

REPORT CONTENT

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INTRODUCTION: Connecting young talent to jobs in Central Ohio

There is a need to better connect graduating high school students with employment opportunities in the local Central Ohio area. Companies that are searching for talent do not have a relevant resource for identifying which students are the best hires and students do not have any way to know what company or job is right for them.

A new tool is in development.

The Columbus Chamber of Commerce is currently developing a survey, TalentConnect, that identifies a high school students "work style" and then matches the student to local companies who employ people with the associated "work style." TalentConnect is intended for high school juniors and graduating seniors and is expected to launch online in the Fall of 2015.

How can we make sure it resonates with young talent?

Once TalentConnect is launched, The Chamber wants to ensure that the young talent that it is meant to engage adopts it. In order to achieve this The Columbus Chamber of Commerce commissioned a research project to better understand the student perspective and what it would take to engage and inspire them to take the next step towards a career after graduation.

Research was done to get the student perspective.

Early 2015, The Chamber partnered with Lextant, a Columbus based design research agency to identify student-generated criteria for developing, communicating and socializing TalentConnect. The research team met with 31 Central Ohio high school juniors and seniors. These students had various backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and demographics. Each student brought a unique perspective to the project and through guided activities and structured conversations; the following two questions were answered:

1. How do students truly feel about starting a career and getting a job right after high school?
2. What is the ideal presentation of a survey/website site that assesses their "work style" and then matches them with local companies?

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE: How do students truly feel about starting a career and getting a job right after high school?

Graduating students are excited and nervous about the future.

Students shared with us what scares them and excites them about graduating and moving onto the next phase of their lives. They also shared with us how they feel about going to college, picking a career path, and getting a job.

1. College seems right:

Not everyone can be Oprah, students believe that college is now required to help them get the skills and education they need to get a good job—and they are excited to go to college—especially if they have an idea of what I want to do for a career. However, if there is a job that would allow them to get started in a desirable career right away, instead of going to college, they would be open to it.

Students do not feel that their high school experiences are adequately preparing them for a career. They wish they could have more experiences that teach them the ins and outs of getting a job as well as the skills, knowledge, and experiences that are relevant to the area or field that they are interested in.

2. I'm ready & willing:

No one wants to do something they hate for 40 years. Students believe that a career is something a person likes to do and a job is something a person has to do. Students are looking for jobs/careers that they are passionate about, they believe this is necessary to enjoy going to work everyday.

Students are motivated to start a successful career. They are not only looking forward to the responsibility of independence from their parents, but also because they want to be prepared to financially support their future and their future families.

Students are willing to take risk and work hard to get the job/career that is right for them. They believe the best way to move forward is with all the knowledge necessary to navigate their career—even if the course changes.

3. It's a BIG decision:

Students are nervous about making a career choice—it's a major life decision. There's a lot of pressure to choose now and if they make the wrong decision it could mean more money and more time spent on college. The site has potential to make a big impact with these students—they want to feel proud of the results that the site gives them, they want to feel like the site is pointing them in the right direction so they don't have to back out of it down the road.

Students that are unsure of what they want to do after graduation are nervous about making a decision. They see the site as a valuable tool to help them choose the right direction and know what to expect along the way.

4. I want to be taken seriously:

I want the site to treat me like a serious, job-seeking adult. The site should communicate professionalism by avoiding advertisements and spam, limiting the use of bright colors or other childish visuals, and ensuring relevant information.

Students are open to and excited about getting more career and job direction especially if it's offered up in an engaging and relevant way.

THE IDEAL SITE: What is the ideal presentation of a survey/website site that assesses their "work style" and then matches them with local companies?

The majority of our conversations with students were about the survey and the website that would deliver the survey. We learned what it would take for students to use the site and, more importantly, to believe the information that the site offers up.

The Ideal TalentConnect Site

From our conversations we discovered 5 key criteria for the design of the survey website as well as details that describe the ideal process for a student using the site.

The visual framework below illustrates the overall experience that students want to have when using TalentConnect.

5 key criteria: No matter when or where the student engages with the site, the following five criteria are critical to the adoption and use of the site.

1. Trustworthy:

Students are more comfortable using sites that they perceive to be trustworthy and credible. One way is ensuring that the site is from a trusted/recognized name.

Students believe that sites that give them control over their information are trustworthy. The site should allow the student to be in control of who can see the different types of information that they input into the survey and site.

2. Anytime/Anywhere:

The site should support usage over time. Student want to be able to update/edit their profiles, references goals and results from the survey, and check or be notified about for newly posted jobs and/or companies. Additionally, student want the ability to edit/retake/re-answer questions on the survey in order to re-evaluate themselves as they grow and change or if they are unsure about the results that the survey gives them.

Students can get inspired at any time. Students see themselves using the site anytime and anywhere. The site should be mobile accessible and available 24/7. While they will likely take the survey on a computer, they want access to their results at any point via an app or a site designed for mobile access.

3. Helpful:

The site should be encouraging the student to continue and to press forward to achieve their goals. The site could include motivational quotes, mentorship opportunities, and show feedback as the survey is being taken.

The site should provide help to the students as they go through the process. This can take the form of a chat function or phone number to talk with a live person who can answer their questions, a guided process to take the survey and get results, and/or a pop-up help button.

4. Humanized:

The site should use a friendly, encouraging, and positive tone of voice. Interacting with the site should be like having a conversation with a friend or peer. The site should avoid communicating in a commanding way and should not put any rules, limitations, or requirements right up front.

Students want to be interested in the site when they see it. The site should have a modern, simple, clean, and minimalistic look and feel that uses visual storytelling elements such as photographs and iconography. The site should have it's own unique look and design but should reference the look and feel of a social media site like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram.

The site should limit the amount of text needed to communicate to the student—especially when taking the survey. Students are open to layered information and willing to dig into particular areas to learn more. When possible, visuals should accompany text.

5. Spot On:

Students need the site to be accurate and provide relevant results otherwise they will consider the site and survey a waste of time. The site itself should contain relevant, consistent, up-to-date content. The survey should ask questions that are relevant to the individual student, even using skip logic to avoid irrelevant questions. The results should reflect the student's interest/passion and should connect directly to the answers the student gave. The site could even use the accumulated actions of the student to "learn" and customize as the student provides more and more information.

The site should support the personal nature of the profile. In addition to including the work personal in the title of the profile (e.g., Personal Profile) students want the site to allow them to customizing their profile. They also liked the idea of the site automatically adjusting the language and look as it "learns" more about the student.

THE IDEAL PROCESS

1. Getting Started: How do students want to learn about the site? What will motivate them to use the site?

Students want to hear or learn about the site through a trusted source, and would be skeptical of an unfamiliar email. Preferred marketing channels: social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), guidance counselor, local business, TV ad, radio ad, email.

Students want to see proof that the site works. Knowing that other students are using the site and have used it in the past with success encourages them to use the site themselves. Success stories should include the positive aspects and the challenges that each person faced. These stories should be highly visual—communicated through videos and/or using photos.

2. Taking the Survey: What should the experience of taking the survey be like? What information should be considered in order for students to believe and move forward with the results?

Students want to be comfortable and relaxed when they take the survey. They want to be able to take the survey at home, where they can focus and relax. The survey should be simple, easy to take, exciting and creative so it is a stress-free experience.

Students don't want to feel like they are being evaluated. The survey itself should not resemble anything they have had to do for school. The site should clearly communicate that there are no wrong answers and the words "quiz" or "test" should not be in the title.

Students want their personal interests and passions to be taken into consideration when calculating results. Students see the survey factoring in the specific and unique things about them that could lead to finding the job/career that is right for them. They want the survey to factor in the following things when making job/career recommendations: strengths, talents, which fields are right, life goals, personality, work style. Additionally, students want the site to factor in the field or job that they are already interested in.

Students want the survey to be a quick process, but also believe that accuracy is more important than the convenience. Ideally, the survey itself would only take 10-15 minutes and seeing the results update as they answer would encourage them to continue with the process and ensure them that the results are personalized.

The survey questions should be clear and transparent—even informing the student of the purpose/meaning of each individual question.

3. Discovering the Right Direction: What should the experience of being matched with companies be like? What information do students need in order to choose a path and connect with a company?

Even if students already know what they want to do/study after graduation, they would use the site to explore alternatives and broaden their perspectives. The site should allow them to see all available jobs and companies in addition to the ones they are matched with. The site should show them jobs that align with what they want to do and other jobs that they have not yet considered. The site should allow them to search for jobs and to filter results by personal interest, location and hours.

The site should factor in what the students think they want to do and help them figure out if that field or career is right for them.

When it comes to a specific job or career, the site should communicate the following information: 1. Typical pay/salary, 2. how difficult it will be to get into the job (education, test scores, time, cost), 3.

popularity of the job—how many people are interested in it right now, 4. where the industry is heading—is it growing or dying, 5. demand for the job—how many jobs are out there.

Students want to gain knowledge about a particular job from peers and experts that won't sugarcoat it—giving them a realistic picture of the company goals and vision, the people, and the day-to-day life on the job. They want to learn the best and worst aspects of a job from someone who is in the job. They want the site to be honest and encouraging—giving them all the information they need to make the best decision.

The site should enable them to deep-dive into know the following about the companies that they are matched with: job responsibilities, work culture, location, working environment, schedule/shift hours, wages, working style (e.g., team solo, etc.), PTO, opportunities for advancement, job demand.

Students believe that knowledge is power. The more they know, they more likely they will feel that they are making the right decision and ready to get started with a job/career.

Students feel strongly that the final decision about what job/career to pursue is something they do on their own. It's a personal decision and don't want anyone or anything forcing them or telling them what to do.

The site should include location information for each company or job that the student is matched with. In some cases, students also may want to see a high level look at where different types of jobs are concentrated across the country. More specific to local companies, students want to be able to filter results to see jobs that are close to them—even on a map relative to where they live.

Students want to know the steps they need to take in order to get a job. They want to learn about the site and get advice on how to get the job from someone they can relate to (closer in age, similar in lifestyle, etc.). They want the site to guide them through the process informing them of job requirements (education, personality, skills), how to apply, and how to communicate with a company.

4. Connecting with Companies: What do students expect to happen after the survey has been taken? How can the site support taking the next step once a potential company or career path has been identified?

Students are looking for better and easier ways to connect with potential employers. They would like the site to encourage and facilitate connections and communications with these companies. At a minimum, they expect the site to provide contact information including phone and/or email addresses, but they would also appreciate guidance from the site on the best way (who to contact, tone of voice, channel, information etc.) to communicate with these companies and a way to confirm that communication has reached the company.

Students want their profiles to be easily accessible to companies that are looking for potential hires. They want the profile to have a title that makes them feel special and that they have what it takes to get the job, e.g., Talent Portfolio. While they primarily want to contact companies themselves, if a company were to reach out to them based on something from their profile, they would feel valuable and wanted.

Students want to share everything they can about themselves in order to ensure a good match and to get the job they want. They want companies to know they are dedicated and that they are looking for a career—not just a temporary job. They want companies to know: strengths, talents, schedule/availability, life goals, personality, work ethic, team work style, which fields are right, interests/passions, relevant past work experience, and any good grades or awards they have earned.