

Spring 2016

Recruiting and Maintaining Millennial Talent for The J.M. Smucker Company

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Recommended Citation

Sharer, Emmary; Jones, Conner J.; Morris, Angela; Harpel, Andrew; Miesle, Ashley; and Dixon, Jessica, "Recruiting and Maintaining Millennial Talent for The J.M. Smucker Company" (2016). *Honors Research Projects*. 372.
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THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

Secondary Research Paper

Recruiting and Retaining Millennial Talent for The J.M. Smucker Company

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5/9/2016

Introduction

As a part of the Honors Capstone Project forum, Team APA has begun work with The J.M. Smucker Company of Orrville, Ohio to develop a comprehensive and effective strategy for the recruitment and retention of Millennial talent in the workplace. In an effort to capture Millennials who emerge as leaders in their respective fields, the team will look at the current landscape that these prospective hires face in the workplace. We will analyze their likes and dislikes, wants and needs, and other factors that contribute to their decision to work for a company. Expounding upon a basis of secondary and primary research, we as a team look to deliver a practical and effective plan to tap into the rich Millennial talent pool. This plan will be tailored specifically for The J.M. Smucker Company - built around a strong sense of values and principles that upholds the Smucker purpose: *helping to bring families together to share memorable meals and moments.*

Although the exact ranges of birth years for Millennials are widely contested, the majority of scholars rely on a range of those born between 1980 and 2000 (Devaney, 2015). This population varies widely, from older Millennials who have established families, own homes, and hold significant job roles to younger Millennials who are in the midst of college and even high school. As a result, many statistical studies, particularly those in regard to job satisfaction, are limited to the scope of Millennials who are able to be surveyed. Nonetheless, the Millennial generation exhibits traits that differ greatly from their predecessors. These traits have been shaped by the world events that have occurred in their lifetime: technological discoveries, financial crises, catastrophes, and global conflict among many others (Hamilton, 2015, p. 34).

Each generation faces their own events that shape their perception and attitudes of others. The oldest of present generations, the Silent generation, prefer “job security over entrepreneurship, [and remain] cautious, unimaginative, unadventurous, [and] unoriginal” (Kowske, 2010, p. 267). This stoicism is a direct consequence of their experiences through the Great Depression and World War II, a trait that they carry on eighty years later. In a similar vein, the next generation, the Baby Boomers, are a result of a prosperous post-war economy. Where Kowske describes the Silents as “facilitators and help-mates”, the Boomers are “self-confident” and “self-indulgent”, holding individualistic ideals and priorities (2010, p. 267). The next war-time generation and direct predecessors to the Millennial generation, Gen Xers, are “cynical, distrusting... apathetic and disengaged politically” (2010, p. 267). Gen Xers, faced with the political and social turmoil of the late sixties and early seventies hold the starkest difference of view from the Millennial generation. While Gen Xers hold negative world views, Millennials are “optimists, cooperative, team players, trusting, [and] accepting of authority” (2010, p. 267; Hamilton, 2015, p. 34).

Among the unique challenges that Millennials face, one that stands out due to its impactful and topical nature is the rising cost of higher education. As compared to previous generations, the cost of a four year degree has ballooned out of control and high school graduates are facing increased pressure from employers to obtain a college degree. With this emphasis placed on higher education coupled with the extreme cost, many graduating Millennials find themselves with thousands of dollars in debt even before they’ve accepted a job offer. In 2013, The College Board found that 60% of graduates face debts of \$10,000 or more (Devaney, 2015). To accommodate for the loan payments that Millennials may be making

for decades to come, they are expecting much more out of their employer as a new hire than previous generations would in the way of higher, more competitive salaries and employment “perks”. This challenge is just an example of the changes that employers will have to make in order to attract and retain Millennial talent.

These generational traits and challenges spill over to workplace attitudes and affect how different generations view their roles as an employee of a corporation, interact with co-workers, perform duties, and define their personal workflow. Millennial talent can bring fresh and welcomed perspectives to a business environment. As Baby Boomers retire at a rate of 10,000 a day and as more and more Millennials enter the workplace, corporations must shift their focus on how to seek this new breed of employee (Wasley, 2015). As Smucker looks to build upon their existing Millennial workforce, it will be important to analyze and evaluate current efforts and build upon primary and secondary research to create a comprehensive strategy aimed at recruiting and retaining Millennial talent in the workplace.

Some of Millennials’ most desired companies use innovative tactics to draw consumers and employees. These innovative tactics stretch far beyond simple product refinement and focus on processes and environment that are tailored to attract the newest working generation and appeal to their wants and needs. When firms innovate, they make attempts to differentiate themselves from their competitors and sustain an existing competitive advantage or sometimes even allow the firm to create one. Keeley, Pikkell, Quinn, and Walter’s Ten Types of Innovation allows firms to parse areas of innovation into ten specific areas of focus. As Smucker looks to seek Millennial talent, they should first look to “develop a brand... that signifies and ensures certain desirable characteristics in third-party offerings” (pg. 147). In the case of Millennial

recruitment, their certification strategy would be to create a desirable brand image. After a desirable brand image comes the communication or curation of that vision to prospective hires. When evaluating an innovative Millennial recruitment strategy, Smucker should refer back to these particular factors of the Ten Types in order to keep a focus on the desired strategic goal.

Recruitment Best Practices

Acquiring the top talent from the Millennial segment oftentimes is not as simple as offering the most money. Millennials have expectations and opinions of employers that are new takes on the professional world. Employer brand, or the perception of the company as an employer to their associates and candidates, has a deep impact upon the choices that Millennials make regarding employment (Jian & Collins, 2002). While branding is a complex concept to change for a company, a positive employer brand can be crucial for landing top talent. Rob Kessler, an expert in recruiting strategies states, “If you don’t differentiate yourself, then the candidate’s decision would come down to merely pay and benefits.” He explains, “Your brand needs to have a deeper connection than that, and help explain why your company is different from all its other talent competitors. Focus on what makes you stand out and provokes an emotional response” (NACE, 2013).

Research shows that developing a brand identity will help recruiting efforts for entry level as well as experienced hire positions. The best talent in the competitive marketplace will have endless opportunities in front of them (Keever, 2014). Chris Resto has worked in the corporate world to attempt to bring in top talent and more recently has been working with students to place them into some of the most prestigious internships and full time entry level

opportunities. Resto compares the likes of Microsoft, Goldman Sachs, and McKinsey to be the best practices for recruiting top talent (Resto, Ybarri, Sethi, 2007). Companies need to focus on creating a strong employer brand for the scale at which they operate. A strong local brand is enough to be relatively successful for smaller companies.

Companies are notorious for pitching the grandeur of their companies to talent during the recruitment process. Everything from on-site childcare facilities and 401k's gravitate candidates towards or away from applying to a company. When companies are pitching the long term benefits of the retirement plan and insinuate a life-time career in the same job, companies may be terrifying Millennials unintentionally. Millennial talent is often not interested in creating a single employer-employee relationship during the earlier years of their careers. In fact, 45% of Millennials will leave their position within 3 – 12 months if their expectations are not being met (Linden, 2015). In order to ease Millennial concerns of being stuck in the same job, companies should emphasize a horizontal and vertical career path along an employee's time with a company. Millennial employees need to see that they will have opportunities to grow or the chance for a horizontal shift into a new subject area if they find new interest elsewhere. Employers hoping to recruit Millennial talent should mirror the young professional's desire for career flexibility by sharing the company's openness to internal movement throughout the different functions.

Additional ways to combat other companies' recruitment efforts include creating rotational entry level positions, emphasizing special projects, and creating networks between new hires. Rotational positions are similar to development programs in creating structured rotations that allow employees to learn through experience. These rotations allow employees

to feel as though they are stepping into a company that will give them as many opportunities as they desire. Special projects are opportunities for employees to step away from their normal assignments into a value added and business critical role. This role will be a development opportunity for the employee and also create a quality deliverable for the company. A network will create an environment where employees are able to develop formal and informal bonds. Formal bonds could allow for higher quality collaboration for work-related assignments while informal bonds will create a sense of community within an organization. These are both important aspects of creating a long-term commitment without amplifying it to Millennials who may appreciate the short-term more than the long-term (Resto, Ybarri, Sethi, 2007).

Companies working to attract Millennial talent should consider offering employees stimulating rotational positions, special projects, and networks that will challenge and support them in their careers with the company.

When pitching a company to prospective talent, the pitch should include all-encompassing aspects, including not only job specifics but also traits like location. Millennials have access to internet job boards that connect them with job choices all over the world. As enticing as the thousands of locations and jobs are on the internet, individuals of the Millennial generation “often lack the professional network and the experience to strategically locate themselves and their careers in places where they also want to live” (Meehan, 2006). There are certain areas of the country that are Millennial “hotspots”, and therefore have an easier time recruiting younger talent (Ahmed, Culbertson, Fazzio, Hooker, & Szejko, 2014). A company that is not located in one of the more “hip” locations has to work harder to create an equally desired atmosphere for candidates who will have offers in more glamorous locations. A large factor

that impacts Millennials' decisions to change location is the opportunity to be in an environment conducive to meeting other young people (Florida, 2009). With this in mind, employers who communicate the social opportunities of their location, along with other specifics, create a candidate experience that eases some Millennial concerns while also appealing to their interests.

When it comes to college recruiting, companies that invest seriously in their tactics stand well above the rest and capture the top Millennial talent. Clark Harvey, a college relations and university relations specialist and manager for over 5 years, learned how to pitch a Fortune 1000 company against some of the industry leaders to win top talent. Successful recruiting, he explained, regardless of target generational group or position type to fill, is based on the creation of relationships between candidates and companies. For example, connecting younger company employees with prospective top talent who share the same alma mater can create a relationship that will allow the student to grow regardless of where their career takes them. Harvey found success in sending company employees to attend the career fairs for their own undergraduate programs in order to help connect students with the employee. This in effect connected the student with the employer brand for the company. Through these relationships, candidates kept returning to talk to familiar faces at on campus recruiting events. Another method of college recruiting that costs nothing to employers and creates a high level of engagement with students is communicating with them during unique times. For example, Harvey noted that one of the very few times that students are not thinking of employers is during finals week. A quick note from employers wishing them "good luck on finals" or "keep us posted on your success" is a cost effective way to create bonds that other employers would

never think of that close to the holidays (C. Harvey, personal conversation, November 12, 2015). Increasing the level of engagement with recruits helps to not only build relationships, but also helps to build a stronger employer brand image. Establishing relationships with current and future talent at the university level takes time, money, and energy from the employer, but the connections made help to improve the employer reputation and image. As the rest of the Millennials are finishing school, it is important for employers to use college recruiting to create a talent pipeline that will allow their organization to grow, in a time when growth is critical to future success.

Recruiting for future talent requires taking specific actions that target the desired candidates. A one-size-fits-all process will not be able to find the candidates that are needed by most organizations, and allow top talent to be overlooked and under recruited. The most important part of the recruitment process for acquiring Millennials is communicating that the company can satisfy Millennial desires such as a flexible career path and a challenging yet supportive environment. Employers need to create opportunities to show clear forward and lateral direction for their employees, while also communicating the benefits of the company's specific locations. Employers need to not only be able to clearly state the all-encompassing aspects of their organization to candidates, but also create a personalized recruiting experience for the candidate.

The Importance of Employer Brand Image on Recruiting

When it comes to recruitment, available online information about the company's brand image as an employer can speak volumes to prospective employees. Through the use of social media, online forums, and other professional websites, anyone who has experience with a company has the ability to influence the recruitment process. The internet makes it very easy for talent to do their due diligence in researching prospective employers, making it important to put effort into maintaining an online company presence as a top employer. In today's recruiting world, it's essential to ensure that the company's image online reflects what Millennials are looking for in a workplace. As top candidates have opportunities all over the country and even the world, a strong employer brand image will enable a company to attract and retain desired talent (Keever, 2014).

In the search to engage with future candidates, companies should take a more proactive approach by openly interacting with candidates and building their employer brand image. Through the crowdsourcing-like platform of rating a company's aspects from interview process to CEO Approval, Glassdoor is a way for candidates and employees to be able to discuss their opinions in front of a wide audience. With this medium, employers can comment, reach out to thank candidates for their positive statements, or follow up on bad reviews. Candidates can read through past interview questions to prepare for an upcoming interview and employers can tweak their process according to the feedback of previous candidates. Because this discussion occurs with or without the company's involvement, it is suggested that companies participate in the online conversation to help form and protect their employer brand.

Social media platforms are also excellent methods of communication for company culture and brand image. The concept of employer branding is not a new term developed

alongside the rise of social media. It was first introduced in the late 1990s by Ambler and Barrow as the “package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler, 1996). Since its conception, the idea of employer branding has flourished and transformed due to forces such as demographic changes, technological advancements, education styles, and changing management processes.

Today, the employer branding concept has grown exponentially and it’s important for companies to embrace the increasing trend of professional social media. Social media has been the main vehicle for companies to educate new talent about their company culture and what working there will look like prior to starting a new position. Building a company image on social media is no longer an option, but has become a necessity in order to survive and grow in the current environment and shows that social media is the most effective way to show off their employer image (Kaur, Sharma, Kaiur, Sharma, 2015).

While social media has provided excellent opportunities for firms to expand their employer brand, it has also proved to generate significant hurdles in order to be truly successful at establishing the desired brand image. The most notable of these obstacles is to define the employer image and turn it into a tangible product for their desired target employee audience. For Smucker, the challenge will be to drill down into what Millennials are looking for in an employer and how they can appeal to potential applicants through digital outlets. A similar challenge in employer branding is differentiating a brand from its competitors. One of the hardest challenge facing a company is to “identify the organization’s unique selling points and package them as the employer brand” (Laick & Dean, 2011). Companies have struggled to

maintain their employer brand image and diversify from their competitors to attract and retain the best employees. Vice Media and Gawker Media are very similar expose journalism companies known for edgy, fast-paced content. They were neck and neck in both readership and reputation as a good workplace until their rival Gawker released an article about why working at Vice isn't all it's cracked up to be. It was based on employees reviews of Vice that had not been published before (Career Arc, 2015). This simple comment created a windstorm of negative employee press for Vice, discrediting their fun atmosphere and knocking their employer image. It is important for companies to first create an atmosphere in house prior to advertising their employer brand. Employer brands should first and foremost be factual, as well as unique from their direct competitors. It is possible that had Vice done a better job at differentiating from Gawker, there might not have been as much competition between the two for good industry recruits.

Before attempting to externally distribute the employer brand, companies should evaluate what their ideal candidate is looking for in a job including traditional and cultural benefits as well as the best ways to connect with those applicants. It is important to consider the motivation, attitudes, and emotions of the target audience before determining if the segment would be the proper fit for the company (Nothelle, 2014). In this case, Smucker is interested in becoming more attractive to Millennials. Therefore, it is essential to highlight the environmental benefits a firm can offer Millennial job seekers including supportive management styles, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable business practices (Laick & Dean, 2011). Along with shifting corporate cultural preferences, Millennials have changed the way that recruiters attract talent to their business. For companies who are looking to attract

Millennial talent, it is important to adapt to shifting generational trends such as a migration to digital marketing, including social media campaigns.

It is no secret that the Millennial generation is more tied to technology than any preceding generation. Traditional print media fails to compete in the digital age where companies are taking full advantage of electronic opportunities, including social media. Over 90% of adults between the ages of 18 to 29 are using various social media websites on a daily basis (Perrin, 2015). The majority of these young Millennials have reported that they log onto sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Pinterest at least once a day, with 43% reporting to logging into their Facebook page multiple times a day (Duggan, 2015). While Facebook has been the most heavily used platform, it has experienced a plateau effect in the past two years. However, over 80% of adults 18-29 have a Facebook account, making it the overall most popular page among Millennials. Clearly, social media commands much of the Millennials' attention, and companies should take an interest in maintaining a strong presence on these sites.

In the past five years, social blogging sites such as Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit have experienced significant gains in usage and ratings. While Tumblr and Reddit may not transfer into the professional section as well as Twitter, it shows promise that Millennials will engage with company blogs as they gain professional confidence. Millennials are 13% more likely to use social blogging sites than any other generation before them (Perrin, 2015).

Of the 90% of Millennial's who use social media, 69% have said that they have visited a company's website in order to learn more about the brand (Mintel, 2015). Millennials are using company sites for more than product information; they look for job postings and company

culture insights. Furthermore, over 60% have interacted with their favorite brands on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Millennials are looking for companies to provide content that they can engage with and learn more about the brand atmosphere (Mintel, 2015). Employers should have relatable content readily available in order to engage with the best prospects for recruiting and employer branding purposes.

For companies looking to attract talent from the Millennial generation, this data comes as good news. The social media usage trends show that there is a captive audience in the Millennial generation just waiting to be catered to by companies. Once the employer brand is established, it is time to get the word out to the Millennial job hunters. Laick & Dean recognize the openness of social networking and its “ability to transmit authenticity” (Laick and Dean, 2011). This authenticity is crucial to targeting Millennials who have grown up with technology, making it harder for companies to hide behind a wall of secrecy. Companies attempting to build their employer brand using social media need to be aware of this transparency by creating and controlling what is shared via social media.

Companies have a plethora of social media platforms at their disposal for the recruitment process. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the best sites to portray the company culture to Millennials. Each site has their own distinctive advantages and, if used properly, can be used to portray a company culture in a different manner. Twitter and Instagram are ideal for using branded hashtags in order to interact with viewers. This tool aids in creating original user-generated content, while hashtags allow companies to search the terms in order to gain insights on how potential employees view their business as a place to work. With Twitter and Instagram better geared towards brand image, LinkedIn provides an opportunity

for a company to establish themselves as an industry leader in their niche market in order to appear as the industry expert (Hootsuite, 2016). LinkedIn allows companies to build their company pages with videos, testimonials, and updates on company functions and create career pages with recent job postings all of which help to communicate company culture to prospective hires. Since there is a strong connection between the brand image and job postings, potential applicants don't have to search through different websites trying to find applicable positions. Extensive research has shown that Millennials enjoy interacting with their favorite brands online and seeing the work environment before the interview (Vernicchio, 2014). Employer branding-focused companies can use social media with this trend in mind and create a two-way discussion with Millennials who are interested in working for the company. Pictures and videos have proven to be the best way to give potential applicants a view into the company without even applying or stepping foot in the company's perimeters. Another great way to give candidates an insight into the company and its culture is to encourage current employees to connect their personal LinkedIn page with the corporate page in order to humanize the company and offer credibility to the messaging of the platform (Hootsuite, 2016).

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all center around the same concept: sharing snapshots of a person's or company's ideas and activities. Millennials use these sites mainly for connecting with their family and friends by updating their status, sharing pictures, and interacting with their followers, but young Millennials have also been known to connect with their favorite brands. Many times these interactions are based on complaints or product reviews, so it is essential for employer branding purposes that companies create a solid foundation for positive, healthy conversation between page visitors and the company. This can

be achieved by posting original, interactive content that is both engaging and provides a look into the potential of the company.

Kellogg's is a great industry example of a company interacting with potential Millennial candidates on social media sites. Kellogg's shares a variety of content types such as videos, articles, and photos. They participate in social media trends such as "Throwback Thursday" as well as posts for "National Cereal Day" (Kellogg's, 2016). Posts such as these help humanize the brand and bring a relatable personality to a brand that can help attract followers to the page (Hootsuite, 2016). Followers themselves can help build a company's employer brand, but social media can also help in terms of recruiting by drawing potential employees with shared videos and photos from company events such as team-building and networking opportunities. In order to diversify content, it is beneficial for companies to post well-researched articles on topics like interview tips and what to expect on the first day of a new job. By sharing this type of content, a company goes beyond the four walls of a building and becomes a place for job seekers to learn more and interact with the employer brand.

Companies such as Kellogg's, General Mills, and Quicken Loans are great examples of brands that are successfully showing off their youthful work environment. For example, on General Mills' Instagram page, they post pictures of different trade shows, brand promotional events and company milestones. They are celebrating their 150th year of business in 2016, so a bulk of their social media has been centered around this accomplishment. The pictures they post are colorful, interactive, and tend to have call-to-action statements in an attempt to attract a younger audience. On the professional side, Kellogg's LinkedIn page has not only job postings, but also career tips and company updates (Kellogg Company, 2016). Specifically for

the Millennial target audience, they updated the page with a sustainability project with the honeybees used for their products. Research shows that Millennials are overall attracted to companies who are morally responsible and committed to sustainability (Deloitte, 2016). Kellogg's is clearly aware of this generational characteristic as they post content relating to this topic as well as other Millennial interests. Kellogg's post follows the rule of creating content relevant to your desired employee audience for best results. No matter what platforms companies choose to engage their audience with, it is essential to create a two-way discussion with your targeted audience (Sessa, 2014). Open discussion not only allows potential applicants to interact with the company, but also with other candidates sharing similar experiences. In order to better connect with candidates and fans alike, companies that are actively searching for Millennial talent need to be able to provide reciprocal communication.

When recruiting Millennial talent, companies need to emphasize their employer brand image through the use of social media platforms where Millennials seek company information. As previously mentioned, Millennials want to be engaged in two-way conversation with companies and gain insights into company culture aspects prior to applying for a new position. Professional social media usage allows companies to build a strong employer image as well as meet Millennial expectations of a work environment and how a company can fulfill those needs.

Desired Work Environment

Millennials' desires in work environment differ from previous generations in the workforce, and companies may need to make adjustments in order to attract young talent.

Recruiting Millennials effectively means building a brand image that promotes a Millennial culture and providing opportunities in areas in which Millennials are intrigued. These areas include but are not limited to: professional development, work-life balance, offering clear direction and feedback, diversity in the workplace and health and fitness programs (Kroth & Young, 2014). Prior to implementing any major changes, companies should conduct research on other employers with an already successful Millennial brand image. Through research, aspiring companies will better understand what is, and what is not, an effective strategy for integrating a Millennial workplace culture.

In a study on college students who were involved in campus recreational sports, students were asked a series of questions to determine what they desired in their future work environments. Among other things, the data indicated that students desire opportunities for development in the workplace, and that students expect to be promoted to their next position within four years. A possible explanation for the students' emphasis on constant development is correlated to the level of support Millennials may have received from teachers, parents and mentors. Today, Millennials generally receive more positive support in their developing years than did the youth of prior generations. With more positive support, Millennials have gained a greater expectation of professional development throughout their careers (Kroth & Young, 2014). In order to satisfy this expectation and recruit Millennial talent, company recruiters must work toward convincing Millennials that their organization will provide this generation with increasingly diversified opportunities to help them succeed (Behrens, 2009).

In addition to promoting professional development opportunities, companies should incorporate and advertise a work-life balance program when recruiting Millennial job

candidates. Millennials differ from older generations in that they may view their leisure time as more important than their work. This “work-to-live” and not “live-to-work” philosophy should not be confused for laziness. Millennials will work hard and manage time effectively to allow for a balance in their personal life (Kroth & Young, 2014). Company recruiters are challenged to prove to Millennials that their organization will allow for a flexible working environment to leave time to be spent with friends and family (Behrens, 2009). It is recommended that when representatives are engaging with potential Millennial employees, the representatives should emphasize that flexible hours are part of the program. Such a recruitment strategy is likely to yield success, as it would be in line with Millennial workplace desires.

Unlike previous generations, Millennials also desire more personalized direction and feedback from managers. Similar to how Kroth and Young attribute Millennial’s emphasis on constant development to their upbringing, Millennials may expect to be told what to do and when to do it based on how they were instructed growing up. In order to help Millennials succeed, management should provide training and praise for a job well done (Behrens, 2009). In addition, to satisfy Millennials’ needs for direction and feedback, employers should set clear objectives and outcomes which will challenge this generation and excite them about their work. Although clear direction is desired, this should not be confused with micromanaging. Clear direction and trust in Millennials often lead to a creative way to reach their end goal (Kroth & Young, 2014). When speaking with the Millennial generation, company recruiters should provide examples of how their workplace incorporates structure and feedback in an employee’s day to day tasks as well as evaluation system.

In addition to desiring clear instruction and more personalized feedback, Millennials desire workplace diversity. Again, this may have to do with the Millennial upbringing considering Millennials have grown up learning to respect those of different genders and races. Research on what diversity in the workplace means to Millennials found that organizations should promote qualified, diverse executives into senior positions, establish a cultural group who can plan events and promote diversity in the workplace, and encourage employees to take interest in other cultural practices (Gallicano, 2013). These findings suggest that recruiters should provide Millennial candidates with a summary of what their company does to integrate diversity in the workplace in order to enhance the employer brand image.

Another important factor to Millennials is whether the potential workplace promotes general health. As baby boomers begin to retire and Millennials join the workforce, the importance of health in the workplace will continue to grow. A health-oriented workplace attracts and retains Millennials, and statistics show that 46% want to gather as much data about their health as possible, 64% say that cash (or another tangible benefit) would motivate them to participate in a workplace wellness program, and 33% indicate that providing cash-based incentives would most help them achieve their health goals. Suggestions to incentivize employees include creating a work walking or running group around campus, and offering small rewards to employees for reaching health goals (“Millennial Employees Seek Healthier Workplaces”, 2014). Being able to identify a health-orientated workplace environment will likely aid in recruiting Millennial job candidates.

Forbes published a list of the 100 Best Workplaces for Millennials in 2015. Power Home Remodeling, a Pennsylvania-based exterior home renovation company, earned the number one

ranking on Forbes' list (Tkaczyk, 2015). The company offers many opportunities appealing to Millennials such as flexible hours, telecommuting, and opportunities for professional growth. In addition, the company sponsors an annual Mexico trip where fun and camaraderie is encouraged among employees. The trip hosts a variety of opportunities for employees to meet and mingle with senior management as well as colleagues based in different locations. Throughout the trip there are several friendly competitions utilized as team building activities (Power Home Remodeling Group, 2015). While for many companies a trip to Mexico is not feasible, taking some of these ideas and integrating them into organizations may be appealing to Millennials. For example, hosting an on-site retreat or celebration for a job well done would give employees an opportunity to mingle with senior management and build new relationships.

Two Ohio based companies that appeared on the list were Hyland Software, ranking 46 and based in Westlake, and Total Quality Logistics, ranking 78 and based in Cincinnati. Some of the offerings of these Ohio-based companies include an average of seventy-seven training hours per employee each year, two weeks of training for new hires, a demanding yet fun environment, and an on-site hair salon, dietician, and dry cleaning service (Tkaczyk, 2015).

When seeking to recruit Millennials, companies must focus on the aforementioned desires. These desires may not perfectly align with the desires of previous generations, but nonetheless will prove to be advantageous for employers as the workforce becomes younger and new talent must be acquired. Once a company has implemented the discussed policies, companies must utilize social media resources and other means of communication to engage Millennials and make them aware of the workplace features. Without communication, companies will struggle to develop a company brand image connotative with Millennial desires.

Recruiters should highlight their company's professional development and work-life balance programs, company retreats, health-orientated programs, and ways in which the company strives to promote diversity. In addition, recruiters should summarize and/or provide examples of how company management provides clear direction, feedback, and objectives for work-related tasks. Companies and recruiters should focus on communicating this information to their potential employees to build a strong Millennial brand image for their company.

Importance of Location to Millennials

Overall, Millennials are looking for a work environment that is very engaging and challenging, but is flexible at the same time (Kroth & Young, 2014). Millennials are in search of companies that can accommodate these desires, and they access thousands of pages and sources over the internet in order to find a company with the right fit (Intel, 2015).

Before the internet, distance and lack of information made learning about different companies and applying for job openings more difficult and tedious than it is today. Technology has enabled employers and employees to connect from anywhere and at any time, making location a no longer inhibiting factor for employees to learn about, apply for, or show interest in a company. Today, location deserves more attention in the analysis of Millennial career decisions because technology has opened the door to jobs all over the world.

When Millennials are considering a move in their career, or perhaps the first step in their career, there are many factors that weigh into the decision and the importance of these factors vary from person to person. Although there are many individual preferences that go into important career decisions, Millennials as a generation agree on some general terms in

regard to location. Overall members of this generation are more likely to search for jobs in the city and enjoy areas that provide after-work leisure activities, but still find themselves making compromises when it comes to where their careers will be located (PwC, 2011). Companies looking to attract Millennial talent should consider these locational preferences and incorporate them into a recruitment strategy.

Compared to other generations, Millennials are more likely to search for jobs in larger urban areas and bigger cities. Not surprisingly, the cities that draw the largest number of Millennials are New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. In contrast, professionals from older generations are characterized by their preference of suburbs and more rural areas (Ahmed, Culbertson, Fazio, Hooker, & Szejko, 2014). As the youngest generation currently in the workforce, Millennials are more interested in the excitement and vibrant nightlife that bigger cities have to offer. Without the responsibility of school-aged children, younger Millennials can enjoy the apartment lifestyle and the downtown living that older generations have outgrown.

What may contradict with this appeal for urban areas is Millennials' commitment to safety. Access to entertainment and the arts is important, but 30% of a sample of renters aged 18-34 in the United States stated that safety was the number one factor in choosing a neighborhood (Schrek, 2015). Safety is a key component to the decision on location and employers should consider educating Millennial recruits of the safest, while still exciting, places to live around the area.

While Millennials may be most attracted by the excitement of a larger city, there are factors that Millennials will weigh into their decisions to remain in their current

location. According to one study, the number one factor that would prevent a Millennial from moving is the ability to meet new people and to make friends. Millennials moving away are looking for areas with an exciting nightlife, and those who want to stay do so because of the social risk involved with moving (Florida, 2009).

The social aspect of a millennial's decision to move or to stay may suggest that Millennials are drawn to the city to have a greater chance of meeting people their own age. Cities are known for being hotspots of culture, the arts, shopping, and entertainment, essentially serving as channels for bringing young people together. Millennials may find comfort in the thought that although their social situations are changing, there will be plenty of opportunities to meet other young professionals in the city as opposed to smaller suburbs. Because a social lifestyle appeals to Millennials, companies outside of urban hotspots may consider leveraging their proximity to nearby cities in order to recruit young talent.

As stated, moving can be a large social risk for Millennials who are establishing themselves in their careers. In order for a company to successfully recruit non-local talent, key career-enhancing reasons must be communicated to support such an impactful life change like relocating. The social component is a large factor for Millennials in moving decisions, but their career paths are also very important considerations. In a survey of 1,000 renters aged 18-34 in the United States, the top driver that convinces Millennials to move is greater job opportunity (Schrek, 2015). Millennials greatly value their careers and are willing to relocate if it means a better opportunity. Companies looking to recruit Millennial talent must understand that it is important to emphasize the all-encompassing benefits of a certain career opportunity in order to persuade recruits that the risk of moving is worth the reward.

While there are many situational factors that contribute to an individual's decision to relocate, Millennials as a group are still three to four times more likely to move than any other generation. Millennials may be more willing to move, but they have some additional locational preferences that weigh into the decision. Millennials greatly value an aesthetically pleasing city, access to open space, and many options for entertainment. Other characteristics like affordable housing are also important, but were ranked slightly lower than aesthetic factors (Florida, 2009). Companies can appeal to Millennial preferences regarding location by providing insight and sharing what the surrounding area has to offer.

While nightlife and job opportunities are drawing Millennials to the city, they also specifically look for neighborhoods that allow them to live within walking distance to restaurants and shopping. In a survey of 25-34 years old, 51% valued walking distance in 2010 compared to 32% in 2000 and 12% in 1990 (Hamilton, 2015). Cities and walkability may be correlated, but it is possible to have one without the other. Smaller cities or even larger suburban areas can still provide a pedestrian-friendly environment. Since walkability is a factor that Millennials value in cities, companies located in less densely populated areas should tout their own pedestrian-friendly destinations in order to better appeal to Millennials.

Another locational matter that weighs into the millennial decision of where to live is whether or not there are nearby opportunities to return to graduate school after a few years of experience in the workforce (Florida, 2009). Having credible universities nearby is of value to millennial employees because, as stated earlier, this generation greatly values their careers. Companies working on expanding their Millennial workforce should consider sharing

information about the company's proximity to universities and tuition assistance programs in order to appeal to outside talent.

Location certainly seems to matter to Millennials, but not all of them choose to move to the place of their dreams. The cost of higher education is rampantly climbing, and with it is student loan debt. Student debt is a large problem in American culture and greatly affects young professionals entering into and currently in the workforce. As a domino effect, many Millennials want to save money in any way they can while they work to pay off their student loans. With the economy as another major contributing factor, nearly 22% of those 25-34 years of age choose to live with their parents. This proportion is the highest it has been since the 1950s, meaning that in comparison Millennials are more financially conscientious than other generations were at 25-34 years of age (Goodman, 2015).

The issue of debt directly impacts where Millennials choose to live. Eliminating the cost of living from one's personal expenses helps to reallocate that money to paying off debt. Many Millennials are choosing companies near home so that they can live with their parents and build up their savings. Some Millennials may be flocking to areas filled with social opportunities, but another major trend that cannot be ignored is the decision for Millennials to live at home. This particular locational element is hard for Millennial-recruiting companies to control.

Location is important to Millennials, but with their career and other issues in mind they are willing to make compromises. The top compromises that Millennials make in their job decisions include lower salaries and a location (PwC, 2011). Millennials are willing to make some tradeoffs if the move is right for their career or for their other personal interests.

There are many factors that go into decisions regarding career moves and changes. Many of these factors, like location, are personal decisions that vary from Millennial to Millennial. Overall, if Millennials could choose anywhere to live they prefer cities that bring a lot of opportunities for entertainment and meeting other Millennials. Safety, access to higher education, and living within walking distance of shops and restaurants are also important qualities that Millennials value. Millennials are generally very career-minded, so they will often follow the best opportunity and are willing to compromise on location. While compromise is common, companies should emphasize the attractions in the surrounding areas that would appeal to employees. With this in mind, companies may need to expand the scope of their environment into other geographic areas that contain more appealing characteristics in order to satisfy the locational interest of the Millennial workforce.

Selling Northeast Ohio

With location being such an important factor to Millennials, it is important that a company can identify and market the location of the workplace to attract and retain talent. As many Millennials are flocking to larger cities for the social opportunities like an active nightlife, it is important for companies located in more rural areas to show Millennial candidates how the location can still satisfy social needs (Florida, 2009). The J. M. Smucker Company is located in Wayne County in Northeast Ohio, and the counties that surround it are Ashland, Medina, Summit, Stark, and Holmes. This section of the state has many desirable aspects that would be attractive to Millennial candidates, and should be used during the recruiting process to highlight the best features of Northeast Ohio. Studies have shown that Millennials value

affordable housing, open space, aesthetically pleasing cities, access to a variety of entertainment, and the ability to meet new people (Florida, 2009). Northeast Ohio can provide for many of these desires as it is home to many highly ranking school systems, a beautiful National Park, many spots for entertainment, and has a cost of living lower than other metropolitan areas.

In 2013, Newsweek Magazine released a list of the top 2,000 public high schools in the United States. On that list were 77 schools from Ohio and 28 of those were located in the Northeast Ohio area. Newsweek based the rankings on six components including graduation rates, college acceptance rates, AP/IB/AICE tests taken per student and average score, and SAT/ACT scores (Misson, 2013). The top Northeast Ohio school was Solon which was ranked 107 (Misson, 2013). As the older half of the Millennial generation is beginning to start families, having a top rated school system is important in weighing whether or not to relocate to the area.

A report on the social and economic condition of Northeast Ohio found that the average high school graduation rate of students in the Northeast Ohio area was 82.2%. This graduation rate surpasses the national average which stands at 78.5%. Medina County, which was the highest ranking in Northeast Ohio, had a high school graduation rate of 95% (NEORIO team, 2011). Again, this can be a major selling point for Millennials who are beginning to establish families, and companies should consider making this information available to candidates who want to learn more about the area before accepting or applying for a position and relocating.

Another factor that Millennials consider when moving to a new area is the cost of living in comparison to current location (Florida, 2009). In Northeast Ohio, the cost of living is well

below other urban areas in the nation and in Cleveland, OH the cost of living is 9.4 % below the national average (Cleveland, OH, 2016). The cost of living index for the United States is 100, meaning that Ohio's index of 88 is lower than the national average which indicates that the area has more affordable living (Ohio State Cost of Living, 2016). A lower cost of living is something that Millennials value, and is a welcomed departure from the oftentimes high cost of living found in urban centers.

Other characteristics that Millennials may find attractive about the Northeast Ohio area is its potential for growth, access to airports, and the variety of lifestyles in the surrounding area. The latest Census projected population growth in many of the counties in Northeast Ohio, as well as a decrease in the unemployment rate (U.S. Census, 2010). As young professionals are attracted to more populated areas with the promise of career opportunities, this shows that Northeast Ohio is moving in the right direction. Access to airports is also something that may be attractive to candidates who are being recruited from other states. Smucker candidates may find comfort knowing that The Akron-Canton Airport (CAK) is within 40 minutes from JMS headquarters, and the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE) is also nearby. This could ease some of the candidates' concerns about moving away from family and friends. Northeast Ohio is also the center of many industrial and consumer markets with a population of 10 million people living in a 150-mile radius (Northeast Ohio is Great, 2015). With such a large population surrounding the area, Northeast Ohio encompasses a wide variety of lifestyles and opportunities. As Smucker continues to recruit Millennial talent from various locations, they should consider emphasizing these factors.

As previously mentioned, Millennials are attracted to the excitement of larger cities due in part to the availability of entertainment and nightlife (Florida, 2009). Companies within the Northeast Ohio area can share with recruits how the culture of the region is centered widely around art and music. The area is home to some of the most famous and prestigious performance, art, and historical institutions, and a number of these are located just an hour from Smucker in Cleveland. The Cleveland Orchestra is a world-renowned and highly acclaimed orchestra which performs throughout the country and world (About the Orchestra, 2015). The Cleveland Museum of Art is also a large source of art and culture for the area. Founded in 1913, it is one of the “world’s most distinguished [and] comprehensive art museums” (History and Mission, 2015). Cleveland is also home to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum providing music and history for a different crowd. In Akron, about a 40-minute drive from Smucker, there is also a wide variety of entertainment and art as well. The Akron Art Museum, though smaller than the Cleveland museum, hosts many exhibits throughout the year. Jilly’s Music Room and Musica are also located in Downtown Akron where there are live concerts and a variety of music styles to enjoy. As Smucker is looking to attract candidates who may not be familiar with Northeast Ohio, it is important to help candidates realize the potential for leisure time opportunities. Art and music are a large part of the Northeast Ohio area and something that can be used to attract and retain talent.

As mentioned earlier, Millennials are looking for after-work leisure activities when searching for a job (Florida, 2009). Northeast Ohio has an array of entertainment activities, and the area is home to many performing art centers. For example, the Cleveland Playhouse Square is the second-largest in the country. As for sports, there is a wide array of professional and

semi-professional teams to support. From the Cleveland Cavaliers to the Mahoning Valley Scrappers (Minor league baseball team) there will be a team that is right for the occasion. There are also many shopping malls and centers to explore in the area (Northeast Ohio is Great, 2015). Beachwood Place shopping center, located in Beachwood, Ohio, is home to over 100 stores including 18 restaurants, according to their website. Because Millennials are concerned with how to spend their time outside of the office, companies hoping to attract young talent should help communicate this information for their candidates early on in the recruiting process.

Another example of a leisure activity and sport that has been a popular pastime for Millennials is golf. In recent years, Millennials played more rounds of golf in 2015 than 18-34-year-olds have in the previous 20 years (Heitner, 2015). There are more than 120 golf courses in the Cleveland-Akron Ohio area (2013 Northeast Ohio Golf, 2013). The Plain Dealer created a contest to determine the best golf courses in the area, and the findings further prove why Cleveland was named one of the top ten cities for golf by Golf Digest in 2011. The newspaper received votes from people living in 16 different states, and the courses Sleepy Hollow and Mallard Creek came out on top (Rogers, 2013).

Not only is Northeast Ohio home to the arts and great golf courses, but it also has one of the nation's greatest National Parks. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park, located right between Akron and Cleveland, spans 33,000 acres and includes many hiking and biking trails. To spend some time on the water, residents also spend time on the shore of Lake Erie, the fourth largest Great Lake. Located on the shore is Cedar Point, "the roller coaster capital of the world." There

are also many local park systems and other outdoor activities to discover such as golf, cycling, fishing, and skiing in the winter (Northeast Ohio is Great, 2015).

Northeast Ohio can offer many things outside of the workplace to a potential resident. Factors that are important to Millennials can be found in the surrounding area as long as someone knows where to look. For a Millennial who is looking to move their family, or start a family in the future, the area offers excellent schools, family-friendly entertainment, and overall welcoming community. This can attest to the fact that Northeast Ohio is a great place to live and work and can be marketed to potential employees of the J.M. Smucker Company.

Conclusion

Expected to comprise the largest generation of working individuals in history, those born between 1980 and 2000, the Millennial generation, offer a large pool of talent and skill that employers can pull from to bring value to their firm. These Millennials differ in many aspects from past generations and force companies to adapt in their recruitment and retention strategies to better cater to Millennials' desirable characteristics. Companies are seeking innovative ways to adapt their current strategies in reliance upon secondary information regarding these desirable characteristics. We believe that the knowledge and subsequent incorporation of information on Millennial traits allows companies to hold a competitive advantage in building and communicating a desirable brand image.

In the next six years, the last of the Millennials will be graduating from college and moving into their respective fields. It is still as important as ever for companies to actively seek out this new talent through recruiting programs designed to target desired candidates who are

graduating from college in addition to those who are well-established in their field of expertise. Most significantly, prospective hires look for companies with a well-established reputation and attractive employer brand image. Employers must look to appeal to the characteristics that Millennials seek most: horizontal and vertical career advancement opportunities, a desirable location, and a strong social network within the company. By playing off of these factors, Smucker has the ability to design a unified and robust brand image that encompasses Millennials' most desirable traits. Once this brand image is well-established, the company can look to strengthen their communication processes to reach and attract Millennials in innovative ways.

Though a company may have a strong brand image developed and ingrained internally, communicating this image with those outside of the company is imperative in changing the dynamic of the hiring process. All companies look to establish a dynamic where instead of seeking Millennial talent, the talent seeks employment and holds a strong desire to work for the company. With the social media presence of many companies growing and the landscape becoming almost as complex and competitive as products themselves, innovative uses allow employers to stand out to prospective hires and establish this coveted relationship with prospective employees. More so than any previous generation, Millennials look to professional social networks such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor as well as informal networks like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram to define the company's brand image and the type of future that they might have as an employee of that company. What these social media sites also allow Smucker to do is to establish two-way discussions with followers even before they seek

employment and instill strong brand perceptions that benefit the hiring process later down the road.

It is important for the communicated brand image to appeal to characteristics in which Millennials both desire and place great weight upon. One such characteristic is the desired work environment. Millennials differ from previous generations in that they place strong emphasis on advancement opportunities wherein they have the ability to quickly occupy roles of significance in the company. They also look to establish paradigm-breaking interactions with their superiors and call for clear instruction and feedback that shorten the power distance relationships. In regard to the workplace as a whole, Millennials also seek health-oriented work environments that place emphasis on wellness programs and other health initiatives. Most importantly though, Millennials look to work for companies that support positive work-life balances through the use of flexible hours, telecommuting, and encouraged social interactions with peers. With these specific wants in mind, steps to establish these types of programs and environments can often be done simply and help to build a company's Millennial-appealing brand image.

Along with a desired work environment, Millennials also place great weight upon the location of prospective employers. A desirable location allows Millennials to seek many career opportunities with an abundance of businesses and fuel a healthy work-life balance by offering strong leisure activities. These desires often lead Millennials to seek employment in large cities such as New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The urban shift offers quite a departure from the very suburban-centric mindset of the previous two generations. In order for companies located in semi-rural areas to combat this difficulty, they must look to incorporate

the strong social and cultural environment both internally and in the surrounding geographical areas into their brand image.

Expounding upon the geographical location and its importance in brand image, Smucker's Northeast Ohio location offers much to appeal to Millennial desires. The area itself is expected to see continued population growth while maintaining excellent school systems and above-average graduation rates appealing to the older Millennials who have begun to establish families. Northeast Ohio also maintains extremely competitive costs of living that have the potential to draw Millennials out of expensive urban locations. The area also offers parks, museums, art centers, and sports teams that allow support of a healthy work-life environment. When incorporated into brand image, these external factors play a large part in developing a strong appeal to Millennial talent.

As a strategy to recruit and retain Millennials in the Smucker workplace begins to develop, it is important to rely on the secondary research gathered to evaluate and craft a successful plan. The strategy should appeal to a Millennial's desired work environment and utilize the attractive elements of Northeast Ohio to appeal to a Millennial's ideal location. This desirable brand image of Smucker and Northeast Ohio can then be applied and communicated in innovative ways through traditional recruitment strategies as well as on the new frontier of social media. By creating and communicating this new strategy, Smucker can utilize two of Keely's Ten Types of Innovation, brand and customer engagement. By treating prospective Millennial hires as "customers", Smucker can focus their efforts to create an innovative brand and communication strategy that works to capture the talent therein.

Foreword to Primary Research

In our secondary research, we attempted to lay a foundation of which to begin our primary research and, ultimately, our suggestions to Smucker. By evaluating five portions of the recruitment and retention process, we have gained an academic understanding of characteristics Millennials seek from employers. The conclusions discovered about recruitment strategies, brand communication, desirable workplace and work location characteristics, and information specific to Northeast Ohio will shape our explorations in the primary research. Our primary research methods of a survey and two focus groups will be aimed at clarifying and validating the findings of each portion of the secondary research in order to improve upon the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention plan.

For the recruitment process, the primary research looks to define the most important parts as well as how to successfully communicate programs such as mentorship and young professional's networks. Direct feedback from survey respondents and focus group participants will also be used to find other companies with strong brand images that could be used as best-in-class examples when developing a recruitment strategy. We are looking for validation on positive work-life balances and specific examples that Millennials are looking for that would help to maintain this stability. Our primary research will also look to expound upon the location characteristics that Millennials seek and how best to approach Northeast Ohio as a fulfillment possibility.

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