

Fast Forward: Recruiting the Best of the “Next Greatest Generation”

Maximize your recruiting efforts to tap into the emerging talent pool.

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The National Society of High School Scholars surveyed high-achieving students ages 16-22 in January 2008 to discover their expectations and aspirations about their future careers. With almost 10,000 respondents, the results of this online survey offer a taste of the career attitudes and expectations of this generation.

NSHSS is an honors organization founded in 2002 by Claes Nobel, a senior member of the family that established the Nobel Prizes. The Society currently has a roster of 350,000 members in all U.S. states and territories, and nearly 180 countries, who are either college-bound, currently enrolled in a university, or recently graduated from college. Students are required to have a 3.5 grade point average to qualify for membership, and can continue as members beyond high school. These students aspire to become leaders and world changers; they are highly motivated, competitive, and career-focused. They come from virtually every walk of life, from every corner of the globe. International member Anya Rasulova, a native of Uzbekistan now attending Brown University, said to us recently that “I wanted to belong to NSHSS because it reaches out to and embraces people of diverse backgrounds and cultures and makes us all feel at home in the organization.”

In addition to gathering demographic data from the respondents, we asked questions about the following:

- Intended or current college major.
- Expected career field.
- Importance of various factors in choosing an employer (benefits, commuting distance, corporate social responsibility, diversity, flexibility of schedule, personal interaction with managers, company, prestige, promotion opportunities, salary, teamwork, telecommuting opportunities, travel, vacation, and work environment).

- Ideal cities in which to live and work.
- College internship expectations, including top choices of companies for internships.
- Perceived importance of international experience.
- Perceptions of what they think employers are most looking for in candidates.
- Expectations of when they will become financially independent.
- Extent of parental involvement in career decisions.
- Technology/communications access and preferences.

The respondents were 67% female. Seventy three percent were in high school and 27 percent in college.

Ethnicity of NSHSS Respondents is:

- 54% Caucasian;
- 18% Asian;
- 11% Hispanic;
- 9% African/American;
- 2% Native American; and
- 6% Other.

The majority of survey respondents reside in the U.S.

These students indicated that their top college major/career fields include medical/health related fields, business, and engineering/technology. They gravitate toward what they perceive as “fun” jobs in entertainment and media (Disney, DreamWorks, CNN); Internet (Google and Yahoo), and trend-setting firms (Abercrombie & Fitch and Nike). They indicate a strong interest in participating in internships during college. Although this techno-savvy generation expects to communicate socially through Internet networking spots and text messaging, they prefer to communicate profes-

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sionally through email. They gravitate toward larger metropolitan areas, selecting New York City, London, and Los Angeles as the top three cities in which they wish to live and work.

STEM careers (science, technology, math, and engineering) rank high on the list of intended and current college majors of the respondents.

The top five career choices:

- Medical 37.1%
- Business 19.6%
- Engineering/technology 17.2%
- Arts and entertainment 15.8%
- Sales/marketing received the lowest ranking

A list of 100 companies was created by combining a Forbes ranking of companies identified as the best to work for from the perspective of employees and those with interest previously expressed by NSHSS members. Respondents selected the three companies where they most wish to intern and were allowed to write in a choice.

Disney was the ranked first among the companies from this list, selected as first choice by 26 percent of respondents. While some of the highest-ranked internship choices do not reflect the top major and career choices, hospitals were selected as the No. 1 write-in choice, clearly in line with the number one ranked major and career choice field.

Of these respondents, 87.7 percent indicated they expected to participate in an internship program during college. This group has a very high interest in internship opportunities and definitely plans to seek out internships during college.

As NSHSS member and Princeton student Robert Rowe wrote in an article for members on the value of college internships, “That first internship puts your foot in the door, and you can use it as a stepping stone for the future.”

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of factors in choosing an employer. They identified the working environment as the No. 1 priority. When asked about the importance of a working environment, NSHSS

Top 50 Companies: Internship Preferences

Disney	#1	Marriott International	#26
Google	#2	Hewlett-Packard	#27
DreamWorks/Universal Studios	#3	DuPont	#28
Microsoft	#4	Computer Science Corporation	#29
Sony	#5	American Express	#30
Abercrombie & Fitch	#6	Humana	#31
CNN	#7	Genzyme	#32
Nike	#8	S.C. Johnson	#33
Pfizer	#9	AT&T	#34
Starbucks	#10	Verizon	#35
Procter & Gamble	#11	Hot Topic	#36
Bank of America	#12	Principal Financial Group	#37
GE	#13	IKEA (U.S.)	#38
Coca-Cola	#14	Delta	#39
IBM	#15	PricewaterhouseCoopers	#40
Yahoo	#16	Ernst & Young	#41
Intel	#17	Citigroup	#42
Nordstrom	#18	General Mills	#43
Texas Instruments	#19	Cisco Systems	#44
Whole Foods Market	#20	Washington Mutual	#45
Goldman Sachs	#21	REI	#46
Southwest Airlines	#22	Amgen	#47
Target	#23	Sallie Mae	#48
Four Seasons	#24	Valero Energy	#49
Time Warner	#25	Aerotek	#50

intern and member Marcela Munoz, a native of Colombia, South America, told us “My working environment is really important to me because I want to be comfortable, accepted, and valued both for my skills and unique qualities. I also want to work where there are diverse perspectives, so I can learn from others that have different experiences.” IBM Executive Ann Cramer states, “The next generation of employees is interested in a broad

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societal ecosystem of businesses, communities, and institutions, and it is important to understand their interests in order to retain and attract new talent.” Salary/personal time/benefits ranked highly. Following closely in importance is the opportunity to interact directly with managers. These young people want to interact with supervisors—to present their ideas and feedback, and to receive feedback—to know that they are valued.

Respondents were asked to rank the factors that they believe recruiters are most interested in when selecting applicants for employment. Their responses are ranked in order below. They believe that employers are less interested in where they went to college than the level of education they have attained. They also clearly indicate that they know they need the right skills to land a job.

- Skill set: 39.1%
- Education level: 21.8%
- Personality: 18.2%
- Prior work experience: 14.0%
- GPA: 3.7%
- Other: 3.2%

Young people have become hardwired to adapt to the dizzying innovations in technology—in communicating, listening to music, navigating the world. They adapt to and embrace new technology. Our survey results indicate that 41.6 percent own their own computers; 92.2 percent own cell phones; 68.3 percent frequently use text messages, with instant messages less frequently (51 percent). Interestingly, 42 percent indicate they do not read or write blogs. However, 50.5 percent indicate they have a social networking account, such as MySpace, Xanga, or Facebook, and 29.7 percent indicate they have more than one such account. Despite the fact that many of this generation practically live on their internet networking pages, they indicate a desire to keep their social networking and business networking separate.

Ranking of Factors for Choosing an Employer

Work environment	#1
Salary/Compensation	#2
Vacation or personal time (balancing life and work)	#3
Benefits (other)	#4
Promotion opportunities	#5
Personal interaction with managers (meetings or feedback)	#6
Flexible schedule	#7
Corporate social responsibility	#8
Commuting distance	#9
Prestige	#10

When asked how they expect employers to communicate with them about job opportunities, they selected email (87 percent), personal contact (83.8 percent), and telephone (80.8 percent), with only 8.3 percent indicating they expected employers to contact them on an account like Facebook. When further asked how they would prefer to be contacted, only 0.4 percent indicated through Facebook or MySpace accounts and only 0.8 percent through text messaging. Email, with 32.4 percent, is listed as the preferred method of employer contact.

This generation is often characterized as being products of “helicopter” or even “hovercraft” parents, who micro-manage their students’ lives, college decisions, and even career choices. Ninety-two percent of respondents currently in high school indicated that their parents are involved in their career decisions; and 89 percent of college student respondents indicated that parents are involved in their career decisions. As for becoming independent from their parents, the majority indicated they do expect to become financially independent within one to two years of leaving college.



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