

Young recruits

How to enhance the local work force by working with schools **Interviewed by Elizabeth Grace Saunders**

You know that turnover within your organization costs you in financial capital, in terms of recruiting and training, and in intellectual capital, in terms of lost experience and knowledge. But have you ever considered that turnover in your community, especially of highly skilled young professionals, also comes at a high expense? When qualified individuals leave your region, your local candidate pool decreases.

“Attracting and retaining local professionals is critical for firms wanting to grow their business,” says Carol Brinkley, vice president of WorkForce Services and Consumer Affairs at Tampa Bay WorkForce Alliance (TBWA). “These professionals have basic experience and knowledge of a region’s culture, and they are eager to move up into the challenging positions that the new global economy now demands.”

Smart Business asked Brinkley how to partner with local schools to benefit your company and your business community.

Why is it important to attract and retain local young professionals?

Businesses require a well-educated work force to thrive in the present marketplace. Young professionals play a pivotal role in our knowledge-driven global economy where technology and knowledge now serve as the primary wealth-creating assets. This drastic change in our economy over the last several decades has put a premium on workers who are more educated, skilled in technology and adaptable to the rapidly changing world. The presence or absence of a highly educated, skilled and flexible work force has proved to have a major impact on a region’s economic strength.

What makes this recruitment so difficult?

Quality of life plays an important role in recruitment. Young professionals tend to move to metropolitan areas with high concentrations of other young professionals, which can leave smaller towns and cities lacking workers in their 20s and 30s.



Carol Brinkley
Vice president
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But the highest recruitment motivator for young professionals is salary. This generation is not afraid to move across the country if it means they can make more money. Our technologically connected world makes it even easier for these individuals to move for advancement and increased compensation opportunities. Businesses no longer compete for this group on a local level; they now also compete at a national and global level. This means companies need to take a proactive stance to retain top talent.

How can companies collaborate with local schools?

Encouraging local young professionals who hold a wealth of information about the area economy and culture to stay can help businesses of all types. With the help of work force boards, businesses can create strategic partnerships with local schools. Valuable educational experiences, such as internships, job shadowing and co-op programs, can offer highly skilled and knowledgeable students insight into your business. These opportunities can also

attract more ambitious high school students to attend your local college or university. Pre-graduation recruitment programs open up a talent pipeline into your company.

How do scholarship programs support the community?

Scholarship programs, such as the one offered by TBWA, assist with developing work force talent to foster economic development. Targeted scholarship programs enable companies to help students prepare for the increasing demand for higher-educated workers. This funding can also create loyalty and can be offered in conjunction with employment programs. Scholarships also support the community at large by raising the education level of the overall work force, making it more attractive to new businesses.

How do job shadowing, internship and co-op programs assist with future recruitment?

Collaboration between private industry and local universities and colleges allows businesses to grow the talent and keep graduates in the region. Offering programs, such as job shadowing, internships and co-ops, allow students an opportunity to gain an intimate understanding of and appreciation for your business. They can also start to form relationships with your employees.

Reaching out to these motivated candidates in advance of their graduation gives businesses a competitive edge. When trained young professionals enter the work force, they will often first look to companies where they have already worked. <<

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