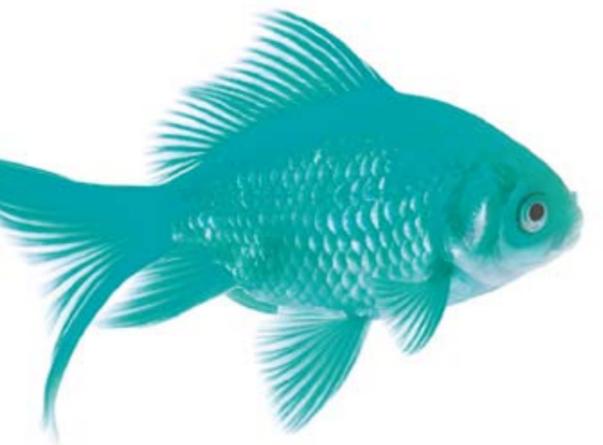


# GRADFOCUS



Issue 16 SPRING 2009

## Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of GradFocus, the GradWeb newsletter designed to give graduate recruiters an insight into the latest issues and opportunities in the world of emerging talent recruitment.

In this edition our feature article is an interview with Gary Argent, Operations Manager for the AGR. In these uncertain times the value of graduate schemes may come under scrutiny within many organisations. Gary discusses how to make a case for graduate recruitment so that it remains firmly on the agenda.

We also feature two campaigns which have experienced a surge in applications this year and both are in the public sector. The first is an interview with Tracy Ross, Associate Director at "Teach First" and the second a case study of London Treasurers' Graduate "Finance Scheme" which GradWeb manages on behalf of the London Boroughs.

We would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has contributed and if you would like to be included in our next newsletter, then please let us know.

We hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter and we look forward to receiving your comments and feedback.

## Making the case for graduate investment

*With the 'R' word dominating everyone's thoughts, it's more important than ever to justify your graduate recruitment programme. GradFocus talks to Gary Argent, Operations Manager for the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), about tips and techniques for weathering the storm clouds of recession.*

We might well be seeing the first signs of Spring in the air, but by all accounts the economy is as far away from those immortal 'green shoots' than it's ever been. In fact, everything seems to be frozen in permafrost right now, whether it's confidence, lending, manufacturing output, or even Alistair Darling's smile. So where does that leave graduate recruitment?

Some might expect graduate recruitment to be frozen too. However, that's far from the truth. The fate of Generation Y graduate vacancies is undoubtedly tied to the fortunes of the economy, but there's an abundance of instances where graduate demand is holding up – and in many instances showing those elusive green shoots of growth. According to the Graduate Recruitment Survey 2009 Winter Review, published by the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), for example, the engineering sector is bucking the trend with an expected 8.3% rise in jobs – although there may be a shortfall of graduates to fill them. Equally, vacancies are also rising in parts of the FMCG, retail and public sectors.

Given the vagaries of the economy right now, the value of the graduate recruitment programme will undoubtedly come under fire as firms look to make cost savings. Many recruiters are being asked some probing questions such as, 'How long until we see a return on the investment in graduate recruitment?'; 'How efficient are we versus our competitors?'; 'Could we replace graduate recruits with school leavers or experienced hires?'; and 'What would the impact be if we pulled out of the graduate market?'

## Raising the profile of graduate recruitment

This means it's more important than ever for an organisation to raise the profile of its graduate recruitment programme, to ensure it remains front-of-mind with the executives who hold the purse-strings, and to maintain a coherent justification for its continued use. According to Gary Argent, Operations Manager for the AGR, its members have different ways of keeping programmes visible. "Some companies have deliberately placed high-flying graduates close to the CEO's office to increase their visibility," he says. "Others have used graduate success stories to evangelise the value of graduates, either through something they achieved, or by introducing a 'Graduate of the Year' scheme – with the award being handed down by the CEO, of course! Other firms have arranged a bidding process for graduates, whereby each line of business bids for a particular graduate and argues the case for acquiring him or her."

However, according to Argent, in the current frosty economic situation, companies need to go further. "The recession surrounding us means that organisations need to do more than simply justify their schemes based on efficiency of process," he says. "Increasingly, graduate recruiters need to understand the value that their graduate schemes bring to the organisation, and to quantify this value in concrete, financial terms."

## Measuring the value of the graduate and placement schemes

So how can you measure the return on your investment, and what is the best way to benchmark the efficiency and effectiveness of your own activities against those of other recruiters? A new report from the AGR might just have the answer. Based on experiences collected from AGR members and sessions with recruiters and suppliers, the 'What is the return on your investment?' report is designed to help organisations measure the value of their graduate and placement schemes.



**Gary Argent, Operations Manager for the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR)**

The first step in constructing a business case, says the AGR report, is to understand your objectives: Why does your organisation recruit graduate talent? The answer may vary across different levels within the company. For instance, the project manager may want to build resource to staff projects or bring in new junior talent to allow existing staff to progress.

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The finance director's view may vary – and is likely to be expressed far more in terms of measurable returns over the medium term of a financial year. And the chief executive's view will probably be more high level around the future strategic goals for the organisation and the long-term development of senior leaders.

As with every business case though, when graduate recruitment comes up on the agenda for senior decision makers, the issue most likely to be raised is quantitative and qualitative measures of Return on Investment (ROI). In other words, what concrete evidence is there to validate graduate recruitment? "A quantifiable measure of the success of a graduate recruitment programme is the cost per hire, including criteria such as advertising costs, on campus costs, and recruitment team costs. This can then be balanced against a measure of ROI, specifically the contribution made by the individual over a defined timescale," says Argent. "Data like this is available relatively easily and can be used by recruiters as ROI evidence when a scheme is being set up prior to being signed off."

According to Argent, there is a raft of other measures beyond ROI that can be used to justify the efficiency and effectiveness of the graduate recruitment process. "By examining the number of applications, organisations can see whether their marketing campaign has raised brand awareness, for example. Likewise, analysis of the number of applications per university will highlight whether efforts to target key institutions are working."

Argent adds a note of caution to the process. "Measuring the return on graduate recruitment is easier if you have a cost-based model. For instance professional services organisations that charge for their time by the hour or the day will automatically be able to calculate the financial worth of a graduate, whereas it may take longer for firms without a charge-out scheme, such as marketing or engineering, to complete it," he says. "Once you scratch the surface, it's a very complex subject, which is why we'll be focussing a lot of our attention on it this year at our annual conference, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> July."

However long or however deep the recession, those green shoots of recovery will arrive at some point. When they do, Argent is convinced the spectrum of graduate recruitment will be in better shape. "One of the outcomes of the current situation is that employers and universities are working closer together than ever before to target, attract and retain the best graduates. If there's one good thing to come of this recession, it is the closer bond between the campus and the company."

# Teaching graduates a thing or two



*Teach First is experiencing over a 90% rise in the number of applications to its teaching and leadership programme. GradFocus asked Tracy Ross, the charity's Associate Director of Graduate Recruitment, whether this is simply due to the economic downturn or whether it reflects a more deep-rooted social change in career aspirations.*

Quiet please, no talking, sit down at the back, and answer the following question. With the economy heading for its deepest recession in living memory, which line of work is experiencing its biggest ever recruitment boom? Yes, it's teaching, with reports from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) indicating that one in ten workers is now considering a career in the profession. They also report a 45% increase in online enquiries from potential teachers since the start of the recruitment year.

All of this is great news for Teach First. The non-profit organisation aims to address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields. Teach First targets high calibre students who would not normally consider a career in teaching and places them in challenged schools, where more than a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, or fewer than a quarter achieve five A\*-C GCSE grades including Maths and English, for the course of the two year placement. Teach First's strong links with business means that after the placement participants really do have the choice of whether to stay on in the classroom or try their hand at an array of different careers elsewhere.

So is Teach First seeing a boom in graduates applying through the charity for teaching positions? Absolutely, according to Tracy Ross, their Associate Director of Graduate Recruitment. "We recently announced that Teach First will be increasing the number of places it is able to offer graduates this year to 600," she explains. "A rise of over 90% in the number of applications to Teach First's teaching and leadership programme, coupled with continuing demand from schools to employ Teach First teachers in their classrooms, means the charity will place 140 extra teachers on top of a planned 460 for the 2009 cohort. Teach First offered 373 places in 2008, aims to offer 600 in 2009, and is on target to offer 850 places per year by 2013."



Tracy Ross, Teach First's Associate Director of Graduate Recruitment

The crucial question remains whether this demand is being driven by the economic downturn. Or does it reflect a more deep-rooted social change in career aspirations, with graduates shying away from the 'work hard, pay hard' mentality towards careers that are more philanthropic? "The two issues are closely linked," says Tracy. "The economic situation and the bleak career outlook have brought the social issues into sharp relief. Some graduates are forced to change the direction of their career away from banking, consultancy, or other such roles, whereas others are choosing to do so."

Part of the reason why Teach First is seeing unprecedented demand is because of the flexibility it offers. Teach First recruits, trains and supports its recruits as teachers and long-term leaders. Participants receive leadership training and continuing professional development support throughout a two-year teaching and leadership programme, completing an intensive six-week teacher training course before they enter the classroom.

The first year is then spent teaching an 80% timetable alongside ongoing teacher training and study towards Qualified Teacher Status, which participants achieve at the end of the first year. In their second year,

participants are expected to expand their contribution to the extra-curricular community of the school and undertake additional leadership training provided in association with partners such as Imperial Business School and the Institute of Education.

As you might expect though, some teaching vacancies are easier to fill than others. History and Geography, for example, are very popular with graduates; however, graduates from the 'STEM' disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) are the hardest to target and find. "The additional places we announced this year will be used to fill teaching vacancies in shortage subjects like Mathematics, Science and ICT, as well as supporting the expansion of Teach First's programme to new regions of the UK," says Tracy.

She adds, "Whilst it would be foolish to deny that a diminishing number of graduate vacancies elsewhere forms part of the picture, it is clear that Teach First has been able to demonstrate the value of teaching as a leadership profession to the UK's brightest young people. The skills learned in teaching have application in a variety of fields and the Teach First programme is a great start to a graduate's career."

# Fantastic results for local government

*GradWeb has delivered the annual recruitment campaign for finance trainees across a number of London Boroughs since 2004. Each year participating boroughs come together to recruit and train graduates who want to pursue a career in public finance.*

The 2009 campaign opened on December 1st 2008 with a target of 38 vacancies to fill. The selection process timetable meant that candidates were only given a six week window in which to apply. The attraction strategy used a variety of online only media and given the tight timescales it had to be highly targeted and deliver results quickly. With these objectives in mind, Pay-Per-Click on Google (Google Adwords) was very successful as one of the marketing channels.

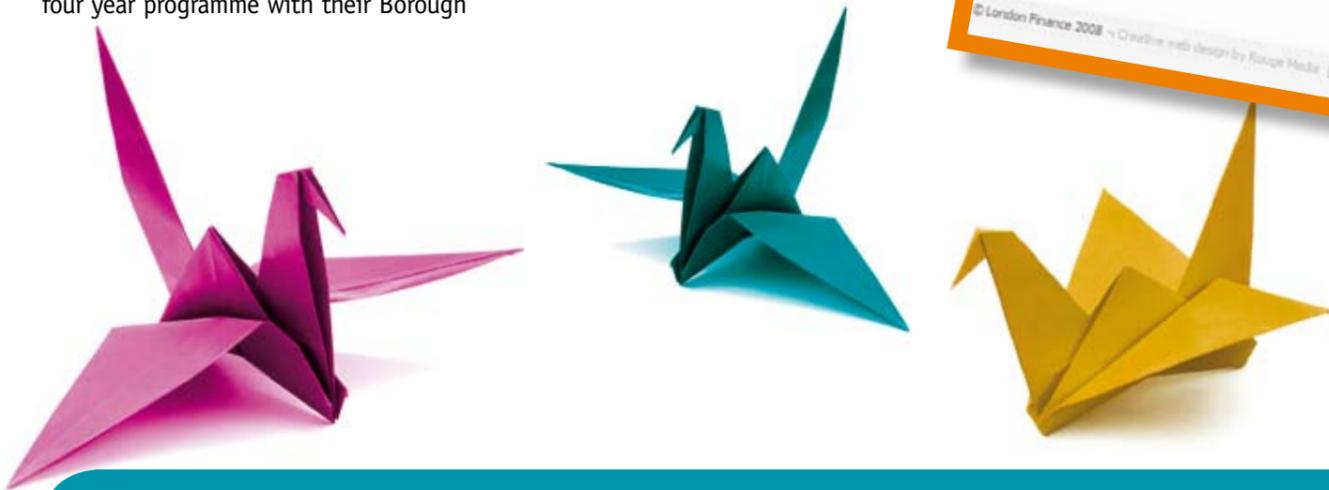
A new recruitment website has been designed for the campaign with a more contemporary and professional feel and includes video profiles of current trainees recruited through the scheme, visual imagery representing the Boroughs and a user friendly navigation system for potential applicants.

"We really wanted to bring the site to life and give potential applicants a taste of what working full time as well as studying for a professional qualification may be like" commented Katrina Rostrup, Director of GradWeb. All trainees join a four year programme with their Borough

during which they are sponsored to study for the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Professional Qualification.

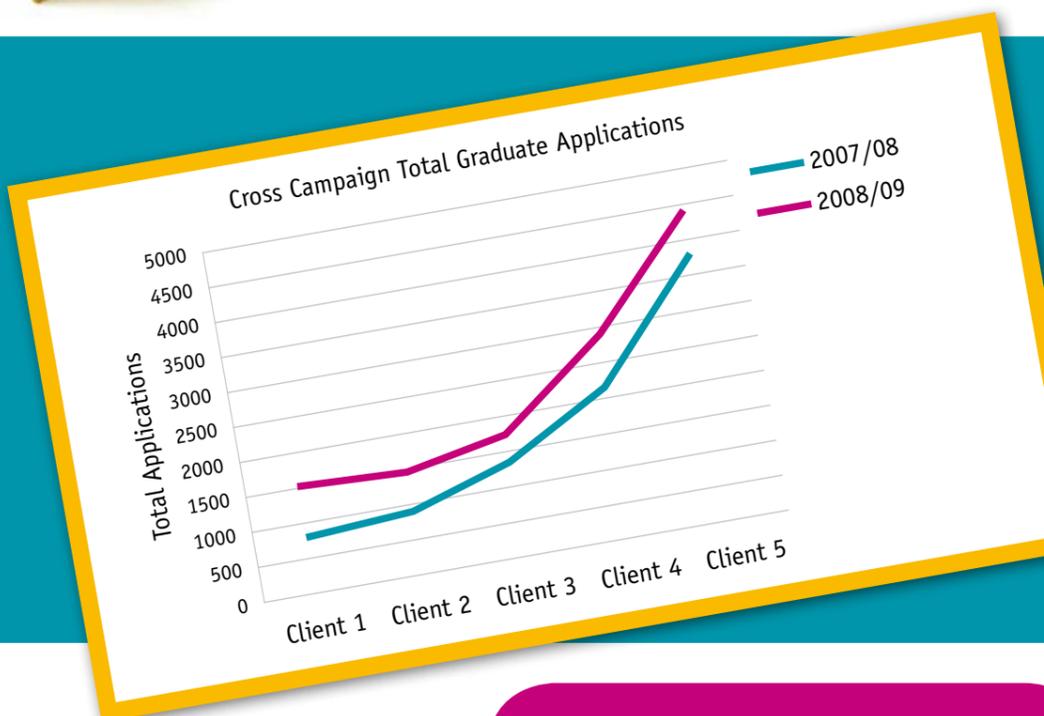
Over 1500 applications have been received this year, which is almost a 50% increase on last year. "The number of applications we have received has been fantastic particularly as we have more vacancies to fill this year. I believe that the increase in applications is a result of both the improvements to our marketing and also as a result of the current recruitment climate. With fewer opportunities available to graduates in the private sector, particularly within the financial sector, more candidates are now considering the public sector as a career alternative."

Assessment centres were held at the end of February and all interviews with participating London Boroughs will be completed by the end of March. Although the final stage of the selection process is not yet complete the signs are that this is going to be a record breaking year for the London Boroughs.



## Graduate applications up as predicted

*The anticipated increase in graduate applications received by employers is reflected across many of our clients, with increases in total applications of between 14% and 48% seen to date.*



**GRADWEB**  
GRAD/RECRUITMENT COVERED

# GradWeb appoints Head of Business Development

*Ben Jackson has recently joined GradWeb as Head of Business Development. Ben has nine years' experience in recruitment, and spent the last two years at Alexander Mann Solutions as a Client Director, managing major recruitment outsourcing contracts. Prior to that, Ben was UK Recruitment Manager for Motorola, and Head of Recruitment at Service Innovation Group (Europe).*

Ben's role is a broad one, with responsibility for new business development, the development of existing client relationships, product development and strategy. It is a new role for GradWeb, and one in which Ben's comprehensive knowledge of all types of recruitment will be a huge benefit.

"It's an indication of how much I believe in the quality of GradWeb's people and services that I took a business development role in the middle of the recession!" says Ben. "This is a great business, and I have been thrilled with the high levels of satisfaction that our existing clients have with our services. Clients love what we do for them, and love the way we do it – always going the extra mile to ensure that the process runs smoothly."

Despite the wider economic conditions, it's a busy time for the business development function at GradWeb. "Interest in our services is actually very strong at the moment. Although we expect overall vacancy volumes to fall in the 2009-2010 season, the vast majority of big businesses are pledging to continue with their graduate and placement

programmes. In some cases, organisations are having to do the same amount of work with fewer staff. Add to that the development of our next generation recruitment technology, and the recent introduction of our attraction and on-boarding propositions, and there is a lot to do."

Ben's broad experience brings a wide perspective of the recruitment landscape to GradWeb.

"I've been responsible for pretty much all types of recruitment in the last nine years; graduate, HR, finance, engineering, supply chain, IT, sales, marketing, senior management and executive, industrial placement, MBA and PhD. It's a pretty broad mix, but it means that I understand the different drivers at all levels within the corporate hierarchy.

Many of the challenges that face graduate recruiters are identical to those faced by experienced-hire recruiters; competing for the right talent, ensuring a robust and consistent process, using the right assessment and selection tools, selling the Employer Value Proposition effectively, and making sure that the pre-boarding and on-boarding stages of the process are robust. I know it's a cliché, but recruitment isn't rocket science. It's a case of being slicker, smarter, more efficient and more effective than your competition, whilst building contingency planning into all aspects of your process. I believe that's what GradWeb helps clients to do, and it seems our clients agree!"



## GradWeb - About us

GradWeb offers an extensive and flexible range of services to help you manage your graduate recruitment campaign. Whether your requirement is large or small, we can provide you with a combination of services to create a tailored solution that meets your requirements exactly.

The services we offer comprise:

- **Online application and candidate management systems**
- **Candidate attraction**
- **Candidate management and related administration**
- **Project management**
- **Application form screening**
- **Interviewing**
- **Assessment centre design and delivery**
- **Recruitment process design**
- **Interviewer and assessor training**
- **On-boarding**

We already work with some of the best known graduate employers in the UK including: Logica, ngdp, Arup, Audit Commission, BP, Cisco, Watson Wyatt Worldwide, RWE npower, Corus, Unilever, Atos Origin, British Energy, Sony Music and Network Rail. Our client retention rate is second to none and comes as a result of delivering a quality service through industry best-practices and fully integrating ourselves within our clients' graduate recruitment processes.

If you would like to find out more information about GradWeb and the services we offer, or would just like an informal chat about your graduate recruitment requirements, then please contact Ben Jackson on +44 (0)7826 916 108.



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*If you have any comments, questions or feel you have something to contribute to our newsletter, we would be delighted to hear from you.*

GradWeb  
Mill Reef House  
Cheap Street Newbury  
Berkshire RG14 5DD

Telephone +44 (0) 1635 584130  
Facsimile +44 (0) 1635 584131

enquiry@gradweb.co.uk  
www.gradweb.co.uk

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