



TALENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION

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A vision of the future, MBA students from UBC Sauder School of Business

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 hardships 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 pretence 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 who have two to five years of work experience. Moreover, students tend to care more than their graduate peers about this opportunity.

The general trend is that the years of work experience bring greater focus on salary, involvement in leadership decisions, annual leave days above three weeks, and pension plans. The reverse tendency, though, is observed with teammates' personality and approach as well as training and education opportunities, global organisations and offices, and team social events green flags. These lose their appeal as the years of work experience are being accrued.

Regarding red flags, years spent at a job tend to increase the sensitivity to CEOs' and founders' relatives in critical jobs and a company's low-balling at salary negotiations. As a trade-off, staying longer as a labour force in the market makes the respondents more forgiving about a company's intolerance to failure, absence of coaching and mentoring, vague promotion track, and non-sustainable values.

Beyond the trends mentioned above, respondents with less than two years' work experience are significantly more negative about complex hierarchy/non-approachable leaders, 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.

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GREEN FLAGS

	Slicing by Work Experience					Slicing by Employment Status			
	<2 yrs	2-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	> 10 yrs	Total	Student	Unempl. Graduate	Empl. Graduate	Total
Career Advancement Opportunities	4.22	4.64	4.38	4.05	4.30	4.83	4.21	4.24	4.30
Immediate Manager Personality/Approach	4.33	4.09	4.22	4.43	4.28	4.00	4.24	4.36	4.28
Salary	3.78	4.14	4.28	4.41	4.25	3.92	4.28	4.31	4.25
Teammates Personality/Approach	4.56	4.09	4.09	3.97	4.09	3.83	4.14	4.12	4.09
Health Insurance Coverage	4.33	3.73	4.06	3.92	3.96	4.17	4.10	3.85	3.96
Investment in Leadership Decisions	3.78	3.86	3.88	3.92	3.88	4.00	3.93	3.83	3.88
Annual Leave Days - 3 weeks +	3.56	3.59	3.81	3.89	3.77	3.58	3.52	3.93	3.77
Training/Education Opportunities	4.11	3.82	3.91	3.41	3.72	4.42	3.76	3.56	3.72
Reputation of the Company	3.11	3.86	3.75	3.38	3.58	3.42	3.72	3.54	3.58
Office Location	2.67	3.68	3.41	3.70	3.51	3.08	3.52	3.59	3.51
Diversity & Inclusion	3.33	3.91	3.66	3.11	3.48	3.42	3.79	3.34	3.48
Gender Equality	2.89	3.73	3.97	2.89	3.42	3.58	3.86	3.17	3.42
End of Year Performance Bonuses	3.33	3.27	3.41	3.30	3.33	2.92	3.69	3.24	3.33
Clear Role Definitions	3.33	3.00	3.28	3.57	3.33	3.08	3.00	3.54	3.33
Industry	3.44	3.55	3.44	3.05	3.32	3.42	3.79	3.07	3.32
Delegation Culture	3.11	3.14	2.97	3.51	3.22	3.00	3.10	3.32	3.22
Pension Plans	2.78	3.00	3.16	3.38	3.17	2.83	3.21	3.22	3.17
Sustainability Goals	3.67	3.41	3.16	2.84	3.14	3.50	3.31	2.98	3.14
Decision Making Bottom Up	2.11	3.59	3.00	3.22	3.13	2.17	3.14	3.32	3.13
Option to Work Remote	3.00	3.41	2.81	3.14	3.08	3.08	2.97	3.14	3.08
Overtime no more than 10 hours per week	2.56	3.05	2.66	3.46	3.03	2.33	3.10	3.14	3.03
Global Organisation/Offices	3.44	3.09	2.84	2.70	2.90	3.08	3.14	2.75	2.90
Business Travels	2.22	2.50	2.81	3.16	2.82	2.42	2.62	3.00	2.82
Team Social Events	3.44	2.82	2.72	2.41	2.69	3.00	2.93	2.51	2.69
Stock Options	2.56	2.86	2.53	2.70	2.67	2.33	2.79	2.68	2.67
Reviews from Glassdoor or other Websites	2.56	3.14	2.56	2.51	2.67	2.58	2.72	2.66	2.67
Company Website	2.33	2.64	2.44	2.24	2.40	2.17	2.83	2.24	2.40
Decision Making Top Down	1.78	2.45	2.47	2.32	2.35	1.33	2.59	2.44	2.35
Unclear Role Definitions	2.22	2.77	2.03	2.38	2.34	2.00	2.21	2.47	2.34
Familiar Faces in the Team or Company	2.11	1.77	1.72	2.16	1.93	1.92	1.62	2.08	1.93

RED FLAGS

	Slicing by Work Experience					Slicing by Employment Status			
	<2 yrs	2-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	> 10 yrs	Total	Student	Unempl. Graduate	Empl. Graduate	Total
No Tolerance for Failure or Experiment	0.89	0.73	0.56	0.54	0.62	0.67	0.79	0.53	0.62
Bad Referrals from other Employees	0.44	0.77	0.56	0.59	0.61	0.75	0.52	0.63	0.61
Abusing the terms "Flexible"/"Team Player" to substantiate extra or undefined workload	0.67	0.50	0.47	0.70	0.58	0.75	0.55	0.56	0.58
No matter what the case is, you should be in the Office	0.56	0.59	0.50	0.57	0.55	0.58	0.52	0.56	0.55
Lowballing by the Company (offering a low salary at first, and then negotiate)	0.22	0.45	0.56	0.54	0.50	0.58	0.34	0.56	0.30
Failing on Commitments, lack of Accountability (eg promised contacts never happening)	0.44	0.45	0.56	0.49	0.50	0.50	0.66	0.42	0.50
Complex Hierarchy or Non-approachable Leaders	0.78	0.36	0.50	0.46	0.48	0.67	0.52	0.42	0.48
Absence of Mentoring and Coaching by Seniors	0.78	0.55	0.56	0.24	0.46	0.75	0.52	0.37	0.46
Critical-position Employees are Relatives of the Founders/CEO	0.11	0.32	0.50	0.57	0.45	0.33	0.38	0.51	0.45
Departmental Silos (Lack of Information-sharing among different Departments)	0.44	0.59	0.53	0.22	0.42	0.42	0.52	0.37	0.42
Undefined or Unfit Mission and Values of a Company	0.44	0.41	0.47	0.35	0.41	0.50	0.52	0.34	0.41
Non-Sustainable Values of the Company	0.56	0.41	0.41	0.32	0.39	0.58	0.48	0.31	0.39
Vague Promotion Track	0.56	0.59	0.31	0.27	0.38	0.58	0.45	0.31	0.38
No Procedure/Job Description in effect	0.33	0.45	0.34	0.30	0.35	0.50	0.34	0.32	0.35
No Delegation of Functions to Professionals is observed	0.22	0.18	0.31	0.22	0.24	0.25	0.28	0.22	0.24
Founders are Jack-of-all-Trades with overlapping functionality	0.00	0.09	0.06	0.11	0.08	0.00	0.07	0.10	0.08
Quantity of Founders are more than 3	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.03
MBAs among Founders	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.01