

Millennials in the Midwest Three Keys to Attracting Top College Talent

By **C. Todd Richardson**

“**H**ow can a high-tech, high-growth company flourish in Indiana?” As head of our human resources team, I get this question all the time. With good reason, people assume ExactTarget would gravitate to the coasts like many other successful tech companies.

But Indiana’s close proximity to high-quality academic institutions and our ability to continually harness top college talent is a competitive advantage for ExactTarget – and any other company willing to invest in strategic college recruiting and internship programs.

Indiana: An educational breadbasket

There are more than 50 universities throughout Indiana, including some of the nation’s top-ranked programs in entrepreneurship, accounting, marketing, arts and design, engineering and informatics. If you’re willing to drive a couple hours, you’ll also find esteemed academic institutions like Northwestern, Ohio State, Miami of Ohio, University of Illinois and University of Chicago. Indiana businesses are uniquely positioned to draw from one of the richest college talent pools in the country.

So, how do Indiana companies harness this opportunity? Companies must master three keys of Millennial recruiting, including: (1) building mutually-beneficial relationships with schools; (2) identifying characteristics of your business that appeal to Millennials; and (3) constructing strategic programs that focus on the recruitment, hiring, employment and professional development of top college talent.

Relationships matter

With dozens of universities across the Midwest, it’s important

to narrow recruiting efforts to a select group of schools or programs that produce the kind of talent you seek. For example, at ExactTarget we have a never-ending need for business-savvy, technically-inclined graduates.

The School of Informatics and Computing at Indiana University is a fantastic cultivator of those skill sets and helps fill our funnel for top technical talent. ExactTarget has worked tirelessly to forge and grow a strong relationship with the school. We serve on the advisory board, participate in career fairs and on-site interview sessions, facilitate case study competitions and even volunteer in the classroom to ensure students and recruiters, alike, know who we are, what we do and why we’re different.

Give Millennials what they want

Approximately 75 million people were born between 1980 and 2000. We affectionately call them the Millennial generation. Millennials are technically savvy, thrive on group interactions and are born multi-taskers. Among other things, Millennials want variety in their work, flexible hours and work-from-home options, personal relationships with their managers and a strong work/life balance. At ExactTarget, we’ve also found they especially appreciate the opportunity to travel both domestically and internationally for work. Figure out what your workplace offers Millennials and aggressively market those benefits to college talent. Know what you have and use it.

Plan and execute

Our strategy for attracting and retaining Millennials takes



C. Todd Richardson

Millennial Viewpoint

Adam Gillespie is an ExactTarget solutions designer.

What first attracted you to ExactTarget?

Adam Gillespie: “Most companies drill Millennials with nerve-racking, behavioral-based scenarios or technical use cases during the interview process. ExactTarget stood out because the recruiters were interested in what motivates me and what I’m passionate about – they got to know me as a person. Their transparency put me at ease and allowed me to talk candidly about my talents, interests and experience.”

Did the IU School of Informatics play a role in your decision?

AG: “It was critical. The informatics program brought ExactTarget to campus for everything from IT conferences to career fairs, which gave me numerous opportunities to develop a relationship with the company outside of a stereotypical interview setting. I was able to showcase my passion and

experience to the recruiters over three years, not 30 minutes.”

Why did you select the Catapult Rotational Program?

AG: “As fast as the IT world is moving, it’s impossible for technically-inclined students to know exactly what they want to do after graduation. The Catapult Rotational Program lets me explore the entire spectrum of my interests, as well as gain the general business and company knowledge I need to be successful in the long run.”

Why did you decide to stay in the Midwest?

AG: “The Midwest provides employees with the best of all worlds. Indianapolis is a safe, clean and inexpensive place to live and a fantastic place to start a career.”

each of these characteristics into account. In 2007, we tasked four ExactTarget Millennials with developing and launching a program focused on the recruitment of top college talent. They christened the program “Catapult” and developed a compelling platform from which to launch the careers of recent graduates. The Catapult program involves three 10-week rotations through different areas of our business, an ideal structure for talented students who need help figuring out what they want to do and why.

During this time, the new grads (commonly referred to as “Catapulters”) build relationships with business leaders throughout our company and relish significant cross-functional experiences. In addition, each Catapult class networks weekly with ExactTarget officers, key leaders within the company and esteemed community leaders.

Since the inception of the program, more than 60 Catapulters



The 2011 participants in the ExactTarget Catapult Rotational Program.

have completed over 120 projects and made significant contributions to our business. In fact, these talented graduates are currently leading software development efforts, managing our social product lines and servicing some of our largest clients around the world.

Regardless of your business or location, the breadth of talent coming from our state’s postsecondary institutions can and must be leveraged in a way that differentiates Indiana businesses from our out-of-state competitors.

INFORMATION LINK

Author: C. Todd Richardson is senior vice president, global human resources and general counsel at ExactTarget, a global Software as a Service leader with more than 1,000 employees on three continents. He can be contacted at www.exacttarget.com

Apply Today for 2012 HR Award

C. Todd Richardson was the winner of the 2011 Ogletree Deakins/HR Dimensions Human Resources Professional of the Year award. Nominations for the 2012 honor are being accepted until March 23. The award will be presented during the Indiana Chamber’s 48th Annual Human Resources Conference & Expo on April 30-May 2. Complete information and the nomination form are available online at www.indianachamber.com (membership tab/awards program) or by contacting Jesse Brothers at (317) 264-7549.

THE EMPLOYEE TAKES CENTER STAGE

Sponsored by:

Frost Brown Todd LLC
 ATTORNEYS

Indiana Chamber
The Voice of
 Indiana Business.®

May 1-2, 2012
Indianapolis Marriott East

**48TH ANNUAL HUMAN RESOURCES
 CONFERENCE & EXPO**

Strategic HRCI credit available

TO REGISTER: (800) 824-6885 • WWW.INDIANACHAMBER.COM