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CPAs to invest in the screening, interviewing and relationship development with up and coming accounting professionals. As the class of 2014 just received their diplomas, there is a host of fresh talent equipped with technology experience, new ideas and the drive to take your firm into the future. The key is meeting these fresh accountants early in their college career to make hiring an easy decision. In order to attract and retain top talent here are a few things to consider when recruiting.

**Amy Vetter • Jul. 21, 2014**



In order to continue the long-term success of an accounting practice, it's crucial for CPAs to invest in the screening, interviewing and relationship development with up and coming accounting professionals. As the class of 2014 just received their diplomas, there is a host of fresh talent equipped with technology experience, new ideas and the drive to take your firm into the future. The key is meeting these fresh accountants early in their college career to make hiring an easy decision. In order to attract and retain top talent here are a few things to consider when recruiting.

It's well documented that millenials are bringing new life to the workforce and the accounting industry is no exception. With cloud technologies and anytime, anywhere mobile capabilities, flexible schedules and casual atmospheres, the

professional work environment has drastically changed, and accounting practices

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an adjunct accounting professor, I quickly realized accounting students are much different today than when we went to school. They work and think differently and have very different expectations of quality of life when starting out in their careers. It is important to know how to identify those characteristics in students that may make successful accountants one day for your firm, even if it comes off differently than you expect. It all comes down to two key factors: work ethic and technology prowess.

- **Work Ethic:** An individual with previous experience in the industry outside of the required course-load signifies a strong, positive work ethic that will likely follow suit throughout their career. Look for students who were actively involved in their school's accounting fraternity or held a few related internships while in school. This experience may not be with a firm or corporation – they may have taken the steps to start their own businesses while in school. Not only does this reflect diligence and determination, but it also displays that they can be a self-starter.
- **Technology Background:** One primary benefit of hiring younger professionals is their experience with technology. These students have been surrounded by evolving technology throughout their entire lives and immerse themselves in new tools on a daily basis. It's incredibly important to find a technologically adept candidate. They should have an interest in tech, are open to learning or personally use cloud apps and willing to bring that experience into the firm.

During the interview process, ask what types of cloud, social or mobile technology they used in school for organizations they participated in or how they were able to promote social events. It's inevitable that recent graduates have experience with cloud-based software through common services like Google Docs, Dropbox, Skype, and all sorts of apps. Those that can articulate cloud benefits will be inclined to have a better understanding of the technology

as well as key knowledge on how to best take advantage of these tools for

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environment for your employees. This generation greatly values quality of life, and accounting firms should aim to reflect culture and match outside interests within the work environment. A few considerations to create a positive employee experience may include:

- **Create an alternative atmosphere:** Offer the ability to work on couches, standing desks or even beanbag chairs if desired.
- **Provide break-time activities:** Encourage your staff to utilize non-billable time for periodic breaks throughout the day. Create an environment for them to re-energize by providing fun activities like a pool table, ping-pong table or foosball table in the office.
- **Create interest groups:** Find ways to match employees with similar interests and schedule events – running groups, book clubs, gamers, etc.
- **Choose simple software:** Select simple, easy-to-use technology for your clients that young professionals would be excited to work with. There are a variety of software applications for all areas of business (accounting, payroll, invoicing, etc.) designed for this generation, so don't be afraid to try something new. When the accounting applications available are more like the apps they use regularly, making the transition to learn new software is easier for them.
- **Go completely virtual:** Embrace the available cloud technology and create an entirely virtual office space that enables a flexible schedule. Utilize software that is tablet and mobile-friendly and provide mobile devices to your employees in place of the permanent desktop computer. A firm that is accessible on all devices, anywhere, anytime will be sure to stand out against the rest. Rather than the traditional mandatory "face time" in the office, allow for virtual FaceTime or use of applications like Skype and Google Hangouts for meetings.

By implementing key recruiting strategies and designing an experience that appeals to the younger generation, your firm will be able to successfully develop a strong

team that will create success for the firm into the future.

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