# Factors That Influence the Job Market Decision: The Role of Faculty as a Knowledge Broker

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## Abstract:

This study examines the perceptions of students, recruiters, and faculty regarding the importance of various workplace attributes to students who are entering the job market. Furthermore, this study discusses the important role that faculty can play as a knowledge broker with both students and recruiters. Looking at students' Top 10 attributes, we found there is a significant difference between students and faculty perceptions for (1) job satisfaction, (2) company culture, (3) company's employee treatment, (4) training program, (5) company growth potential, and (6) company financial stability. In each case, the faculty underestimated the importance of these attributes to the students. Regarding (1) fit with goals and (2) current organization employees are satisfied/loyalty, both faculty and recruiters significantly underestimated the attributes' importance to the students. Results indicate recruiters are more accurate with respect to what students look for in a job than are faculty. This study also begins some initial exploratory work on developing factors for the items used within this study. Specifically, the three samples were combined and exploratory factor analysis was conducted, resulting in a five-factor solution. Furthermore, this study provides faculty with a better understanding of what student job applicants are looking for in a job and also gives suggestions for helping the faculty become better able to serve as knowledge brokers between recruiters and students.

**Keywords:** sales management/sales | course content | marketing education issues | learning styles | learning approaches and issues | promotion and tenure | education administration issues | balance of teaching, research, and service | marketing careers/advising | placement issues | employer needs

## Article:

Organizations are expected to face unique and unprecedented staffing challenges in the first decades of the 21st century. It is reported by the year 2020 that more than 46 million baby boomers with education and training beyond high school will be over the age of 57, resulting in a potential labor shortage of roughly 20 million skilled workers (Carnevale, 2005). Not only will recruiting qualified employees become a priority, retaining knowledgeable workers will also be important (Dawley, Houghton, & Bucklew, 2010). In particular, in the sales area, identifying, hiring, and retaining top sales talent continues as one of the major challenges facing sales

organizations, while salesforce turnover remains an intractable management problem (Boles, Dudley, Onyemah, Rouziès, & Weeks, 2012). Recruiting the right salespeople to an organization is a key step for implementing a strategic sales plan and achieving successful sales performances (Wiles & Spiro, 2004). However, recruiting the wrong salespeople can negatively impact performance and can lead to salesforce turnover, which can have both direct and indirect costs to an organization. And unfortunately, studies have found a number of inconsistencies regarding how sales managers and entry-level sales representatives assess the importance of various skills when recruiting for entry-level sales positions (Raymond, Carlson, & Hopkins, 2006). Thus, recruiters should strive to find a fit between their job applicants and the job to be filled.

The current workforce is comprised of individuals from four generations: the Silent Generation (born 1925-1945), the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1981), and Millennials (also known as GenY, Generation Me, nGen, and IGen; born 1982-1999) (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). With much of the Silent Generation already retired and many of the Baby Boomers entering retirement, Millennials will steadily take a prominent position in the workforce. It should be noted that while similar, different birth years have been used to describe the Millennial generation. For example, Strauss and Howe use 1982 as the Millennials' starting birth year and 2004 as the last birth year (Horovitz, 2012). The Pew Research Center suggests the Millennial birth range as those born "after 1980" (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). In the remainder of the article, we will use the term Millennials to maintain consistency, even though some of the references cited use the term GenY or Generation Y.

Research has found many generational differences in attitudes, personality traits, behaviors, and mental health (e.g., Kessler et al., 2005; Wells & Twenge, 2005). Overall, GenX and especially Millennials are more individualistic and self-focused (e.g., Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007; Sirias, Karp, & Brotherton, 2007; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008), which has inspired the label Generation Me (Twenge, 2006). Many organizations have responded to the work values of the Millennials (e.g., Alsop, 2008a; Gloeckler, 2008) and added amenities focusing on work-life balance, relaxation, and leisure activities (Twenge et al., 2010).

Identifying differences in what Millennials are looking for in a job is important because recruiters sometimes fall short in communicating relevant information during the interview process (cf., Mauerer, Howe, & Lee, 1992). When this happens, it reduces the chances of students accepting a job offer due to a lack of perceived fit between those attributes they are looking for in a job and what is communicated by a recruiter (Wiles & Spiro, 2004). On another front, research shows changes are occurring in the current teaching pedagogy that reflect accommodations to current Millennial students (e.g., Cummins, Peltier, Erffmeyer, & Whalen, 2013; Das, 2012; Mills, 2010). These changes will be discussed in a following section of the article.

The purpose of this study is to advocate and enhance the role that sales faculty can, and in many cases already, play regarding being a knowledge broker between students and recruiters. Schibrowsky, Peltier, and Boyt (2002) recommended a more professional school approach to business education and specifically methods that offer higher likelihood of placement of graduates. Students' desire and intention to pursue a career in sales continue to lag

behind industry demand for salespeople (Peltier, Cummins, Pomirleanu, Cross, & Simon, 2014). Therefore, a better understanding by sales faculty of what both students and recruiters expect will contribute to their potential knowledge broker role. To develop this information, we conduct an exploratory study using upper level university students who fall toward the middle of the Millennial age range. Not only will this study provide faculty the opportunity to close the gap between the job applicants' and recruiters' perceptions, but it will also help the faculty adjust their own understanding of what is important to students when entering the job market.

## Millennials

Each generation has common characteristics that give it a specific character, and Millennials have been identified with the common traits of being tech-savvy, family-centric, achievement-oriented, team-oriented, and attention-craving (Kane, 2010). Research also ascribes the following to Millennials:

- They often converse comfortably with adults (Tapscott, 1998).
- They are brighter than previous generations—15 points higher in raw intelligence than their counterparts of five decades ago (Greenfield, 1998).
- They have excellent written communication skills (Tapscott, 1998).
- They work collaboratively, while quickly gathering information and sharing it regularly (Howe & Strauss, 2000).
- They respect and value the importance of multiculturalism as well as diversity and are resilient (Zemke, Raines, & Fitzpatrick, 2000).
- They sometimes struggle in a relatively unsupervised environment (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Millennials have been called "Trophy Kids," a term that reflects the trend in competitive sports, as well as many other aspects of life, where mere participation is often enough for a reward. It has also been reported that this has become a concern in the workplace and that Millennials have too great of expectations from the workplace (Alsop, 2008b, p. 21). Studies have predicted that Millennials will switch jobs frequently, holding many more jobs than Generation Xers due to their unrealistic expectations (Kunreuther, Kim, & Rodriguez, 2009). Being familiar with the aforementioned common traits of Millennials allows business leaders the opportunity to adapt to achieve greater results in less time, at less expense, and with less risk. However, it is necessary to recognize that not every Millennial fits all these characteristics. Instead, the characteristics present powerful clues on where to start to faster connect with and influence people of different ages because there are ever so many factors that go into shaping an individual's experience other than merely a birth year (Dorsey, 2014).

## Comparison of Recruiting Research

### Student Perceptions

Since the 1990s, there have been only two studies that have directly compared student sales applicants and sales recruiter views (Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). Job satisfaction was the most important attribute in both studies, while financial stability, salary, and

security were also similar (Wiles & Spiro, 2004). However, there were significant differences in the rankings between the two studies when examining the 15 most important attributes. The most notable change was that the company's ethics policy changed from 32 to 15 in importance. Wiles and Spiro (2004) also found students in their study placed more importance on job advancement opportunities, geographic location, training programs, recruiter personality, whether the recruiter shows interest, and nonmonetary benefits than students in 1992. However, Wiles and Spiro (2004) found students placed less importance regarding whether employees can voice their own views and the fit between student and organization goals than the 1992 students.

### Recruiter Perceptions

When comparing their findings to Weilbaker and Merritt's (1992) study, Wiles and Spiro (2004) concluded recruiters have changed and seem to have more accurate perceptions of what is important to students when seeking a job. For instance, the attributes of company ethics policy, defined career path, recruiter morale, defined customers, and job travel opportunities revealed recruiters changing their rating in the same direction as did students. Furthermore, although Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) found sales recruiter perceptions more accurately reflected the views of students who were not interested in pursuing sales careers, Wiles and Spiro (2004) found the opposite—sales recruiter perceptions were closer to students who were interested in a career in sales.

## Role of the Sales Faculty

University business faculty are expected to perform in the three traditional areas of teaching, research, and service (e.g., Fairweather, 2005; Moore, Newman, & Turnbull, 2001; Rapert, Kurtz, & Smitt, 2002). The emphasis placed on each of these performance areas varies widely depending on the school, college, or university mission (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [AACSB], 2003, 2004). For example, the proportion of time devoted to teaching, research, and service can dramatically vary. For instance, a large research institution such as the University of Oklahoma can have a 30/60/10% mix, whereas a smaller teaching institution such as Pacific Lutheran University can have a 60/10/30% mix (Honeycutt, Ford, & Thelen, 2010). Business faculty allocates their time across these three areas according to what they perceive to be important in their promotion, tenure, and reward process.

### Teaching

Whether at a teaching university or a research-oriented university, the uniqueness of Millennials has led to business faculty adapting their teaching approaches. For instance, knowing that Millennials are receptive to experiential learning (Cummins et al., 2013), academicians have attempted to adapt the pedagogy to accommodate a different learning style. Sojka and Fish (2008) tested an experiential teaching tool in the personal selling class that uses Brief In-Class Role Plays (BIRPs) to teach the Millennial students and they suggest that the method can be developed for other marketing courses. Haytko (2006) introduced how to use the Price is Right game to teach pricing strategies.

While teaching business ethics and decision making, Pelton and True (2004) found Millennial students may possess different value orientations that may or may not be accordant with traditional teaching methods or content areas. Mills (2010) demonstrated how the jazz metaphor can aid the instructor in both facilitating students' learning of the more basic as well as the more specific skills that make up the marketing research class, in addition to contributing more to student enjoyment of the subject. Recognizing Millennials tend to favor electronic mediums, Kaplan, Piskin, and Bol (2010) presented an adaptation of blogging as an innovative approach for building and improving necessary marketing skills as part of the Marketing Management class. Das (2012) introduced another innovation by using the participatory photo novel as an innovative pedagogical tool in place of a traditional lecture, allowing students to co-create content.

## Research

Rapert et al. (2002) identified a number of activities that encompass the academics' time beyond teaching, research, and service, but this core triad still remains the focus of responsibilities for faculty. Miller, Taylor, and Bedeian (2011) found there is a perennially expressed concern that pressure to publish may marginalize teaching because research and teaching compete for scarce time and faculty effort. Melguizo and Strober (2007) note that although some faculty feel that research and teaching are complementary and enhance one another, for the most part good teaching appears to take time away from research, which is often emphasized in performance reviews and compensation decisions. Regardless of an institution's mission, the research expectations on faculty are increasing (Mott-Stenerson, 2005; Wyler & Blood, 2006). Empirical evidence supports the notion that the more research conducted by faculty members, the higher their respective salary levels (Fairweather, 2005), and teaching institutions now are requiring more research (Fairweather, 2005; Marsh & Hattie, 2002). For instance, most business schools expect that business faculty, over 80% of whom hold PhDs, will publish in refereed journals to remain intellectually active, gain tenure, and earn promotion to higher academic ranks (AACSB, 2004). Therefore, regardless of institutional focus, university faculty research expectations appear to be increasing (Mott-Stenerson, 2005), with no indication that it will change.

## Service

Service can relate to performing administrative activities on campus (i.e., serving on department, school, and college "governance" university committees), being active in the academic community (i.e., holding a leadership position in a national organization or serving on an editorial review board for a journal), and helping in the local community, including providing gratis consulting services to businesses (Honeycutt, Thelen, & Ford, 2010). One study concluded that service activity and research productivity do not seem to preclude each other, suggesting that a faculty member can excel in several areas of performance. However, at many institutions, service contributions generate minimal financial rewards (Shields, 1998). Some institutions value service highly, whereas others assign increased service levels as a form of punishment for poor research and teaching. In addition, institutions may view certain service activities (i.e., serving on a departmental committee) as being more valuable than providing service to the discipline (i.e., member of an editorial review board) or vice versa, depending on the goals of the

institution. Thus, business schools proffer that service contributions are the least important area of the core triad (Honeycutt & Ford, 2000; Shields, 1998).

The role of advising duties in marketing departments is another example of faculty service. In general, the quality and amount of contact a student has with faculty members outside the classroom plays a key role in recruiting and retaining satisfied students (Shields & Gillard, 2002). Furthermore, the literature reports that effective academic advising not only enhances students' academic performance but also benefits the institution by reducing many avoidable problems (Petress, 2000). Interestingly, the role of advising duties in marketing programs or business education in general has not been extensively documented. However, Shields and Gillard (2002) report that two-thirds of the marketing educators surveyed in their study were directly involved in academic advising. They also concluded that although faculty had positive attitudes toward advising, they often were not provided the resources or motivation to perform the activity. Furthermore, the most extreme differences of opinions about advising were found between faculties at teaching versus research-oriented institutions.

In the sales area, the role of sales faculty has expanded, with duties that include sales competition coaching, soliciting sales program sponsors, organizing career events, and most importantly, guidance counseling. As guidance counselors, sales faculty are spending more time working as a "go-between" who advises company recruiters and helps students better understand the process of choosing a company to work for upon graduation (Agnihotri et al., 2014). This role is becoming even more important given some statistics place the odds of students taking a sales job after graduation at approximately 80% for all marketing majors (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2011).

Furthermore, with the increase in the number of universities that are offering sales programs, the need is enhanced for sales faculty to serve as a knowledge broker between students and recruiters. The growth of sales centers around the country and the expanded membership in the University Sales Center Alliance (USCA) lends further support to the opportunity that exists for faculty to serve as a knowledge broker. The USCA is currently comprised of 20 full member schools and 15 associate member schools and has the mission "to advance the sales profession through academic leadership: education, research, and outreach" (USCA, 2013). Members of the USCA work diligently in fostering partnerships with sales organizations regarding student job placement and sales research. As sales organizations learn more about these sales programs, corporate recruiters are placing greater expectations on sales faculty to connect them with qualified student candidates. These organizations, in greater numbers, have participated in many of the university sales competitions across the United States and have more and more partnered with university sales centers and institutes. This closer association and the investment of resources by partnering sales organizations can again burden sales faculty with a sense of greater responsibility to more effectively assist in their recruiting efforts.

Although there is evidence, as noted above, that sales faculty are becoming more involved in serving as a guidance counselor or knowledge broker, little has been written about the topic in marketing education journals (Cummins et al., 2013). Most recently, Agnihotri et al. (2014) provide a set of 16 propositions for sales faculty who advise students on company choices

and for recruiters regarding how to better appeal to students. The lack of literature in this area further underscores the importance of the current study.

## Methodology

### Sample

Surveys were made available to students, faculty, and industry recruiters during a 3-day national collegiate sales role-play competition that included a sales exclusive career fair and social networking events, as well as an elimination-style tournament for college students interested in pursuing careers in professional sales. The event is a well-established university and college student sales role-play competition that has been conducted for 15 years and draws instructors and sales students primarily from universities across the United States. Respondents were encouraged to complete the survey by holding drawings for one iPad for each category of respondent (student, faculty, and recruiter).

#### *Student sample*

The sampling procedure to collect data from students differed from the Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) and Wiles and Spiro (2004) studies. Both of those studies focused on upper level marketing students from a single university. The present study focused on students from across the United States to increase our ability to generalize the findings of the study. Specifically, students attended the event to compete and also to participate in the career fair. Two students per university were allowed to compete in the undergraduate and graduate divisions. A total of 68 universities participated (67 undergraduate university teams included five that also participated in the graduate division and one university team that competed in the graduate division but not the undergraduate) and included 134 undergraduate competitors and 12 graduate competitors, for a total of 146 competing students. Additional students attended from each university to participate in the career fair and other events not involving the competition portion. One hundred and thirty-eight noncompeting students attended. A total of 114 female students and 150 male students were included in the population from which the sample was drawn. Of the competitors, 60 were female and 76 were male. Of the noncompetitors, 54 were female and 74 were male. Students and faculty in attendance primarily represented universities from 34 different states, 9 from the Southeast United States, 7 from the Central United States, 6 from the Midwest, 6 from the Northeast, 2 from the Southwest, 1 from the Northwest, and 1 from the Western United States. In total, 133 usable student surveys were obtained.

#### *Recruiter sample*

Industry participants represented 58 Fortune 500 companies that engage in business nationally and internationally and included business-to-business and business-to-consumer organizations, with a majority of those being business-to-business. Industry recruiters included 201 females and 247 males, for a total population size of 448. In total, 71 usable recruiter surveys were obtained.

#### *Faculty sample*

Faculty and instructors attended with students from their respective universities who participated in the event. During the competition, instructors participated as judges and also continued to coach their students throughout the event as well as networked with other instructors and industry representatives. The instructor population numbered 94, including 38 female instructors and 56 male. In total, 50 usable faculty surveys were obtained.

## Items

Items for this study are partially based on Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) and Wiles and Spiro (2004) and were measured from *not at all important* (1) to *very important* (5). Specifically, 41 of the present study's items appear within these two studies. Wiles and Spiro used 44 of Weilbaker and Merritt's (1992) 50 items. In addition, as an extension to the Weilbaker and Merritt study, they added three items (employee morale, company growth potential, and task variety), bringing their total to 47. Given that six items produced means under 3 for both studies, the decision to exclude these items from the present study was made (excluded items include international company, company support of student organizations, company U.S. owned, student knows employees in company, recruiter age, and recruiter gender).

Due to the changes in the business environment over the past several decades, the authors of the present study felt it would be beneficial to ensure the attributes reflected the modern sales environment. Given this, we conducted a small-scale study. Specifically, experts in sales from industry along with multiple faculty members at three major universities were asked to review the list of 41 items and propose any items that may be missing from the listed items. Second, sales students at several major universities were asked to identify any items that may be missing from the listed items that they felt were important when considering a potential employer. Fourteen new attributes were identified and included in this study, for a total of 55 items. Furthermore, none of the six items removed were identified as missing. Given this, we felt comfortable leaving these six items out of the final questionnaire. The additional items are provided in the Appendix.

## Analysis

The data analysis follows procedures similar to Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) and Wiles and Spiro (2004). Specifically, attributes are ranked from most important to least important based on the overall students' assessment of importance. This ranking is created by ordering the resulting average values from 1 to 55 for each sample (student, faculty, and recruiters). Then, a series of *t* tests are used to compare (1) students to faculty, (2) students to recruiters, and (3) faculty to recruiters. Unlike the Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) and Wiles and Spiro (2004) studies, the present study will include standard deviations in addition to reporting Levene's test. Levene's test is used to assess the equality of variances between groups. Specifically, Levene's test determines if the variances for the samples are equal. When Levene's test produces significant results, reporting significance based on the assumption that variances are not equal will be used.

In addition to following the procedures similar to Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) and Wiles and Spiro (2004), this study begins some initial exploratory work on developing factors for the items used within this study. Specifically, the three samples were combined and exploratory factor

analysis was conducted. To develop the factors, values less than .50 were suppressed, each factor had to have three or more items, and items that did not load on a given factor were removed.

## Results

Findings across students, faculty, and recruiters highlight differences in actual feelings (students) and/or perceptions (faculty and recruiters) of what is important for students when searching for a sales position. Rankings of attributes differed between the three groups. In total, 40 of the 55 rated attributes examined showed at least one significant difference. Table 1 provides a summary of the attributes ranked, by students, from 1 to 55. Of importance to note, when considering rankings, differences in mean values between attributes should be considered. In several places, mean differences were small.

**Table 1.** Summary of the Results.

| Attribute | Student Rank | Faculty Rank | Recruiter Rank | Significant Mean Differences Between (1) Student and Faculty, (2) Student and Recruiter, and (3) Faculty and Recruiter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Job satisfaction | 1 | 4 | 2 | (1) Yes[a] |
| | 4.79 | 4.48 | 4.70 | (2) — |
| | (0.46) | (0.84) | (0.46) | (3) — |
| Advancement opportunity | 2 | 2 | 1 | — |
| | 4.68 | 4.52 | 4.75 | — |
| | (0.66) | (0.54) | (0.50) | Yes[a] |
| Company culture | 3 | 6 | 4 | Yes |
| | 4.62 | 4.38 | 4.61 | — |
| | (0.66) | (0.70) | (0.55) | Yes[b] |
| Company's employee | 4 | 8 | 9 | Yes |
| treatment | 4.59 | 4.30 | 4.41 | — |
| | (0.67) | (0.76) | (0.67) | — |
| Training program | 5 | 10 | 3 | Yes |
| | 4.59 | 4.24 | 4.63 | — |
| | (0.63) | (0.74) | (0.57) | Yes |
| Company growth potential | 6 | 16 | 6 | Yes |
| | 4.56 | 4.08 | 4.54 | — |
| | (0.65) | (0.67) | (0.58) | Yes |
| Fit with goals | 7 | 11 | 13 | Yes |
| | 4.53 | 4.24 | 4.31 | Yes |
| | (0.66) | (0.82) | (0.71) | — |
| Challenging/exciting work | 8 | 3 | 8 | — |
| | 4.53 | 4.50 | 4.48 | — |
| | (0.65) | (0.58) | (0.65) | — |
| Current organization | 9 | 12 | 18 | Yes |
| employees are | 4.48 | 4.16 | 4.24 | Yes |
| satisfied/loyalty | (0.76) | (0.74) | (0.75) | — |
| Company financially stable | 10 | 21 | 12 | Yes[a] |
| | 4.48 | 3.92 | 4.34 | — |
| | (0.74) | (0.97) | (0.74) | Yes |
| Work/life balance | 11 | 22 | 21 | Yes |
| | 4.47 | 3.92 | 4.21 | Yes |
| | (0.72) | (0.80) | (0.74) | Yes |
| Employee morale | 12 | 7 | 7 | — |
| | 4.42 | 4.34 | 4.49 | — |

| Attribute | Student Rank | Faculty Rank | Recruiter Rank | Significant Mean Differences Between (1) Student and Faculty, (2) Student and Recruiter, and (3) Faculty and Recruiter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (0.81) | (0.77) | (0.63) | — |
| Salary | 13 | 1 | 10 | — |
| | 4.40 | 4.54 | 4.39 | — |
| | (0.70) | (0.54) | (0.78) | — |
| Job security | 14 | 26 | 20 | Yes |
| | 4.39 | 3.80 | 4.21 | — |
| | (0.77) | (0.70) | (0.81) | Yes[a] |
| Company retention | 15 | 5 | 5 | — |
| | 4.38 | 4.42 | 4.58 | — |
| | (0.76) | (0.67) | (0.67) | — |
| Ethical company | 16 | 28 | 16 | Yes |
| | 4.37 | 3.78 | 4.27 | — |
| | (0.87) | (0.91) | (0.76) | Yes |
| Recruiter personality | 17 | 19 | 19 | Yes |
| | 4.35 | 3.94 | 4.23 | — |
| | (0.80) | (0.82) | (0.85) | — |
| Recruiter is knowledge | 18 | 18 | 11 | Yes[a] |
| | 4.35 | 4.00 | 4.35 | — |
| | (0.81) | (0.67) | (0.63) | Yes |
| Company's leadership | 19 | 33 | 22 | Yes[a] |
| | 4.35 | 3.52 | 4.15 | — |
| | (0.79) | (0.97) | (0.79) | Yes[a] |
| Making a difference in the | 20 | 32 | 24 | Yes |
| lives of customers | 4.34 | 3.68 | 4.01 | Yes[a] |
| | (0.91) | (0.84) | (0.73) | Yes |
| Job | 21 | 24 | 25 | Yes |
| description/communication | 4.28 | 3.82 | 4.00 | Yes[a] |
| of expectations | (0.86) | (0.77) | (0.76) | — |
| Recruiter morale | 22 | 13 | 14 | — |
| | 4.27 | 4.14 | 4.29 | — |
| | (0.81) | (0.78) | (0.78) | — |
| Recruiter shows interest | 23 | 15 | 23 | — |
| | 4.26 | 4.10 | 4.07 | — |
| | (0.81) | (0.65) | (0.79) | — |
| Commission program | 24 | 9 | 15 | — |
| | 4.26 | 4.26 | 4.28 | — |
| | (0.85) | (0.63) | (0.83) | — |
| Recruiter is friendly | 25 | 14 | 17 | — |
| | 4.19 | 4.14 | 4.25 | — |
| | (0.83) | (0.76) | (0.81) | — |
| Company ethics policy | 26 | 42 | 27 | Yes[a] |
| | 4.15 | 3.35 | 3.87 | Yes |
| | (0.95) | (1.23) | (0.91) | Yes[a] |
| Geographic location | 27 | 17 | 32 | — |
| | 4.12 | 4.04 | 3.79 | Yes |
| | (0.87) | (0.86) | (0.84) | — |
| Products readily sellable | 28 | 23 | 34 | — |
| | 4.07 | 3.84 | 3.77 | Yes |
| | (0.91) | (0.77) | (0.97) | — |
| Work with different people | 29 | 45 | 38 | Yes |
| | 4.03 | 3.26 | 3.65 | Yes |
| | (0.87) | (0.85) | (0.79) | Yes |

| Attribute | Student Rank | Faculty Rank | Recruiter Rank | Significant Mean Differences Between (1) Student and Faculty, (2) Student and Recruiter, and (3) Faculty and Recruiter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employee creativity | 30 | 31 | 30 | Yes |
| | 4.02 | 3.70 | 3.83 | — |
| | (0.95) | (0.89) | (0.91) | — |
| Defined hiring process | 31 | 34 | 40 | Yes |
| | 4.00 | 3.49 | 3.59 | Yes |
| | (0.93) | (1.00) | (0.84) | — |
| Low employee turnover | 32 | 36 | 36 | Yes |
| | 4.00 | 3.48 | 3.75 | — |
| | (0.97) | (0.91) | (0.92) | — |
| Task variety | 33 | 29 | 37 | — |
| | 4.00 | 3.76 | 3.68 | Yes |
| | (0.90) | (0.69) | (0.84) | — |
| Company's organizational | 34 | 52 | 44 | Yes |
| structure | 3.99 | 2.82 | 3.48 | Yes |
| | (0.91) | (0.96) | (0.97) | Yes |
| Company | 35 | 79 | 54 | Yes |
| retirement/pension plan | 3.98 | 2.94 | 3.08 | Yes |
| | (0.93) | (1.10) | (1.02) | — |
| Transfers within company | 36 | 35 | 35 | Yes |
| | 3.97 | 3.48 | 3.75 | — |
| | (0.96) | (0.71) | (0.89) | — |
| Defined career path | 37 | 25 | 26 | — |
| | 3.95 | 3.82 | 3.94 | — |
| | (0.88) | (0.77) | (0.81) | — |
| Nonmonetary benefits | 38 | 27 | 33 | — |
| | 3.94 | 3.80 | 3.79 | — |
| | (0.88) | (0.97) | (0.74) | — |
| Employees voice own | 39 | 40 | 29 | Yes |
| views | 3.93 | 3.42 | 3.83 | — |
| | (0.96) | (0.93) | (0.81) | Yes |
| Company communication | 40 | 44 | 31 | Yes |
| paths | 3.92 | 3.30 | 3.80 | — |
| | (0.94) | (0.93) | (0.89) | Yes |
| Company industry | 41 | 37 | 43 | Yes[a] |
| | 3.83 | 3.48 | 3.56 | — |
| | (0.91) | (1.07) | (1.02) | — |
| Defined customers | 42 | 39 | 47 | Yes |
| | 3.80 | 3.42 | 3.44 | Yes |
| | (0.99) | (0.86) | (0.92) | — |
| Bonus program | 43 | 20 | 28 | — |
| | 3.77 | 3.94 | 3.86 | — |
| | (0.94) | (0.80) | (0.90) | — |
| Job travel opportunities | 44 | 43 | 46 | Yes[a] |
| | 3.70 | 3.30 | 3.46 | — |
| | (1.11) | (0.81) | (0.75) | — |
| Location cost-of-living | 45 | 30 | 45 | — |
| | 3.70 | 3.72 | 3.48 | — |
| | (0.99) | (0.81) | (0.75) | — |
| Job stress | 46 | 38 | 41 | — |
| | 3.67 | 3.44 | 3.59 | — |
| | (0.93) | (0.91) | (0.85) | — |
| | 47 | 48 | 42 | Yes |

| Attribute | Student Rank | Faculty Rank | Recruiter Rank | Significant Mean Differences Between (1) Student and Faculty, (2) Student and Recruiter, and (3) Faculty and Recruiter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Socially/environmentally | 3.66 | 3.04 | 3.57 | — |
| responsible company | (1.11) | (1.05) | (0.91) | Yes |
| Graduate education support | 48 | 46 | 50 | Yes[a] |
| | 3.59 | 3.12 | 3.27 | — |
| | (1.21) | (0.94) | (1.06) | — |
| Cost-of-living increases | 49 | 47 | 53 | Yes |
| | 3.58 | 3.12 | 3.09 | Yes |
| | (0.84) | (0.96) | (0.97) | — |
| Company mission statement | 50 | 55 | 49 | Yes |
| | 3.35 | 2.38 | 3.31 | — |
| | (1.16) | (1.07) | (0.96) | Yes |
| Company number one in | 51 | 50 | 39 | — |
| industry | 3.19 | 2.94 | 3.62 | Yes |
| | (1.14) | (1.20) | (0.98) | Yes |
| Company size | 52 | 54 | 52 | Yes |
| | 3.13 | 2.74 | 3.13 | — |
| | (0.98) | (0.90) | (0.96) | Yes |
| Fortune 500 company | 53 | 53 | 51 | — |
| | 3.04 | 2.80 | 3.13 | — |
| | (1.23) | (1.05) | (1.09) | — |
| Employee ages | 54 | 41 | 48 | Yes |
| | 2.98 | 3.36 | 3.34 | Yes |
| | (1.14) | (0.88) | (1.03) | — |
| Interview food, lodging | 55 | 51 | 55 | — |
| | 2.92 | 2.88 | 2.86 | — |
| | (1.08) | (0.87) | (0.88) | — |

*Note*. Data represent means, with standard deviations in parentheses.
a. This indicates a significant Levene's Test and that equal variances not being assumed produced significant differences between the two groups.
b. This indicates a significant Levene's Test and that equal variances not being assumed produced a nonsignificant difference between the two groups.

In order of importance, students ranked their Top 10 as (1) job satisfaction, (2) advancement opportunity, (3) company culture, (4) company's employee treatment, (5) training program, (6) company growth potential, (7) fit with goals, (8) challenging/exciting work, (9) current organization employees are satisfied/loyalty, and (10) company financially stable. Six (job satisfaction, company culture, company's employee treatment, fit with goals, current organizational employees are satisfied/loyalty, and company financially stable) of the 10 attributes that students felt were important were ranked lower by both faculty and recruiters. Furthermore, faculty had significantly lower means ($p < .05$) for all six of these attributes, whereas recruiters had a significantly lower mean ($p < .05$) on only two of the six attributes. In two (training programs and company growth potential) of the Top 10 attributes, faculty showed significantly lower rankings and means ($p < .05$) than both students and recruiters. One attribute, challenging/exciting work, was ranked higher by faculty (third) than both students (eighth) and recruiters (eighth). However, there were no significant differences in means ($p > .05$). Only one of the Top 10 attributes, advancement opportunity, seemed in alignment with regard to rank between all three groups (second, second, and first).

Four attributes outside of the students' Top 10 are relevant given that they fall within either the faculty or recruiters' Top 10. Specifically, faculty ranked the salary attribute as the top attribute, whereas recruiters ranked it 10th and students ranked it 13th. Although a large difference in rank occurs, the means ($p > .05$) were not significantly different. Employee morale was ranked seventh by both faculty and recruiters but 12th by students. Company reputation was ranked fifth by both faculty and recruiters but 15th by students. Like salary, neither employee morale nor company reputation produced significantly different means ($p > .05$). Commission program was ranked ninth by faculty members, 15th by recruiters, and 24th by students. However, no significant mean ($p > .05$) differences were found.

When examining the factor structure, five factors emerged (see Table 2). We named each of the factors. Factor 1 is called "Recruiter Influence" and includes these five items: recruiter personality, recruiter is friendly, recruiter morale, recruiter shows interest, and the recruiter is knowledgeable. The eigen value for this factor was 4.821 and produced loadings between .604 and .831. An alpha of .81 was produced. Factor 2 is called "good/ethically responsible company." The eigen value for this factor was 2.701, and loadings were between .689 and .785. It includes these items: company mission statement, socially/environmentally responsible company, company ethics policy, and ethical company. The alpha for this factor is .80. Factor 3 is called "Position Clarity" and includes four items: products readily sellable, defined hiring process, defined customers, and defined career path. The alpha for this factor was .71, and loadings ranged between .555 and .806. The eigen value for this factor was 1.713. Factor 4 is called "Industry Leadership" and includes three items: company size, Fortune 500 company, and company number one in industry. The eigen value is 1.384, with an alpha of .671. Loadings ranged between .699 and .826. Factor 5 is called "Employee Focused" and includes three items: training program, job satisfaction, and employee morale. The eigen value is 1.090, with loadings between .683 and .763. An alpha of .639 was produced.

**Table 2.** Factor MANOVA Results.

| | Student | | | Faculty | | | Recruiter | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor** | **Rank** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | **Rank** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | **Rank** | ***M*** | ***SD*** | **Significant Differences** |
| Employee focused | 1 | 4.60 | 0.47 | 1 | 4.35 | 0.64 | 1 | 4.61 | 0.42 | Faculty are significantly lower |
| Recruiter influence | 2 | 4.28 | 0.61 | 2 | 4.06 | 0.54 | 2 | 4.23 | 0.60 | |
| Position clarity | 3 | 3.95 | 0.68 | 3 | 3.68 | 0.60 | 4 | 3.69 | 0.63 | Students are significantly higher |
| Good/ethically responsible company | 4 | 3.88 | 0.78 | 4 | 3.13 | 0.87 | 3 | 3.76 | 0.68 | Faculty are significantly lower |
| Industry leadership | 5 | 3.12 | 0.87 | 5 | 2.83 | 0.87 | 5 | 3.29 | 0.74 | Faculty are significantly lower |

Next, MANOVA was conducted to see if differences exist between the three groups of respondents. Table 2 provides a summary of the factor means for each group and if significant differences exist between the three groups of respondents. Faculty produced significantly ($p < .05$) lower means than both students and recruiters on the employee focused, good/ethically responsible company, and industry leadership factors. Students produced significantly ($p < .05$) higher means than both faculty and recruiters on the position clarity factor. No differences were found on the recruiter influence factor.

With regard to ranking, students ranked employee focused as Number 1, recruiter influence as Number 2, position clarity as Number 3, good/ethically responsible company as Number 4, and industry leadership as Number 5. Faculty ranked the factors in the same order as students.

However, recruiters ranked position clarity as Number 4 and good/ethically responsible company as Number 3.

**Discussion**

The current research was undertaken for several reasons. First, we wanted to compare faculty and recruiter perceptions of student job attribute importance rankings with those of the students to determine their accuracy. Adding faculty rankings to those of students and recruiters extends previous research on the topic, as does the use of factor analysis. A second motivation for this research is that these students are part of the Millennial generation and are demonstrably different from previous students (Karns, 2005; Millennial Impact Research, 2014). It is quite possible they have different views than those students examined in the earlier research studies comparing student and recruiter perspectives on job attributes.

Overall, findings from the current study indicate that recruiter beliefs about which job attributes are important to students are somewhat more accurate than in previous studies (Wiles & Spiro, 2004; Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992). Recruiters today appear more "tuned in" to what students are looking for in a position and factors that attract top recruits to consider their firm as a place of employment than in previous years. The cost of hiring and the expense involved in training a new hire have perhaps made firms do their homework concerning what students are looking for in a sales position. Hiring the wrong person not only results in turnover, but in increased expenses related to recruitment and training, as well as lost sales.

Even with this newfound knowledge concerning student desires and preferences, in several instances student perceptions still differ from those perceived by recruiters. For example, in the Top 15 items, students significantly differ from recruiters in three of their importance rankings: fit with goals, current organization employees are satisfied/loyal, and work-life balance (student rank 7, 9, and 11, respectively).

We believe that the differences between recruiter rankings versus student rankings of the same attributes may represent an information gap—albeit a fairly small one—that potentially provides an opportunity for sales faculty to become "knowledge brokers" or perhaps "match-makers" between the students and sales organizations. It may be that their knowledge can be helpful in matching students with firms that they know provide strong training programs and have a higher rate of success among their new hires than with firms that do not do as good a job of trying to help new hires succeed. Faculty members also may be able to help recruiting firms tailor their message to emphasize job attributes the firm offers that match with what students desire in a position.

However, if faculty members are to fill this "knowledge broker" or "matchmaker" role, our findings, based on the rankings of the individual items, indicate that they have some additional work to do in better understanding what current students desire in a job. Results indicate student perspectives differ from what faculty believe are important to students in 10 of the students' Top 15 item importance rankings. Concerning all 55 attribute items, the faculty tend to report lower importance for the majority of the items, though their relative rank still holds. These results suggest that faculty members, even though they work closely with and often mentor students,

may not understand the career expectations and desires of the current crop of students as well as they would like to believe.

A good example of the differences between the views of this current group of students and those of the recruiter and faculty involves the issue of a balance between work and life. This issue is one that firms may have to more strongly consider if they wish to obtain the best students for their organization—especially Millennials (Kane, 2010). Students rated this as their 11th most desired attribute of a job—quite different from faculty (22nd) and recruiters (21st) in terms of ranking. Given the current environment, where firms lay off and restructure on a seemingly regular basis, and the fact that many employees move from one firm to another several times during their career (something that Millennials expect to do during their careers), many current students may not see the job as the most important part of their life and appear to be more concerned with balancing work and nonwork activities (Gloeckler, 2008; Twenge et al., 2008). Therefore, if faculty members are to serve as "knowledge brokers" or "matchmakers" between students and sales recruiters, they must develop a better understanding of both student and recruiter needs.

When analyzing the five factors uncovered in the current research, results provide greater confidence that faculty may not be as inaccurate regarding student preferences in a sales job as indicated if one only looks at rankings of the individual items. For the factors identified by the analysis, faculty ranked those five factors in the same order as the students—though the mean level was lower overall. Recruiters, although reasonably accurate, did rank position clarity and good/ethically responsible company differently from the students.

Findings suggest that although the means may differ on some items and factors, faculty are still fairly well in touch with students' preferences in sales positions. In general, these five factors that were uncovered suggest that today's sales students seek a position with a firm that is employee focused, provides considerable clarity regarding job expectations, is ethical, and is a leader in its industry. Results indicate that faculty members understand the importance of these issues—though they may not rate them as highly.

Though the factor analysis did not include all of the items, the factors that emerged can provide clarity for both recruiters and faculty with regards to the important factors guiding job preferences. The issues identified in the factor analysis are much more easily understood than would be the case when working with a large number of individual items, as has been the case with previous research studies. The factors uncovered by the factor analysis will allow future research to be more focused on the major issues driving student job preference rather than just presenting them with a wide-ranging "laundry list" of job-related attributes. Finally, by recognizing the areas uncovered by the factor analysis, future researchers can use those factors rather than try to work with 50+ different items in their analysis of student versus recruiter versus faculty issues relating to job placement. With a similar objective of achieving clarity and using less measurement items, Peltier et al. (2014) developed a parsimonious 13-item scale to predict students' intent to pursue a sales career.

As noted earlier, if faculty are required to spend additional time working with students, it may be difficult for faculty to find the additional time given ever increasing demands for high-quality

research (Melguizo & Strober, 2007; Wyler & Blood, 2006). Given the increasing emphasis on research at many universities and colleges, if faculty members are to become more attuned to student job-related values, something has to change. Aside from the role conflict that is often inherent in time devoted to teaching versus research, one way that faculty members may help achieve better understanding of what students and recruiters seek is by bringing sales managers and recruiters to speak to sales classes.

Many sales faculty members already do this, but perhaps not even a majority. Taking this step can serve multiple purposes, such as helping recruiters better understand the new generation of students, helping students have a clearer understanding of what recruiters expect in potential new hires, and assisting faculty in better understanding both the hiring firms' perspective and the students' view of various job attributes via the discussion that occurs with the guest speaker. Another possible approach to better understanding our current student is to organize activities that involve the business community where students help plan and carry out the event, as well as conduct the fundraising aspect (if any) related to the event they have planned. To a degree this step is being done in some programs with a sales emphasis, but again, it is probably used by a minority of programs. As noted earlier, however, helping develop and organize these student-led events can be time consuming and may not be attractive to faculty who are in a "publish or perish" mode.

It is possible that the increased research emphasis for tenure-track faculty may make the role of clinical faculty and professionally qualified full-time lecturers more important. The movement to clinical professors and full-time instructors is already happening at some schools with large sales programs. Because these individuals will have fewer research expectations, they can devote time to building stronger relationships with sales students and hiring organizations than tenure-track faculty—assuming they are tasked with this responsibility. Thus, these individuals may be capable of serving as both "knowledge brokers" and "matchmakers." Furthermore, the information they gain from these increased levels of boundary-spanning activities can be communicated to the rest of the faculty so that those individuals have the same information, but will not have to devote as much time to acquiring that knowledge.

Having this knowledge can pay off long term, in increased understanding of what students look for in a career and what firms offer that meet those requirements. It is also possible that students from these sales programs may be more closely linked to their school and willing to become supporters of the school. In addition, as firms hire students who are ready to "hit the ground running" in their sales organization, these organizations also may be increasingly willing to provide some financial support to the sales program of those universities turning out qualified sales recruits. By being informed, faculty—whether tenure track or nontenure track or clinical professors/lecturers—can help bridge the gap between students and recruiting firms. By doing this, they can help their current and future students be more knowledgeable about what a potential employer looks for in a new sales hire via sharing current recruiting research and having guest speakers discuss what they look for in a salesperson. Faculty can also identify for students those factors that tend to be associated with sales success in their industry. Because these requirements often differ from one sales position to another (depending on the type of sales process), providing students with exposure to a range of sales managers representing different types of positions can result in a better perspective on what various firms look for in new hires.

This step may help students self-select to interview with certain firms and to choose not to take an interview with a firm whose job does not meet their preferred attributes.

Although many faculty members may already have this capability, as they often interact with a variety of sales managers and selling organizations, many others probably do not have this level of expertise. Working more closely with the school's placement service can also result in a better understanding of what firms hiring salespeople are looking for across a variety of sales positions.

The Sales Education Foundation (SEF) represents another excellent source of information and assistance. Specifically, SEF has assessments that can help each student gain a better perspective on what his or her strengths are relative to specific types of sales positions. Although some schools currently make use of this service, many do not and this approach could be beneficial to students at a number of schools. Introducing this program to the students can help faculty counsel students to take jobs more fitting with their skills and attributes, which can result in greater success in a shorter time frame, as well as help steer good firms toward students with the required skill and/or aptitude.

**Limitations**

A potential limitation pertains to the way faculty ranked the importance of the attributes. In general, faculty ranked attributes consistently lower than students and recruiters. Although not a limitation if faculty members truly feel these attributes are less important, it is a limitation if the faculty tended not to answer toward the higher end of the scale given knowledge of scaling issues and/or knowledge of the previous work on student recruitment attributes. Also, on a related matter, it is important to note that students' average importance scores for 33 of the 55 items were above four, and all but two of the items were above the midpoint. Given the high values for the majority of the attributes, caution should be taken when using the rankings to assess the importance of each attribute.

Concerning the samples, this study used highly involved students, faculty, and recruiters, and as such, the responses might not generalize to all students and faculty. Finally, exploratory factor analysis was run to create factors for attributes. Caution should be taken when using these factors to predict relationships. Further validation of these five factors should be conducted.

**Future Research**

Based on study results, researchers can dive deeper into understanding individual attribute importance for students who are interested in sales as a career or at least as a career starting point. Although this study focused on large variations in rank and significant mean differences, all results were not discussed. Other interesting findings can be provided based on an examination of Table 1. Subtle differences within this study between students, faculty, and recruiters could be the foundation for additional, more detailed inquiry on specific attributes. Also, given this study used samples comprised of highly involved students, faculty, and recruiters, consistent with Peltier et al. (2014), future research might use students in marketing and other classes to determine if their importance rankings are similar or different than what was found in the current study.

Shifting the focus from the student to the recruiting company can provide an additional line of inquiry. Instead of focusing on which attributes are important to students when considering a sales position, research should look at what is important to companies when considering hiring a student for a sales position. Recruiters could provide what their companies are looking for in new hires, while students and faculty could provide what they perceive as important to companies. Expanding this idea, future studies with the proper data could longitudinally examine what attribute rankings were made by new salespeople who become high performers. In addition, the use of the factors uncovered in the current research during future data collection efforts may help streamline survey instruments for researchers examining students and recruiters, as fewer items may be used to assess the major issues that are high on the list for students. Ideally, if data could be obtained from sales competitions linking student performance in role plays to their rankings of what firms look for in new hires, this could potentially be a method to tie perceived attribute importance to competitive sales call performance. Furthermore, tracking these students as they enter their sales career and how successful they are in that career could provide interesting insights in a number of areas including (1) potential curriculum reform for some sales programs, (2) the usefulness of speakers in the classroom in terms of placing students with those specific firms represented by the sales manager/recruiter and the student's future success with that firm, as well as (3) how students' own rankings of what is important in a job evolve over time as they take on additional work-related and non-work-related responsibilities.

## Conclusion

Our study provides an updated perspective on what students seek in a job as well as offering a comparison with what faculty members and recruiters think students believe is important. It also provides an update on the student-recruiter differences from prior research on the topic (Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). Unlike these previous studies, which used a limited geographic scope of student respondents, the present study examined a national sample of students. Although results show some stability across time, there are a number of notable differences. A number of new items generated for the current study were ranked as very important by respondents. The addition of these new items and their relevance to students indicates that the hiring environment may have changed substantially over the past decade. Similarly, the development of factors in the current study may help bring additional understanding regarding the issues most important to students as they make decisions regarding their choice of employer. Results indicate that if faculty members are to effectively serve as "knowledge brokers" or "matchmakers" between students and recruiters, they need to develop more accurate knowledge concerning what current students desire in a position.

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## Appendix

Added Attributes

| |
|---|
| Challenging/exciting work |
| Company culture |
| Company's employee treatment |
| Company's leadership |
| Company's organizational structure |
| Company retirement/pension plan |
| Current organization employees are satisfied/loyalty |
| Ethical company |
| Job description/communication of expectations |
| Low employee turnover |
| Making a difference in the lives of customers |
| Recruiter is knowledgeable |
| Socially/environmentally responsible company |
| Work/life balance |

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