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Recruiting and Hiring Millennial Talent in Northeast Ohio

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Honors Project Report

Recruiting and Hiring Millennial Talent in Northeast Ohio

Client: The J. M. Smucker Company

Report Prepared by Awesome, Inc.

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ATTACHMENT: PRIMARY RESEARCH REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

As a member of The Williams Honors College and the College of Business Administration, Awesome Inc. had the opportunity to participate in the Honors Business Forum. This part lecture, part experiential learning initiative provided the opportunity to work closely with The J. M. Smucker Company's Executive-in-Residence Andy Platt and CBA Assistant Dean Dr. Susan C. Hanlon to research a pressing business problem in Northeast Ohio. Teams were formulated based on major and class standing, providing the most well rounded teams to tackle the projects.

Through the primary and secondary study of innovation, millennials, Northeast Ohio and The J. M. Smucker Company, Awesome Inc. was able to deduct valuable insight that can now be applied to the recruiting and talent acquisition efforts of The J. M. Smucker Company. Once the information was collected, Awesome Inc. then used the knowledge to innovate and create a few deliverables that would accurately reflect the quality of The J. M. Smucker Company. These findings and recommendations were then presented to the client, as well as other high-standing executives and business leaders within the university. Overall, the presentation was received with open minds, and the client had the opportunity to ask questions that Awesome Inc. was capable of answering. It is the highest hope of Awesome Inc. that The J. M. Smucker Company is able to implement some of our recommendations to take their millennial recruiting practices to the next level.

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II. SUMMARY OF SECONDARY RESEARCH

The secondary research report attached to this document revealed that millennials value independence and ambition far higher than previous generations. Millennials value family security and health as their top two terminal values as well as honesty and responsibility as their top two instrumental values. It is also supported that the exclusive millennial interest in urban living is simply a myth.

When it comes to millennial employment preferences three main categories became prevalent. The first was corporate responsibility. Millennials believe that companies are responsible for taking care of the environment and should be socially active. Next, innovation is a key motivator. Millennials are looking for something new and exciting from their employer. Also, flexibility is a huge factor. For example, millennials like to be able to work from home, have onsite childcare and other amenities that will make their lives easier. Last but not least, millennials are trending more and more towards freelancing positions. They are willing to wager uncertainty for the freedom to do independent work.

Based on this information, Awesome Inc. decided to build the primary research around these common themes found in the secondary research.

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III. STRATEGY FOR PRIMARY RESEARCH

The goal of the primary research was to collect psychographic information pertaining to the millennial generation and what they are looking in a future employer based on previous field-related experiences. In order to achieve this goal, it was decided that Awesome Inc. would conduct an online survey of students from the University of Akron and a focus group with current J. M. Smucker Company employees who fall within our target demographic of individuals aged 18-24. The primary research was designed so that The J. M. Smucker Company could better understand what motivates these individuals in their job search process and what inspired long term employment with Smucker. In addition to the following discussion, all qualitative and quantitative primary research information, including copies of the survey questions and focus group guide, is provided in the attached Primary Research Report. This was a deliverable provided to the client upon the group presentation.

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IV. SURVEY

The hiring process is becoming more and more two-sided involving a great fit for both parties. The purpose of this survey was to gain a greater understanding of millennial psychographics, particularly aged 18-24, and what factors are influencing their employment choices by asking the following questions: "What do millennials value in their work experiences?" and "How far are these millennials willing to travel or relocate in order to have an employer that hosts these values?"

It was important to understand what employment characteristics job seekers are actively pursuing and avoiding so that Smucker can customize their recruiting practices to best fit the needs and desires as a future employer. Therefore the survey was designed in three sections: Employment Experience, Employment Preferences and Geographic Location. The following section is a thorough breakdown of the methodology used to conduct the survey, followed by a detailed discussion of the key findings.

a. Methodology

In order to execute this form of primary research, we designed and distributed a multifaceted survey using the online SurveyMonkey survey tool since members of the Awesome Inc. team had already had some experience with the program. The survey was designed with 19 questions and took, on average, 10-15 minutes to complete. The questions were a combination of multi-select, rating scale, multiple choice and open ended. The combination of questions was used to ensure the integrity of the information, and to provide the participant the maximum capability to answer sincerely. The survey was posted online and had open collectors for a 3 week window. Since the survey was launched over Spring Break, it was critical to have an open window a bit

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longer to ensure that participants who were traveling for the week would still have the chance to provide insight. In order to distribute the survey,, Awesome Inc. generated collectors for both e-mail and Facebook platforms. Using CBA class e-mail lists and personal Facebook accounts, the survey was delivered to University of Akron students who fell within the desired target. Each survey was attached to an invitation explaining answer confidentiality and that all completed surveys will be entered in a drawing for one of nine \$10 Amazon gift cards. The gift cards were generously purchased and distributed to winners by Kevin Smith of the Institute for Leadership Advancement.

In addition to the mass-market distribution method, Awesome Inc. also hosted an in-person survey event in the atrium of the CBA. Tables and rented laptops were set up, and Awesome Inc. group members ushered students to the tables and offered Uncrustables as an incentive to complete the entire survey.

b. Set Backs And Surprises In Survey Design And Distribution

There were only a few setback experienced during the survey design and distribution process. First, with the SurveyMonkey tool, there were several features needed for question logic that required a Premium subscription. A one-month subscription was purchased for \$18 using funds provided by Kevin Smith and the Institute for Leadership Advancement. Also, despite having the premium subscription, there were still some serious issues with the question logic performance. For example, if a participant were to answer a specific question a certain way, the survey should have closed immediately so as not to skew the rest of the data. Unfortunately, this logic did not perform consistently. This resulted in tedious data filtering during the data analysis process. Luckily, SurveyMonkey has extremely efficient filtering capabilities.

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The only other big issue Awesome Inc. experienced was the lack of 100% survey completion rates. It was a trend that participants would get to the halfway point of the survey then either exit or continuously skip through the rest of the survey without providing answers. Was it a length issue? Was it the questions or the way they were presented that inspired such action? It was surprising, however, that the highest level of 100% completion rates occurred during the in-person survey event that John, Brandon and Rachel hosted in the CBA Atrium. There, they provided the Uncrustables as an incentive to complete the survey, and as a result, the survey collected the most valuable responses.

Overall, the designing and distribution of the survey was relatively smooth, and after filtering all of the incomplete and unwanted data, Awesome Inc. was able to collect enough genuine responses to deliver valuable key findings as explained below.

c. Summary Of Key Findings

Since surveys can be widely and quickly distributed, they can provide a lot of quality information resulting in valuable findings. The data supporting the findings below are provided in the attached Primary Research Report.

The first section of the survey focused on employment experience within the students' field of study including internships, fulltime and part time positions. First, relevant experience, independence in the work place and positive work atmosphere are the top three aspects that resonated well with millennial talent. Also, the inability to work remotely, the lack of meaningful work and the location of their employer, typically due to the distance from their school, fell amongst the least desirable aspects of their work experience. The second section of the survey focused on the preferences for a future employer. The data supports that millennial

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talent are not specifically looking for contracting options, free coffee (that was a joke, but still an interesting finding) and corporate wellness systems in a future employer. To be clear, these aspects are not undesirable, but they are not 'deal breakers' if the employer cannot provide these services.

Finally, since the client presented location to be the biggest deterrent for acquiring new talents, it was critical to investigate the geographic preferences of millennials as they seek new, full time employment. First, over 47% of millennial talent surveyed stated that they are willing to relocate as a part of the job process. Also, there is a strong percentage of current graduates who are looking to move to a major metropolitan area, but certainly not all of them, as previously proven by the secondary research report. Although the vast majority of millennial talent surveyed are only looking within a 60 mile radius from their current residence, about 34% of individuals are looking with no geographic boundaries in mind. With the majority looking within such a close proximity, it is recommended to extend outreach programs to those individuals outside of this 60 mile radius. Probably the biggest surprise of this survey was the finding that only 9% of surveyed individuals are not willing to relocate. Therefore, the location issue that Smucker is having is not stemming from an unwillingness to relocate, but the location itself. So, in order better understand what specific types of locations millennials are looking for, it was imperative gather data on factors influencing their move. Given an abundant list of factors to choose from, cost of living, proximity to workplace and safety are the top priorities for future residences of this particular millennial age group. Busy nightlife actually scored very low, indicating that this is not a critical deciding feature in future residences. Therefore, it can be concluded that millennials will be willing to relocate to places what fit these factors.

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After analyzing the data, it became clear that not all millennial students are alike. In fact, there are some distinct differences across majors and disciplines. In order to demonstrate this, Awesome Inc. filtered the information to illustrate the differences between the two most popular responding majors: information systems and marketing. It was interesting to discover that these two types of individuals had varying desires and motivations.*

| | Information Systems | Marketing |
|---|--|--|
| Most Favorable Aspect Of Employment | Experience, Ability to Work Remotely, Pay | Experience, Feeling of Empowerment, Independence in The Work Place |
| Least Favorable Aspect Of Employment | Lack of Independence and Lack of Empowerment | Pay and Lack of Meaningful Work |
| Employment Search Radius | 40% are looking within a 21-40 mile radius | 20% are looking within a 21-40 mile radius |

**A full break down of these differences are provided in the Primary Research Report.*

Overall, the survey was a success based on the number of responses and the information provided. Through both quantitative and qualitative data, it was clear that the overarching themes in the Secondary Research Report were reflected by the responses of The University of Akron students. Once these employment and relocation preferences were confirmed, it was critical to then see how well The J. M. Smucker Company fit into these preferences. It was also important to identify where they did not fit so that Awesome Inc. could then provide the platform for the enhancement and implementation of different recruiting practices.

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V. FOCUS GROUP

The purpose of the focus group was to gain a greater understanding of the strengths of The J. M. Smucker Company, what they have to offer millennials, and to better understand the impact of the location in Northeast Ohio. The focus group was designed to answer the following questions: "What makes The J. M. Smucker Company such a fantastic employer?" and "How does the rural environment of the Smucker headquarters impact the employment experience?"

a. Methodology

In order to conduct the focus group, Awesome Inc. connected with Lindsey Long, the head of the Smucker internship program, to organize a 60 minute focus group on Smucker campus in Orrville, Ohio. Ms. Long was kind enough to set up a small breakfast, and recruit the participants. In order to ensure balanced responses, a healthy representation of majors, genders individuals who had different experiences with Smucker recruiting practices was required for the study. Overall there were nine participants, seven of which were actual employees, two were interns and all nine of them fit into at least one of the three categories:

- A current Smucker intern
- A current Smucker employee who was hired from the internship program
- A current Smucker employee who has recently graduated from college within the last 2 years (with no previous internship with Smucker)

The departments represented included human resources, engineering, sales, marketing and brand management .

On the Friday morning of the study, Kate mediated, while Rachel and Rose took handwritten and typed notes. One of the biggest challenges of this study was that Smucker prohibited both visual and audio recording of the session. This presented a challenge for the note takers, for they had to write very quickly, and while they were taking notes, they could have

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missed other important nuggets of information being said. Also, at times, they had to stop the conversation and ask the participant to either repeat what they had just said, or to slow down the conversation in general. This process was also very time consuming on the data entry end, because all of the notes then had to be entered into the appropriate digital documents to perform the qualitative analysis.

The goal of the focus group was to understand why these millennials came to The J. M. Smucker Company in the first place and what had inspired them to convert to fulltime employees. To reflect these goals, the hour session was broken into two part: Internship Experience and Choosing Your Employment with Smucker. A full copy of the Focus Group Guide and findings can be found in the attached Primary Research Report.

During the session, it was important to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to contribute information. Some were definitely more talkative than others, but all members were respectful of each other and were incredibly open and responsive to the questions being asked. Overall, it was an incredibly positive experience that resulted in a great deal of valuable insight as discussed below.

b. Summary of Key Findings

Before accepting a position, the majority of participants already knew about Smucker and their reputation for being a great company to work for. Some applied but did not get the internship, and those who intentionally applied had plans to do so from an early point in their career. However, for those who did not intern with Smucker, they had tried but were unable to secure a position. They knew friends or family who had worked with the company before, and understood the positive work environment and work-life balance.

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As far as the actual internship experience, those who had internships with Smucker noted how meaningful and relevant the work was and the positive support and feedback from management. Those who did not intern at Smucker noted that the work they were doing seemed meaningless and it was simply to fill a requirement for graduation. They noted that they would not work for that company after the internship experience, whereas those who interned at Smucker stated that they wanted to be on boarded full time after their internship experience. It is important to point out that the experiencing these students had with Smucker were so meaningful they all wanted to continue fulltime. And those who could not intern with Smucker, made it a point to get a full time job there because of how meaningful and supportive the company is with their employees. These findings are also aligned with the key findings from the survey.

Also, those who already knew what Smucker was all about was hoping to be offered a full time position. Some left after an internship experience but was displaced with the poor corporate culture and meaningless work of the other companies and came back to Smucker to work full time. Others looked to places such as Sherwin, Goodyear, Macy's and Aldi, but the outdated gender roles and poor interviewing techniques deterred them from accepting positions.

As far as geographic location goes, most participants commute around 30-40 minutes. They prefer to live in areas outside of Orrville because there are extremely limited in the activities and opportunities to network both personally and professionally. About 50% of participants prefer working in Orrville because they like the country. The other half prefers to live in a big city but live in-between Orrville in Cleveland or Akron. Once again, this is consistent with primary and secondary research findings. They are willing to commute if it

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means that they can live closer to more attractions and networking opportunities. Those who do commute said they don't mind the drive.

In line with the survey findings, the focus group participants were willing to relocate, although the vast majority prefers to commute to remain in more urban areas. They noted the easy drive and how great it is to be close to work and to major attractions such as Cleveland, Akron and Canton. Those who had either been a part of the relocation process or knew someone who had stated that the process was extremely easy. Participants said that the helpfulness of Smucker employees and local resources made them feel supported, appreciated and invested in.

By the end of the focus group, it was extremely clear that the rural location, despite previous concerns, has little not no impact on the perceived quality of an employment experience with The J. M. Smucker Company. Just like in the survey results, only 9% of respondents would not relocate. And given the boastingly positive reviews of the relocation services provided by Smucker, as well as the benefits of low cost of living and a limited-traffic commute, it is important for the Smucker company to leverage their strengths as an employer with their relocation services, and their existing Smucker communities outside of Orrville, Ohio.

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VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in both the primary and secondary research, there are a few practices at The J. M. Smucker Company can start implementing right away.

The first recommendation is to design recruiting materials that reflect the amazing benefits of working for The J. M. Smucker Company based on millennial preferences discussed above. With these materials, instead of trying to glorify Orrville, instead focus on areas in Northeast Ohio where current communities of Smucker employees reside. This can be easily shown using a heat map, or a map of Ohio that has different sized markers depending on how many employees live in a specific area. This lets the potential recruits see where exactly Smucker employees are staying, and that they will not have to sacrifice location for a fanatics job opportunity. According to the data, millennials prefer job experience over location so focus on the strengths of the company, and highlight surrounding areas and to Smucker communities within them. Also, since cost of living was an overwhelming factor in deciding where to relocate, it could be beneficial to provide a brief cost of living breakdown that compares the cost of living at the recruit's current city of residence with that of surrounding Northeast Ohio communities. These materials could be designed right away at minimal cost, and would make for a great project for marketing and human resource interns looking for meaningful and relevant work experience.

When making these materials and displaying the benefits of working for The J. M. Smucker Company, it is recommended that these materials reflect the specific interests of the professional being recruited. As stated in the Survey Key Findings, marketing and information system professionals value different aspects of a work experience. Therefore, utilize this information to make the most of the details. It also might be beneficial to continue this research

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so that the specific motivations are known for all desired departments such as management and leadership positions. Remember, these recruits are talent with specific skills, so a generic, one-packet-fits-all recruiting method is no longer going to make the impact necessary to get them through the door.

The second recommendation is to show modern innovation through recruiting practices to prove that although The J. M. Smucker Company is in a rural area, it is most definitely NOT a rural company. By using virtual reality tours of the campus at career fairs and for out-of-state recruiting packages, The J. M. Smucker Company can create an unforgettable experience that shows off real technological capabilities and innovative agenda that set itself apart from the competition. The details pertaining to executing a heat map, modern website and the VR tours are provided below.

a. Heat Map

A heat map is a visual way to show data that is not like a typical bar graph, pie chart, etc. but instead uses a matrix and color points to plot data. The different color points that are used in a heat map distinguish the quantity of data that is plotted in a particular spot of the matrix. For example, a red point on a heat map could mean that there are 100 pieces of data that correspond to that point on the matrix, where as a blue point could mean that there are only 10 pieces of data that correspond to the blue area of the matrix. While Smucker currently claims on its careers website that they have employees that commute for all over northeast Ohio, they have no visual representation to give extra emphasis to their claim.

A recommendation that Smucker can implement to give potential employees a visualization of all the different places across northeast Ohio that current employees live is

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through the use of a heat map. To implement the heat map, the company will have to collect the addresses of all their current employees (this should be easy as most companies have this information already collected in a human resource management database). Once the information is collected, they will have to utilize software developers to create an application that can plot these data points on a map of northeast Ohio (this software component can be achieved through the use of Google Map's open source code). An example of the graphical user interface for this heat map application is shown in figure 1 below, where the red points show the locations of where current employees live. The larger and darker that the red points are mean that there are more employees that live in those areas.

The example heat map was created using Microsoft Word, where red circles were placed over a screenshot taken from Google Maps. Once the software component is created, Smucker can then post the heat map to its careers website so that potential employees can visually see all the locations that current employees live. This can make the potential employees realize all the different locations in northeast Ohio that are reasonable to live in. This will result with more potential employees becoming interested in working for Smucker.

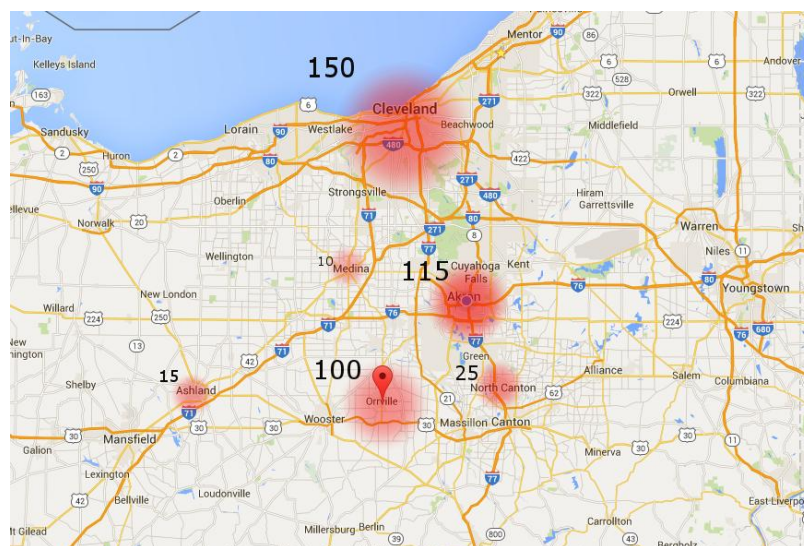


Figure 1. Example of Smucker residents across northeast Ohio shown in a heat map.

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b. Google Cardboard And VR Applications

Smucker's campus is one of their best kept secrets. When on campus, Smucker's facilities are breathtaking and appealing to many job candidates. However, being on campus is not always feasible or practical. For example, when courting a potential employee who lives on the west coast or recruiting college students at a career fair. While Smucker's can show candidates pictures of their campus, it does not have the same effect as physically being there. Fortunately, the advances in virtual reality (VR) allow employers to offer candidates an opportunity to experience their campus without actually traveling to it. VR exists in many forms, many of which that can be quite expensive. The most expensive technology in VR, Oculus, offers the rift, but companies have to spend a couple thousand dollars and transport a pretty expensive computer to get the rift to work properly. For many companies and job candidates, this is far from ideal. Luckily, a cheaper, more effective VR technology exists.

Google Cardboard is not like other VR platforms. It is inexpensive, about \$25 (non-bulk pricing), convenient as it folds up when not in use, and does not take a lot of technology to use, requiring just a smartphone. Google Cardboard consists of a cardboard frame that folds up in a way to hold your smartphone in front of your face. There are two lenses that distort the image on your phone for proper viewing and a simple button for interacting with the phone. On the smartphone side, all you need is the Cardboard Viewer app to view pictures or the Cardboard Camera app to take the pictures, both of which are free and available for Android while only the camera app is available on iOS. To take the pictures, all a company has to do is open the app and spin in a full circle to capture the area around you, including sound. A company can view the pictures in the viewer app to see the new VR photos, but this only works on Android.

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Currently, however, there is an even easier way to share the photos on Google Cardboard. Towards the end of March, Google was decided to release the code to allowing individuals and companies to embed Cardboard images into websites. In other words, all a company would have to do to distribute the images, to both Android and iOS users, is create a website. Going one step further, Google also released a development kit to embed the images into phone apps. This development kit makes distributing the photos as easy as sending a link or downloading an app. This technology is so new, it wasn't even possible when this project started.

To create an even more immersive experience, the Google Camera app is available to take "photo spheres." Photo spheres go not only all the way around, but also up and down to show things that may be on the floor or ceiling. Our group utilized this technology when filming the Smucker's basketball court, demonstrating to viewers the Smucker's logo on the court and the track above. If a company wants to go further than just a phone app, many of the large camera brands, such as Ricoh and Nikon, are coming out with their own 360 degree cameras that capture the whole image at once. These cameras produce clearer images and even allow for 360 degree video. All in all, Google Cardboard is a unique experience that can be produced and consumed easily and cost effectively.

Smucker's would definitely benefit from the use of the Google Cardboard technology. As stated earlier, Smucker's can use it when recruiting a potential employee from the west coast, especially when the employee might not be sold on traveling to Orrville for a visit. Smucker's could simply mail the potential employee a customized Smucker's branded Cardboard and a link to the campus photos. When the employees receives the Google Cardboard, all he/she have to do is assemble the Cardboard, download the cardboard app, and pull up the photos on his/her

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phone. In less than five minutes, a potential employee can be standing in the middle of the Smucker's gym, taking in the nature outside, or stopping down for a fresh cup of Café Bustello all from the comfort of their home. In addition to the potential employee scenario, Smucker's could utilize Google Cardboard at college career fairs. Instead of giving away free miscellaneous merchandise like other firms, Smucker's would immediately stand out as an innovative company and attract more students to their booth. And while other recruiters point to their try folds, perspective candidates can be checking out what it's really like to be on Smucker's campus.

In conclusion, Google Cardboard is a great way to show off the Smucker's facilities. It allows the user to get a better feeling for what a company's facilities are like and is the next best thing to be physically there. Google Cardboard is simple and cost effective while engaging tech savvy millennials desired by Smucker's.

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VII. CONCLUSION

When The J. M. Smucker Company first came to the Honors Business forum with their millennial location problem, the first thought that came to mind was, "How can we, college students, make a difference for this multibillion dollar company?" However, after diving into the research, it was simple to see that we have an extremely valuable perspective. Through research, supporting findings and sharing that perspective, Awesome Inc. has been able to provide extremely valuable insight into the way millennials search for employers. Furthermore, we provided recommendations on how The J. M. Smucker Company can react to those millennial preferences to obtain the up-and-coming talent in Northeast Ohio. We created for them a website hosting the virtual reality tours are team created, we provided them a virtual reality tour experience they could put their hands on and personally experience the incredible marriage of The J. M. Smucker Company and technology. We provided the valuable insight into how millennials perceive employers and location. Finally, we provided simple, easy to execute action steps that can be implemented right away at extremely low costs. Awesome Inc. is limited, however, in that we can only provide the information, insight and recommendations. It will be up to the HR team at The J. M. Smucker Company to execute to achieve the results they are looking for.

Overall, this has been an incredibly rewarding project. We are thankful for the experience to work with such a great company, and for the endless patience shown by Dr. Hanlon and Andy Platt as Awesome Inc. innovated and explored the world of recruiting.