, there is always too much to do and not enough hours in the day. You could use some extra hands, and maybe a mentor to give you some advice. But often, working capital is tight. Good news: There are many ways to get the help you need for free or at worst for very little cost. Here are ten options to explore for getting the help you need:

1. **Unpaid internship.** Federal rules on this are fairly strict, as unpaid interns cannot work directly on anything that brings you a profit. But you may have some tasks an unpaid intern could handle.
2. **Paid internship.** Often, it's just a small stipend, as many internships are primarily for school credit. But this can be a great way to get some cheap additional labor, especially in the summertime. Both types of internships can also be a great way to audition possible full-time hires in a no-risk way.
3. **Student clubs.** Future Business Leaders of America and Junior Achievement are business-oriented youth clubs that encourage entrepreneurship. Their members are always looking for interesting business projects to work on that they could present to their club. Business students can be helpful for conducting quick market research, for instance.
4. **Business students.** Ditto for college entrepreneurship students — these youth need business experience and projects that could serve as case studies for college credit.
5. **Family and friends.** If you have a work crunch, it's possible you could blow the family to a pizza or a special movie night and get them to help you through it. For instance, I know a family with a boutique winery that gets friends to come help with the crush. And personally, I get my 10- and 11-year-old kids to moderate my blog's spam for a pittance.
6. **Barter.** Got a service business? If there's something you don't know how to do in your business, such as web design, you might be able to arrange a trade directly with that provider. Also consider joining a time bank, where you'll have more flexibility in trading to get what you want.

7. **SCORE.** Did you know that experienced, retired business owners volunteer their time mentoring entrepreneurs to help them succeed? Sounds too good to be true, but it's real. The sad thing is how few owners look to take advantage of SCORE counselors.
8. **SBA offices.** The Small Business Administration has general offices with services and resources for small business owners, as well as specialized programs focused on helping women, veterans, minorities, and businesses seeking to become federal government contractors. Their services are all free — take advantage!
9. **State entrepreneurship resources.** States are increasingly active in encouraging entrepreneurship as well. Check with your state's department of revenue for leads on incubators, mentoring programs, and other assistance they may offer.
10. **Nonprofit assistance.** Because of the vital importance of the small business sector to our nation's economic health, there are many nonprofits focused on helping startups succeed. One of the biggest is the Kauffman Foundation, which has many programs to help entrepreneurs at different stages.

When you're feeling overwhelmed, think about whether there is a free or low-cost way you could get the help you need. Your business will move forward faster, and you'll be less stressed. ***How do you find affordable help for your business?*** Leave a comment and share your tips. *Carol Tice is the author of [The Pocket Small Business Guide to Starting Your Business on a Shoestring](#) (Allworth Press). Learn more about her at [caroltice.com](http://caroltice.com).*

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