



Personality Power: The importance of showing your company's personality when hiring graduates

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Why is this topic important?

Graduates applying for jobs in the highly competitive 2019 job market are under an increasing amount of pressure to stand out from the crowd by revealing more than just their skills and experiences within job applications.

They are being encouraged to ensure they are also showing employers the only thing they have that completely differentiates them from every other graduate: their **personality**.

While thousands of graduates could have the relevant degree and necessary experience for a particular job, far fewer will also have the type of interests, values and temperament that make them perfect for the company.

As a graduate job advertising platform that champions a more transparent, personality-led approach to graduate recruitment, GradTouch has long recognised that showing personality is not just something applicants ought to be doing, but something employers can benefit from greatly too.

This being the case, we wanted understand what makes a company stand out to a graduate, and to what extent they expect companies to return the favour and inject a little (or a lot) of their personality into job advertisements.

In this report you will find data and insights collected from survey feedback and our website data into how influential a company's personality is on graduate applicants and how to ensure you are communicating the right things about your employer brand with them, while still being true to it.

Among some significant findings, we discovered that graduates in 2019 are **74%** more likely to apply for a job after being given an insight into a company's personality, and that a further **65%** of them would be put off from applying for a job if they can tell that the company has used generic stock photos instead of genuine, representative photos of the office and team.

We also learned that graduates are starting to become disenchanted with the idea of chasing the "dream job", and are instead more enticed by the company and its culture, personality and wider impact on society. This is reflected in the fact that **83%** of graduates want to hear about a company's approach to employee wellbeing and mental health just as much as any perks that come with the job.

By highlighting just how important it is to share as much insight into your company's personality as graduates are expected to disclose about their own, GradTouch's report aims to empower employers of all shapes and sizes to reacquaint themselves with their company's values, discover what makes them stand out and spark the interest of a wider, more relevant and emotionally engaged range of graduate talent.

Methodology

To assess how aware graduates are of a company's personality and the impact this awareness has on their decision to apply for jobs, we ran a nationwide survey of **852** graduates in the UK between 22nd July - 5th August 2019.

The survey was distributed across all major social media platforms and the GradTouch student and graduate community of over **300,000** members.

Alongside this, we analysed GradTouch website data taken from a sample of **9,911** graduates who opted to add their personality traits to their GradTouch profile. Combining this data with the survey feedback, we are able to determine which traits graduates are identifying in themselves on pages 10 and 11, and see how this correlates with those they desire in a company on pages 6 and 7.

Wondering about your own company's personality and whether you are showcasing it effectively enough?

Find all the advice you need on pages 20 to 23.

Graduate candidates are paying attention to your company's personality

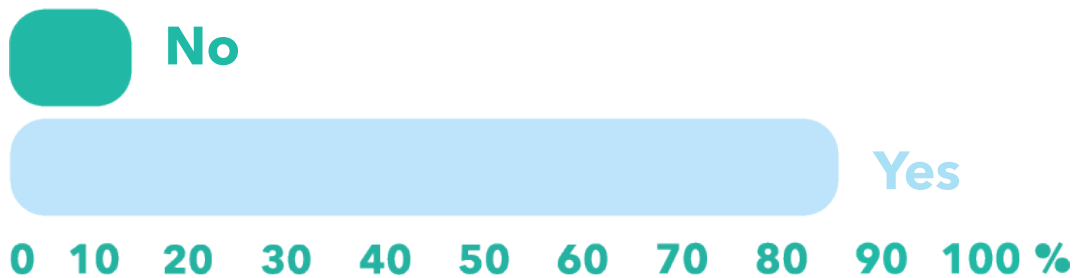
Graduate candidates are **74%** more likely to apply for jobs at companies that have revealed a little of their personality.

We asked survey respondents whether they take note of a company's personality when looking into jobs. An overwhelming **87%** of them confirmed that company personality is very much on their radar.

In addition to wanting to know whether graduates are considering company personality, we also asked them to what extent this could influence their decision to apply for jobs.

Respondents revealed they would be **74%** more likely to apply for a job after being given an insight into the company's personality.

"When looking into jobs, do you actively consider how a company's personality comes across?"

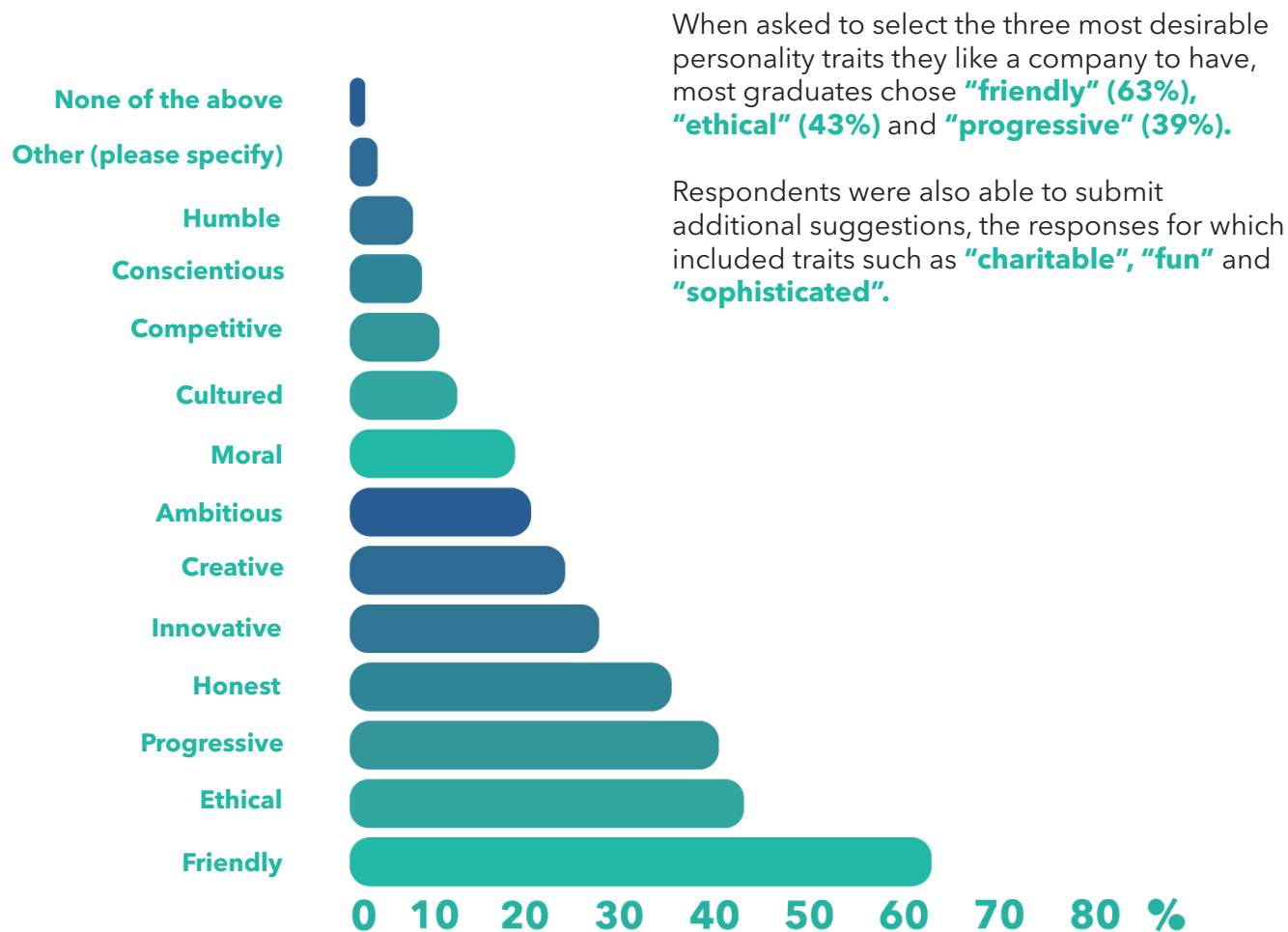


"How much more likely would you be to apply to a job after getting a feel for the company's personality?"

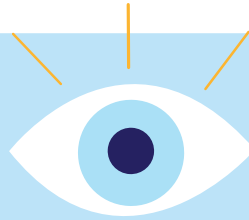


Which personality traits are graduates looking for in a company?

The friendliness of your company is what makes you most attractive to graduates.



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It is noteworthy that one of the least desirable company personality traits to graduates, **"competitive"**, is not only used often by companies to describe both themselves and the type of graduates they are looking for, but is also frequently used to describe the salary on offer.

If we take into account the fact that **"friendliness"**, with its connotations of positivity and sincerity, is what graduates are most attracted to, we can infer that any use of the word **"competitive"** by a company, even if it is not meant in a negative or misleading way, can be construed as such.

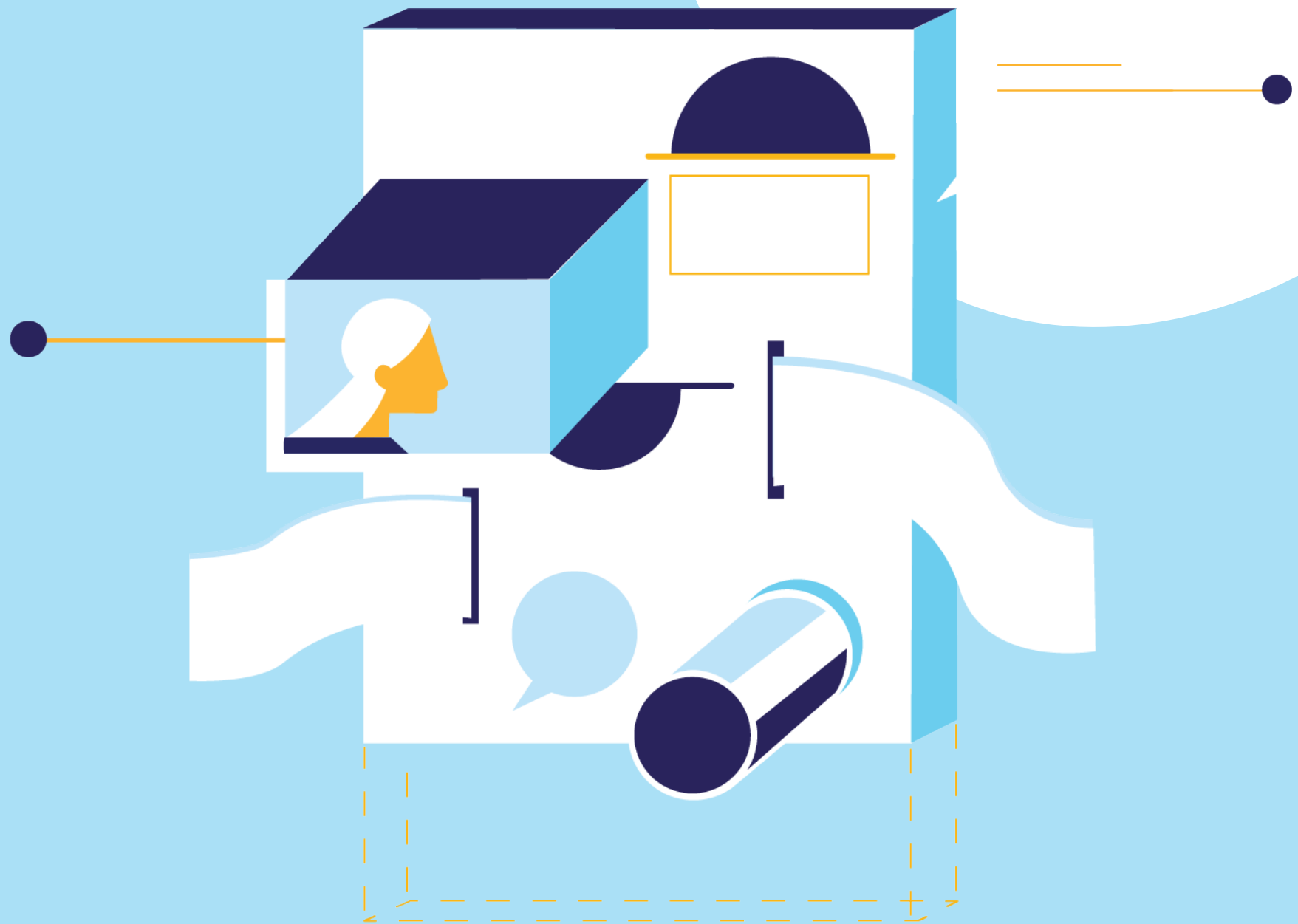
GradTouch top tip

One of the most effective ways we enable companies to showcase their personality is by sending our in-house media team to take **photos** and shoot **videos** of the employees and office environment in which they work.

The benefits of doing this go far beyond simply ensuring your company profile reflects your personality and looks authentic to graduates; it also has an impact on whether or not they will hit that apply button on your jobs.

67% of graduates said they can tell if a company has used generic stock photos instead of actual photos of the team.

A further **65%** indicated that if they can tell that stock photos have been used they would be put off from applying to that company.





What about the personality traits graduates identify in themselves?

The most common personality trait graduates select for themselves is "driven".

In addition to encouraging the employers we work with to indicate within job descriptions on our website the type of person they are ideally looking for, we also provide each of our users with the option to select within their profile any personality traits they identify in themselves.

Collecting this data allows us to make it easier for graduates to identify which companies' personalities are similar to their own and also means that we can send them highly targeted emails about relevant opportunities based on more than just the usual factors, such as degree, location and industry preferences.

The majority of graduates in our database identify themselves as "driven" (7%), "organised" (6%) and "honest" (6%).

Here are some of the personality traits GradTouch users select for themselves:

Driven
Organised

Creative
Team-orientated
Honest

Observant
Independent
Outgoing
Problem Solver
Confident
Determined

Case Study

NMPi is a digital marketing agency that helps some of the world's best-known brands reach their target audiences online.

To a graduate, its demonstrable success and high-profile clients could be intimidating, but its company profile and job advertisements on GradTouch's website are anything but.

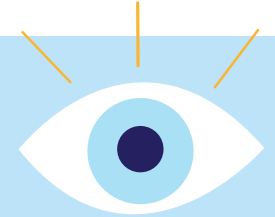
Candid photos and videos of the team going about their day-to-day roles, taken by GradTouch's media team, create that all-important friendly atmosphere that graduates are most attracted to.

Plus, using them removes the mystery from who works behind a successful company, helping graduates to envision themselves as part of the team.

Check out some of NMPi's photos below:



GradTouch Insight



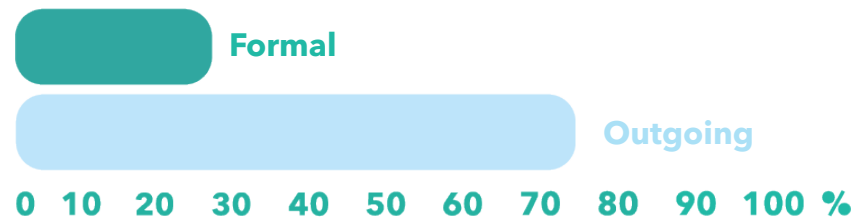
We believe that it is extremely important to hire people whose personalities and aspirations align with your own, but we also know that graduates in particular can sometimes feel the need to say what they think companies want to hear.

Usually this is to compensate for a lack of experience or information from the company itself, which is why we encourage every employer we work with to be as honest and forthcoming about who they are and who they are looking for as possible. This way, potential, **relevant** applicants feel more comfortable to be themselves, which in turn makes it easier for employers to see who is the right fit for them.

Graduates are tired of overly-formal, unforthcoming job descriptions

The majority of graduates prefer it when a company comes across as more outgoing and less formal in its job descriptions.

“Do you prefer it when a company is more formal or more outgoing in its job descriptions?”

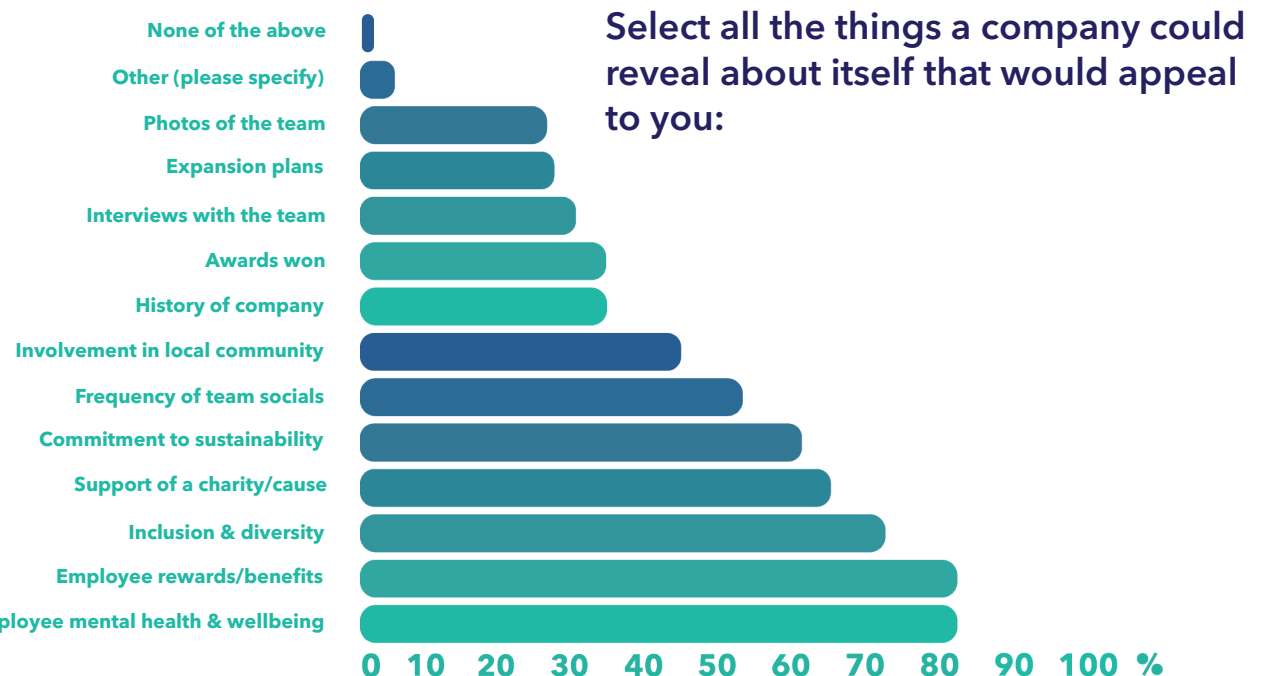


We asked survey respondents to select what, if anything, they like to know about a company to help them to engage with its personality and deduce whether it is the right one for them.

GradTouch top tip

Being less formal in your job descriptions doesn't have to mean being informal, unprofessional or taking on a different personality than that of your company. Graduates still want you to be honest with them.

If you want to meet graduates halfway without compromising on formality, try simply avoiding using inaccessible business jargon, unoriginal stock photos and failing to talk about the wider company culture as well as the basics of the job.



Here again, respondents could submit additional factors that would be of interest to them when reading a job description (you can read some examples below).

"I'd like to know about their working environment and dimensions, the company culture, career progression opportunities etc."

- Tristan, University of Edinburgh

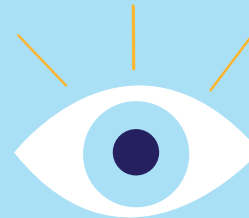
"Hearing about a company's environmental policy, especially its approach towards recycling, would be good."

- Katie, DeMontfort University

"Having contact details to ask questions about the company / role."

- Mohammed, UCL

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The fact that "awareness of employee mental health and wellbeing" and "employee perks" are the two, joint most appealing things a company could reveal to graduates is very telling.

It is a reminder to employers that graduates want to hear about the perks you have on offer, but that they should not be used as a distraction from or excuse for poor treatment of employees. Essentially, if you're going to talk about one you should talk about the other too for context.

Making a good first impression is crucial when it comes to candidate attraction

85% of graduates investigate what your company is like immediately after seeing a job they are interested in or just before applying.

When asked how soon they research what a company is like after coming across a job they might want to apply for, **43%** of graduates said they do so immediately, while a further **42%** do so before submitting their application.

"When you see a job you like the sound of, how soon do you research what the company is like?"

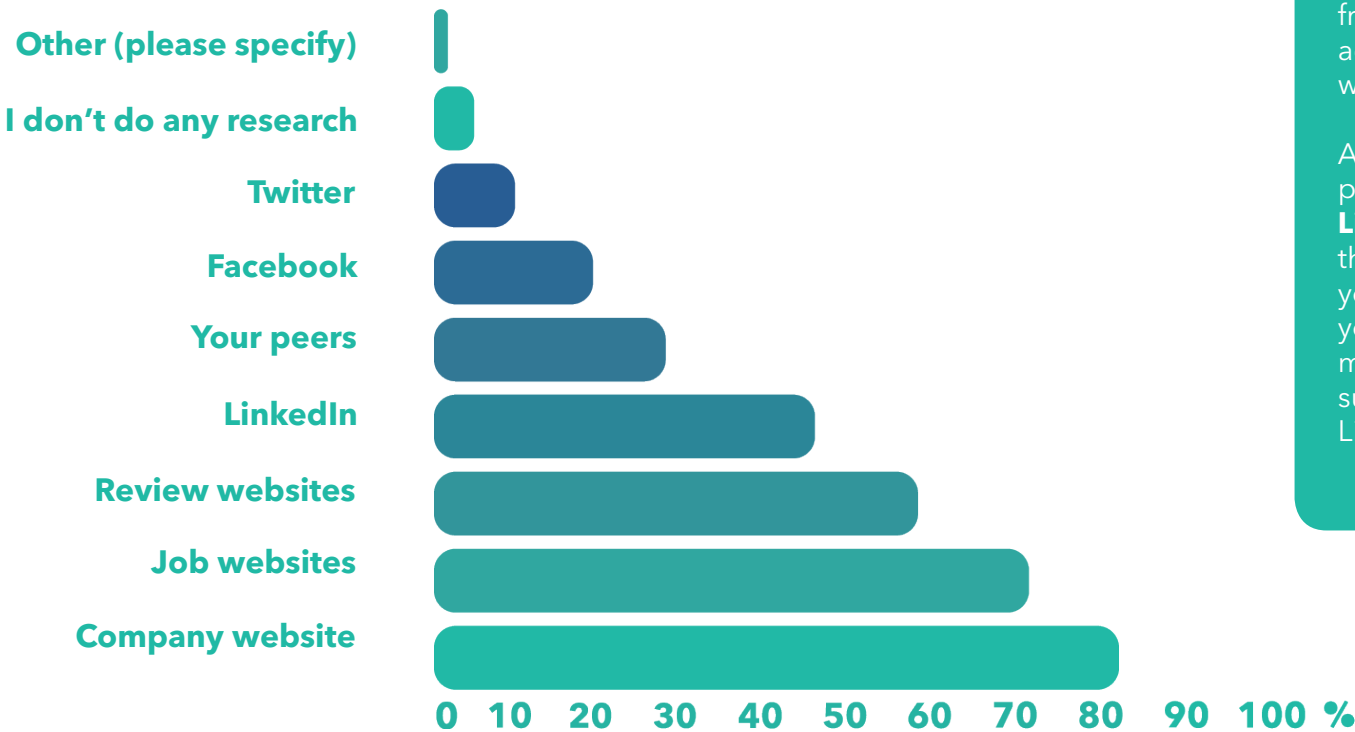


Graduates are not stopping their research after the first impression, either.

We asked survey respondents to select all the channels they use in order to investigate what a company is like.

Although the most common source they use is a company's website, graduates are also seeking out a company's presence on social media, review websites and beyond.

"Which channels do you use to research companies before applying?"



GradTouch top tip

Whichever elements of your company's personality you share with graduates within job descriptions, be sure that your company's internet footprint mirrors those elements. For example, if you make a point of highlighting what a fun, flexible and friendly office you have but your social media accounts and Glassdoor reviews say otherwise, it will ring alarm bells.

A good way to ensure you are practising what you preach is to **build your employer brand through LinkedIn**. By encouraging your employees to share their own experiences of life at your company you can constructively and faithfully communicate your company's personality in a way that seems more genuine to graduates, many of whom, as the survey revealed, will look you and your team up on LinkedIn before applying.

Graduates are becoming more concerned about whether the company is right for them than the job

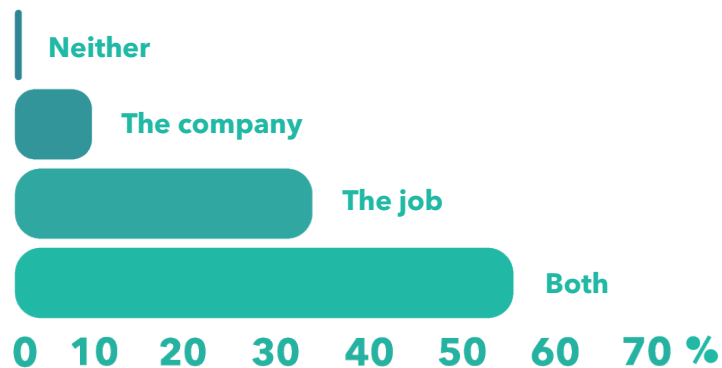
The majority of graduates would rather work at a company they believe is perfect for them than get a “dream job” at company they do not really like.

We asked graduates whether it is more important to them that the job or company ticks the most boxes. While **35%** still put more emphasis on the job, well over half of respondents said that both the job and the company need to be right.

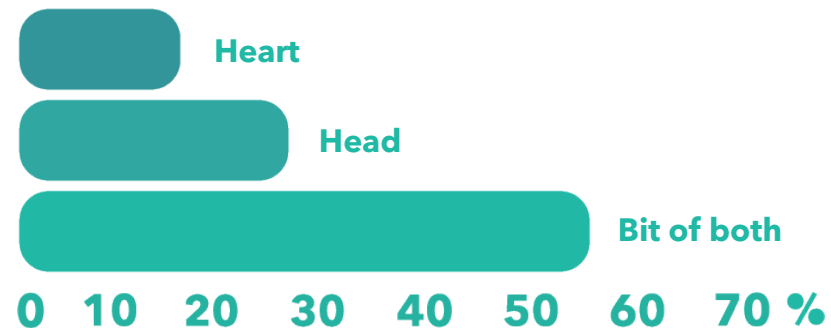
Looking into this further, we also asked survey respondents whether they are more likely to follow their head or their heart when applying to jobs, and which they would choose between their “dream job” or their “dream company”.

Although most graduates indicated that both their head and their heart have a say in their job-hunting decisions, there was a clear majority for the “dream company” option.

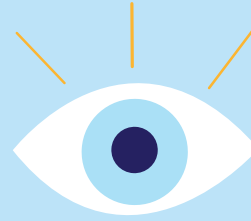
“When looking into jobs, is it more important to you that the job or company is right for you?”



“When deciding whether or not to apply for a job, are you more likely to follow your head or your heart?”



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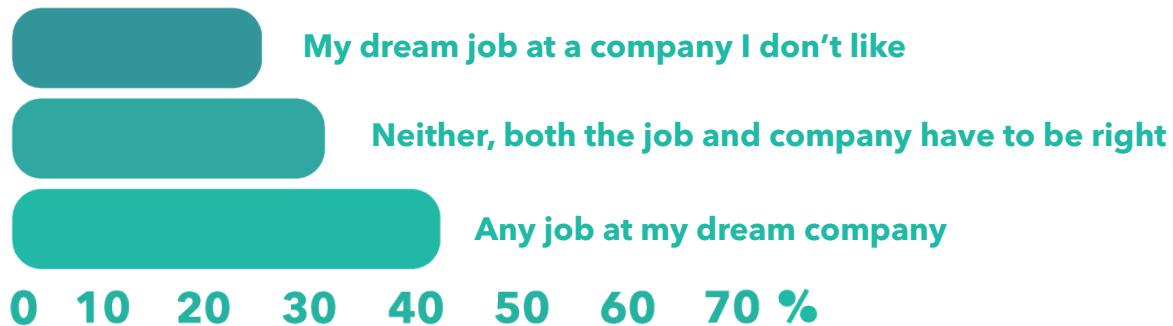


Recent research shows that 'Millenials' and 'Generation Z' feel strongly about brands being accountable, engaging and making a positive impact on the world.

This means they are increasingly less likely to be lured into applying for a job by a huge salary or a well-known brand name than they are by seeing proof that a company is taking steps to improve employee wellbeing or helping to fight climate change, for example.

As the survey responses suggest, for companies that have long relied on graduates being attracted to its jobs and ignorant of its wider impact on the world, the tides are starting to turn. Showing who you are and what you stand for allows smaller, newer companies to start competing at the same level as the bigger, established industry giants.

"If you had to choose between getting your dream job at a company you really don't like or getting any job at your dream company, which would you choose?"

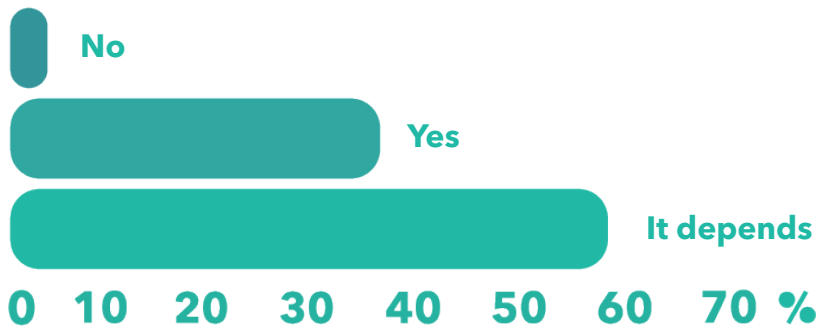


What graduate applicants want you to know

If a graduate hears something positive about a company, they would be **85%** more likely to apply for one of its jobs.

As well as wanting to know what specifically would make a graduate want to apply, or not, to a company, we also gave respondents the opportunity to voice any additional elements they would like employers to know to help attract them.

"If you read or hear something negative about a company would you be put off from applying?"



"If you read or hear something positive about a company would you be more likely to apply to it?"



“Is there anything else you would like companies to know to help attract you to their roles?”

“I would like companies to be more informal in job descriptions and not make a big list of skills they are after. Of course list the main ones but include personality or characteristics of the applicant so it’s not all about the role.”

- **Sophie, Newcastle University**

“Be up front about pay and responsibilities - it is a waste of our time applying to a position if we are not given the information we need to decide if it is of the right level and skill set for us.”

- **Rory, Glasgow Caledonian University**

“Make it clear that you need passionate workers and help them to gain experience. So many reliable, qualified people go jobless due to a lack of experience.”

- **Natalie, University of Salford**

“Charity work, equality, environmental consciousness.”

- **Tara, University of Manchester**

GradTouch top tip

Revealing your personality isn’t just important for attracting relevant graduate applicants; it can also be a useful form of **damage control**.

As we learned on page 15, graduates are researching your company online, giving them easy access to any and every article, review or statistic about your company, whether accurate or not.

By revealing your company’s personality within job descriptions you have an opportunity to take back some control over how potential applicants see you, addressing any possible concerns which may have been caused by bad press. This is where using genuine photos of your team, video interviews with previous graduates and building your employer brand on LinkedIn comes in very handy.

What is your company's personality and are you showcasing it?

Whether it is immediately evident or not, every company has a personality and every company can use its personality to help attract likeminded people to its workforce.

To help you identify your company's personality and verify how you can best communicate it to graduates, we have compiled our **top tips** based on graduates' feedback and our experience of working with employers to construct authentic, honest and personality-filled job advertisements.

Identifying your company's personality

A company's personality is made up of a combination of elements, but there are three key determiners:

The company's core values and objectives

Why was the company started? What do you care about as a company? What are your goals and what steps are you taking to ensure you are reaching them?

Over **60%** of the graduates we surveyed want to know about a company's commitment to sustainability and its support or involvement in a charity. Another **70%** of them are interested in how inclusive and diverse a company is.

There are lots of things you will be doing as a company, some of which you may barely notice, that if shared with a graduate could be the difference between them applying for one of your jobs or not.

It could be as big as offering flexible working or as small as encouraging every employee to recycle - whatever it is you are doing, it forms your company's personality and makes you stand out from the crowd.





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Companies should never need to change their personality in order to attract the right people. There will always be things you can reveal about who you are or better photos you can use of the team and office you already have that will give you an edge.

However, if you are reading this and thinking that there are perhaps a few more elements you could add to your company's personality – without changing it – that are based on your core values, then take this opportunity to make some positive changes where possible.

Its position within an industry

A young SME in the media industry that has just implemented an unlimited holiday policy may, arguably, find it much easier to communicate its personality within job advertisements than a large, long-established tax firm, for example, which, although it does not have unlimited holiday, it does offer decent salaries, healthcare and bonuses.

Whichever end of the scale you are at, there will be lots of little intricacies of life at your company and individual stories from your employees that you can share which make you unique within your industry and can serve to catch the eye of relevant graduate talent.

The personalities of its current employees

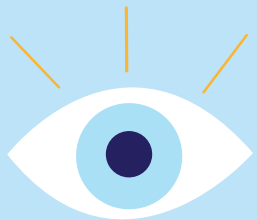
We know that people make companies, and graduates know it too. **62%** of those we surveyed said that they would be interested in seeing interviews with or photos of the team behind a company when looking into its jobs.

Your employees' personalities make up part of your company's personality by default, and so, by giving your employees a chance to share their own personalities, you can provide potential applicants with an extremely genuine and relatable insight into the kind of company you have.

Showcasing your company's personality

If you are not used to weaving your company's personality into your job advertisements, it can seem like a fairly daunting task.

Here you will find three examples of some of the simplest and most effective ways to communicate who you are to graduates, in addition to talking about the job role you are wanting to fill.



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We know that some companies will be unable to share photos of their team and office for confidentiality reasons. In these cases, using accessible language, clear branding and, if possible, interviews (written, if not filmed) with the team become essential to ensuring that graduates do not get the impression you are hiding the reality of life of at your company.

Photos

Given that **65%** of graduates would be put off from applying to a company that has decided to use stock photos instead of actual photos of the team, this is not only a really easy step you can take to reveal your company's personality but is actually incredibly important for increasing engagement.

GradTouch's media team snapped lots of photos of financial software company **Alfa** to help showcase its company personality and give its job advertisements a really friendly, approachable and genuine feel. Check some of them out [here](#).



Videos

Whether it is a short video showing a snippet of everyday life within your office or a series of interviews with members of your team (whose personalities make up your company's personality, don't forget), videos are one of the most stimulating and relatable ways to help graduates to understand who you are and what to expect should they apply to join you.

We filmed recruitment company **Spencer Ogden** to provide potential applicants with a window into life as a part of the team, speaking to everyone from graduates all the way up to the company's Director. You can watch the video [here](#).



Talking about more than just the job

As simple as it sounds, it is something that many companies forget to do, either because they are, understandably, focused too much on the job to talk about anything else or because they do not realise how important it is.

Bearing in mind that the majority of graduates want both the job and the company to be right for them, not mentioning anything - or enough - about your company and its culture could lead to you missing out on applications from graduate talent.

One company that ensures it covers all the bases is recruitment company **Maxxima**. Its profile on GradTouch is not just filled with genuine photos and videos, but is also complete with insights into the company's history, team, office and more. See for yourself [here](#).



We can help you showcase your company's personality.

If you're a graduate employer and you would like to talk to us about how to better communicate your company's personality and increase candidate engagement to help drive graduate applicants, here's how you can contact us:

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