Summary of Recruiting Trends 1979-80

A Study of 471 Businesses, Industries, Governmental Agencies, and Educational Institutions and Employing New College Graduates

By John D. Singleton and L. Patrick Sheeetz Ph.D.

This report is a summary of the Ninth Annual RECRUITING TRENDS SURVEY conducted by Placement Services at Michigan State University for 1979-80. Four hundred and seventy-one employers from a cross section of business, industry, government, and education were surveyed for this study. The results include information pertaining to trends in hiring new college graduates, anticipated starting salaries, campus recruiting activities, and other related topics of interest to college recruiters, placement officers, educators, career counselors, and students.

JOB OUTLOOK FOR GRADUATING CLASS OF 1979-80

According to many observers, our country is currently in a recession or on the threshold of one. Judging from the information received from employers in this study, however, the overall employment picture for new college graduates will not be affected by this condition. In fact, a slight increase (1.2%) is anticipated in the number of college graduates hired this year over last year. For MBA graduates the employment picture is expected to remain about the same as last year. The number of campus visits by prospective employers is expected to remain the same, or there will be a slight increase of 1.2 percent at the most. Since last year was a good year for the placement of college graduates, the job market this year promises to still be good in light of this survey. Currently, certain industrial and business groups are expected to recruit more heavily than others, but other groups expect to remain the same or even decline. Those expecting to recruit the heaviest are accounting, aerospace, electronics, merchandising/retailing, military and the petroleum industries. Electric equipment/machinery, food and beverage processing, hospitals and health services, hotels and motels, metals and metal products, utilities and research and consulting firms are expected to increase their hiring slightly (1-4%). While this forecast speaks to the demand nationally, there is evidence of some soft spots. The most glaring example of this is in the automotive industry, where a decrease is expected in the hiring of college graduates this year.

AVERAGE STARTING SALARIES

Starting salaries are expected to increase approximately 7.8 percent for graduates in the highest demand areas, such as electrical, mechanical, chemical, and petroleum engineering, computer science majors. An increase of 5.6 percent in starting salaries is forecasted for medical, civil, and civil engineers. MBA's, marketing, sales, chemistry, accounting, agriculture, math, and general business. The lowest increases in starting salaries are expected for human ecology, social science, liberal arts, and education majors. An interesting sidelight reveals that most employers establish starting salary categories for all new graduates for particular degree levels and academic majors. This represents 65.4 percent of the employers. Thirty-four percent of the employers indicated that starting salaries are negotiable during the interviewing process in their organizations.

DEGREE LEVELS REQUIRED OF NEW Hires

Of all the professional positions in the surveyed organizations, the bachelor's degree was the level of education in most demand. Approximately 110 percent of the positions require an associate's degree, 51-60 percent a bachelor's degree, 110 percent a master's degree, and 110 percent a doctoral degree. In these organizations, approximately 41.5 percent of the employers indicated that starting salaries are negotiable during the interviewing process in their organizations.

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Recruiting

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In order of importance is the employment decision. Contrary to popular belief that grades are first in importance, grades rank 26 in that list of factors. Several factors like "the ability to get things done" rate higher.

Most employers do not have a minimum grade point average for hiring college graduates, although 20.6 percent do. If those employers with a minimum grade point average requirement, 58.4 percent required a GPA of 2.5 or higher and 22.4 percent required a 3.0 or higher.

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Recruiting Trends 79-80

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REFERENCE CHECKS IN SELECTION PROCESS

Most employers (84.1%) check references when considering new college graduates for employment in their organizations. References are checked most often (84.6%) before the job offer is made. Other employers check references after the initial interview, after the second interview, and after the site interview. Some employers (12.7%) check references after the individual has been given a job offer. Nine employers check references after the job offer is accepted or after the individual has started on the job. Most reference checks are done by telephone (70.1%), some by letter, and a few by credit bureau and personal visits.

VOCATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Vocational and psychological testing for employment purposes is declining. Only 13.4 percent of the surveyed employers used vocational and psychological testing when considering new college graduates for employment. Of those 63 employers, only 26 use vocational and psychological testing more today than they did 5 years ago. Generally, tests of this type are designed specifically for the employer’s needs.

PREPARING FOR CAMPUS INTERVIEWS

Most employers are pleased with the interviewing preparation displayed by college students. Employers recommend that students read the employers’ literature available in their placement office libraries, be ready to describe their career goals, present a well-prepared resume at the interview, and ask good questions.

EMPLOYERS’ TOUGHEST RECRUITING PROBLEMS

This year the toughest recruiting problem was convincing individuals to relocate to the organizations geographical location. According to employers, the next problem most frequently cited was finding enough qualified minorities and women, and hiring qualified graduates within the starting compensation constraints. Competition between firms and competition for the outstanding candidates were also mentioned often. In recent years, employers have noticed an increase competition from other employers, constant increases in salaries resulting in a compression problem with established employees, and more emphasis on college recruiting, and increased competition and demand for technical graduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JOESEEKERS

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MANPOWER
Summary of Recruiting Trends 79-80

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Employers have the following recommendations for new college graduates on how to get a job with their organizations: prepare for interviews, research any organization you are interviewing or visiting, submit job applications, sign up for campus interviews, use your Placement Services, earn good GPAs, set realistic career goals, show a genuine interest in work for an organization, gain previous work experience (summer employment, part-time, co-op), have a well-prepared resume, be enthusiastic, sell yourself, be aggressive. Persistent, assertive, enroll in a high demand academic major, present a good appearance, be willing to work hard, have a good work attitude, and demonstrate good communication skills.

TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR NEW HIREES

Most employers (68.2%) have training programs for new hires. On the average, these training programs include 910 hours of training each week during the first 6 months on the job. By far the most prevalent type of training is on-the-job training (OJT); 418 employers have this. A distant second is orientation training.

Classes, formal training, and written training are used less frequently.

TURNOVER OF NEW COLLEGE HIRES

New college hires leave at the rate of 56 percent during the first year, according to the surveyed employers. A few employers (31.9%) stated that 7 percent or more of their new hires left during the first year. Turnover rates vary greatly depending upon employer type too. Most new college graduates leave their first organization during the first two years because they receive a better job offer. As a second reason, they leave because they are not able to adapt.

MANPOWER FORECASTING

Many employers (68.2%) use manpower forecasting when establishing quotas for new college hires. One year is the usual time span for these projections (45.5%). Approximately 22.4 percent of the employers use 5 years as the time projection. Some employers (8.9%) are not using manpower forecasting because they have not found an acceptable system.

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Almost one third of the surveyed employers (29.9%) did not know which geographical region in the United States would be the easiest for new college graduates to find jobs. Of those employers who rated the regions, Southcentral (Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, etc.), Northwest (Minnesota, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota, etc.), and Southwest (California, Nevada, Hawaii, New Mexico, Arizona, etc.) were rated highest. Those regions with the lowest ratings were Southeast, Northeast, and Northwest.

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"A resume is an advertising promotional piece that touches on all things that influence your qualifications and that is geared to represent your best interests," said Edwin B. Fitzpatrick, of MSU Placement Services.

Placement Services offers a manual which deals with these considerations.

This manual says that for the best appeal to a prospective employer, a resume should be a summary of background, experience and ambitions. In addition, the candidate for a job must give the impression that he knows what he wants.

Most employers have stacks and stacks of resumes to look through, and can only scan them. It is important to get the most pertinent information on one page.

The resume should also be visually attractive. It should be appealing to the eye.

Fitzpatrick also said that professional copy services should be used.

The most problem areas in student resumes are usually past employment and education description. These are the most important parts of the resume.

Most students tend to underestimate their educational background. Education is a major qualifier for employers, said Fitzpatrick.

A good resume can often be ruined by a bad cover letter. Just as much thought should be given to the cover letter as was given to the resume.

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