Future Proofing
Graduate Recruitment

The skills shortage is talked about widely in the press and yes, it’s real, particularly in the engineering sector where competition is fierce. A recent CBI survey quoted demand for around 87,000 graduate engineers each year for the next 10 years in the UK. However, we are only producing 46,000 engineering graduates each year, and it’s not only engineers who are in demand! So, with competition starting at entry level, “Future Proofing” your Graduate recruitment is key.
What do they think about your sector/organisation?

We recently surveyed STEM students on behalf of one of our water clients to get a feel for the perception of the organisation. In doing so we discovered that over 70% had never even considered a career in the water industry at all, but would do so if they had access to more information.

Accepting this is a small sample and for a specific organisation, it is however indicative of how important real engagement with students is. Building interest for future Graduates is vital, and other organisations are doing this (and not just with final year students). So, if you want your organisation to be top of their mind when it’s application time, it’s important to get on it!

Candidate behaviour

When you’re looking to recruit, it’s important to know about your candidates’ behaviour if you’re going to influence it – get to know where they hang out, which websites they frequent, how they want to be communicated with – all of the things that will help you get one step ahead of your competitors in reaching and engaging with the talent you need ahead of them.

Some food for thought

Consider your Employer Value Proposition – what is it? How are you communicating it? What do the Graduates of the future consider vital in their decision making process about who to work for? Do you have brand ambassadors at work for you within universities?

We know from the conversations that we have with candidates every week, that it’s not all about the money – they care about how you are ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come, they want to know which charities you support and how you make a difference. They also want to know that you do what you say you do as an organisation – brand ambassadors are great in helping you spread your message.
Employer Branding:

The CIPD define employer brand as a set of attributes and qualities – often intangible – that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform to their best in its culture.
Do you know the mission statement and values of your business?

Companies with strong employer brands find it easier to source and retain talent – and your mission statement and values is where you begin to lay out your employer proposition. Companies with a strong employer brand have a lower cost per hire, because they will knock on your door.

Does your website reflect your organisational values? It should! Because...

1 in 3 graduates are motivated to apply by an employer brand.

It is important to know what matters to your candidates. For example, what makes a candidate choose company A over company B where the job and salary is largely the same?

In a recent survey – job seekers said they would accept lower salaries if:

- Employers make a great impression in the hiring process (68%)
- Employers have had exceptional online reviews (67%)
- Organisations have had recent positive press (65%)

Our top three recommendations for positive employer brand indicators are:

Explain your recruitment process – and be as accessible as possible

Encourage employees to share their experiences – a daily tweet can help to build a following!

Clearly define career pathways and where graduates could hope to be in the future.
Strategic Sourcing

In order to make sure your business has the people it needs, when it needs them, it’s no longer enough to put together a job description and post an ad when a job becomes vacant.

Forward thinking and successful companies are investing time and money into developing strategic sourcing techniques.
You may have a wide variety of channels – such as Social Media, offline methods, strategic relationships – and a choice of streams – with some being switched on at certain points in a cycle – while others may be continuously on-going

**Our top 5 recommendations for graduates:**

- **Start sooner.** Don’t concentrate on final year students – begin to build your employer brand with first years and think about how you can build a favourable impression. First and second year students can begin to populate your talent pool for the future.

- Understand where your best people come from. Target specific universities and courses.

- Beyond the career service, reach out to tutors.

- Consider a school leavers programme, sponsored degrees, Industrial placements, tours, open days, projects and summer placements

- Who do you have in the business now that can be the link for particular universities, and be a brand ambassador?

- And one top tip for experienced hires – peer to peer referencing! A great way of growing the talent pool!

When you are considering experienced hires, analyse your employee data first. Different generations “hang out” and use technology differently as well as having different attitudes to recruitment methods. For example, Generation Y and Z want to see a corporate “personality”, they expect online engagement – and they expect to be found rather than having to apply for a job.

- Baby Boomers (1945-1962)

- Gen X (1963-1980)


Technology

Technology should be an enabler, for both candidates and recruiters.

We can order pizzas on our phone, but can you register your interest and apply online?

Candidates today want everything fast and easy. A long, complicated application form is a big turn off. Ask yourself, do we really need this now?

Top Tips:

- The best on-line recruitment processes will allow candidates to self de-select. For example – if you expect your graduates to work away from home one week in four – make that clear right from the start.
- Make sure the process and methods reflect what you need. For example if you are looking for future leaders, ask a question about leadership and use video interviews so you can assess both the content of the answers and the presence of the candidate.
- Apply yourself – imagine you’re a new Graduate. Is the process too long? Test it out!
- Can candidates see really quickly and easily when your scheme is open? Can they register their interest? Make this button big and visible!
- Make it mobile friendly – this is a MUST for today’s mobile generation.
The Future Graduate Market:
One of the key things to remember about your future Graduates, is that they are better connected than ever before. They talk, they tweet, they review and more importantly they share endlessly – far more than is really necessary if the truth be told! What this means is that their experience from the first point of interaction with your organisation, is really important. Particularly within the recruitment process – they will talk about it and not only to their friends but the wider world, in many places and in many ways. This isn’t something to be afraid of just aware of – good content, a positive experience, having conversations and just being real will help to engage future talent.

**Falling birth rate**

Why is it important to be thinking about the future Graduate market now?

Well, aside from the skills shortage, according to the ONS, in the early 2,000’s the birth rate in the UK fell. This is going to have a knock-on effect to (UK born) Graduate numbers approaching 2020 – 2025. Many businesses are unable to offer sponsorship for international Graduates, and if this applies to you then planning for your future Graduate talent now is really key.

**Securing Graduates for the future**

Many organisations consider Graduate requirements a year in advance, but we really think you should consider what your business is going to need in five years’ time and start planning for it now. It may be that you could consider over-recruiting in the next few years to compensate for the predicted shortfall, but it definitely means that you should be engaging with talent early – this could be through building relationships at school level, offering apprenticeships, work placements and definitely building relationships with key universities – it’s not only the final year students you need to be speaking to.

You need to ensure that promises made during the recruitment process are the reality, ensure that the culture you described when they applied for the role does actually exist, and keep managing their expectations so that there are no surprises. Employees are less likely to be early leavers if you do what you say you do.
Candidate Engagement

It’s not just about how and where you engage with candidates, but it’s important to remember to do it consistently. Candidates will only engage with you if you have something interesting to say that they want to hear / read / follow / see / talk about.
Varied channels are also important as candidates hang out in different places, so really it’s helpful to plan your content in advance to keep their interest and encourage the sharing of positive items, maintaining that employer brand.

For emerging talent such as Graduates, it’s unfortunately not enough to engage remotely – as we’ve already discussed they want to see you face-to-face. All 27 employers who won an award at the most recent Target Jobs Awards, attend University careers fairs, have dedicated campus teams or brand ambassadors and have conducted on-site campus activities, for example open events where candidates can meet the current Graduate team.

**Twitter**

Engagement needs to be a two-way process whereby you’re not only trotting out company information, but giving candidates a reason to interact with you. Have you thought about Twitter Q&A sessions? You can answer questions about the recruitment process, discuss how to do well at assessment centres and capture talent of the future by directing them to your talent pool registration.

**Talent Pools**

It’s important to remember once you’ve attracted talent to your website, don’t forget about them - make sure your engagement plan includes your talent community.

Just because a candidate isn’t right for your organisation now doesn’t meant they won’t be at some point in the future, and this is particularly true of Graduates who perhaps don’t get through your recruitment process first time, but go off and get some great experience with your competitors – by keeping in touch with them you can pick them back up in a few years’ time.
Retention

The disappointing reality is that while a lot of effort is required to find good people, there is no guarantee of keeping them for as long as you’d like. However there are some activities that can put you in a stronger position.

Top Tips:

• Starter surveys, a necessary check.

• Remember, the whole company has a part to play. Ensure that everyone knows their role in the onboarding process.

• Put buddies and mentors in place

• If they do leave – keep in touch and organise a neutral exit interview (not their manager or even HR)

Don’t get left behind

Graduates are gaining power. They know you want them, and they want to be impressed. As the pool of graduates gets tighter and competition rises, attracting graduates will be an ever increasing challenge.

But through knowing your graduates, great engagement and a thorough understanding of the market, you can ensure that you are able reach, engage with and retain the stars of the future.
A little bit about us

Cohesion is a leading recruitment services provider.

Our total recruitment philosophy means we deliver services which include and are not limited to:

- Recruitment campaign management
- End to end recruitment process outsourcing
- Talent pool cultivation and management
- Internal referral process management
- Strategic direct sourcing
- Contingency workforce management
- New starter and retention surveys
- Volume recruitment campaign management
- Tailored assessment and selection
- Bespoke recruitment technology
- Hiring manager recruitment training
- New media engagement strategies
- Locum bank recruitment and management
- Graduate, apprentice & trainee recruitment

To find out how we help you make a significant impact on recruitment, contact Lee Burman on 07939 297 337.