

## xxxx Early Careers Proposal

Recommendations for how xxxx can attract, engage, inspire, and retain people in their early career



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## 1.0 Introduction

xxxx is a revolutionary new work model with over 1000 freelance members from a range of industry backgrounds. Although successful in recruiting individuals that are more established in their career, there is still some work to be done to attract those in the early stages of a freelance career e.g. graduates and college leavers.

This report seeks to offer an insight into those individuals embarking on the early stages of their career, including graduate and college leavers. It will examine latest surveys such as the HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education in the United Kingdom as well as data from Universities UK. It will propose ideas for how to encourage individuals in the earlier stages of their careers and ways to retain such individuals at Xxxx.

The UK Government's latest Careers Strategy encourages input from the freelance sector as part of careers provision.

*"Employers are integral to great careers advice. We need employers of all sizes, and from all sectors, to provide encounters that inspire people and give them the opportunity to learn about what work is like and what it takes to be successful in the workforce...."*

*They could include encounters with people who are self-employed and working for themselves, reflecting the growing number of freelancers in the workforce."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (2017) Careers Strategy: Making the Most of everyone's skills and talents.

Available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664319/Careers\\_strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664319/Careers_strategy.pdf)

## 1.0 Early Career Market

### Who are the people in the early career market?

Individuals in their early career could cover many different groups. For the purpose of this report, they will be grouped into the following:

- School and College Students
- University Students
- Recent Graduates and Postgraduates

Therefore, the age group examined will be 16-22-year olds.

*“16-22-year olds. Youth, with all its highs and lows, is on their side. They represent the future yet are already very significant. Today, the UK is home to 5 million of them.”<sup>2</sup>*

As part of the report, professionals in the careers sector will also be included as a group Xxxx need to engage with. They are often the first port of calls for young people when seeking careers advice.

### School and College Students

There are around 2.2 million students studying at colleges (including sixth form colleges). They prepare them for their career, help develop their employability skills and/or help them progress to university/high level vocational education. Around 35% of 16-18-year olds are studying at colleges and sixth forms, 23% are in state funded schools, 11% are in other Higher Education Institutions, 8% are already in employment and 6% are embarking on apprenticeships.<sup>3</sup>

### University Students

In 2017–18, there were 2.34 million students studying at UK higher education institutions.

- Undergraduate: 1.77 million
- Postgraduate: 0.57 million
- Full time: 1.84 million
- Part time: 0.5 million
- Students from the UK: 1.88 million
- Students from the EU: 0.14 million Students from non-EU countries: 0.32 million<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> We are Futures (2019) Emerging Adults: Tomorrow’s Consumers, Here Today. Available at : <https://wearefutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Emerging-Adults-Tomorrows-Consumers-Here-Today.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Association of Colleges (2018) College Key Facts. Available at : <https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/College%20Key%20Facts%202018-19.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Universities UK (2019) Higher Education in Facts and Figures Available at: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Documents/higher-education-facts-and-figures-2019.pdf>

### Recent Graduates and Postgraduates

542,535 individuals graduated from university between 2016-2017. Of those who responded to the HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey, more than 90% of graduates from UK HEIs were in work or further study within six months of leaving university. <sup>5</sup>

58.7% of those graduated are in full time work, 12.1% are in part time work, 5.7% are undertaking further study and working, and 4.7% are unemployed. 20,420 graduates started work with organisations featured in The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers in 2018, which was a 4.3% rise on recruitment in 2017. <sup>6</sup>

According to the HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education report, 59.5% were on a permanent or open-ended contract, 23.8% were on a fixed-term contract and 5.3% were either self-employed or freelance. Men were more likely than women to be self-employed or freelance.

Results for the newly developed Graduate Outcomes 2017-2018 leavers report will be published in 2020. It surveys approximately 700,000 individuals who have graduated within the last 15 months. More information about this report, can be found here: <https://www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk/>.

### What do people in their early career want?

*“Emerging Adults”* are what the agency We are Futures terms the 16-22 age group. *“A moving target...more fluid than any other generation”*

*“With fluidity has come the expectation of stimulation and choice in terms of their education, career path and work role. Companies that fail to appreciate the fluidity of EAs and instead treat them as a homogenous group with linear career paths and singular interests will fail to engage them.”*

(We are Futures, 2019, p. 2)

This youth agency makes some valid comments around this group’s attitudes to life such as the findings that opinions of younger people are now more dynamic than ever. There is an increased consciousness about the environment and social fairness. Interestingly out of 21 choices, career happiness was the first choice stated by those interviewed for the report as a factor for a successful life.

*“They are desperate to grow and thrive, and greatly value skills and training opportunities.”*

(We are Futures, 2019, p. 4) <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> HESA (2017) Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education 2015/16. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/destinations-2015-16>

<sup>6</sup> High Fliers (2019) The Graduate Market in 2019, Annual Review of graduate vacancies & starting salaries at the UK’s leading employers. Available at : [https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2019/graduate\\_market/GMReport19.pdf](https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2019/graduate_market/GMReport19.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> We are Futures (2019) Emerging Adults: Tomorrow’s Consumers, Here Today. Available at: <https://wearefutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Emerging-Adults-Tomorrows-Consumers-Here-Today.pdf>

### **School and College Students**

School and College Students tend to view the labour market less competitively and so at this stage may not be as willing to look at freelance work opportunities, preferring perhaps to look at a more traditional routes to work.<sup>8</sup> However, the same research shows this group are less likely to want to choose a graduate role in the future and are more open to “other” job options.

Additional research from the ISE Development Survey (2018) cited in the Prospects, Early Careers Survey (2018) shows a significant drop of students in this group in employment whilst at school. In 2017, 21% of 16-17-year-olds were working, yet in 1997 the figure was 42%. Perhaps this indicates a propensity for this age group to focus more on further study as a progression route and less interest in work experience.

### **University Students**

Students studying at HEIs are mostly looking for permanent/graduate roles (57.9%) although some are also interested in temporary roles (11.3%). Interestingly only a small amount indicated a desire to work in a large company and of those that expressed a preference on the size of employer, most would prefer to work in an SME.<sup>9</sup> Like the We are Futures report, students interviewed for the Prospects Early Careers Survey are looking for more commitment from employers in relation to the environment and diversity in the workplace. They are no longer satisfied by companies merely having “policies” in this area. They want to see real commitment and active engagement from employers in these areas.

International as well as home students could also be interested in freelance options because there are less likely to be issues around VISAs if for example, they set businesses up in their own home countries but were mobile and able to work with companies in the UK.

Universities are doing a lot of work to prepare students for the future of work, for example the University of Birmingham has a special strategy around the fourth industrial revolution in the workplace. Agility, entrepreneurial spirit and emotional intelligence are areas they are focusing on. The way employers engage with employees with potentially more scope for freelance workers is being highlighted and students are engaging and becoming interested in this.

### **Recent Graduates and Postgraduates**

Graduates and postgraduates view the career marketplace more competitively than their counterparts in the other groups of university students and school and college students and are less interested in re-locating in comparison to these groups. In comparison to students studying at university, once graduated the type of work these individuals looks for changes quite dramatically.

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<sup>8</sup> Prospects Early (2018) Early Careers Survey. Available at: <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/early-careers-survey>

<sup>9</sup> Prospects Early (2018) Early Careers Survey. Available at: <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/early-careers-survey>

For example, 78% want to work in a graduate/permanent type job and only 7% are looking for temporary work.<sup>10</sup>

### What do Careers Professionals Want?

Speaking to several careers and enterprise professionals at the University of Birmingham, University of Warwick and the University of Coventry campus in London indicate an appetite for more diverse careers information. They said they would happily invite Xxxx to talk at university events, however there was some reticence about whether freelancers had the time to do this.

*“As a careers guidance professional inviting in employers to talk to students, we normally felt it was better to approach larger organisations so that the impact of their time out of the office was less impactful. My network also didn’t tend to reach freelancers, and I wonder whether freelancers had the time to come into schools?”*

Some say:

*“Careers leaders would love the opportunity for real life examples of what freelancing is to share with their students.”*

*“Students are definitely more interested in more flexible career options”*

Others say:

*“When talking about the gig economy I think teachers may assume this is only for zero contract workers e.g. in hospitality, rather than freelancing.”*

*“The majority of careers resources don’t mention freelancing as a career option – or if they do it’s an anecdotal reference at the end of a description e.g. you can be a designer for a company or work for yourself as a freelancer.”*

*“Despite freelancing being on the rise, careers resources / support has been slow to react and there is very little provision / activities focused on this.”*

*“If freelancing is mentioned, it is likely to be in relation to creative industries with roles such as website design and graphic design.”*

This feedback clearly indicates that Xxxx can influence and direct the perception of freelance careers in the university sector. There is plentiful opportunity to step into an area of interest for students that is not currently being filled by other organisations or individuals.

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<sup>10</sup> Prospects Early (2018) Early Careers Survey. Available at: <https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/early-careers-survey>

### 3.0 Freelance Market, what are the competitors up to?

Some of the larger freelance platforms are promoting the freelance lifestyle to the student and graduate community. For example:

Freelancer:

<https://www.freelancer.co.uk/community/articles/5-reasons-every-student-should-freelance>

Freelance UK:

[https://www.freelanceuk.com/become/freelancing\\_while\\_university.shtml](https://www.freelanceuk.com/become/freelancing_while_university.shtml)

There is also a dedicated site for student freelancing positions, UniTaskr:

<https://www.unitaskr.com>

The dynamic with these offerings is very much focused on short term work whilst studying and positioned less as a considered career development opportunity.

The quality and depth of work advertised on these sites is very different to the type of work Xxxx can offer. From the limited research carried out for this report, it is difficult to see if or how competitors in this area are engaging with younger people in their career development. There appears to be much scope for xxx to direct conversations in this space in terms of partnerships with universities, colleges, schools, Government, and non-Government bodies related to careers, diversity, and enterprise.

### 4.0 The Xxxx Offer

Xxxx can engage with individuals in their early careers on a profound level. Individuals in their early career have grown up during a recession and their views and values reflect issues such as social responsibility, diversity, and social fairness.<sup>11</sup> These values are integral to the Xxxx business model and so there are many synergies that Xxxx can focus on when engaging with this group.

As well as the more obvious benefits of working in a freelance capacity around flexibility, promoting the community aspect and training opportunities that Xxxx provides will give Xxxx an edge when standing out to this group.

Xxxx should be a platform where young freelancers can air their views and concerns and feel listened to.

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<sup>11</sup> We are Futures (2019) Emerging Adults: Tomorrow's Consumers, Here Today. Available at : <https://wearefutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Emerging-Adults-Tomorrows-Consumers-Here-Today.pdf>



## 5.0 Recommendations

There appears to be a growing appetite for freelance work from the university community. For example, on the biggest UK student money website Save the Student, there is a recent piece about freelancing. <https://www.savethestudent.org/make-money/big-guide-to-freelancing.html>. Additionally, the Prospects career site has a section all about freelancing as a valid career option. <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/self-employment/freelancing>.

However, there is still a huge amount of work to do. Taking into consideration, the comments from the careers professionals spoken to and the data from student and graduate surveys, the following activities should help Xxxx raise its profile in the early careers market and retain early career freelancers in the collective.

### How can Xxxx attract and engage people in their early career

#### University/College Careers Fairs

- Identify key universities and colleges where Xxxx values may resonate (worth exploring which universities are more proactive in terms of promoting entrepreneurial type career options) e.g. Sheffield Hallam <https://www.shu.ac.uk/study-here/why-choose-us/employability/start-your-own-business>
- Create a calendar of careers fairs and attend 5-10 throughout the year
- Ensure levels of interest are logged, as well as numbers of attendees, and interesting comments and feedback
- Ensure stand has case studies and useful information about starting up a business too and potentially attend with Xxxx clients
- International examples of Xxxx freelance members will also be useful to appeal to international students
- There are usually discounts for SMEs taking a stand. Some fairs can also be free to attend but most do have a fee associated with them

#### University/College/School Workshops/Talks

- Identify key universities, colleges, and schools where it may be possible to engage with students via talks and workshops. Most careers departments are open to this, whether at specific events or a special talk just for Xxxx.
- Once a good cohort of freelancers in their early career are onboard, they can act as ambassadors for Xxxx and take on this work (*see more information in inspire and retain recommendations*)

#### Careers and Recruitment Sites

- Identify websites and forums where the early career market is looking for information about career options e.g. Milkround [www.milkground.com](http://www.milkground.com)
- Look for opportunities to develop thought leadership articles
- Identify advertising opportunities

### **Engagement with Government Bodies/Skills Organisations**

- Xxxx should identify strategic partnering opportunities with organisations that are active in the areas of entrepreneurial education, careers support, and societal change. There are both Government bodies e.g. Department for Education and non-Government bodies e.g. NCEE (National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education, <https://ncee.org.uk/>) that could be approached.
- There may be opportunities to speak at conferences, contribute to reports, and attend roundtables. This will be useful to start influencing conversations around how freelancing career options are presented in educational institutions.

### **Partnering with Xxxx Clients**

- It may be more cost effective and impactful to join forces with Xxxx clients to reach out to the early career market. A joint PR campaign/case study or visits to university career fairs together could be very appealing to the younger market who are initially quite unsure if a freelance career is for them.
- This will be particularly useful if Xxxx clients are also looking to reach out to those starting out in their careers but prefer to recruit via freelance organisations

### **PR**

- Xxxx should investigate key publications and online platforms that those in their early career are engaging with. Developing a content calendar and press stories during key periods of the academic year for example graduation time could be valuable to ensure the audience are made aware of career options as a freelancer.

### **Social Media Campaign(s)**

- Xxxx should engage with this audience through social media platforms. Instagram and Snapchat are particularly important to the 16-22 age group.
- Explore relationships with key career influencers/other organisations that already have good online relationships with this audience
- Look at a content calendar and plan content for key periods and hashtags used throughout the year
- Video case studies and podcasts could also be interesting areas to explore to give this audience further insight into Xxxx and freelancing as a career option

## **How can Xxxx inspire, and retain people in their early career**

### **Training**

- Although Xxxx already invests in this area, it will be useful to develop some useful training programmes particularly for those in the early stages of their career, perhaps more in depth sessions about how to set up a business/work independently and lots of other practical useful tips.
- These should be held regularly to maintain interest from this group. The group should be encouraged to make their own contributions about what training they require so they are fully engaged and involved.

### **Ambassadors**

- Once individuals in the early stages of their career begin to join Xxxx, there should be a process where Xxxx “Early Career Ambassadors” are appointed in order to further the promotional work already carried out and to ensure this group and their interests are fully represented. Young people will want to feel listened to and valued.

### **Early Freelance Group and Community**

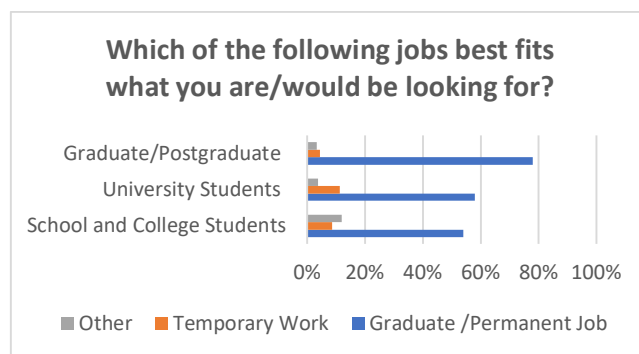
- There should be a group/community set up for those in the early part of their career to encourage networking and mutual support. It will feel a less intimidating and more welcoming environment to work if new early career members feel like there are others in similar positions.
- The group should be encouraged to hold their own events and there should be scope for the group to input into Xxxx developments and strategy going forward.

## 6.0 Conclusions

There is clearly a lot of work to undertake to start seeing a shift in the early career market, e.g. student and graduate employment moving into the freelance sector. As stated in a Xxxx blog last year written by IPSE (The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed):

*“Even though we’ve seen a significant rise in the number of people choosing to work in a freelance capacity, still only 2% of self-employed professionals found out about this way of working at University, and only 2% found out about it whilst at school.”*

The research conducted in this report also suggests that to encourage younger people into freelance careers, the input must start early on in their education. As you can see from the below chart, students at college and school are less likely to want to opt for a traditional graduate type role and would instead consider “other” career options.



(Prospects Early Careers Survey, 2018)

Xxxx should start engaging with schools, colleges, and universities imminently and input to discussions in education and skills communities to ensure their voice is heard and individuals are attracted to the freelance revolution.

## 7.0 Further Reading

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017#main-points>

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7857/CBP-7857.pdf>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/797308/GLMS\\_2018\\_publication\\_main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797308/GLMS_2018_publication_main_text.pdf)

<https://www.consultancy.uk/news/18474/uk-has-2-million-freelancers-and-the-number-will-continue-to-rise>

<https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/half-of-workers-expected-to-be-freelance-by-2020>