



# What is driving student decision making?

## Introduction

Amberjack in partnership with SFS Media ran an interactive panel at the ISE Recruitment Conference 2022. The purpose of the session was to discuss and debate some of the key challenges for employers when marketing to and recruiting students for Apprenticeship programmes. Joined by leading employers BDO and Virgin Media O2 and also current students and their teacher some fantastic insight was shared.

Below is a summary of the key takeaways.



# Which is better for gaining confidence, skills and values?

- There are a number of early career personas, and therefore there is not one size fits all. Each type of early career programme typically provides behavioural and technical learning. Review how well you do this in your organisation and the similarities and differences.
- A key reason for students choosing university over an apprenticeship is the perception of a better 'life experience' they will gain. Consider thinking of those transferrable skills gained from university and how they can translate to solutions in the workplace. Utilise any current apprentice cohorts to ask for their view.
- Although apprenticeships usually do not ask for a degree - it does not mean graduate calibre will not apply. Think about who you are trying to target and how important qualifications are to your business vs potential of talent
- Build a Future Talent /Early Career internal network to enable a strong connection between Graduates and Apprentices.
- Utilise your apprentice and graduates to attract students -they can relate and also share their passion for their selected route.
- Whether you employ an apprentice or graduate, both need support. Think about how you can align activities, as well as additional support for individuals.
- Consider how you could showcase the skills, confidence and values your organisation has right from attracting candidates in the market.



# Which is higher value in terms of long-term career progression?

- Build a business case that focuses on the capability needs & overall strategy of the business and identify the right solution based on this. Both apprentices and graduates can bring long term benefit, and typically graduates are used for fast progression to leadership and apprentices for fast progression into deep technical skill sets. Both can drive a strong DE&I pipeline.
- Create defined career pathways for Apprentice's post programme to ensure they are clear on the expectation and opportunity.
- The perception is often that Apprentices are not rewarded at the same level as Graduates. Review how you benchmark apprentices and graduates and ensure it reflects the role they undertake and their salary potential post programme. Showcase salaries on the website to help students make an informed decision.

A photograph of four young people (two men and two women) smiling and standing together outdoors. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple gradient.

# Who markets their options better to young people?

- Review the similarities and differences in how you attract and recruit apprentices and graduates. Challenge yourself on why they are recruited differently.
- Ensure you are clear on student motivations and behaviours and work with your current cohorts to co-create solutions.
- Understand your main competitor (universities) and how they are engaging students and young people. You need to be able to compete, especially if your brand is well known.
- Use a blend of marketing channels. Relying solely on schools is unlikely to drive the brand awareness required. Consider using a wider variety of channels including social media.
- There is a real strength in partnerships. Whether that be with other employers, schools or suppliers. Consider the strength of your partner network and how you can best utilise these relationships.
- Think about the tools and approaches you could use to help students identify the best education route for them.