

- Graduate Recruitment -

You've made a strategic decision. You need graduates to bring valuable skills and experience to a role. You also want this person to be trained and be able to perform a management function in the future. They will become an important asset and add value to your organisation. The question now is how do I recruit a graduate?

It doesn't matter if it is the first time or the 100th time, each graduate recruitment exercise is fraught with new challenges. The first thing is to decide the audience you wish to target.

Targeting

When designing your person specification be sure to consider the following advice.

1. Identify the degree course you want. Do the skills you need match the degree course? Learn about the skills each degree course can provide.
2. Select the universities who provide this degree course. You can search at www.ucas.org.uk for a list of universities that teach the degree subject. You may wish to narrow this further to universities within a radius of the intended place of work. This means interview expenses can be kept low and makes it easier for applicants to spend more time at your offices.

Reaching graduates

The following methods are proven ways to attract graduates. You can use a variety of these but the key is to measure the success of each campaign. That way you can refine your strategy and save money.

1. Research. Find out what it's like to be a graduate. Time spent in this area will enable you to design a better communication strategy.
2. Plan ahead. Many graduates apply for work in the Autumn of their final year. Timing is essential if you want the best.
3. Design a graduate recruitment section on your website. This can provide information on your company, what you are looking for and maybe a case study. An online application form will enable you to capture applicant's details and build a database.
4. Try to control the quality of applicants. Enable graduates to self-select themselves out of the process by describing a typical day.

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5. Approach the University Careers Service and speak to the Employer Liaison Officer. They can advise on their services. This can range from a simple job advertisement to arranging open days interviewing candidates.
6. Contact the Students Union and see if you can advertise through their newspaper, website or radio.
7. Advertise with online job boards such as www.grb.uk.com who specialise in attracting students and graduates throughout the year. They will also enable you to email selected graduates from their database of registered job seekers.
8. Advertise in the national or local press. Choose a day of the week that has a focus on graduate jobs. Consider contributing editorial to raise your profile.
9. Consider specialist recruitment agencies like Graduate Recruitment Bureau who can attract and select suitable candidates quickly and accurately.
10. Set up an employee referral system. This can be a cost effective way for your current staff to find someone suitable for you.

Selection

1. Plan your selection procedure. Make sure everyone can make it. Don't plan interviews during exam time!
2. Involvement. Get as many of the potential team to interview the person. The candidate may open up and provide more information.
3. Provide feedback. Although time consuming it is important to leave a good impression with the graduates who have been through the process. Word of mouth is especially powerful in this audience and they may be potential future users of your product or service.
4. Benchmarking. Make future recruitment easier by using the results of psychometric tests. This way every future applicant has to reach a set standard.

Retention

The success of your campaign comes down largely to whether you keep the graduates you hire. A high percentage of graduates leave within the first 18 months but there are ways to encourage greater loyalty.

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- 1.** Start as you mean to go on. Once you have made the job offer keep regular communication. Post an induction pack before they start enabling them to familiarise themselves with your company, office, staff and what to expect on their first day.
- 2.** Keep the Line Manager involved throughout the recruitment process. One of the major problems is a mismatch of expectations. The recruiter says one thing in advertising and presentations whilst the reality can be very different! Manage expectations and make sure their line manager is living and breathing the company ethos!
- 3.** Assess training needs. Many graduates are attracted by training programmes. Decide what training can be offered internally or externally.
- 4.** Career tracking. Keep a record of the graduates progression through the organisation. This will enable you to provide evidence of success to the board of directors.

Future plans

If your graduate recruitment plan is over several years you may wish to consider running an internship programme. This enables you to hire a student for a short period of time, from 3 months to a year, to work on a project.

You can assess their success whilst the student also gets a chance to test you out. It is arguably one of the most effective ways to recruit graduates but requires proper planning, monitoring, time and of course investment.

If you would like more advice on how we can tailor the best combination of strategies then please call our experts on 01273 3257775 or visit www.grb.uk.com