HR Edge

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Expanding the Talent Pool With University and College Recruitment Strategies

Understanding Belonging in the Workplace

The Case for Considering People Analytics

Expanding the Talent Pool With University and College Recruitment Strategies

Employers have an opportunity to expand their recruiting reach by pursuing entry-level candidates at universities, colleges and trade schools. As new generations enter the workforce and everyday job skills change, savvy employers can secure candidates who have the potential to grow in a new career. If not already doing so, employers should explore recruiting and hiring employees from universities, colleges and trade schools to help build a sustainable recruitment strategy.

Understanding the various learning institutions employers partner with and their differences is essential to determine which will be more beneficial for employers to recruit from.

A **university** generally refers to a larger higher education research institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate programs.

A **college** is often smaller and usually refers to community colleges, technical schools and liberal arts colleges. They typically only focus on undergraduate studies.

A **trade or vocational school** offers programs that can be completed within one or two years and focus on a career-intensive curriculum with hands-on experience.

Benefits of University and College Recruitment

Consider the following benefits of targeting and hiring candidates via universities, colleges and trade schools or from different sectors or even roles:

- **Continuous supply of candidates** — Multiple groups of students graduate in a given year. That means employers can connect with new graduates several times throughout the year. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2021, 1.3 million graduates (ages 20 to 29) earned a bachelor's degree, and 371,000 completed an associate degree.

- **Fresh, transferrable skills** — It can be beneficial to hire someone with solid communication, leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills instead of focusing on years of industry experience.

- **Increased innovation** — A candidate outside your sector won't have industry fatigue and is positioned to bring fresh ideas to the workplace. Employees who have spent time in a learning environment tend to be more adaptable and open to new working methods.

- **Expanded talent pool** — Hiring candidates from various universities and schools can help an organization expand its candidate reach and find potential employees of varying backgrounds.

While experience and industry knowledge have their places in recruitment and hiring, it can be beneficial for organizations to hire talent from outside their industry or consider candidates with the right skills but not enough experience yet.

What Employers Can Do

Employers looking to expand their recruiting reach should review the following considerations to sustainably engage student candidates:

- Attend in-person events (e.g., career fairs) to engage and connect with candidates on campus.

- Actively recruit virtually, leveraging online tools or portals to engage with candidates and bolster employer branding.

- Participate in virtual recruiting efforts (e.g., virtual career fairs, virtual events and webinars).

- Build relationships with stakeholders, such as career centers and professors.

- Establish an internship or apprenticeship program to get talent in the door early and provide candidates with real-life experience.

- Offer learning and professional development opportunities.

Recruiting from higher education institutions relies on establishing effective relationships with educational institutions and identifying and engaging with suitable candidates who can bring value to the workplace and grow in a career there. Recruitment can be a mutually beneficial opportunity for both employers and universities.

Understanding Belonging in the Workplace

Social belonging is a fundamental human need that naturally extends to the workplace. According to the Center for Talent Innovation, when people feel like they belong at work, they are more productive, motivated and engaged, thus making them 3.5 times more likely to contribute to their fullest potential. Organizations can foster diverse, equitable and inclusive communities for these workers.

With hybrid and remote workplaces becoming increasingly popular, additional employee experience layers must be considered among employers. Ultimately, employers can elevate their workforce experiences by creating spaces where employees feel they belong.

As employers compete for top talent, they can turn their attention to workplace culture and belonging to keep employees engaged and make them feel accepted. Employers can explore the concept of belonging and the benefits of building an inclusive culture in the workplace.

What Is Belonging?

Belonging is a critical component of company culture. At work, belonging is the experience of employees being wholly accepted and included by those around them.

Professional services network Deloitte defines employees' sense of belonging as how they feel like members of the broader world. This impacts how employees are accepted and feel comfortable being themselves and contributing to their respective organizations' common goals.

Furthermore, Deloitte states that creating a sense of belonging requires the following mutually reinforcing attributes:

- **Comfort**—Employees should feel comfortable at work, necessitating being treated fairly and respected by their co-workers and leaders.
- **Connection**—Employees should feel they have meaningful relationships with co-workers and teams, keeping them connected to organizational goals.
- **Contribution**—Employees should feel they contribute to meaningful outcomes, understanding how their strengths help achieve common goals.

Many workplace factors can impact employees' sense of belonging, including (but not limited to) company culture, benefits offerings, communication methods, learning and development resources and mental health support. Any day-to-day interactions among co-workers and managers or companywide initiatives may impact workplace culture and employee experience.

A Deloitte report ranked belonging as the top human capital issue organizations face today.

73% of respondents said fostering a sense of belonging was important to promote company success, with **93%** agreeing that a sense of belonging drives organizational performance.

Employer Takeaway

People want to feel a sense of belonging and value in their communities, including the workplace. Isolation at work can lead to employee disengagement, negative perceptions of employers or job dissatisfaction. Leaders are responsible for building trust and acceptance, which will help create safe spaces for employees.

Thoughtful belonging efforts can bolster the overall employee experience by allowing staff to bring their authentic selves to work. In turn, these initiatives may carry additional workplace benefits, such as enhanced productivity and performance.

The Case for Considering People Analytics

Over the last decade, people analytics has gone from obscurity to being at the center of HR. This department's employees used to rely on limited information and gut feelings to make decisions, but as organizations integrate people analytics, that's all changing. With today's talent challenges, utilizing people analytics can help organizations perform more effectively in a competitive environment and give them a leg up as they compete for talent.

What Is People Analytics?

People analytics is a data-driven approach to managing e mployees. It involves collecting and applying organizational data to improve business outcomes. This data allows organizations to attain better insights and make talent decisions that can improve an organization's overall performance.

People analytics relies on capturing data from traditional HR sources, including:

- Recruiting
- Demographics
- Performance and learning management
- Compensation and benefits
- Job architecture
- Succession planning
- Talent development
- Exit interviews

In addition to traditional HR data sources, people analytics relies on non-HR sources, such as finance, marketing, customer and other data. This holistic approach provides HR professionals with a deeper understanding of their organization, including areas for growth and improvement.

71% of organizations today believe people analytics is a key priority, according to Deloitte research.

How Is People Analytics Used?

People analytics allows organizations to utilize data-driven practices to improve overall strategies. Organizations can use people analytics to gain a competitive advantage in the talent search. Some organizations increased their recruiting efficiency by 80% and decreased attrition rates by almost 50% due to people analytics, according to recent research from McKinsey & Company. People analytics can identify individuals who will likely be successful employees by helping organizations understand factors that influence their overall performance and providing insights to address performance gaps.

Labor tends to be an organization's most significant cost. People analytics allows organizations to optimize their workforce costs by breaking them down into smaller and distinct parts, helping organizations understand how best to optimize the money they spend on talent. It can help organizations forecast staffing needs and future budgets by revealing their workers' skill sets and identifying future business needs. This lets organizations bridge their talent gap by creating a talent pipeline and designing employee development programs to address their future needs.

Organizations rely on people analytics to improve strategic business objectives in many areas, including:

Talent sourcing	Recruiting and hiring	Employee onboarding
Performance management	Workforce planning	Employee engagement and retention
Employee lifetime value	Employee benefits and compensation	Employee wellness, health and safety

Making the Case

People analytics is becoming increasingly common because there's less guesswork when making HR-related and general business decisions. Affordable cloud-based options make this option attainable for many employers. Successfully implementing and relying on people analytics provides the tools to assess real-time data that can be critical in making better decisions, allowing organizations to better position themselves to compete in today's challenging market.

Contact us for more human resources trends, industry insights and proactive strategies to maintain a competitive edge in today's workplace.