Talent acquisition and retention issues are one of the three significant challenges that growing companies are facing today. The other two are financial constraints and the inability to tap into the market as quickly as planned. These three hurdles boost each other, creating a vicious circle, where it is now hard to identify the cause and effect. With talent becoming a scarce resource, knowing their mindset and behavioural triggers makes all the difference between winning them for your enterprise and losing them to other companies.

In our research among UBC students, predominantly MBAs of different cohorts, we focused on getting a snapshot of how these future employees assess a company as a good or bad place to be. There were 100 respondents who gave their feedback on 30 green and 18 red flags, which attract or scare away a candidate respectively. Without any pretense on the study being exhaustive or representative beyond the UBC MBAs, we want to share the observations.

While salary, quite expectedly, is in the top 10 green flags, it is positioned only third after career advancement opportunities and immediate manager’s personality/approach. Career advancement is especially critical for those annual leave days above three weeks, and pension plans.

The general trend is that the years of work experience bring greater focus on salary, involvement in leadership decisions, while those with two to five years’ experience will avoid a company which has bad references from other employees and those with more than ten years’ experience will be wary of companies which manipulate employee flexibility and permanently overload them.

The number of red flags was the highest in the student segment, followed by unemployed graduates. Employed graduates seem to be less reactive, producing only six deal breakers above the 50% threshold. Obviously, progressing from student to a worker changes the sensitivity to some factors, but it does not mean that red flags are non-existent for the respondents.

With this extra piece of knowledge, we wish you all the best in capturing and retaining talents by better knowing your target hire’s aspiring and concerns, which tend to evolve and move up and down the priority ladder with the pace of time. We hope that MBAs do fall under the category of talent for you that makes these insights worthwhile.

The Next Generation Leadership Session was supported by Melbourne Convention Bureau and the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.