

SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN COLLEGE RECRUITING

The Partnership for Knowledge Entrepreneurship
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Abstract

Binghamton University is an incubator of creative and intelligent minds. Greater Binghamton can greatly benefit from the intellectual capital fostered through the University by hiring local graduates. In order to keep university graduates working and living in the Greater Binghamton Region, the university needs to create the proper environment for successful recruiting. Also, companies need to know what students are looking for in a company in order to market themselves properly. To some extent, Binghamton University graduates are consumers and companies need to market themselves to recruit employees. Research based on migration preferences, building social networks, and recruiter knowledge provides sufficient evidence to support methods for change

Keywords: Career recruitment; Relationship building; Career fairs

Binghamton Keywords: Binghamton University Career Development Center; Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce

I. INTRODUCTION

The Greater Binghamton Region contains a large amount of employment opportunities for college graduates. About half of the Binghamton population consists of college students, which poses the opportunity for the community to greatly benefit from the intellectual capital of local universities and colleges. Non-profit organizations, schools, government, retail, restaurants, engineering companies, business firms, law offices and many other locals income-generating entities can utilize the creative intellects of a twenty first century mind. College graduates offer new ideas that will help Binghamton become competitive with other communities and offer new levels of success. Specifically, Binghamton University (SUNY) strives to prepare students for careers and graduate programs. Not only does the University utilize learning in classrooms through internationally recognized professors, but they also have a Career Development Center (CDC) that provides job recruiting, internships fairs, interview workshops, and many programs that directly connect students with real world opportunities.

Unfortunately, the university and community fail to connect in a proper setting for successful relationship building. Students who are not initially interested in living in Binghamton after college graduation tend to change their perspective if a marketable local employer offers them a job. Therefore, it is essential that recruiting methods are reformed for local employers to connect to students. Local companies contain the qualities that students are looking for, but they need the opportunity to inform students on a personal level in order to build relationships.

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Employment is a huge factor in migration of college graduates. In a study done by Kodrzycki (2001), two thirds of the respondents stated that work related reasons have an influence on migration. Presently, the economy is suffering a great deal and many college graduates fear the decreasing amount of job availability. Students who want to work in the human service industry are more likely to choose a career location based on job availability over quality of life because of the difficulty to find work. With many local companies continuing to hire new employees, the local Binghamton community contains a great asset to intrigue graduates. Employers need to advertise their asset to the intellectual capital at the university. A great form of marketing is to further understand the needs of the students.

Ironically, in the study done by Kodrzycki, engineering majors tended to value quality of life over employment because they felt they had many job opportunities. This is directly related to the idea that college graduate recruiting is a buyer's market with students as the consumers. Companies need to offer something unique to intrigue students (Stevens-Huffman, 2006). Building a reciprocal relationship requires employers to offer the intellectual capital they need an incentive to stay. In order to make an intriguing offer companies need to be aware of what students are looking for. The competition requires local companies to be one step ahead in their recruiting methods. Students are looking for good ethics, a personable representative, benefits, professional development, and social performance (Turban and Cable, 2003 & Stevens- Huffman, 2006). Many companies in this community, such as Lockheed Martin, have these assets, but are not able to effectively communicate this to the student population.

An important influence on college recruiting is physical presence. Many students feel welcomed by companies who go the extra mile to make them feel wanted. The current generation of college graduates are not impressed by companies that rely on technology for recruiting. Students know companies to have the newest technology, and therefore are not impressed by video interviews and online applications. Instead, students respect capable recruiters who interact with students in person because it shows that the company is fully dedicated to making that student a part of their workforce (Stevens- Huffman, 2006).

Building social networks is crucial to successful recruitment. One of the four new roles for human resource executives in the knowledge economy is relationship building. Mark Lengnick-Hall and Cynthia Lengnick-Hall (2003) define relationship networks as social capital. Social Capital is beneficial because it creates a collaborative and comfortable environment that breeds innovation. It is important for human resource representatives to expand the values of relationship building to increase retention and recruiting. There are multiple important dimensions to a successful relationship, including rapport, bonding, breadth, and affinity. These dimensions are successful for retention in an organization but they also work in attracting new employees. Company representatives should be empathetic, respectful, trustworthy, loyal, complimentary, and share common interests as the students they are looking to recruit (Legnick- Hall and Legnick-Hall, 2003). In order to build a memorable relationship, students need to feel a connection to the company, which can be achieved through informal and formal activities such as career fairs or speaker presentations for all majors.

Many employers rely solely on career fairs and one stop programs to engage with students. In order to build a significant relationship with potential employees, companies need a personal setting for marketing. "One-stop programs" must revolve around fostering this relationship (Gardner, 2009). Career fairs are the perfect opportunity to connect the right

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student and employer. However, many employers consider these events one stop shopping and overlook the importance of attraction. When attending networking events, companies should be prepared with the number, type, and location of available jobs, advertise prior to the event, and send personal invites to students in related programs (Crow, 2005). Making an effort makes a company more marketable to students. The marketing process can be jumpstarted by university recruiting websites that allow employers to search for specific majors and send personal invitations through email. Just as students familiarize themselves with companies prior to career events, it would be beneficial for companies to do research on the students at the university in order to attract them. Companies in Binghamton are competing with employers across the country, therefore, it is important to utilize recruiters as a form of marketing.

Often, career fairs are full of upperclassmen and lower classmen at the University. It is extremely important to build a memorable relationship with all students. Underclassmen are looking for recruiters who can answer questions about the hiring process, information about careers, and most importantly, building contacts. Underclassmen who are not necessarily looking for a job will remember someone who simply answered their questions in a friendly manner and offer contact information for future advice (Payne and Sumter, 2005).

Word of mouth plays a large role in the recruitment process. A firm builds reputation based on relations with other students at previous fairs and students who have worked at their companies. When job seekers have had no personal interaction with a firm they sometimes assume that the reputation reflects working conditions. Students are more likely to apply for jobs at companies with good reputations. In a study done by Turban and Cable (2003), firms with a positive reputation received fifty percent more applicants than firms with a negative reputation. Also, the firm with the positive reputation also received higher quality applicants. A great way to build a positive reputation is through industry- university collaboration. Companies can sponsor networking activities such as talks with students through professional school organizations followed with dinner or desert. Students will remember the company in a positive way because they took time to give advice and talk about their company (Crow, 2005).

A majority of college graduates choose their location based on employment opportunities. Local companies need to utilize this asset and make students aware of the many jobs in Binghamton. Also, companies need to build successful relationships with students to generate a positive reputation through word of mouth and make memorable connections with upper and lower classman. It is clear that in order to retain knowledge capital in the Greater Binghamton Region, uninterested students need to be informed and intrigued by the many great companies in the area.

II. BEST PRACTICES

It is evident that employer student networking expands far beyond a booth at a career fair. Successful relationships are built through first impressions and visual interest. In order for companies in the Binghamton community to stand out to students at the University there needs to be changes made to the University Job and Internship fair. Cornell University and the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce organize exemplary social networking job fairs.

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Cornell University provides career networking by offering multiple career fairs. The University held six career fairs during the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters, General Interest Career Fair, Technical and Engineering Career Fair, Nonprofit and Government Career Fair, Hotel School Career Fair, School of Industrial and Labor Relations Corporate Career Fair, and School of Industrial and Labor Relations Social Justice Career fair. Cornell also participates in a few virtual and off campus career fairs as well. The Cornell Career Center plans the General Interest and Technical Fairs. They charge five hundred dollars per day/per table for technical and engineering companies and two hundred dollars per day/per table for non profit, education, and government companies. Though the technical company tabling prices are high, amount of companies attend the fair because it is ultimately extremely cost effective. In 2008, around four thousand students and two hundred and fifty companies attended the non technical fair in two days. Also, around sixty companies attended the Nonprofit and Government Career Fair and a large amount are local organizations. Students are required to sign up prior to attending so the University and employers are prepared for a large amount of attendees (Cornell University Career Services, 2009). Having multiple fairs creates a more intimate atmosphere and allows the companies to showcase themselves to students. There is also a larger possibility that all subject fields will be represented at one of the career fairs which provides relationship building opportunities for all types of careers.

Another great example of social networking is the career fairs held by the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce. GBCC works to connect industrial activities to promote B, profession, and civic activities to support Binghamton. They provide support for the local business community and seek to attract businesses (Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce, 2009). Project Homecoming in December and the June Job Fair are organized similar to the University job and internship fair. The only main difference is that mainly local companies attend chamber fairs. In December 2008, fifty five employers attended ranging from Wendy's to BAE systems. Like the University, they first contact companies that attended the fair in previous years and work hard to retain and gain employers. After accepting their invite, companies have the opportunity to give a brief overview of their business and post the positions they are hiring. The information is put in a booklet and handed out to people on the day of the career fair as well as a map with the location of the employer tables. Providing this information makes it more accessible for job seekers to locate companies of interest (Vikki Collazo, personal interview, April, 20, 2009). It is evident that these fairs are coordinated in a similar way to the Binghamton University program. However, by combining professional school fairs produced by Cornell University, highlighting local companies in Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce Fairs, and technological access of the University a successful Career Networking environment will form.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Binghamton University coordinates a campus wide career fair each semester. The Career Development Center does a great job contacting companies across the country to attend the job fair and connecting employers and students through the e-recruiting online system. Yet, local companies have a hard time recruiting students from the University. Based on social networking research, offering specific professional school job and internship fairs is a potential solution for local employers.

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The number of undergraduates in each school ranges from 7,500 undergraduates in Harpur College to 455 undergraduates in the College of Community and Public Affairs (Binghamton University, 2009). Although the Harpur internship fair is still serving a lot of students, it is a huge amount less than the entire university wide fair. Companies will have the ability to advertise themselves in a smaller setting and more local companies can attend each separate fair. Also, the event organizers have the ability to focus on a wide range of companies because each school has different subjects. The Career Development Center at Binghamton University wants students who are unsure of their future career to have the opportunity to explore different options. Therefore students will be able to attend any fairs they have an interest in. It is also important to make the program cost worthy for businesses. The Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce charges around two hundred and seventy five dollars for companies and two hundred dollars for Non-Profit agencies and they have no price complaints nor do they have issues attracting businesses. Vicki Collazo also stressed the significant impact of sponsors and their financial aid in the event.

According to Eileen Bauer, many companies are looking for students from any field or have available jobs in multiple fields (personal interview, April, 16, 2009). A solution would be to place these companies in the Harpur College fair. Prior to the fair the Career Development Center should provide students with a list of the attending companies, a brief overview (created by the company), and the positions available, similar to what is already done. Also, companies are uncertain that a large number of students will attend the fair (Ellen Bauer, personal interview, April 16, 2009). Undergraduate enrollment at Cornell University is thirteen thousand, five hundred and ten students, which is a small amount more than Binghamton University who has an undergraduate enrollment of eleven thousand, five hundred and fifteen students. In 2008, a little over 4,000 students attended the non technical career fair at Cornell University. Therefore it is evident that there will be a significant amount of students attending the fairs.

Professional School career fairs are a great approach to showcase local companies. Currently, around twenty to twenty five percent of local companies are represented at Binghamton University Job and Internship Fair. Working with the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce, the university would gain many local contacts. University students would not attend a fair with only local companies, however, if students attend the fair looking for a job in New York City or anywhere, they might unexpectedly find a great opportunity with a local company. Recruiting students at Binghamton University starts with exposure. Making students aware that many local companies are hiring is the first step that can be achieved through a more intimate setting. Once students see the opportunities in the area, it is up to the companies to hire knowledgeable and personable recruiters and prove that their companies have what students are looking for.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Greater Binghamton Region provides a large range of career opportunities for Binghamton University graduates. Successful recruitment is far more than standing at a booth at one career fair. Successful relationships are built through personable recruiters, prepared companies, physical contact, and personal environments which make students aware of the many careers available locally. Binghamton university graduates are great intellectual capital that can really contribute to local businesses. By making providing professional school fairs, bringing

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more companies to University career fairs, and companies marketing themselves to students Binghamton will be more successful in retaining intelligent minds of the next generation.

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