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Do your homework before embarking on college campus recruiting

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Recruiting on a college campus can be either feast or famine.

While there is no one clear way to be sure you return from a college recruitment visit with your next new hotshot employee, there are a few steps that you can take to ensure that your visit will be rewarding.

Unlike traditional headhunting, college students often present a blank slate to employers that makes separating the wheat from the chaff a unique challenge.

College students may have some work experience, but past employment often has little to do the industry they're entering. Even more often, college students have little other than their personality and outward appearance as tools to land a job.

The good news is that there is a wealth of untapped talent on college campuses for those who take the time to look.

But prospective employers shouldn't waste time. In September 2012, the unemployment rate for new college graduates " defined as college graduates ages 20 to 24 " fell to 6.3 percent from 8.3 percent in September 2011 and 9.4 percent in September 2010.

Michael Russ, recruiting committee chairman with law firm **Butler, Snow**, O'Meara, **Stevens & Cannada** PLLC, says that his firm has been able to find an immense pool of talented new attorneys by combing the law schools.

"We gave out more offers than I would've anticipated through the recession," Russ said.

Butler Snow has 240 attorneys in 13 offices spread throughout the Southeast. A large number of those new attorneys have come to **Butler Snow** via its recruitment program. The firm held 11 different on-campus recruiting events between July and September 2012.

"The firm recognizes the value of bringing in new recruits from law schools," Russ said. "There's a real commitment to maintaining that."

Russ says that developing a good relationship with the career placement counselors and faculty members can

help deliver better quality interviews and allow employers to maximize time.

That sentiment crosses into all industries, according to Brett Good, senior district president with staffing and recruitment giant Robert Half International Inc.

"Speaking to the career groups that organize these job fairs and ask them about who's typically in attendance, who's scheduled to be in attendance and what other organizations are going to be there to be really effective," Good said.

Good also highlights the importance of research into the colleges that employers are recruiting. Some companies may find the competition they face for the best recruits overwhelming.

"If you're a small company and you're hoping to attract a stellar accounting student yet you're going to go to one of the schools targeted by the big four accounting firms, you're probably going to struggle," Good said. "You really need to do your homework on the front end."

Though it is natural to want to bring on the best and the brightest from a college class, the difference between magna cum laude and summa cum laude shouldn't be the determining factor.

Finding the right fit for your company could require an extra investment in time. If possible, try to find a way to meet your recruits in a more informal setting. Good says that breaking standard interview protocol can help determine if your prospective employees fit in with your company's culture.

"You get them out from behind the desk in an interview setting, where often recruits can give rehearsed answers, and you can find out a lot more," Good said.

Helpful Hints

- 1) Be prepared to look beyond GPA and class placement. Though grades are an excellent indication of talent, the student ranked fifth in his class may be a better fit for your company than the one ranked first.
- 2) Maintain a strong relationship with the appropriate faculty. Professors and career counselors have a relationship with their students that can be very insightful when choosing which prospective employees to spend time with
- 3) Research your institutions. Though a college may turn out highly valued prospects, that may not mean it's the best opportunity for your company.

Web sites

<http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/08/recruiting-business-school.html>

Highlights: Butler, Snow, Stevens & Cannada, Butler Snow, Butler Snow