

On-Campus Recruiting – Is It Right For Your Company?

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With ever-increasing competition, more employers are recruiting on-campus to directly source the brightest and the best.

On-campus recruiting offers a variety of methods that can work for any company, whether you are recruiting for five or 500.

Human resources professionals in the field believe that a visible presence is the first element of a good program. “It’s important to get your name out there,” says Tara Winslow, recruiting specialist at Deloitte & Touche in Toronto. “The PR will help you to attract the best.” Don’t just limit yourself to once-a-year recruitment. Utilize all aspects of the programs available – job fairs, information sessions, networking events or speaking in class for specialized programs.

Not all schools require that you follow their on-campus schedule. Some schools offer flexible arrangements to employers outside of the regular recruiting seasons. This can be ideal should you have a special recruiting requirement.

It’s also important to be prepared, before you arrive on campus. “An attractive booth, information specific to what you are looking for and well-informed people manning the booth are key in on-campus recruiting,” suggests Suzan Daly, HR generalist with Markham, Ontario-based ACNeilsen.

Some companies make the mistake of just arriving on campus with little or no preparation other than putting up a posting. Being unprepared can be detrimental to your overall presentation and yield negative results.

“We try to have alumni from the school and a mix of people including front-line workers who can explain what they do on the job,” says Maura Dyer, university and college relations at Bank of Montreal in Toronto.

Picking the right schools is also an important element. Research and target schools that have the programs to meet your requirements. Develop your contacts with the on-campus school co-ordinators who can be invaluable in providing advice.

In addition to research beforehand, follow-up is equally important. “We are constantly refining our program. Recently we implemented a recruiting software with applicant tracking,” Winslow says. “We screen 2,000 to 3,000 applications a year. That made a big difference in managing that aspect of the process.”

Another effective program which is part of on-campus recruiting is hiring co-op students. Nicole Edgar, campus recruitment manager at Waterloo, Ontario-based Research In Motion, notes that throughout the year there are co-op students in all areas of the company. “Students’ experiences with us tend to be positive and many students take full-time offers after they graduate.”

The major downside of recruiting on-campus is the resources required. “We put considerable manpower into the program, drawing on people throughout the year to meet with students,” Dyer says. “There are also the recruitment tools including brochures, giveaways, uniforms for all the people manning the career fairs and travel and associated expenses.”

Managing a co-op program can stretch resources as well. “We are doing this three times a year for every four-month term,” Edgar says. “And it puts pressure on the supervisors who work with students because they are always training.”

The main advantage of a co-op program is that both employer and employee have a chance to learn about each other in advance of a permanent position. “The students are tracked if they meet or exceed expectations,” Edgar says. “If they have exceeded expectations, then a position can be found for them.”

One of the big advantages of direct on-campus recruiting is that recruiters get to meet the candidates face-to-face. “You have their résumé right in hand,” says ACNeilsen’s, Daly. “You can make a note right on their résumé if someone is particularly impressive.” That can be extremely beneficial in screening, particularly when you are reviewing hundreds of applications.

Face-to-face discussions work both ways, Bank of Montreal's Dyer notes, allowing the bank to educate students about its culture and values.

All of the professionals involved in on-campus recruiting believe that it will work for any company—no matter what size. “Not all students want to work for a big company,” says Winslow of Deloitte & Touche. The key again, however is to create a program that takes advantage of the best the company has to offer, which means planning, follow-up and adding the proper resources to find and attract the top candidates for your organization.

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