RECRUITING TRENDS 2015-16 45th Edition

BRIEF 5

Recruiter's Toolbox

Key findings from 2015-16 are presented in this research brief. We have broken the release of employer information into a series of short briefs that will be made available over the next six weeks. You can download the briefs from the Collegiate Employment Research Institute.

Meet the Completers

We generated this convenience sample from employers currently seeking college talent through their interactions with college and university career services offices. Nearly 200 career service centers from around the country invited their employers to participate in this study. More than 4,730 employers provided information useful for understanding recruiting trends and practices. We also included information from respondents recruiting talent for full-time positions, internships, and co-ops. Readers can use the following key sample characteristics to determine how applicable our survey results are for their campus employer base.

Key Economic Sectors	
Professional & scientific services	22%
Manufacturing	11%
Nonprofits	8%
Finance & insurance	8%
Educational services	13%
Government	7%
Healthcare & social assistance	6%

Company Size		
Very small	> 9 employees	9%
Fast-growth	10-100 employees	30%
Small	101–500 employees	24%
Midsize	501–3,999 employees	20%
Large	4,000–25,000 employees	10%
Very large	> 25,000 employees	7%

Key States	
Michigan	8%
Massachusetts	7%
Texas	7%
California	6%
Wisconsin & Florida	5%
Illinois, New York & North Carolina	4%

Role in College Recruiting	
Full-time positions	56%
Internship or co-op positions only	16%
Short-term hiring	8%
Experienced hiring	20%

Institutions Where Companies Recruit Talent	
Two-year public college	26%
Four-year public college	51%
Four-year private college	40%
Two- & four-year for-profit institution	22%
Institution with bachelor's & advanced degree programs	67%
Institution with advanced degrees only	9%
Historically black college & university	17%
Hispanic-serving institution	15%
Asian, Asian-Pacific serving institutions	14%

Active Recruiting by Region	
International	5%
Entire U.S.	23%
Regional recruiting only	72%

Talent seekers have a wide array of tools to identify and select job candidates. Each year we ask respondents to select the recruiting tools they use; like many of us they selected tools that are cool or fun to use. (As a woodworker, I always want to use a router in any project – it's my favorite tool!) While most recruiters employ a number of tools, they rely heavily on just a few. This year we asked respondents how important each tool was for talent acquisition (from 0 = no importance at all to 10 = critical importance).

Although employers use all the tools included in the survey, perhaps 10 to 12 are used most often. The most common tool is posting a job announcement in places where candidates can easily find it. The two most common venues are the organization's website and the college or university's recruiting system. Posting to a college or university's database appears in our survey results because it is the conduit through which we solicit employers for this survey. These passive practices are basic résumé depositories and as such require little interaction between recruiters and candidates. The benefit for recruiters may be the distance from which they can winnow the unqualified candidates. In addition to traditional methods, several new ones are challenging the functional use of résumé depositories.

Employers have three proactive means for connecting to and recruiting talent. Career fairs, internships and co-ops, and short-term employment (summer or between academic terms) are the most important tools in the toolbox. Employers also rely on their current employees, especially alumni from schools where they recruit, to identify candidates.

While most of these strategies have been around a long time, social media is relatively new. Its transient nature and brief shelf life make identifying and capturing qualified candidates a less than perfect recruitment tool. In past reports, we tried to ascertain how widespread social media was becoming and how it was being embedded in the recruiting process. It remains moderately important, primarily as an organizational branding strategy, and is probably still in its infancy, at least at the college recruiting level. As organizations become more sophisticated in using social media, their ability to connect, identify, and capture talent through social media will improve.

Holding Career Fairs

What about the career fairs — the workhorse of college recruiting? Do they still have legs? Before the crash in 2008, various observers, including the Trends report, expressed concerns about employers discouraged by the uninspiring results coming from career fairs. Costs were rising and the talent just did not seem to be there. Career fairs served an important function in identifying a pool of intern and co-op candidates, but full-time hiring results were not as positive. Tracking the rise in employers who used interns showed a strong correlation with career fair participation. These recruiting methods still seemed to be moving in tandem; however, we did not know if employers had the same reservations about career fairs as they did a decade ago.

We explored this topic with respondents in a series of questions about the future of career fairs. Colleagues in college career centers can exhale; career fairs will not disappear any time

Recruiting Strategies in Order of Importance for Employers		
Toolbox	**Employers who use strategy (%)**	**Essential tool in recruiting strategy (mean)**
Post open positions on their organization's website	97	8.4
Post positions through the college or university online employment system	99	8.0
Hire interns, co-ops, or part-time student workers (summer employees) who have worked or are currently working for their organization	96	7.3
Attend career fairs on college campuses	96	7.2
Solicit names of potential employees from current employees	97	7.0
Use current employees who are alumni of the institutions where they recruit to connect with students	96	6.6
Visit college campuses to talk to students (information sessions, classroom presentations, student organization events)	93	6.3
Connect with potential talent; post company information and positions on social media sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, etc.)	95	6.3
Request candidate résumés from college career service offices	94	6.2
Post positions with national web-based employment providers (Monster, Google, CareerBuilder)	91	6.2
Seek candidates directly through faculty connections	95	5.9
Attend targeted job fairs (for specific skills such as IT, design, health services)	90	5.7
Interview prospective candidates on college campuses	92	5.6
Solicit names of potential employees through the alumni organizations on the campuses where you recruit	89	4.8
Attend job fairs not held on college campuses	85	4.6
Post positions on local or state (government, Chamber of Commerce, economic development authority) job boards	85	4.6
Place ads in media and professional journals or magazines	80	3.6
Use a staffing consultant or hiring agency	71	2.9

soon. Employers remain somewhat positive about career fairs in general, despite increasing costs and frustration over student preparedness. The way employers use career fairs, however, has certainly changed. Although employers are interested in finding talent, establishing the organization's brand on campus is taking precedence. The branding attracts students to the organization, making it more likely the organization draws the candidates it desires.

Employers responded to statements about key aspects of career fairs, indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed. We used a data reduction technique (factor analysis) to group the statements into two categories. The first category contained six statements that best described the costs and benefits of attending career fairs. The second category contained four statements that best described how career fairs are structured.

These are the most important points employers wished to make about career fairs:

◆ The majority of respondents (75%) believe career fair attendance achieves organizational branding goals. The employers most likely to use career fairs will be emerging companies (100-300 employees) and large organizations (>10,000 employees) that need to build and sustain their image on campus.

◆ Career fairs can still be effective for finding talent, especially when career services centers organize the fairs to attract several employers at one time. By grouping companies seeking similar talent, the added depth attracts a larger, wider pool of candidates. This is one area where emerging technologies could help both career services centers and employers make better connections.

◆ Cost-benefit ratios are not as positive as some companies would like but still appear to be a good bang for the buck.

◆ Respondents remain neutral on the demands of career fair attendance on recruiting staff.

◆ The good news: most employers currently attending career fairs intend to stay the course over the short term.

◆ The bad news: despite the costs of attending career fairs, an organization's sense of altruism toward career services centers is commensurate with the assistance they receive from career center staff.

Posting Job Openings

The software programs (Simplicity and CSO) used in career offices have become more sophisticated in their ability to match candidates to specific jobs. Although the programs are improving, they are still somewhat imperfect: most systems require candidates to sort through posted positions to find a job opening that matches their interests and possible skills.

"Big data" and stronger algorithms, however, are improving the ways recruiters and employers establish organizational fit protocols and promote direct interaction with candidates. If successful these big data and fit approaches may quickly obsolesce today's systems.

The big data approach is being used by firms such as Doxa, Gild, and Textio to develop automated hiring software. Robo recruiting, which is receiving media buzz of late, may help human resource staff conduct deep data searches and improve the match between candidates and job requirements. Reactions in the media are predictably mixed: while the technology purports to increase diversity and reveal job description language that promotes gender bias, some job search firms believe an over-reliance on technology may do more harm than good.

We asked respondents questions about robo recruiting, especially whether their organization was exploring automated hiring. Most organizations do not expect to adopt robo hiring any time soon.

Employer Ratings for Career Fairs						
Statement	Mean	Disagree-strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Agree – strongly agree (%)
Costs and Benefits						
Career fairs are an important way to increase our brand among students.	5.4	6	4	13	20	56
Career fairs provide a very effective way to identify our talent pool.	5	7	8	15	27	42
We believe career fairs are cost effective means to achieve our hiring objectives.	4.6	13	11	20	24	32
My organization does not plan to reduce career fair attendance over the next several years	4.5	11	11	33	13	32
It is not difficult to identify top talent despite many unprepared students	3.9	17	24	25	15	19
Benefits of attending fairs still outweigh the total cost of attending ($ and staff time).	3.8	24	23	20	13	20
Career fair structure						
Career fairs need to be more effectively organized so we can see the right students at the best times.	4.8	6	6	30	36	32
Career fairs are starting too early skewing our recruiting cycle.	3.7	22	11	36	16	15
There are too many career fairs; college relations staff burned out	3.6	22	13	46	11	7
Colleges depend on career fairs for revenue. Are you willing to support career centers if no longer attending their fairs?	2.8	47	13	29	6	4

◆ The majority of respondents (68%) focus on the human element when vetting candidates.

◆ Another 24 percent know about this technology and are evaluating its benefit for recruiting.

◆ A small percentage (5%) is testing automated software or services to see if it improves their talent pool.

◆ Only 3 percent are using robo recruiting software or services.

Fit Assessments

Organizational fit assessments have been around for more than 30 years. Once paper exercises, assessments have been adapted to work on computers. Assessments are tailored to the organization's specific values and structure and require careful construction and validation. Their value lies in their ability to identify candidates more likely to be successful in the organization.

Large data analytics and powerful algorithms have the potential to elevate the role of organizational fit in recruiting. One software company, Knack, is changing the way employers conduct fitness assessments. Knack is the first program to match candidates with employers by using gaming software most new college graduates learn early and play often. The software, designed by behavioral and data scientists, software and game developers, and game designers, contains hundreds of variables that track within milliseconds, for example, how long the player hesitates before making a decision, which part of the screen the player touches, and which moves the player makes. In the space of as little as 45 minutes, the game returns a list of the job candidate's qualities; the results show the employer how well the candidate will fit into the organization's culture.

We asked respondents about their familiarity with organizational fit, whether they were considering or already using it for recruitment.

◆ Less than half of organizations (40%) were unfamiliar with organizational fit assessments.

◆ Another 38 percent were familiar with assessments but were not using them.

◆ A small percentage (8%) occasionally used organization assessments for recruiting.

◆ Slightly more (13%) regularly used organizational and cultural fit assessments.

◆ Only 1 percent knew about talent matching programs like Knack and used them in talent identification.

We were surprised to find so few organizations were using organizational fit measures. While this approach is being refined with changes in technology, the possibilities are wide open for future adoption and could replace more passive systems.

Transcripts and Co-curricular Transcripts

Faculty frequently ask: "How often do employers request transcripts for recruitment?" About 40 percent of respondents indicated that they reviewed transcripts. We scanned the data to see if one group used transcripts more heavily than another; in every nook and cranny of the survey, an employer required a transcript. Slightly more than 65 percent of organizations with 500 or fewer employees wanted to see transcripts; only 10 percent of large organizations wanted them. Not surprising, Education and Nonprofits were the two sectors most likely to require transcripts. Manufacturing subsectors (automobile manufacturers and food processing plants), and Professional, Business, and Scientific Services subsectors (advertising firms. computer services, management consulting firms) followed close behind.

As more colleges and universities adopt co-curricular transcripts to capture student engagement in activities that transcend the classroom, faculty also wonder how useful these transcripts are for employers. Nearly 45 percent of respondents say they are not interested in co-curricular transcripts because the information should be on the candidate's résumé. About one-third might use the transcript to verify a candidate's activities. One-quarter (23%) of organizations across all size groups find co-curricular transcripts helpful. Educational institutions, primarily pre-K and K-12, value co-curricular transcripts. Organizations in Professional, Business, and Scientific Services find them helpful.