

Like it or not, employers need gen-Y

Old recruitment methods won't cut it for younger workers who grew up connected

The oldest members of generation Y have already made their dramatic entrance into the workforce but the bulk of that generation is still on its way. As a member of gen-Y myself, I've noticed there is no shortage of information out there — both positive and negative — about gen-Y and, in particular, its impact on the working world.

Regardless of this, and whatever your personal opinions of gen-Y, two things are irrefutable: You have to hire us and the methods you used to hire previous generations won't be effective.

You have to hire us — and hire us in large numbers — in the coming years because of the exodus of the baby boomers, which will leave major personnel gaps at many organizations and potentially cause a countrywide labour shortage.

We're different from previous generations for many reasons but the most important reason is gen-Y grew up connected. We're used to unrestricted access to information and the ability to spread information easily.

Old methods no longer apply

This means employers' campus recruitment communications have to evolve in line with these shifts. It baffles me when employers stick to the status quo — using the same activities and strategies that have been used for decades, such as campus career fairs and display advertising.

Reaching students with campus recruitment messages is no longer just about being there. And it's certainly not about interrupting us — shoving information down our throats — when we're not looking for it. It's about being part of the



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conversation and being available when a candidate is ready to consider you — not the other way around.

Consider the example of a student who has decided to purchase a new digital camera. Today's young shopper won't buy the first camera he sees advertised on a billboard or in the pages of a magazine. Rather, he is more likely to use online tools to research and make the right decision. And this won't happen on the advertiser's timeline. It will happen when it makes sense to the student — between classes, after work or even in transit on a mobile phone.

The same logic holds true for the decision to pursue a career path with a specific employer. We've grown up in the age of digital video recorders and online streaming video, where even television commercials are optional, so interrupting us with a glossy photo and logo won't work.

The key to campus recruitment in the age of gen-Y is to become a part of the conversation instead of an interruption. Rather than trying to control when and where gen-Y learns about and engages

with your organization, it's about being present and available when gen-Y is looking for you.

How can employers reach newer generations?

Get online: Take stock and take control of your online presence. The best way to be available when students want to learn about you as an employer is to ensure you have an online presence that is both easily accessible and precisely targeted to generation Y in its messaging.

Consider and adjust your employer brand: While students are learning to be aware of what personal information an employer might find through a Google search, employers should consider the alternate situation and ask the following two questions:

- When students look for you, can they find you easily?
- When students look for meaningful careers in your field, can they identify you as one of the best places to start their career?

Be there when students are making career decisions: It used to be true the best way to ensure an employer was considered by students planning their careers was to be present at annual career fairs at colleges and universities across the country.

But that type of event just doesn't work for students anymore. With access to the Internet, the type of research that used to be conducted at campus career fairs can be done with significantly greater scale, on many more platforms and, most importantly, when it's convenient for students.

To be there in today's campus recruitment market, employers need to figure out where young people are going to do their research and make career planning decisions, and set up a proverbial booth.

The employers that are successful in reaching the best and brightest students are the ones that make a communications shift and understand young workers have grown up in a world where traditional advertising is considered noise.

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