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Recruiting Considerations

Seems like I've been watching a lot of documentaries lately that run the gambit of topics such as nature, music, art, meditation and biographies. This one particular documentary addressed the transition from a college prepared workforce to a skills-based workforce. Since I wear the HR hat in my firm it caused me to contemplate new concepts.

Certainly, we all have and will need skills but more and more we hear opinions about the traditional brick and mortar colleges becoming outdated in preparing for success in the workplace. We can all agree that COVID has changed our perspective of the traditional college experience by the remote learning model that accommodated distancing mandates. It has been argued that remote learning brings the student back to the basics of their degree without a lot of the fluff colleges offer to justify their lofty expense.

Many say that an on-campus experience for the freshman student begins to prepare the student for life on their own. Others feel that a mix of work and school is the best way to prepare a student for their future. Perhaps by working in the area of their degree plan while going to school. Earning your way through school with both a degree and experience earned can be a viable option. Not to mention the benefit of less debt. Many firms offer tuition reimbursement. Yes, it may take a few years longer to achieve a bachelor's degree, but you would not only learn from books and professors but also learn the market and technologies actually used in the workplace and gain collaborative skills well beyond what you would learn doing your senior project.

The A/E/C industry is based on professions that require a license to perform their services and to get that license one would have to earn a degree from a certified college program. But we are not all Architects or Engineers. Design firms are also made up of support and technical staff. Many of the support staff can perform their jobs without the traditional college experience. Many of us do have a degree and often provide the same support for our firms as our non-degreed counterparts. What's best depends greatly on the person and the attitudes of the firm leadership. Flexibility to nurture skills, ability and discipline may create more committed and dependable employees.

One revelation a participant in the documentary had was the acceptance of computers. This person had never been formally trained to use computers and stated that they hated computers. They preferred working with tools. Their experience had been a hands on and on the job approach to their work and had managed to make a modest living without computers in their work. Once they were shown a workshop that utilized what they identified as tools but were in fact just an extension of a computer they were open and even excited to venture into the world of computers.

Being open to trying new and even seemingly scary things is a lesson for both the job seeker and the firms building their staff. You never know where your next success will come from or happen.

Our chapter recently scheduled a speaker to present on the topic of recruiting during the Principal Appreciation Chapter Meeting, which sadly I did not attend. I am certain that I would have benefitted greatly by the information shared in that presentation. Who knows if the documentary I watched contradicts the speakers perspective or they share in the idea of a recruiting strategy that goes beyond the traditional resources? Certainly, it is food for thought to strive to be openminded and flexible when recruiting the future of our firms.