

## Hiring a new grad is about potential

*With 300,000 grads entering the workforce each year, Gen Y is a vast source of talent ready to be moulded*

Graduating from university in 2005, I was confronted by a major problem: What was I going to do next? The obvious answer of course was to enter the workforce. But how?

I had a degree in economics with above-average grades, a summer internship under my belt and was very active on campus. But the dozens of employers on campus weren't knocking down my door.

And I wasn't the only one in this position. Take a sample of six of my university classmates, all of whom were in arts or engineering programs. Not a single one of us was recruited on campus.

Without any previous plans to do so, four of us went on to grad school and, in the end, when we did enter the workforce it was through a connection.

This suggests a major problem. There are more than 300,000 graduates entering the workforce each year, according to Statistics Canada. If my experiences and those of my classmates hold true, that means a significant proportion of high-potential, high-energy, mouldable, low-cost talent is going unnoticed.

Employers can solve this problem by recruiting "outside the lines." By looking at degree titles and grades as secondary to the core skills attained while earning them and looking beyond direct work experience and into life experience. By realizing that you're not hiring us for what we already know, but for what we have the potential to do.

Employers that look beyond the obvious will discover a vast pool of talent with backgrounds from a wide variety of degree subjects, uniquely armed with the superior analytical skills required to be truly



### ■ GUEST COMMENTARY

LAUREN FRIESE

remarkable members of the organization.

There are a few important points for employers to keep in mind:

**Don't worry too much about what we already know.** Graduates are eager to learn. You can train us in your systems, policies, culture, and yes, even teach us the skills required for the job, on the job.

### There's more to hiring than business degrees and grades.

**Focus on our potential.** As newcomers to the workplace, we are uniquely qualified to hit the ground running, contribute with energy and solve new and complex problems through unique innovations.

**Look beyond direct work experience.** The majority of students are smart, energetic, resourceful and ambitious. That combination means work experience shouldn't always be a necessity. Instead, employers should look for demonstrated interest in all areas of a new graduate's background.

### Encourage "resumé-ing" outside the lines.

In the summer after my third year, I did an internship at a major Canadian bank. Several years before that, I decided I wanted to be an actress and, as a result, bought a domain and started a web community for young actors. I also appeared in two commercials. Which of these experiences do you think comes first on my traditional resumé? The banking internship. And which more accurately sends employers the correct signals about my potential in their company? My acting "phase."

By encouraging "resumé-ing" outside the lines, employers are encouraging students to sell themselves far more appropriately and giving them the freedom to present the most accurate signals of their potential within the organization.

**Recruit outside the lines.** Look at degree titles and grades as secondary to the core skills students attained while earning them. University is not career-prep, but it is an environment that fosters analytical thinking, the principles of responsibility and independence and the development of leadership skills — all skills that make new grads exceptionally high-potential candidates.

There's more to hiring than business degrees and grades, and employers that embrace this are likely to be the ones with the most diverse, innovative workforces in the years to come.

*Lauren Friese is the founder and CEO of TalentEgg, a Toronto-based online community connecting employers across the country with students and recent-graduates. She can be reached at [Lauren@talentegg.ca](mailto:Lauren@talentegg.ca).*