

The Fantasy of Wealth: Attracting College Graduates into the Workforce

Nile A. LaTowsky, Shawn M. Bergman, and James Westerman

Appalachian State University

Abstract

The need for top talent is a critical factor towards the current and future success of organizations. Each year 1.5 million college students graduate and enter the largest generation of the workforce, Millennials. Therefore, it is imperative for companies to understand how to effectively attract the Millennial talent pool. A trend within organizational recruiting is for companies to provide more initiatives for organization's stakeholders than just the triple bottom line. One type of initiative that is shown to be effective in recruiting from the general talent pool is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which is an organization's efforts towards obligations at different levels - economic, legal, environmental, and philanthropic - that affect their stakeholders. Evidence shows that CSR is most effective when job choice is high. However, research indicates that recent college graduates may have a lower level of job choice compared to more experienced applicants. This indicates Millennials may hold different values towards CSR recruitment messaging when compared to the general talent pool. Millennials seem to be attracted towards organizations that provide opportunities for quick career progression and competitive benefits and are willing to compromise their need to affect society to keep these opportunities. This suggests that Millennials, especially college students, ought to favor an employment situation which offers better economic CSR benefits. The proposed study aims to see if college students place more value on one CSR type, and if an organization will be viewed as a more attractive place to work when economic CSR is displayed on a corporate website as opposed to the other types of CSR when considering a job right out of college. The results of this study will allow organizations to understand how to effectively recruit and retain recently graduated college students in the Millennial talent pool.

Organizations are consistently looking for top talent that will provide them with a competitive advantage (Beechler, & Woodward, 2009). Millennials are a significant applicant pool from which to source top talent given they became the largest portion of the American workforce in 2015 (Fry, 2015). With the last of the Millennial Generation slated to graduate in 2025 (Howe & Strauss, 2010) and approximately 1.5 million Millennial college graduates looking to join the workforce each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), understanding how to effectively recruit from the Millennial talent pool is crucial for current and future corporate success.

One concept shown to be important in recruiting top talent is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR; Turban & Greening, 1997). CSR is an organization's initiative to assess and take responsibility for obligations it holds towards internal and external stakeholders. There are four CSR types environmental, legal, philanthropic and economic (Albinger & Freeman, 2000). Evidence suggests CSR is a key strategy in attracting and retaining top employees (Bhattacharay, Sen, & Korshun, 2008) and research supports this claim by showing how CSR is related to Millennials' level of attraction towards an organization that emphasizes volunteerism (McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011). Recent research suggests that CSR messaging is more complex and only certain CSR types resonate with applicants when displayed on corporate websites (Belinda, Lesniak, & Bergman, 2016). Further research has shown added contingencies to the potential effectiveness of CSR suggesting it is most effective when the job choice of an applicant is high (Heather & Sarah, 2000). Given that recent college graduates might have lower levels of job choice compared with more experienced applicants (Albinger & Freeman, 2000), it is reasonable to suspect Millennials might favor different CSR recruiting messages compared with the broader talent pool.

Research on how Millennials view job options supports the notion that this generation could view CSR differently. Opportunities for relatively quick career progression and competitive benefits are top factors that attract a Millennial to an organization (Maurer, 2015; PwC, 2011). Millennials are often found compromising their needs to affect society in order to keep their current job for financial reasons (Deloitte, 2017). These findings suggest that Millennials, especially college graduates who have lower levels of job choice, ought to favor an employment situation that offers greater economic CSR benefits compared with the other CSR types (environmental, legal, philanthropic), which have been shown to favor the general market (Bhattacharay et al. 2008).

The current study will sample undergraduates who are about to graduate and enter the workforce. Initially, participants will complete a survey examining the value they place on the four CSR types when considering a job opportunity out of college. Subjects then will be randomly assigned to one of five experimental conditions. These conditions will have participants view a mock company that displays one of the four CSR types or a control page (one that displays no CSR information). Participants will indicate their level of attraction towards the company and their level of interest in pursuing a job with the organization. A Within-Groups ANOVA will first be conducted to determine if participants place more value on one CSR type as compared to the others. Next, an Analysis of Covariance will determine if: 1) an organization that displays economic CSR on their website will be viewed as a more attractive place to work when compared to the other types of CSR.

References

- Albinger, H. S., & Freeman, S. J. (2000). Corporate social performance and attractiveness as an employer to different job seeking populations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 28, 243-253. doi: 10.1023/A:1006289817941
- Basil, D. Z., & Erlandson, J. (2008). Corporate social responsibility website representations: A longitudinal study of internal and external self-presentations. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 14, 125-137. doi:10.1080/13527260701858497
- Beechler, S., & Woodward, I. C. (2009). The global “war for talent”. *Journal Of International Management*, 15, 273-285. doi: 10.1016/j.intman.2009.01.002
- Belinda, C., Lesniak, K., & Bergman, S.M. (2016, October). Online displays of corporate social responsibility: The impact of individual & website design factors on recruitment outcomes. In K. O'Connor (co-Chair) & G. Schmidt (co-Chair), *Social Media as a Technology for Connecting People to Each Other and Knowledge*. Symposium at an annual meeting of the Southern Management Association, Charlotte, NC.
- Bhattacharya, C., Sen, S., & Korschun, D. (n.d). Using corporate social responsibility to win the war for talent. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 49(2), 37. Retrieved from: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2333549>
- Deloitte. (2017). Millennial Survey 2017. Deloitte, Social impact, Innovation. Retrieved from: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>
- Fry, R. (2015). Millennials surpass Gen Xers as the largest generation in U.S. labor force. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-lar>

[gest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/](#)

Albinger, H. S. & Freeman, S. J. (2000). Corporate Social Performance and Attractiveness as an Employer to Different Job Seeking Populations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, (3), 243.

doi: 10.1023/A:1006289817941

Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York: Vintage Books

Maurer, R. (2015) Millennials expect raises, promotions more often than older generations.

Society for Human Resource Management

Retrieved from:

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/millennials-raises-promotions-generations.aspx>

McGlone, T., Spain, J. J., & McGlone, V. (2011). Corporate Social Responsibility and the Millennials. *Journal of Education For Business*, 86(4), 195-200.

doi:10.1080/08832323.2010.502912

Pricewaterhouse Coopers (2011) Millennials at work Reshaping the workplace, The PWC.

Retrieved September 14, 2017, from:

<https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/consulting/documents/millennials-at-work.pdf>

Turban, D. B., & Greening, D. W. (1997). Corporate social performance and organizational attractiveness to prospective employees. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40, 658-672. doi:10.2307/257057