Hire★Vue

ADAPTING EARLY CAREERS HIRING IN THE NEW NORMAL

Graduate and Campus Recruiting in a Covid-19 Era

With exams over and the end of term upon us, the May-June time frame is typically when graduate and campus recruitment season gets into full swing in many parts of the world. But while applications are now open for many 2020 programs, this season finds recruiters like yourselves scrambling to react to the challenges presented by COVID-19. The pandemic has sent students home early; we have no concrete end in sight for the social distancing restrictions.

The choice recruiters like you now face is to either pivot your existing hiring approach towards something more virtual, or put your programs on hold.

Except the latter isn't much of a choice. Whether we are reacting to an economic recession, natural disaster or pandemic, history has taught us that bringing in fresh talent is a vital part of any business's rebound.

Now is the time to turn to technologies such as video interviews and online assessments. These tools allow you to find and interview your next graduate cohort remotely, while social distancing rules are in place.

This is a **once in a generation opportunity for recruiters to implement lasting change** in how they look for and assess entry-level talent—breaking down the barriers that exist within the current graduate and campus recruitment process, encouraging a far more diverse, inclusive applicant pool, and delivering a better candidate experience.

A SYSTEM THAT WAS ALREADY BROKEN

Graduate and campus recruiting was broken long before the pandemic. To understand why you only have to look at the way in which today's hiring practices narrow the recruiter's view of the candidate pool:

✦ **Visiting only a handful of schools and university campuses**

✦ **Asking for arbitrary GPAs and grades (no longer an option this year)**

✦ **Using the resume as a primary screening method despite its lack of true candidate insights**

Everyone knows where the limitations lie, but the status quo has remained largely unchanged.

Until now.

Now, change is being forced upon you. And it is happening fast. But while much of what has happened to date has been out of your control, you have a choice in what's to come.

THE MOMENT IS NOW

As COVID-19 tears up the standard graduate and campus hiring handbook, now is your chance to start afresh. You can build on what you already do brilliantly and switch out what you don't.

This is a once in a generation opportunity for recruiters to implement lasting change in how they look for and assess entry-level talent – breaking down the barriers that exist within the current graduate and campus recruitment process, encouraging a far more diverse, inclusive applicant pool, and delivering a better candidate experience.

But you don't have long to act.

Grappling with a huge sense of uncertainty and anxiety about their futures, today's students are desperately looking to companies and educational institutions for empathy, reassurance, and a path forward. And they want to see change. With brand reputations on the line, organizations that evolve their current practices quickly, confidently, and effectively to deliver a compelling virtual candidate experience stand the best chance of success in the long run. Those who don't will find themselves struggling and left behind long after lockdown finishes.

FINDINGS

Before looking at how graduate and campus recruitment practices can be improved, we must first understand what they are.

To build out an accurate picture of entry-level hiring across the world (prior to any COVID-19 related changes), HireVue undertook desk-based research into the early career programs offered by 90 of the top companies in the US, UK and Australia.

Thirty names were taken from each of the DJ30, FTSE 100, and ASX 50 lists.

FINDING ONE:
LIMITED PROGRAMS, REQUIREMENTS, & POTENTIAL

Before diving into each company's graduate offering, we first looked at the broader list of programs available to candidates entering the workforce.

Despite the huge attention non-university career paths have received in recent years, our findings showed that the majority (55%) of the companies we researched listed a graduate program as their only full-time option for entry-level candidates.

In fact, just one in four (25%) companies listed an apprentice program of some kind in addition to their graduate program and less than a fifth (16%) mentioned other entry-level options such as traineeships or direct job opportunities. This effectively means that recruiters are missing out on huge swathes of entry-level talent, just because candidates didn't go to university. So, if most companies are looking for graduates, is that because their roles require a specific depth of knowledge?

Apparently not. Out of the 65 companies we looked at that had graduate programs and listed degree requirements, over half (54%) stated no preference of subject and a further 29% were just looking for a degree in a relevant (but unspecified) subject.

This reliance on seemingly arbitrary evaluation criteria was also echoed in how most companies begin their screening process. Of the 74 companies that offered up the relevant detail on their process, over four-fifths (84%) ask graduates for a CV (or its equivalent) as the first step, regardless of its well-reported limitations.

REGIONAL FINDINGS

- ✦ **Australian companies were the most likely to offer only graduate programs, and UK companies the least**

- ✦ **Just 20% of us companies had an apprentice program on their career pages compared to 50% of uk companies**

- ✦ **Most traineeships were listed by Australian companies as part of their indigenous career pathways**

84%

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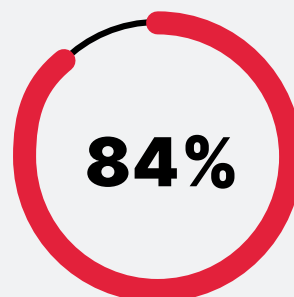
of companies still ask for a CV or resume

FINDING TWO:

COMPANIES ARE TRYING TO GET TO KNOW CANDIDATES ON A DEEPER LEVEL

Despite the limitations in their initial approach, there was encouraging evidence that companies have taken steps to get to know candidates during the recruitment process. A number have brought in new assessment types and formats that focus on uncovering how a candidate thinks, not what they've achieved to date.

Of the 66 companies that offered up a detailed enough breakdown of their graduate and campus hiring process, the vast majority (85%) listed some form of online assessment as a key stage. These companies test candidates on cognitive abilities, numerical and verbal reasoning, situational judgment, critical thinking, and core strengths.

Only six companies called out the use of game-based cognitive ability assessments, which is one of the newest forms of candidate testing

Even before COVID-19 hit, much of this testing also appeared to take place on-screen versus a static form. Seventy-six percent of the 67 companies who specified different interview formats, listed video as either a standalone stage, or as an option at the general interview stage.

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE

✦ **UK companies were mostly likely to list online assessments as part of the Hiring process**

✦ **Four of the six companies that offered game-based cognitive assessments were in the UK**

✦ **UK companies were also the mostly likely to list video interviews as part of the hiring process pathways**

85%
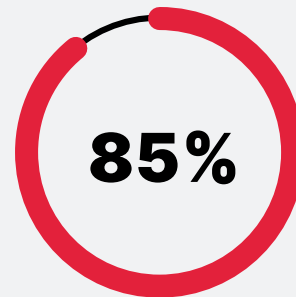
of companies listed some form of online assessment as a key stage

FINDING THREE:
#### THE QUEST FOR CANDIDATE KNOWLEDGE IS LEAVING THE PROCESS CONVOLUTED

One unintended consequence of the bid for greater candidate understanding is that companies risk bloating the end-to-end hiring process. Across the 90 companies HireVue researchers examined, the number of stages in the interview process for graduate and campus hiring varied from two to seven. And while most companies (69%) listed between three and four stages (pre-offer), three-fifths (61%) have four or more, and almost two-in-ten (16%) have at least five stages.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

While the 90 companies we examined represent just a snapshot of global organizations, the research paints a clear picture: there is much to be desired in the way companies find and hire early career talent.

By evaluating the types of programs on offer and how candidates are being screened, the results underline the narrow approach companies continue to take to recruit for entry-level roles. There are inefficiencies in current screening practices, and there exists a broad scope for change.
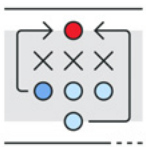
Too many steps in the interview process. Across the 90 companies HireVue researchers examined, the number of stages in the interview process for graduate and campus hiring varied from two to seven.

A GRADUATE AND CAMPUS RECRUITMENT PROCESS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

1 │ SOLUTION
FAILURE TO REDUCE INTERVIEW BIAS

2 │ SOLUTION
GET TO KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES BY COMPETENCY, AT SCALE

3 │ SOLUTION
CLEARLY COMMUNICATE & MODERNIZE FOR BETTER ENGAGEMENT

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1 │ SOLUTION
FAILURE TO REDUCE INTERVIEW BIAS

Apparently not. Out of the 65 companies we looked If you are seriously committed to evolving your graduate and campus hiring process, then diversity has to be the first place you start. Recruiters must find a way to broaden their talent pool and evaluate candidates based on potential, rather than their experience.

That isn't to say you can't maintain a shortlist of colleges and universities that you will eventually start visiting. However, beyond these visits, your graduate and campus team should make every effort to cast as wide a net as possible by adopting virtual recruiting on a more permanent basis.

In addition to utilizing other sources for your talent search, you should also consider the criteria you use for evaluation. Grades have long been questioned as an indicator of job success. And with exams cancelled for the year, you now have the perfect opportunity to move away from such arbitrary predictors. Instead, switch your focus to measuring skills and potential. In fact, there is a danger that a reliance on "predicted grades" (the suggested alternative for this year) could backfire. These predicted grades fail to account for any students who "save it all" for the final exams, hoping to boost their grades.

The time has come for recruiters to seize an opportunity:

- ✦ **Avoid narrowing your candidate search by only looking in certain places**

- ✦ **Abandon unreliable indicators such as grades, CVs, and resumes**

Open your process and level the playing field, inviting all to enter via an online assessment that tests candidates on their competencies and behaviors from the offset.

2 │ SOLUTION

GET TO KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES BY COMPETENCY, AT SCALE

Interviews provide crucial insight into candidates' skills and potential. They're the most powerful screening step in graduate and campus recruiting. However, it is difficult to scale traditional interview formats across a large candidate pool – particularly if you have taken steps to broaden that pool as suggested above.

In such circumstances, online assessments become an absolute necessity. They offer you the ability to handle a far greater volume of interviews, in a manner that is both consistent and informative. But, with so many options out there, how do you know which kind of online assessment to use?

You could switch to the traditional static form of assessment. These are the types of multiple-choice questionnaires many of us have completed in previous lives. However, using static assessments forces you to lose your chance to see the candidate during the interview process. Instead, we recommend leveraging on demand video interviews, which combine the interview and assessment to provide a more 360° view of the candidate.

The use of videos will also give you a chance to show off your brand. Many organizations choose to record an introductory video for candidates to offer a glimpse into their programs, values, and culture. Candidates want to know you better and this kind of personal touch can literally make or break brand appeal.

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3 │ SOLUTION

CLEARLY COMMUNICATE & MODERNIZE FOR BETTER ENGAGEMENT

While most of us are still coming around to technology, Generation Z is the online generation. True digital natives, your graduate audience is more ready to embrace technology than any other age group. And they want to work for companies that demonstrate similar values, starting with the recruiting process. Today's graduates expect their candidate experience to be slick, seamless, and snappy – and they'll look for you to use technology to deliver it. That means a murky, seven-stage process just isn't going to cut it.

Use this as an opportunity to make changes to shorten your hiring process, as well as making it more tech-savvy. Look for solutions that measure multiple things at once – such as our HireVue OnDemand video interviews. Your digital interviewing technology should provide you with the confidence to do away with stages which aren't telling you anything concrete.

As you think about technology, you should also consider leveraging social media, job preview videos, and online employee stories to give candidates a full virtual picture of the company before they start the application process. When done correctly, you can create an experience where in-person interaction is no longer a necessity.

One thing you cannot do without, however, is proper communication. No matter how many stages you have, you need to make sure to provide information during each step, both in the form of instructions and feedback.

The number one reason candidates reportedly turn down jobs is that they don't hear back in time from organizations. Setting clear expectations about what to expect and when they'll hear from you can prevent some of this drop off. You'll also avoid the longer-term brand damage of providing a poor impression to candidates. This is something brands found to their cost after the last recession when they failed to communicate properly and faced a knock-on effect to reputations afterwards.

DESIGN FOR THE DISAPPOINTED

✦ **Design your process with the mindset that early careers candidates are consumers of the future and that it is therefore as important to leave those you don't hire with a good impression as it is to win over your favoured candidates. In fact, delta airlines has geared its entire recruitment program towards "design[ing] for the disappointed."**

Use this as an opportunity to make changes to shorten your hiring process, as well as making it **more tech-savvy.**

As we face an unprecedented level of disruption in the world around us, the prospect of embracing even more change can be daunting.

But virtual hiring is not an unknown. It is tried and tested. Most importantly, it is what your early talent audience wants.

By rapidly transitioning to an effective virtual hiring model now, you can help your organization continue to bring in critical new talent – in spite of COVID-19 or any other situation we might face in the future. And don't view this switch as just a short-term solution. By taking the first step towards bringing more of the recruiting process online, companies can diversify the way they hire graduates and open up the talent pool to candidates that might not have been considered previously. Which, of course, is best for everyone involved.

So, stay positive. Focus on adjusting your hiring practices based on diversity; bring in a more skills-based perspective and streamline the number of steps. Engage with students about the changes you are making and tell them why you're going in this new direction. Be optimistic about the future and talk about the exciting opportunities that await them. Mention that, together, you'll both come out of this stronger.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To understand the state of entry-level hiring (prior to any COVID-19 related changes) HireVue undertook desk-based research into the early career programs offered by 90 of the top companies in the US, UK and Australia (30 companies per region were selected from the DJ30, FTSE 100, and ASX 50 lists).The research was undertaken during April 2020 and involved English-language only searches of each company's online career pages. No other information sources (i.e. graduate portals) were used. Of the 90 companies evaluated, the vast majority made information easy and accessible for prospective entry-level recruits, however there were instances where the relevant information wasn't readily available. In those instances, the companies were not included in the key statistics (max 25 companies). Where global information on entry-level programs was unavailable, the country specific pages were used for whatever list the company came from i.e. Australia, the UK, or US. Only full-time roles were evaluated – not internships or work experience placements.

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