



VIEWPOINT

ARE YOU UNLOCKING YOUR GRADUATES' POTENTIAL?

Organisations invest heavily in graduate recruitment. But how do they maximise their return? How can they identify, secure and retain the best graduates, and get the best from them once they enter the workforce?

We'll look at some of the challenges that organisations face, based on our recent research, and give you top tips to make sure you're getting the most from your graduates.

74% OF ORGANISATIONS ADMITTED RETAINING GRADUATES WITH STRONG PEOPLE SKILLS WAS A CONCERN FOR THEIR BUSINESS

ATTRACTING AND HIRING GRADUATES IS A COSTLY BUSINESS

In 2015, The Association of Graduate Recruiters estimated that UK employers spend just over £2000 marketing each graduate vacancy. That's more than £200,000 for a company looking to hire 100 graduates.

Then there's the cost of integrating graduates into the organisation. Our research puts the average cost of onboarding new entrants to the workforce at £500-£1000 per individual.

Given the scale of investment businesses make in their graduate intakes, they need to be certain they're hiring the right graduates.

Organisations also need to onboard graduates effectively to make sure they stay. In 2012, a ten-year study by The Marketers' Forum found that graduates stay in their first job for just a year and a half on average. A fifth move on after just six months.

The potential for wasted investment in recruitment processes and high staff turnover is significant.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

We also know from our research there are yet more challenges when it comes to recruiting graduates. Professionals in UK graduate recruitment and development tell us that organisations find it hard to source graduates with enough of the 'soft' skills they'll need in today's workplace.

Sometimes called 'people' skills, soft skills are the emotional and social competencies needed to navigate the workplace, understand organisations and climb the career ladder. They include essential qualities such as self-awareness, self-control, empathy, influence and teamwork. They are abilities which recent graduates are unlikely to have had an opportunity to develop and refine, or understand the importance of in the workplace.

As such, it's perhaps not surprising that nine in ten graduate recruiters consider soft skills to be lacking in the majority of graduate job applicants.

Almost as many (81 percent) say they face strong competition for graduates with people skills; only 5 percent say they don't struggle to find such individuals.

This might explain why a Hay Group survey of graduates found that half have considered leaving their first job because they feel they don't 'fit in'.

Interestingly, today's graduates don't lack the potential to develop soft skills. Data from Talent Q suggests they have as much potential to succeed as any other generation, in terms of their cognitive abilities and their emotional and social skills.

SOFTLY, SOFTLY

There's a reason why organisations place such importance on soft skills: they can be just as valuable as the technical abilities needed to do the job.

Studies show that in complex jobs, two thirds of the difference between an average and a top performer is down to emotional and social skills.

In our experience, these abilities become increasingly important as people progress in their careers, taking the step into management and leadership roles. Employers seem to agree: according to our survey, 91 percent believe that graduates without good people skills will prove ineffective leaders.

Yet the importance of people skills can be lost on graduates when they first enter the workplace – unsurprising if they haven't had the relevant work experience.

As much as 70 percent believe they only need to be good at their job to succeed. More than half tell us that people skills actually get in the way of their ability to do the job.

WE BELIEVE IT'S CRUCIAL FOR EMPLOYERS TO HELP GRADUATES UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS; AND TO HELP THEM DEVELOP THESE ABILITIES QUICKLY IF THEY'RE TO FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL.

70% OF GRADUATES BELIEVE THEY ONLY NEED TO BE GOOD AT THEIR JOB TO SUCCEED

The world of work is changing at such a pace that organisations need their graduates to be up to speed from day one.

But is it fair for employers to expect them to start applying emotional and social skills in the workplace without any guidance?

Four fifths of employers say it takes longer than three months to develop people skills. Yet over half provide their graduate intake with just three months or less of onboarding.

This might be enough to learn how to do the job, but it won't help career starters get to grips with the unwritten rules of the working environment.

NOT SO FAST

Our research also showed that there's a contradiction between the speed of promotion graduates expect, and the time it takes to develop the workplace skills they need. Almost two thirds (62 percent) of graduates expect to be promoted between three months and a year after starting their careers. But as we've already seen, it takes longer than three months to develop the necessary social and emotional skills.

The reality for most graduates is that success won't happen overnight. Providing them with development opportunities early in their careers will help keep them encouraged. It will signal that there is potential for them to progress, and that their organisation is investing in them.

MANAGERS HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY HERE: THEY MUST MAKE CLEAR TO GRADUATES THAT THE ORGANISATION IS THINKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE. THEY NEED TO MANAGE GRADUATES' EXPECTATIONS WHILE KEEPING THEM ENGAGED IN THEIR ROLE AND THE ORGANISATION.

TOP TIPS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Emotional and social skills aren't learned by accident. We believe organisations must help graduates to learn these abilities early in their careers, to set them and their organisation up for future success.

So how can you get your graduates' soft skills up to speed quickly and keep them engaged and retained in the process?

1. **Instil organisational awareness.** Help graduates to understand the organisation and navigate the workplace. Explain where they fit into the bigger picture. Give them opportunities early on to find out how other parts of the business work.
2. **Provide learning opportunities.** Encourage graduates to practice new behaviours in safe environments – both on the job and away from the office.
3. **Bolster self-awareness.** Start building self-awareness in graduate recruits from the outset, by feeding back on how they performed during the hiring process.
4. **Start early.** Begin the process before they start. Organisations often hire graduates a couple of months in advance, so begin preparing them for the workplace while they're still in the 'green room'.
5. **Be transparent.** You can begin managing graduates' career expectations before you've hired them. Introducing situational judgement tests into the recruitment process will give applicants a realistic insight into the role and the organisation.
6. **Encourage.** Make it clear to graduates that you're investing in their future. Give them clear development plans and performance goals.
7. **Leverage technology.** Younger generations expect to learn on their smartphones and tablets. Using technology in training will help engage graduates in their own development.
8. **Make learning compelling.** Use gameplay – points, competition, levels, recognition and rewards – to make learning enjoyable, and tap into people's achievement motive.

THE JOURNEY STARTS HERE

To help get your graduates up to speed, we've created a powerful tool designed to help entry-level graduates become more effective team players. It can help them have a more positive impact on their organisation in just four months.

Our Journey app takes users through a series of on-the-job exercises. To underline the importance of emotional and social abilities, and help people to develop them. The content is based on our expertise in driving performance at work. And the app uses gamification techniques to create a compelling learning experience, keeping graduates focused on their development.

What's more, delivering training over work technology delivers benefits to the organisation as well as the trainee.

Firstly, it aids managers when teaching graduates vital workplace skills, freeing them up to focus on other tasks. And secondly, it focuses development resources on the 'sweet spot'. People learn up to 70 percent of their skills and knowledge on the job, 20 percent socially, and 10 percent from training courses. An effective training app makes on-the-job development – the 70 percent – more easily accessible.

IN SUMMARY

Today's graduates have as much potential as any other generation. But it can be easy to miss it if you're not looking in the right places.

To unlock this potential – and get the most from their investment in graduates – organisations must recruit, onboard and develop them in the right ways.

Employers need to be open about what's expected of graduate hires. They need to manage career demands, and begin developing their people skills as early as possible.

Businesses that do this will find their graduates more engaged and committed to staying with the organisation. This will reap the benefits - and return on investment - of bringing graduate talent into the workforce.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Hay Group commissioned Opinion Matters to conduct research amongst: 150 professionals in the UK responsible for the recruitment and initial development of new graduate talent and 150 graduates in the UK that have been in employment for 3-24 months. The research was carried out between 13th-20th February 2015.

**IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT
HOW WE CAN HELP YOU FIND, RECRUIT
AND DEVELOP THE RIGHT CANDIDATES**

PLEASE VISIT: WEB.HAYGROUP.COM/THE-GRADUATE-JOURNEY

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ABOUT HAY GROUP AND TALENT Q

In April 2014, psychometric assessment specialist Talent Q became part of Hay Group, a global management consultancy.

Hay Group has been helping organisations to make strategy happen through their people for over 70 years. We employ over 3,000 people in 87 offices across 49 countries. Our clients are from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors across every major industry.

Talent Q designs and delivers online psychometric assessments, training and consultancy to help organisations make better, more informed decisions about their people. With a passion for innovation and a practical approach to solving talent management challenges for clients, Talent Q has been first to market with a number of new initiatives and approaches in the assessment industry.