



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Attracting Apprentices & School Leavers 2020

No. 1

Thursday 30th April
10am - 11:30am

Overview

With the many changes imposed on organisations large and small since the beginning of lock-down 5 weeks ago, the range of challenges is immense. Some immediately obvious, others less-so.

TheTalentPeople with Class Careers hosted a 'virtual' round table on 30th April, to discuss the current talent landscape, and the challenges facing employers within it.

Three important topics were identified in advance of the round-table having spoken to a number of the attendees on a 1-1 level and analysing the requests in the sign-up forms:

1. Employer brand and recruiting candidates in the current climate
2. Working with schools and what the future holds for careers advice and employer engagement
3. Screening and onboarding candidates in a virtual world

Participants of the event represented a wide range of organisations:



Employer brand and recruiting candidates in the current climate



When it comes to company branding, particularly in light of a large global event, every action affects the perception of the organisation. The current global pandemic creates a new challenge for organisations involved with attracting, onboarding and retaining talent, however. 90% of candidates are still looking for work and almost 60% of those are looking to employers for information on the available opportunities (TheTalentPeople candidate research, 2020). Public-facing messages and activities are likely to be seen by candidates and have an effect on how they see an organisation. The candidates' request for answers, however, means that even a lack of activity and messaging is also likely to say something.

'There is a lot of caution about getting it wrong in terms of branding, but your brand is on show regardless. How do you get that tone right? Maintaining brand image is a balancing act'

The Conversation



1. Different recruitment and onboarding patterns are being experienced across different roles

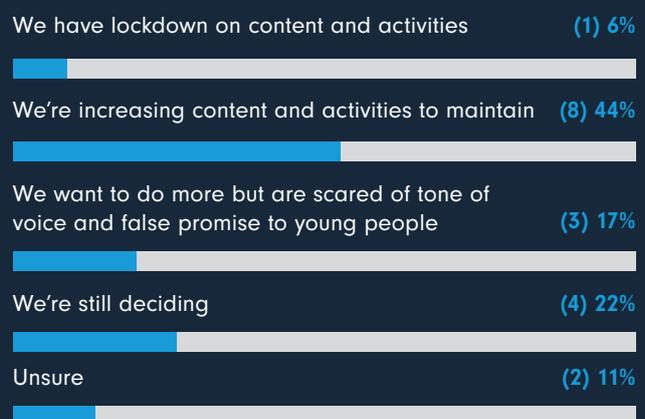
– Desk-based roles, particularly those that can be fulfilled by home working are proving more popular by application than that of field-based roles such as software developers according to one employer. It is expected that the national health situation is likely influencing these results.

2. How do you manage candidate expectations if you don't know when you're going to hire? – 'when can I start' is one of the most prolific questions being face by hiring a few organisations right now. Some attendees suggested the use of company FAQs to demonstrate they are addressing candidate queries whilst others stated they were being transparent in saying they couldn't provide a fixed start date.

3. Keeping candidates

warm – Maintaining candidate relationships has been key for some of the attendees. Particularly when acceptance and onboarding has been delayed. Personal contact is the key and individually contacting candidates has had incredible results for positivity and engagement.

What's the position of your current brand?



The Conversation



4. Hiring in new areas might mean an employer's brand needs to be developed – Audiences can sometimes have a narrow view of what working for a particular company involves. Hiring in areas not usually associated with a brand might require some outbound messaging and maybe even some new communication channels utilised according to one attendee.

5. Both candidates and employers are looking to connect on the same points – Uncertainty around employment/hiring is clear on both sides of the conversation. The topic can't be avoided, so honesty is key. Employers should be clear with candidates around what to expect in similar way to being clear about the organisation's expectations.

Many future recruitment needs require an element of speculation right now. The end of public restrictions is an uncertain timeframe – the effects of which are being felt heavily. What does 2021 intake look like was a common challenge facing employers who attended?

One thing is for certain; the organisations making attempts to attract and engage candidates now will have first pick when restrictions are lifted. We know that a pleasurable candidate journey has the ability to change even negative perceptions of a company. There is only up for a stable and positive brand.

Working with schools and what the future holds for careers advice and employer engagement



School and College engagement is key for many organisations when it comes to engaging talent of the next generation. With many conventional educational institutions closed for the immediate future and the turn to virtual almost certain for many businesses, what did the future hold for school, careers advisors and the employers of the roundtable?

'Student-employer engagement is very important with schools and colleges right now. Schools are the start of the pipeline, so inactivity now will have a major impact on the pipeline in three years-time'

The Conversation

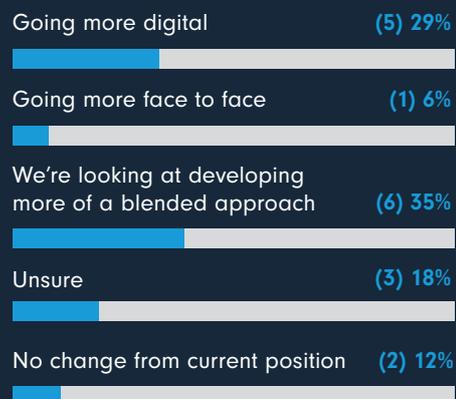


6. The implications to the awarding of results this year are greater than most see – If the modern job-hunting profile is dictated by grades and successes, how does a candidate with a question over their school results compete in the future landscape?

It's no secret that there's more to the application process than just results, so many of the attendees agreed with the question of; how do you assess the candidate in a broader perspective? Similarly, how does this convert to unconditional offers after college?

7. Some events transition to digital fairly well, but how do you deliver the kind of major event that you would have traditionally delivered face to face? – Staff furloughing has exacerbated the challenges facing total school engagement according to one employer. Online career advice, although an option, might be limited in its offering. Either way, employer engagement is a necessity.

What plans do you have for school/college engagement?



The Conversation



8. Business' move to digital and virtual worlds is distancing them from schools

– limitations with resource, staffing and budgets means schools can't keep up with technological demands set by an entirely digital employer engagement strategy. This is likely to get worse and redefines the issues around diversity according to one attendee. The remedies?

One suggestion to improving social inclusion was in providing tech and resources to allow those less fortunate to connect.

Accessibility challenges aren't just faced by technological means. There are requirements around needing to offer a range of dates, times and channels in order to allow for those in a variety of circumstances to participate in and outside of the school environment.

Virtual drop in sessions with challenges and digital competitions helps to keep young people engaged but these all provide challenges around how quality and ROI is measured for employers.

School and college candidate engagement defines the candidate attraction funnel. Now more than ever with many questions being asked of future employment and routes into careers, organisations should be reaching out to talent of the future. The more ways in which they offer this, the better for all early talent.

Screening and onboarding candidates in a virtual world



The move to an entirely virtual recruitment strategy has been ongoing for the last 10 years. Improvements to technology on both the business and consumer end of the spectrum have allowed for more flexible routes to engagement. The national health situation has accelerated this trend and now businesses are forced to consider this approach if not already turning to face it. So, what does this actually look like?

'How do you onboard and train safely now that group activities in person are no longer possible? A lot of recruitment is on hold as a result of this, but it's mixed.'

The Conversation



9. Virtualisation – yes / Digitalisation – no – Virtual hiring and onboarding can and is happening amongst the attendees of the roundtable. But in taking this approach, it's important to maintain personal touches in order to create a positive candidate journey they say. A great candidate experience can have profoundly good results for branding as well as staff

10. How virtual do we go? The extent to which an organisation virtualises their onboarding and training will vary. From conversations, it largely depends on the style of these elements that are usually carried out. For some, moving the entire previous process into a virtual realm, like room to room networking, fits. For others, dropping some elements of assessment centres in favour of more personal 1-2-1 conversations talks more to their brand.

11. Ensuring work enjoyment, productivity and pastoral care:

- Buddying, 1:1, and new starter networks provide individuals with comfortable relationships to thrive in.
- Management skills changes are required in order to create great employee environments. Virtual management is very different to physical management and requires the overcoming of new environmental challenges.
- Make additional materials available, including those for mental health. This promotes a self-care attitude with the resources to be able to assist employees.

Virtual onboarding example shared from one attendee.



1. Students were digitally onboarded on day one as an introduction to the company and their roles.
2. Laptops were shipped to the new cohort and IT were able to assist with setup.
3. Week 1 required no work from the new starters other than preparing themselves.
4. Induction started on week 2

This system was successful for Graduates and will be tested with Apprentices too.

A virtual world presents us with new employee challenges. But it's important to also view this as a chance to take advantage of new opportunities. A new wave of talent might not know any different and so making sure the company has the right tools to provide for new starters will create smooth transitions. This might be a learning curve but by being honest, open and employee-led, fantastic growth environments can be generated. From the roundtable it is positive to know what all attendees are 'in the same boat' and are sharing their ideas to face these challenges together.

**'It's amazing to know what we are
all in the same boat'**



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