



Small Scenarios for Changing Times:

# Lost Generation

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# Lost Generation

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*The current pandemic has not only created problems, it has also revealed existing problems within some institutions that were troubled long before anyone had ever heard of COVID-19.* For example, access to healthcare in the US has been a crisis for a long time. Growing income disparity in the U.S. is another conundrum that seems to be getting worse. Playing into income disparity is unequal access to educational opportunity. The pandemic has particularly exacerbated inequities in higher education.

Colleges and Universities have been in the hot seat for a while now. Many argue these institutions have systematically been charging more and teaching less for decades. Admissions scandals of multiple varieties seem to confirm what everyone has suspected for years: merit, grades, and test scores do not determine access to top schools.

The inequities in access to higher education then extends to employment opportunities. Companies participate in elaborate rituals to recruit new college graduates. They spend fortunes to

attend career fairs, hand out “swag” by the fistful, and host exclusive gatherings of students in hopes of wooing them. Practitioners argue that, while the system isn’t perfect, it still somehow manages to work every year. The difference this year is that it won’t work.

Summer internships were thrown into turmoil when the pandemic hit. While some companies have developed “remote” alternatives, most companies have canceled their summer programs altogether.

This year’s class of graduating seniors is especially impacted. College recruiting has a strict cadence and timeline and, with each passing day, the class of 2020 is facing the prospect of being completely excluded from

the recruiting process. They

can’t apply for any jobs because there aren’t any jobs available and there are no hiring managers to fill them. The class of 2020 could very well become a “Lost Generation.”

It’s important to remember that there are still brilliant students out there. Here are some strategies companies can use to hire them.



*“Small newsie down-town. Saturday afternoon. St. Louis, Missouri” National Archives*

## Forget about timing

The traditional timeline used in college recruiting starts when companies calculate the number of interns and entry level workers needed to achieve their hiring goals. Then they develop budget requests, identify the hiring managers, schedule career fairs and interview visits, and select target schools. Because of the pandemic, none of these things will happen this year in the regular way; the timeline is completely disrupted.

Instead, companies should treat the current pool of unplaced seniors as simply another pool of qualified candidates and work to get to know them in the same ways organizations recruit workers. Source potential candidates, connect and get to know them, get them engaged with the company.

## Integrate your approach

Because of the additional up-front effort required to make a college recruiting program work, it is sometimes viewed as a separate and isolated component in a company's overall recruiting strategy. The pandemic represents an opportunity to evaluate schools in such a way as to find good hires for those few critical positions that are still open, rather than for a self-contained program that often has very little to do with those key roles.

## Enhance your partnerships

Target schools are selected for many reasons including ranking, diversity, or proximity to company offices. The pandemic represents an opportunity to review high-performing talent already in the organization and determine which schools they attended. Many times a small, local school has just the right curriculum and just the right student population to make it a great long-term partner for a company. Schools are interested in knowing what skills employers are looking for so they can help their students succeed and get jobs. Rather than competing for students at a big-name school, consider building strong partnerships with schools that produce students who thrive at your organization.

## Invest in technical training

With the recent focus on predatory for-profit schools, the notion that "everyone must attend college" is once again up for discussion. Trade schools and other forms of postgraduate training may experience renewed popularity as a result of the pandemic. Consider partnering with others in your industry to develop programs that can meet your post-pandemic talent needs in a targeted way.

*A partnership between schools and companies creates clearer understanding, better training, and opportunities for everyone, especially the students.*

## About the Small Scenarios series:

Massive change is afoot. The pandemic gives us the opportunity to rethink and reappraise. The small scenarios project is designed to provoke thought about the medium-term future and how it will be different. The goal is to help HR prepare for the future we will encounter in a few short months.

## The Small Scenarios Team



**HEATHER BUSSING** Heather Bussing is an employment attorney, HR Tech analyst, writer and editor where she explores the intersection of people, technology, law, and work. She also teaches internet law. She's appeared in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, CNN, Mashable, Business Insider, and NPR discussing employment issues and tech.

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### JOHN SUMSER

For 25 years, John Sumser has been chronicling the comings and goings in HRTechnology. These days, his primary focus is on intelligent tools (AI) and People Analytics. He is a Senior Fellow at the Conference Board, the Intelligent Tools columnist for HRExecutive magazine and the founder/principal analyst at HRExaminer.



## About HRExaminer

HRExaminer is a research and publishing company focused on the evolving edges of HR and HRTechnology. The publications team includes a 25 member editorial advisory board who deliver insight and opinion. The company also produces two award winning podcasts (live on Thursday and Friday mornings at 8:00 AM Pacific). Each year, HRExaminer delivers the market benchmark report on the evolution of Intelligent tools in HRTechnology.

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