

Hiring

When Hiring Graduates, Avoid These Mistakes

by Tom Moore and Brandon Labman

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It's that time of year again, and many a manager's inbox has become flooded with the résumés of (very) soon-to-be college graduates. And while most hiring managers are well-versed in best practices for recruiting Millennials, it's amazing to us — as somewhat recent graduates ourselves — how many firms still make the same mistakes when hiring “the best” of Gen Y.

Take this example from our experience of one old-school hiring process, in which an IT firm disheartened several qualified candidates with an overly formal and invasive first-round interview. After a three-hour initial meeting, the firm had mentally drained the young candidates with surprise skill assessment tests and a last-minute decision to have them re-screened by multiple executives. To make matters worse, the candidates were confined to just a couple of rooms — and the company failed to give any insight, spoken or demonstrated, into the office environment. The group left exhausted, without any idea of the company's culture or values. One candidate, believing two hours worth of quarters would suffice for parking, returned from the interview to find a parking ticket on her windshield.

As proprietors of a college-focused recruiting firm since 2003, we've seen examples like this again and again. Outdated interview practices turn off would-be Millennial employees too early in the recruitment process. **More than anything, recent college grads are looking to see how they will fit into your company's culture.**

Communicating culture informally — giving office tours as part of the interview, engaging and forming relationships with prospects while they are underclassmen, and showcasing flexibility — are important techniques to implement. Ultimately, your recruitment approach must evolve from “expect a follow-up if you're qualified,” to “let us show you what we are all about.”

This means that to reach top-performing Gen Ys, don't behave like the hiring managers we've seen who make these common mistakes:

They evaluate for past experience rather than potential and trainability. College students don't have a wealth of resume experience, so it is crucial to look at where they are headed as opposed to where they have been. When talking with students, keep your eyes open for those that are passionate, fit culturally with your company, and have a deep knowledge of their field.

They only offer a highly-structured internship program.

Shadowing experiences, informational interviews, and informal professional development classes are highly effective entry-level recruitment methods. Contact professors and student organizations directly in order to set up speaking and presentation opportunities in the classroom and on campus. By avoiding the cumbersome interview and evaluation processes associated with structured internships, these tools are far cheaper, less resource intensive, and more conducive to building relationships.

They don't highlight, or even offer, flexible work arrangements.

Millennials tend to care more about social and flexible work environments than high salaries. Entice them with perks that matter to them, like extra vacation time, telework options, and flexible scheduling.

The interview process is rigid, even when the company is informal. Before you offer the job, keep in mind that a good interview should communicate company culture and benefits to the interviewee just as much as it qualifies the candidate. This can be as simple as showing the candidate around the office or introducing her to some potential coworkers. If your company has a youthful, tech-minded, or innovative vibe, try to convey that (but don't fake it).

To remain competitive in this growing job market, you must tailor your selection process to the next generation as they graduate. By avoiding these mistakes, managers will not only hire the highest potentials from the Millennial crop, but also start to understand how to effectively manage them once they enter the workplace.

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