



# Attract the best graduates

While there are fears that the standard of graduates is in decline, a university degree remains mandatory for many employers

With everywhere from Bedford to Bolton boasting a university and almost 60 per cent of all school leavers trooping off to study for a degree, there are around 300,000 fresh-faced graduates entering the workforce every year.

One company that competes for the best young staff is wine warehouse chain Majestic, which employs around 150 graduates a year. Tim How, Majestic's chief executive, says: 'The fact that we provide very strong training opportunities is one of the biggest reasons graduates want to join. We want people who are keen to learn and we find graduates give us the right type of person.'

## Get inside their minds

Companies that don't necessarily have the brand or the scale of Majestic, and yet are determined to attract top graduates, might think about how they can appeal to these movers and shakers in the making.

Charles Hipps, founder and managing director of e-recruitment expert WCN, says: 'Think about why a graduate would want to work with you rather than working with PricewaterhouseCoopers. Graduates are interested in high-growth and exciting companies, a good variety of work, training opportunities, an

energetic social life and any environmental concerns.

'They tend to be idealistic types and surveys often show students rank salary and benefits packages in potential jobs lower than business ethics, personal development, career opportunities and training.'

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Marketing services outfit Motivcom has employed a variety of techniques to make it an attractive organisation to work for. 'We found that a business such as ours, because of the B2B services that we provide, is not that well known [by graduates],' says joint managing director John Sylvester. 'So what we do in job adverts is emphasise what it's like working here.

'We talk about the culture of the business; we refer to our "Investors in People" accreditation and our place in *The Sunday Times*' Top 100 Best Small Companies to Work For, and we talk about the successful, growing nature of the business as we believe all people like to be part of that.'

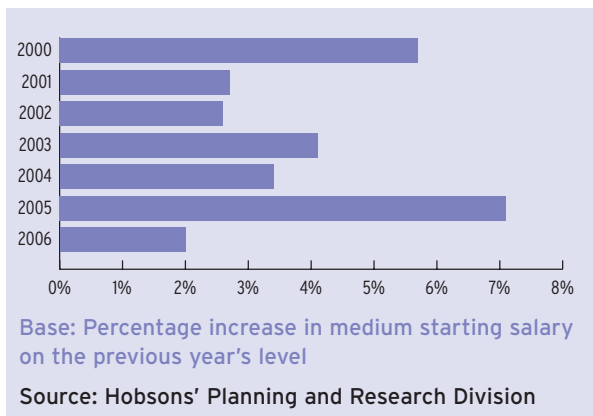
Motivcom has a modest graduate recruitment programme, adding a couple of new conscripts directly out of university from year to year. 'Usually your best graduates don't just sit about,' says Sylvester. 'They're go-getters, so you need to get them as soon as they come out of college.

'In our business development and sales area, we've found there's a limit to the number of people with the right expertise. We have a clear model so we go out and recruit graduates who can sell. Experience doesn't matter - the only criterion is aptitude. So, we give them a test to identify whether they have the right characteristics. We can teach the rest.'

WCN's Hipps reckons you can find quality graduates from a wide variety of universities: 'Obviously some universities have higher entry



Charles Hipps, managing director of WCN, believes quality graduates don't have to come from the top universities



standards and often the bigger companies will target those particular universities.

'But, as a large proportion of graduates tends to stay in the area in which they study, an advantage a smaller company may have will be to target its local university.

'So, as well as going to the graduate fair, you could contact the careers centre and tell them about your opportunities and maybe have the details of these opportunities posted on your website.' ■