

Graduate jobseekers take a 'hit and hope' approach as competition for jobs increases

New research reveals graduates are adapting their approach to job hunting as competition for places gets tougher than ever

8 February 2010 – Research released today by Alexander Mann Solutions (AMS), the provider of world-class talent and resourcing functions and global leader in RPO, reveals that competition for graduate roles is set to be tougher than ever in 2010 as more than half of graduates from 2009 join the hunt for jobs alongside the class of 2010. This increased competition seems to have hit 2009 and 2010 graduates' confidence, leading to less targeted applications and a willingness to apply for positions outside of their preferred field.

The study, entitled *The Emerging Talent Index*, found that of the students that graduated from university in 2009, just 24 percent have been working in a role that requires a degree since leaving university. More than half (53 percent) of the 2009 graduates surveyed are planning on applying for graduate positions this year. 63 percent of those set to graduate in 2010 are also applying for graduate roles (compared to 50% of recent graduates in 2009), leading to far greater competition for positions than in previous years.

This increase in applicants seems to have dented graduate job hunters' confidence with only 26% of those surveyed confident of finding a graduate position this year. Perhaps because of their experiences last year, 2009's graduates are the least confident; just 22% are confident of finding a position this year. These low confidence levels appear to be reflected in graduates' approach to job hunting with one in five (18 percent) of 2009 graduates applying 'for any job'. In fact, the majority of graduates were found to be broadening their approach: 59 percent of 2009 graduates are applying for roles across a number of sectors and just 37 percent of all respondents are limiting their applications to positions which tie-in with their long-term career goals.

The trend is not limited to the applications stage of the process with two thirds (64 percent) of graduates admitting that they would hedge their bets by accepting more than one job offer: either by picking their preferred option nearer the time or accepting an offer and continuing to look for an alternative. This could cause significant problems for graduate recruiters.

Clodagh Bannigan, Head of Client Services at Alexander Mann Solutions, explains: *"The lack of confidence in today's graduate marketplace means that jobseekers are increasingly likely to formally accept multiple offers and then make their final decision just before their joining date. This is, perhaps, understandable in the*

economic climate but it represents a real challenge to employers. Organisations must factor in this kind of behaviour and ensure their strategy will not be adversely affected by applicants dropping out late in the day.”

“It is certainly the case that competition in the graduate jobs market is tougher than ever this year,” commented Clodagh Bannigan. “However, this rise in the quantity of applications has not brought a rise in quality. University leavers are adopting a ‘hit and hope’ approach: applying for as many positions as possible rather than carefully targeting the roles that are right for them. This type of approach can cause problems for employers. Businesses looking to hire graduates need to ensure that they have the processes and scalability in place to deal with the high volume of applications, without compromising on the human touch that is essential when looking to attract the best young talent. This is by no means an easy feat.”

The research also asked graduates which sectors they perceive as offering the best opportunities to university leavers. The public sector was identified as the area that offers the best opportunities, with nearly a third (30 percent) ranking it as the top sector. Financial services and banking fared much worse, being ranked lowest by 28 percent of respondents.

Clodagh Bannigan continues: *“The fact that graduates still consider the public sector to be an attractive destination for university leavers, despite the current economic and political uncertainty, is certainly encouraging. The ability to attract the best graduates is a crucial advantage for any organisation and something that public sector bodies need to prioritise if they are to successfully manage the changes they will be facing over the next few years.”*

“More worrying is the damage that the recent economic crisis has had on employer brands in the banking and financial sector. Employers in this industry have been scrutinised heavily in the last 18 months and this has understandably impacted on their reputations amongst graduates. Businesses in this sector will be able to repair their brands over time, but should be a great concern to organisations that have traditionally been very attractive to university leavers and steps should be taken immediately to restore their standing.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Methodology

The study was conducted online with over 300 recent graduates and current undergraduates.

About Alexander Mann Solutions

Alexander Mann Solutions is the recognised global leader in Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) and builds world-class talent and resourcing functions for organisations. Alexander Mann Solutions is a trusted advisor that delivers its services through innovative outsourcing and consulting services that include



permanent, contingent, internal mobility, graduate and talent resourcing programmes. Alexander Mann Solutions was founded in 1996 by Rosaleen Blair, the Veuve Clicquot 2007 Business Woman of the Year.

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