NACE18: Future of We

Key Talking Points: Drew Butts

SLIDE ONE: UNIVERSITY RELATIONS & RECRUITING

1. Setting the stage
Thank you, Suzanne. I will be talking about the future of work and the future of we from the university recruiting side.

My part of this presentation is based on insights and questions I've gathered from others in recruiting.

In my discussions with recruiting professionals, the overarching question that emerged was: How will we source and connect with candidates in the future?

SLIDE TWO: SOURCING

2. The future of sourcing and connecting with candidates – Process changes
That's hardly surprising: This has ALWAYS been the question that underpins university recruiting. Some of that question is about the process part of sourcing and connecting, and there has been a lot of focus on the process. In fact, we've made great strides in terms of process, and technology has driven that.

We have experienced positive change by implementing CRM and better use of applicant tracking systems, but could we do more? Right now, technology is not updating at a fast enough pace for us: University recruiting and career services are using systems that not only don’t talk to each other, but also don’t really speak to students.

Let me say here, too, that the communication piece is critical for all of us, and, right now, our communications systems aren’t keeping pace with what we need. E-mail is almost antiquated: Students are bombarded with e-mails from everyone, so they are becoming tone deaf to that mode of communication. In fact, some of the folks I spoke with said students respond to them more quickly through LinkedIn than through e-mail.

SLIDE THREE: CONNECTIONS

I think we can expect to crack that nut, to streamline our communications with students; over the shorter term, that may to better integrate text messaging systems into our processes.

A bigger issue, and this gets to what we need to work on now to ensure successful collaboration in the future, is aligning the systems between recruiting and career services so they speak to each other. How we share information between ourselves is going to be crucial to our success.

Something else that we see is that many students are finding jobs online and bypassing career services in favor of external sites. It is critical for career center systems to be elevated so that they can compete against external sites—Indeed, Monster, Careerbuilder, and others—for candidates. At the same time, career center systems could support tools that allow employers to
search for students on campus through online sourcing just as we would through an external site.

Finally, in terms of what’s ahead for us in terms of the processes of sourcing and connecting with candidates, I’d like to take a minute to raise the issue of the decentralized career center or the hybrid career center, where there is a central office to manage the overall career services operation along with a college-based office for students enrolled in a specific school. NACE’s latest benchmark survey shows that—together—these account for approximately 28 percent of career centers. That’s up from around 11 percent 10 years ago. For employers, it doesn’t matter to us—we go where the students are. But, in our footprint, we are finding that many university career centers struggle with influence and status on campus and that the “official” career center seems to have less support from the college both in status and monetarily to operate effectively, so they increasingly look to employers to pick up the slack. More on this a little later.

**SLIDE FOUR: IN-PERSON VS VIRTUAL INTERACTIONS**

3. How will we leverage our face-to-face interactions with candidates?
I’d like to turn now to the relationship side of sourcing and connecting with candidates. Technology is a tool—and is becoming more and more efficient at helping us identify and connect with candidates. It is especially good at handling the “transactional side” of this and will only get better at that piece going forward.

But it can’t do everything or even the most important thing. It can’t MAKE us the “employer of choice,” and, for university recruiting, that is where it’s at. That’s where our branding and, especially, our face-to-face interactions come in.

Face-to-face is and will continue to be important. But how we do face-to-face is changing. Right now, we’re seeing that specific schools within the university are hosting their own career fairs, which impacts attendance at the “main fair.” That means many employers need to make choices about which to attend. Along the same lines, employers need to think about other face-to-face events they are using to connect with candidates. The info session, for example—is that as effective as it once was? Are there other, more efficient means to achieve the goal of the info session: How can we re-evaluate and reimagine the info session so that it helps us build ties with candidates and helps candidates understand our culture and how that culture might work for them?

Perhaps no face-to-face effort will be more important to recruiting in the future than the internship program. We’ve already seen that many employers are giving as much focus to their internship programs as they are to full-time hiring. Over the past 10 years, we’ve seen the ROI measures improve: Acceptance rates, for example, are trending higher as employers put more effort into selecting the right candidates for their internships up front. We’re also seeing now that many employers are sourcing interns earlier and earlier, and a shift in when interns are recruited.

Besides being a main source of full-time hires, internship programs also play a significant role in helping employers build their brand as an “employer of choice.” Leveraging interns who are returning to campus as “ambassadors” will likely be an official part of the internship. Virtual internships are just in their infancy, but look for those to expand. For that matter, some employers already have their interns continue their internships while they are back on campus through a “virtual” internship. That may seem counterintuitive to the whole idea of face-to-face interaction, and I believe real-world internships will continue to be popular and effective, but the
notion that an internship must be bound by time and location is no longer true. We can and will give students access to experiential opportunities virtually.

**SLIDE FIVE: COLLABORATION**

4. Collaboration/positioning
So, where do we go from here? What will recruiting and career services need from each other and how we can and will collaborate?

Broadly speaking, for us—for recruiters and career services—to succeed, we need to tell each other what we need and what we can do for each other. That’s good practice. That’s also going to be critical to our ability to succeed in the future. What we will need from each other is already evolving away from the process-related parts of the career services-student-employer relationship to more meaningful pieces that can’t be automated. What might that look like in the future?

Earlier I mentioned that many university career centers look to employers to help support them. Recruiting can support career services and collaborate with career services not only by providing monetary support but also by helping career services make the case for its value.

For example, most talent acquisition teams take some kind of annual assessment of the ROI they get from their campus events. My company does. We are now starting to share these data with our counterparts on campus to show them the impact they have on our hiring. We also use the data to discuss foundation dollars we are willing to support, what we want those dollars to go toward, and what we are willing to support monetarily. For recruiters, the data help us ensure that we are spending our time and dollars wisely, and provide career services with evidence of value. On the career services side, career centers can partner with employers to help them develop their “employers of choice” brand by helping them gain leadership roles on boards, establishing connections with faculty to get in front of the classroom, or helping them find ways to be in front of students beyond just the general career services events.

**Handover to Glen**

I hope I’ve given you food for thought on where recruiting is heading and how that might impact our relationships and, ultimately, our success. I would like to echo Suzanne in saying that we ARE all in this together, and that through careful thought and meaningful dialogue we can embrace what’s ahead.

I’d like to now turn this back to Glen so that he can get you ready for your roundtable discussions. Glen?

**SLIDE: FUTURE OF WE - DISCUSSION**