Early Careers Virtual Roundtable

No. 3
Thursday 28th May
10am – 11:30am

TheTalentPeople

Overview

The duration of the national lockdown has developed and defined the challenges facing hiring organisations. Discussed over the last two months of Roundtables, it is evident that consistent themes are adding difficulty to many of the processes involved.

Hosting the 3rd roundtable in the series, TheTalentPeople and Class Careers sought to develop the conversations on three popular areas for returning and new attendees:

The roundtable covered three main areas of discussion:

1. Candidate Attraction
2. Onboarding
3. Open Conversation

Attendees of the event included

Executive Summary

1. Employers are having to fight to get the attention of candidates and work harder to maintain engagement in light of uncertain onboarding timeframes and start dates. This runs the risk of damaging the candidate experience and many companies are worried of the potential effects on their talent pipeline.

2. Virtual engagement and onboarding tools are almost a necessity in the current talent landscape. Does this marginalise the candidates who don't have the technology to take part though? Charities are available to help combat this, phone contact has worked extremely well and in some cases, laptops have been sent to all new starters.

3. When it comes to onboarding, a longer, slower process could be far more forgiving and effective for new starters. Candidates can be engaged with using mentors and managers and create regular contact. But, deadlines and what's expected of staff should be clear in order to focus productive efforts and maintain wellbeing.

4. Don't be afraid to flatten management hierarchies and de-silo business operations to create a more open communication environment. What worked best in an office environment might not work well now. Try new things to increase workforce inclusivity and improve motivation.

5. Broader, more transferable skills and an understanding of the working world is desirable right now. It's not the case of putting a bum on a seat for a specific role, it's about getting the right candidate in so that they can help where they can. Adaptability is king in these times of uncertainty; workforces need to pull together to fill skills gaps created by furloughing and retirement.

Candidate Attraction

Some employers have managed to start onboarding successfully, but challenges still exist for most. Lockdown and furlough is putting pressure on remaining human resource to facilitate introduction of new candidates to the business. But with uncertainty, it's hard to plan for the future and change this. As a result, challenges have expanded to maintaining the retention of new candidates too.

The Conversation

For some, internal stakeholders are still a large barrier to recruitment decision making which has negatively impacted progress. With lockdown timeframe uncertainties and a dwindling economy, this only presents further challenges to the already uncertain hiring timeframes. Risk mitigation is high on the list of many company heads, but at what cost?

Maintaining an open dialogue with organisations and institutions supports the understanding of the landscape and provides feelings of security. Similar to many industries, young talent must also take risks and make decisions on their future - the more certain they can be in their decision making, the better.

Webinars have been very successful recently in engaging early talent at suitable times. But, does this marginalise the candidates who don't have the technology to take part? Phone contact has been used to get around this and has also driven incredible results. This presents the issue of a one size not fitting all scenario, but utilising multiple channels will give both sides of the conversation the best chance in taking part.

POLAR 4 data has been interesting for candidate insight and identifying the candidates within a postcode and their educational background. This poses many benefits to approaching diverse candidates for social inclusion.

Virtual work experience is a great option for continued skill building. Maintaining opportunities for young talent will work to upskill this demographic and improve their chances in reaching their desired careers goals (whilst also working towards avoid what many are calling 'a lost year'). Although again, a virtual offering, does pose the challenge of access for individuals who don't have the technological capabilities. Charities can help support those most in need, and currently are. However, the assistance required across different institutions and demographics is not a one size fits all approach and must be tailored for different audiences.

Onboarding

Long discussed at roundtables, onboarding forms the final stage in the candidate journey and contributes to the success of the candidate in their new role. This also has drastic impacts to the retention.

The Conversation

Regular communication is one of the biggest desires of new starters. Connecting new starters with similar others has generated incredibly positive results to understanding and wellbeing. Getting them to talk to key stakeholders in the company and even connecting them with a 'buddy' to share their experiences has also seen positive results. New starters benefit from the added structure and guidance provided by these methods, as well has having a listener to share their thoughts and feelings with.

Managers have been known to struggle implementing the tactics mentioned above and often require extra training to accustom them to the new 'normal'. Managing from a distance also requires a whole new set of skills, and it cannot be taken for granted these changes can be made suddenly and effectively.

A calendar of events needs to be made clear to candidates in order to define outputs and create shared expectations with deadlines. The creation of 'houses' for candidates was trialled in one organisation, with a dedicated manager to run each one. This made the communication funnel very clear for juniors and simpler for managers looking to cast a wide reach to their internal communications. Group communication platforms have also shown their worth in such scenarios, drawing employees of the company together.

Weekly Training Provider contact, mindfulness and other 'extra-curricular' activites have had positive results for furloughed apprentices. Such practices make these individuals feel valued and included.

Global virtual company communication has proven simpler than expected for many organisations, and has positively impacted the removal of company departmentalisation. Candidates have responded well to the interaction with many levels of hierarchy too, taking part in 'pulse' poll exercises and looping in the high-level employees on company news.

Where line-managers have been furloughed and juniors are now feeding into higher level members of staff, the relationships between the top of the hierarchy and bottom of the hierarchy have gone exceptionally well for both parties.

How individuals are learning to act now is different from how they would be expected to in a normal office environment. This is putting pressure on companies to define what the new 'normal' is. This is likely going to influence evolution of company working practices moving forwards.

One attendee had clearly explained with juniors what is different between a home working environment and an office-based one and what is expected of individuals in each. A transition period after the Coronavirus lockdown period has been pre-planned upon return to an office-based

Relaxing communication channels across locations, sustained communication, planned wellbeing interaction and removal of dress codes has resulted in some organisations becoming more fluid and agile.
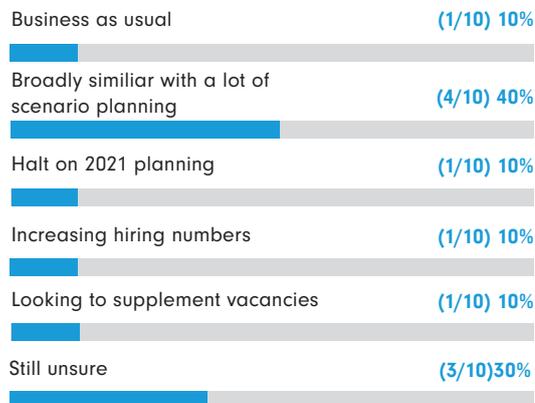
Open Conversation

Attendees were given the opportunity to discuss challenges specifically to them.

What is your hiring and early careers plans in 2021?

When it comes to hiring and early careers plans for 2021, it seems that organisations are split between continuing as normal with risk mitigation as a priority or pausing to better assess the talent landscape. Growth and decline across industries in light of Coronavirus economic collapses has also played its part in increased and decreased hiring plans too.

Business as usual	**(1/10) 10%**
Broadly similiar with a lot of scenario planning	**(4/10) 40%**
Halt on 2021 planning	**(1/10) 10%**
Increasing hiring numbers	**(1/10) 10%**
Looking to supplement vacancies	**(1/10) 10%**
Still unsure	**(3/10)30%**

The Conversation

Broader and more transferable skills with an understanding of the working world is most desirable right now according to attendees. It's not the case of putting a bum on a seat for a specific role, it's about getting the right candidate in that can help where they can. Adaptability is key in these times of uncertainty and workforces need to pull together to fill skills gaps.

Employees are seen to be more grateful for having jobs now and this will likely result in a decreased level of drop-off usually associated with talent trying their hand in different roles, companies and industries. With new starters from a work experience and internship background this is also likely to be the case.

University brand ambassadors are still more relevant than ever for connecting the dots between higher education and post-HE opportunities. Candidates can't apply for roles and companies they don't know about.

There is still a demand in school students to connect with employers. Virtual events are key in the current climate, but the process needs to be thought out. What are you trying to communicate? What do you want to assist with?

Efforts need to be collaborated, schools are inundated with online offerings and so companies need to think about how to best support schools and students to facilitate these efforts as opposed to just squeezing their message in. Safeguarding is also very important, as going to face to face with the real world puts the students in a position of vulnerability.

Students want to know what routes other students have taken to achieve the career progress they have. Real-world case studies improve student understanding and decision making.

In transitioning early talent from student to worker we must also look at our own practices and adapt ourselves for the new 'normal'. The gradual move to remote and virtual working in the 21st century has been accelerated and the effects must be dealt with immediately by all. As the landscape settles, and the requirements for new and future talent grows, so too will the need for adaptable working by employees. The current challenges are too real to ignore, but for those organisations approaching these head-on, nothing is impossible.

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