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accounting firms will have to revitalize their recruiting approach.

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*By Rina Henning.*

Recruiting and employee retention have topped the priority list of businesses at large in the recent past, but for the accounting industry, it has been a primary focus for most of the last decade. Competition for accounting talent is fierce. As soon as sophomore year of college, accounting majors seemingly already have internships lined up for consecutive seasons, and some even have “offers in-kind” for when they graduate.

Accounting firms already contend with some of the more obvious barriers and

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quicker payday, leaving accounting firms in a difficult position.

If the decline in accounting graduates continues, fewer accountants may be left to carry on the legacy of the older partners. Accounting firms will have to find new ways to rebuild the talent pipeline and steer students toward a career in public accounting.

One such way to improve the pipeline is to remove the negative stigmas and educate students at an even younger age.

### **Identify Business and STEM Talent at High School Age**

Firms can work within their communities to partner with local high schools and alternative education programs to identify students interested in a career in accounting and business or even those with a passion that doesn't perfectly align with traditional accounting roles. Recruiting teams can build a relationship with these schools and instructors to identify potential future accountants or offer mentorship from a younger age.

### **Establish Dialogue Between Experienced Professionals and Students**

Schedule a program or even a speaking engagement(s) with targeted schools and open a line of communication between your firm and those students. Allow the students to ask questions and have a dialogue to learn more about your firm and what a position might look like.

### **Break Stereotypes and Educate Students on “Modern Accounting”**

Preconceived notions and biases are part of the root of the talent crisis in the accounting industry. Working for a public accounting firm today looks much

different than ten, five, or even three years ago. Students should start to learn that it

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special programs to expedite the process and make it less daunting. Use this time to extend your firm's professional resources with mentorship throughout their journey.

### **Provide One on One Time with Experienced Partners**

The final component of a solid program for high school-age students is partner attention. Having an opportunity to listen to or speak with a partner could be the most exciting part of the program and the push they need to move forward in their journey to becoming an accountant. Hearing about the career path of a partner may be the "aha" moment for any of these students, and it might even change their perception of the industry. This is also an excellent opportunity for your partners to learn from these students on how they can make the culture and workplace more accommodating and inviting to the future generation.

Connecting with students before they reach college is just one of the many ways accounting firms will have to revitalize their recruiting approach to improve the talent pipeline and fill internship programs. Innovation and a new way of thinking will be critical to win over the next generation of accounting and business students in a highly competitive professional landscape between similar fields.

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