

Gawker is latest target of unpaid intern class action

Unpaid interns for the website Gawker.com have won a round in court in their attempt to bring a class-action suit under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

A federal judge has ruled that lawyers bringing the suit can send notices to unpaid interns throughout the company who could potentially join the lawsuit.

The judge did not decide on the interns' claims, but did rule they had sufficiently common characteristics to be certified as a class.

The court ruled the interns performed work similar to that of paid employees, contributed content to Gawker's publications, moderated sections of its websites and received primarily on-the-job training. They had to follow Gawker's general policies, were supervised in the same way as employees and received communications from management in the same way employees did. They also used the same internal communications systems employees did, were expected to work independently and received no special training or instruction.

In other words, the company treated the interns just like employees in all ways except one—they weren't paid.

Note: Suing on behalf of unpaid interns is the hottest trend in employment law. Don't be a victim! Discuss your internships with your attorney so they can be structured in a legal way. Simply using interns to supplement your workforce will land you in court.