

The Long View on Hiring....Partnering With Local Colleges

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Partnering with a local community college, technical school, college or university could fall under the very important but not urgent category. We're talking about planting seeds now that you can harvest for years to come, perhaps like fruit bearing trees that produce every year. Today, with the shortage of STEM-oriented students and the requirement for STEM-focused employees, these efforts are growing in importance. Getting involved with a local school should be viewed as a process not an event, although a single event will get you started.

Most schools have a placement or career vocational department and one of their primary goals is to see that all students get good jobs or at least, have multiple opportunities. That's why they are very welcoming to employers who want to visit, interact with and ultimately consider hiring their students. It's also worth noting that smaller colleges and universities have loads of talented students who might not have had the resources to attend large or major schools.

More or less on a whim, I accepted an invitation to go to a Career Night at the Business School of the local State university. They were about an hour drive from our firm. That night we were meeting Marketing and Sales students, but they have similar events for technical students. We paid a few hundred dollars to get a table and invested a few hundred dollars more in some tabletop signage, brochures and of course, some free candy and trinkets.

We brought three of our younger more extroverted employees and showed up to spend an evening in January (4 months before graduation). We met over 30 students, juniors and seniors, who were looking for summer Internships or full time work upon graduation. We invited several to visit our office over the next few months and actually hired two full time students and an intern for the summer.

Further success came when we learned about a club that was formed for sales and marketing students. We volunteered to sponsor the club which amounted to giving them a few hundred dollars per semester to fund pizza nights to attract more students, AND, market their own Career Nights where they would bring in guest speakers to talk about vocational choices. I'll bet you can guess who the most featured guest speaker was. Indeed, we spoke to a room full of students on several occasions. (each time different kids). This fed the crowd for the following year's Career Night and when we showed up the following year, our ambassadors had done a great job talking us up.

The results have been very good. We have had interns at our firm over the last three summers and each year, at least one of the interns has come back and joined full time. Not all the hires have been success stories, but some have, and we've built a nice reputation among the students and faculty.

Something to consider in all this is: what is it about your "employment brand" that would attract young workers? The best part about partnering with local college students and really trying to help them understand what's out there, is that you'll become a place where they want to interview and they'll tell their parents, friends and relatives. Who knows, maybe you'll find some new employees or even potential customers there too!

Take a long-term view and jump in. The students will love you and your employees, and you'll feel great about your contribution to our industry as well as your own company.