

**Action Greensboro
Young Professionals Survey Conducted by synerG**

**Business Activity and Perceptions
In Attracting and Retaining Young Adults**

June 2004

Background

Action Greensboro has an overarching goal of bringing more and better paying jobs to Greensboro through various initiatives. As one of the aims of the organization is to attract and retain professionals in Greensboro, Action Greensboro believed that a first step in this process would be to determine whether local businesses were in fact having difficulties attracting and retaining professionals, and whether these difficulties stemmed from the companies location in Greensboro. As part of this effort, synerG, the young adults arm of Action Greensboro, designed and distributed a human resources survey that was distributed to local employers. The survey measured a broad range of companies and evaluated their individual concerns as well as their collective concerns. SynerG hoped to glean information to help formulate recommendations or programs in order to assist local businesses in their efforts to attract and retain employees.

Methodology

The survey was compiled with the help of local volunteers, including human resources and business development experts. The questions touched on many aspects of the companies efforts to recruit and retain professionals: methods of recruitment on college campuses, methods of general recruitment, intern programs, difficulties faced during recruitment, suggestions for new recruitment tools, difficulties faced in retaining employees, and finally an open-ended question requesting employers to give additional feedback and suggestions.

In order to gather a large and diverse sample of companies, synerG obtained a list of 250 local businesses from the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce. synerG volunteers helped identify human resources contact information from each business. Most businesses received the survey in the form of an e-mail, which contained both an electronic version and a printable version of the survey. Employers could choose to either print the survey and fax it or mail it, or complete it online and return it by e-mail. Some smaller companies did not have access to an e-mail account, so they were mailed a survey with a postage paid envelope. This method produced a response rate of over ten percent. SynerG collected responses from businesses of varying size and scope, providing an accurate measurement of the

Greensboro business community. The responses were compiled and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. synerG generated a spreadsheet displaying the data collected from all of the businesses and then generated two separate spreadsheets that controlled for size of the business in order to observe any trends and differences between small and large businesses.

Profile of Businesses

Because the survey was distributed to such a large number of companies, synerG was able to obtain data from a very diverse sample of local businesses. The size of the companies ranged from 5 employees to over 7,000 employees. 48 percent of the companies qualified as small businesses (25 employees or fewer), and 52 percent of the sample represented large companies (26 or more employees.) 21 percent of the sample represented non-profit businesses. The sample collected from the survey is very diverse in the types of companies represented. The focus of the companies ranges from non-profit dental care and non-profit volunteer mobilizing to large banks and insurance companies, providing an accurate representation of the wide range of businesses located in Greensboro.

Observations

In response to questions about hiring numbers for 2003 and on average, overall, companies reported that they hired on average between zero and five employees in 2003, which for most companies did not stray from their average hiring practices. It is important to note that the data collected from this survey reflects an average year, which indicates that the responses provided by the participants are not skewed.

Recruitment

When asked about general recruitment techniques, most companies reported that they use employer referrals most often, followed by professional organizations in order to recruit new employees. Larger companies tend to use company websites more often than smaller companies to recruit employees, which provides them with a larger recruitment pool. Other methods included newspaper ads, job fairs, and campus recruitment.

When asked how difficult it is to attract employees to their companies, on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all difficult, employers ranked their difficulty level at 2. This is true for both large and small companies. Both small and large companies claimed that their location in Greensboro has a positive effect on their ability to attract employees, on a scale that ranged from extremely positive to extremely negative.

Most companies selected salary levels and cost of living as the most important factors that attract professionals to Greensboro. Other choices were nightlife, significant arts and theatre venues, political leadership, and quality of public schools. The lowest ranking factor was nightlife.

Retention

The employers' responses to the questions concerning retention of employees were similar to responses to questions concerning recruitment of new employees. Employers ranked their difficulty of retaining employees at 2, on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not at all difficult. Most employers also claimed that their location in Greensboro had a positive impact on retention of employees. When asked to cite reasons for having difficulty retaining employees, employers claimed they most often lose employees to better opportunities with other companies. Other choices included family issues, pressure of job, part time turnover, lack of fit between employee and company ideals, and the last choice, and lowest ranked, was Greensboro was not appealing to employees.

College Recruitment

40 percent of the employers surveyed reported that they recruit on local college campuses. Employers most often recruit at University of North Carolina - Greensboro, North Carolina A&T

State University, and Guilford Technical Community College. Employers also recruit at Greensboro College, Guilford College, Bennett College, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, Duke University, and Wake Forest University. Greensboro employers ranked their college recruitment efforts at 3 (somewhat successful), on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being extremely successful. The number one problem in college recruitment efforts cited by local employers was that there are few entry-level jobs available at their respective companies. Other problems included Greensboro was not perceived as appealing to college graduates and area colleges do not work hard enough to promote local employers. In terms of retention of the employees area businesses hire through college recruitment, employers' responses were varied. Responses were spread evenly on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being extremely successful. For the 60 percent of companies that do not recruit on local college campuses, most of those employers reported that the school curriculums did not fit into their companies' scope of work. Other reasons were lack of funds and lack of staff to visit campuses.

Conclusions

Overall, the data gathered from the Greensboro Employers Survey do not suggest that employers are having difficulty attracting and retaining professionals in Greensboro. However, in response

to questions that asked employers to rank Greensboro's impact on their ability to attract and retain professionals, employers consistently ranked their location in Greensboro as positive, not extremely positive. Professionals in Greensboro seem to be satisfied with their location, however they are not ecstatic. It is interesting to note that when employers were asked to rank factors that attract professionals to Greensboro, the top two choices were salary levels and cost of living, followed by the quality of public schools. Nightlife and arts and theatre venues were ranked very low. This reinforces the stereotype of Greensboro as a family oriented city, rather than a haven for young, single professionals. Families are generally more concerned about the cost of living and the quality of public schools than nightlife.

In terms of college campus recruitment, local businesses tend to recruit most at the public universities. Local private colleges such as Guilford, Bennett, and Greensboro are valuable untapped resources. Some employers reported that they have instituted intern programs, both summer and year long, in order to recruit students from local campuses. All employers who have intern programs, except one, reported that they hire only up to two interns per year. Most of these employers hire back interns once they have completed college, which is a highly effective

way of attracting local college students to stay in Greensboro upon their graduation.

Within the survey, synerG presented employers with five different options for new tools to aid them in their efforts to recruit college students. Employers showed a preference for information packets for HR professionals with relevant facts and marketing information about Greensboro. The second choice for employers was a website that connects professionals to Greensboro, which is already in place and is proving to be effective. Use of the Internet in any fashion, websites for young professionals as well as recruiting online through local college campuses, is, in this age, a very effective way to appeal to a large number of people.

From the survey data, it seems that Greensboro professionals and employers are satisfied with their location, however they only express lukewarm feelings. The cost of living is excellent, the schools are decent; however, it is the extra perks such as nightlife and arts venues that could be improved to attract the interest of young professionals.