

Cultivating the Next Generation: Strategies for Attractions Industry Recruitment of University Talent

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The attractions industry, encompassing theme parks, museums, zoos, and various cultural sites, faces a consistent need for enthusiastic and skilled talent.

University students represent a crucial talent pipeline, yet many view industry roles as temporary rather than long-term career paths.

To effectively attract and retain this valuable demographic, companies must move beyond traditional recruitment methods and adopt strategies that align with the values and expectations of Gen Z, the dominant generation in universities today.

1. Why it is important: Understanding the University Talent Pool

Current young generations are often tech-savvy, socially conscious, and seek purpose-driven work with clear development pathways. They prioritize flexibility, work-life balance, and continuous learning. To succeed in recruitment, attractions companies must highlight the inherent purpose in their mission (e.g., education, conservation, entertainment) and provide the structure and technological experiences this generation expects.

2. Methodology: A Multi-Faceted Approach

Attracting university talent requires a holistic strategy focusing on employer branding, university partnerships, and an engaging recruitment process.

Step 1: Cultivate a Compelling Employer Brand

University students are discerning and will research a company's values and culture. Your brand must be authentic and transparent.

Checklist: Employer Branding

1. **Highlight social impact:** Showcase conservation efforts, community programs, and educational initiatives. Use authentic content, such as employee-generated videos, rather than polished marketing materials.
2. **Emphasize DEI initiatives:** Clearly communicate your commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion on your careers page and in recruitment materials.
3. **Promote a positive work environment:** Use social media (TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn) to show behind-the-scenes content that highlights teamwork and fun work culture.
4. **Be transparent about benefits:** Clearly state compensation ranges and benefits (wellness programs, mental health support, student loan assistance) to build trust.

Illustration: Authentic Content

A zoo could share an Instagram reel of an animal care specialist discussing their passion for conservation and a typical day's challenges.

This provides a genuine, purpose-driven message that resonates with young generations values.

Step 2: Forge Strategic University Partnerships

Building long-term relationships with educational institutions is critical for ongoing talent acquisition.

Checklist: University Engagement

1. **Engage with career centers:** Develop strong ties with university career services departments to streamline recruitment efforts.
2. **Partner with faculty:** Collaborate with professors in relevant fields (Hospitality & Tourism, Biology, Marketing, Engineering, etc.) to speak in classes or offer real-world case studies/projects.
3. **Offer robust internships and co-ops:** Provide meaningful, paid internships that offer substantial experience, not just entry-level tasks. Ensure these programs have clear learning objectives and mentorship.
4. **Host or attend campus events:** Participate in career fairs, industry talks, and "day in the life" sessions, bringing young, enthusiastic employees as ambassadors to connect with peers.

Illustration: The Power of Internships

A major theme park company could establish a "Rotational Program" where interns spend time in Operations, Marketing, and Finance. This broad exposure helps students see the diverse career paths available within the industry.

Step 3: Streamline the Recruitment and Onboarding Process

Gen Z is accustomed to seamless, digital experiences. A clunky application process can quickly deter them.

Checklist: Recruitment Experience

1. **Optimize for mobile:** Ensure all application and recruitment materials are fully functional and user-friendly on smartphones.
2. **Digitize and simplify the process:** Use technology to remove manual efforts. Offer one-click applications from social media or automated interview scheduling.
3. **Provide continuous and prompt communication:** Avoid "ghosting" candidates. Use automated updates or text messages to keep applicants informed of their status throughout the process.
4. **Offer a tech-savvy onboarding:** Utilize digital platforms for new-hire paperwork and initial training to ensure a smooth transition.

Illustration: The Digital Experience

A museum could use a gamified online skill assessment as part of the application process, which is interactive, engaging, and appeals to Gen Z's tech-savvy nature.

Step 4: Emphasize Growth and Flexibility

Young generations prioritize professional development and a healthy work-life balance.

Checklist: Growth & Flexibility

1. **Provide clear career paths:** Offer transparent career progression frameworks and mentorship programs to show a future within the company.
2. **Offer continuous learning:** Provide ongoing training, skill-building opportunities, and formal L&D programs to support their desire for growth.
3. **Embrace flexibility:** Offer flexible hours, project-based assignments, or seasonal transfer options to accommodate a diverse range of work-life needs.
4. **Prioritize well-being:** Implement initiatives that support mental and physical health, such as mental health days and access to counseling services.

Illustration: Career Transparency

During an interview, a recruiter can present a visual "career map" showing the typical path from a university graduate role (e.g., Assistant Manager) to a senior leadership position, detailing required skills and timelines.

3. Conclusion

By understanding and catering to the unique values of university students, the attractions industry can successfully attract and retain a vibrant, purpose-driven workforce.

A commitment to authenticity, strong university partnerships, and a modern recruitment approach will ensure a steady stream of talent ready to contribute to the magic of the attractions experience

If you would like to learn more, please contact us:

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