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Reflections from students attending Global Business Gate Day #4 on Talent Recruitment

This text is a summary of impressions and recommendations for future events from the students and recent graduate representative that attended the Global Business Gate Day #4 on Talent Recruitment. In total, we were five people that made up one of the panels and we shared our perspectives on talent recruitment. This summary is authored by me, Simon Fredholm. I am a student in the Double Degree track of the Master Program in European Studies (MAES) at the University of Gothenburg. As part of my double degree, I am also pursuing a master's degree in Political Science with focus on Transatlantic Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

To begin, it was a great pleasure to be part of the Global Business Gate Day #4. We are thankful for the trust that was put in us as panelists, and we thank you for the opportunity to have our opinions heard. We were all impressed by the seminar and the presentations. The seminar showed that the Global Business Gate Community is already doing good things to attract talent, and they are asking the right questions. We as students and young professionals would like to highlight some measures and perspectives that we would like the Global Business Gate Community to expand in the coming year. We would also like to stress the great potential for engaging many talented international students and young professionals in the continued build-up process of the Global Business Gate project, which could be realized if Global Business Gate reached out and opened up more generally to this group of people residing in Gothenburg.

Introduction

Our perspectives on effective talent recruitment come from experiences with our fellow international students. It is well acknowledged that Gothenburg is already attracting young international talent through its universities. We – as students in an international environment – study, work, and socialize with people from all over the world. This gives us an outside perspective on the attractiveness of Sweden in general, and Gothenburg in particular. Speaking to our fellow classmates, we notice that attracting talent and students to Gothenburg is not difficult. Sweden and Gothenburg are viewed as attractive places to come for exchange studies, offering an advanced educational system, a high living standard, and a great social life. However, we have noticed that it is difficult to get international students to stay here. Generally, we believe that this is because students in Gothenburg lack effective access to business networks and because there are few relevant local traineeships and internships available. Similarly, we consider these to be the main factors that hinder effective talent recruitment to Gothenburg. Therefore, we suggest that the Global Business Gate Community has these factors in mind when planning future events. In the following text, we give our view on these topics.

Networking

As students just months away from graduation, some of us are working hard to find a network. However, many of us notice that both informal and formal networking opportunities are rare. With so many potential employers, students, alumni, and other professionals in this city it is unfortunate that we are not more connected. Furthermore, we see a range of other benefits in increasing network opportunities in Gothenburg. First, it would allow for people to pursue jobs that do not exactly match experiences or education – but may match their competencies. For example, students from the University of Gothenburg attend multiple top-ranked universities across the globe through various exchange programs. These graduates have unique international experience that international companies in Gothenburg can benefit from. Second, it would not only be the recent graduates who benefit from easier access to business networks, but rather people at all stages of their careers. As Uzma Yasin mentioned in her presentation, people are switching jobs more frequently than ever before. An active networking environment would facilitate more frequent job turnaround, while at the same time providing an active network in Gothenburg. Lastly, we must not forget that Gothenburg is already attracting young talents from all over the world who enjoy living in Gothenburg and would like to stay here and work. Despite this, without an active network, international students and young professionals are especially at risk of being overlooked by both the private and public sector in Gothenburg. By increasing the opportunities for networking, companies can better gauge the expertise available. In addition, universities and students can better advertise what competencies they have to offer. We are convinced that an increase in opportunities to network – and a more prominent focus on competencies and life experience in addition to formal experience and education – could not only allow Gothenburg to attract and retain talent, but also to better navigate the talent that is already here in Gothenburg.

Earlier Student Contact with the Private and the Public Sector

As students in the social sciences, we have noticed the scarcity of relevant positions in the Gothenburg area despite the presence of a large number of companies. If our observations are correct, it is more difficult for graduates of social science majors to obtain employment due to the more abstract nature of their studies compared to technical majors. Also, as mentioned above, the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Gothenburg is highly international, and graduates have a high degree of international experience. We believe there is great potential to be yielded from the visionary and encompassing aptitude often borne by those educated within the social sciences. However, they typically undergo significant struggles in finding employment – Gothenburg being no exception. Several graduates from the Social Sciences at the University of Gothenburg report that it is common that both Swedes and international students to leave Gothenburg to pursue work opportunities elsewhere (commonly, within international organizations and large non-profits abroad). How can better opportunities be fostered for such talents locally? By looking at what companies and public institutions in other cities are doing, we notice that many companies and government institutions offer attractive traineeships and internships. Yet, internships, traineeships, and mentorships are rare in Gothenburg. We believe that by offering more internships, traineeships, and mentorships, companies and local government in Gothenburg stand to benefit from utilizing the academic resources while at the same time attracting talent to Gothenburg.

It has come to our attention that many students are interested in more internships, traineeships, and mentorships to get earlier contact with the private and the public sector. All of the above prepare graduates for working life, and additionally, employers can get access to graduates with better knowledge in areas relevant for their businesses or government institutions. Additionally, students can sooner add value to local businesses and public institutions. For future events, it could be valuable to include a discussion surrounding internships, traineeships, and mentorships, and how

they could become a tool for discovering, developing, and retaining talent. Former and current trainees and interns, as well as a few companies with experience in mentorships and hiring trainees and interns from other cities, could partake in such a discussion.

Conclusion

In the above text, we have argued that Gothenburg already is an attractive place to live and work. However, Gothenburg lacks two important factors for effective talent recruitment. The first factor is the lack of networking opportunities and the second factor is the lack of relevant internships, traineeships, and mentorships (or accessible information about them) for some students. We believe that the lack of these factors makes recruiting, retaining, and discovering talent difficult – especially from the international community. Additionally, we are convinced that companies can receive a lot of value from students coming from most faculties. There is no doubt that there are plenty of internships, traineeships, and mentorships out there suitable for us. Moreover, a more cross-disciplinary outlook would acknowledge the value of various competencies and life experiences that may not be perfect fit “on paper”. Therefore, we argue that better network opportunities, internships, traineeships, and mentorships allow students to better describe and advertise their skills in relation to what position they are pursuing, and also show what value they can add. To facilitate this, businesses may need to become more flexible in recognizing the skills, competencies, and life experiences applicants have to offer.

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