

College Recruiter submission (6/4/14)

Trades Are Cool Again

By Dan Campbell, CEO of Hire Dynamics

For some, the “college experience” is an exciting prospect that starts with trying out subjects that will hopefully lead to a career and ends with the rude awakening of abundant student loans and no job post-graduation to pay them off – or potentially worse, being stuck in a career you’ve discovered just isn’t right. When you need a career path re-evaluation, or when you can’t secure a job (or even an interview) post graduation, use this game plan to determine options.

Not everyone is suited for the typical four-year degree. However, this generation of students typically isn’t known to place a career in the skilled trades at the top of their [dream job](#) list as society imposes the stigma that trade jobs are dirty and mundane. Instead, attending technical school has been waylaid by the promise of status and money after graduating from a four-year college. But, that doesn’t mean your skill set isn’t applicable in trade industries.

If you love your degree, but can’t land a job

The trade industries are hiring, and today’s trade jobs entail sophisticated and specialized work. Skilled trades are as much about working with innovative technologies as with your hands. And like other industries, these companies have sales, marketing, logistics and other departments that can align with your area of study. Also, because trade jobs are being driven by increased productivity, Big Data and Internet commerce, the demand for qualified candidates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers rises. Another added benefit – these careers often offer immediate opportunities, growth and job security.

If you need a new career, as well as a job

There is a growing shortage of skilled labor, yet we’re seeing a shift to “attribute-based hiring” where personal character is as much of a hiring decision driver as skills set. This is because employees can learn the skills of the job more easily than a character trait. As a result, companies are opening their doors to those who have strong core attributes with the capacity to learn, and then train them on the job for a specific role.

Technical school placement rate is higher as these graduates are willing to roll up their sleeves, do the work and move up by proving themselves. To get a foot in the door, present yourself as trainable, progressive and thoughtful. Consider contract-to-hire or short- or long-term contract assignments. These “career trails” will help you re-evaluate your career path while gaining experience and avoiding a resume gap.

The big picture

As innovation and creativity power this generation, companies realize that most Millennials are not going to be attracted to a role that isn’t deemed a hot, cutting edge-opportunity. However, these positions didn’t exist 10 or even five years ago, meaning that emerging professionals can take part in pioneering new efficiencies and technologies that will drive the business world forward. And trade organizations are working to attract your generation more than ever. PayScale breaks down the top 100 [Best Gen Y Employers](#) based on qualities deemed important to respondents, such as flexible schedules, meaningful work and low levels of stress – Cameron International, Boeing and Texas Instruments all made the top 20 list.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, [middle-skill jobs](#) will make up approximately 45 percent of all openings projected through 2014. And, of the occupations requiring postsecondary education, those requiring an associate degree or a certificate (i.e., manufacturing) are projected to grow the fastest, at about 19 percent. There is an opportunity to take advantage of industries different than what was originally anticipated, but ask yourself this – isn't it worth it for immediate opportunities, continued growth and job security?

Dan Campbell is founder/CEO of Hire Dynamics and 2014 chairman of the American Staffing Association. Hire Dynamics is an industry leading staffing provider for contact/call centers, manufacturing facilities, supply chain, e-commerce operations and corporate offices, and has been recognized by Staffing Industry Analyst's list of "Best Staffing Firms to Work For" and Inc. Magazine's 500/5000, among others. More information may be found at hiredynamics.com, on [LinkedIn](#) and on [Twitter](#).