



## Employer Roundtable: Campus Engagement

February 2025

It's February, and this time we're talking about campus engagement. Employers are moving away from traditional career fair models, questioning the return on investment (ROI) of in-person events, and exploring new ways to connect with students. From tracking success metrics to the ongoing debate around merchandise giveaways, the session covered a lot of ground. Here are the key takeaways from the conversation.

## Is Campus Engagement Still Worth It?

For many organisations, the big question wasn't just how to engage with universities, but why. The primary motivations boiled down to two things: building brand awareness and creating talent pipelines. But with stretched resources and attention towards proving a good ROI, some businesses are rethinking their approach.

While large-scale careers fairs still have their place, many attendees reported shifting towards more targeted, high-impact events. Whether through partnerships with specific universities, employer-led workshops, or even embedding in the curriculum, employers are looking for ways to go beyond just turning up with a branded stand and hoping for the best.

**63% of employers see value  
in attending careers fairs.**

### Upcoming Event

## Employer Roundtable

### TOPIC OF CONVERSATION:

## Work Experience: Is Hybrid Work Experience Real Work Experience?



- March 19th
- 10:00am - 11:30am

We asked the employer community:

## What's the most effective way to measure the success & return of investment on campus engagement?

### Number of applications generated

72%

### Number of students at the event/careers fair

38%

### Number of engagements

41%

### Diversity & Inclusion

14%

### Brand awareness generated

24%

### Brand perceptions

17%

### University staff/lecturer feedback

14%

### Anecdotal feedback from students

31%

### Number of email/database sign ups

62%

## Measuring ROI: An Ongoing Challenge

Tracking the success of campus engagement remains tricky. Some employers use AI tools and applicant tracking systems (ATS) to trace candidates back to specific events, while others rely on manual methods like QR codes and surveys, or a combination of both. The challenge? These methods aren't always reliable. Issues like cookie settings, tracking inconsistencies, and low student engagement with follow-up links often make the data unclear, raising the question: is measuring worth it if the data isn't accurate?

Despite these hurdles, most agreed that tracking engagement is still essential. Whether it's monitoring application rates from specific universities, analysing candidate progression through hiring stages, or gathering direct feedback from attendees, having some measure of success is better than none.

## The Evolution of Careers Fairs

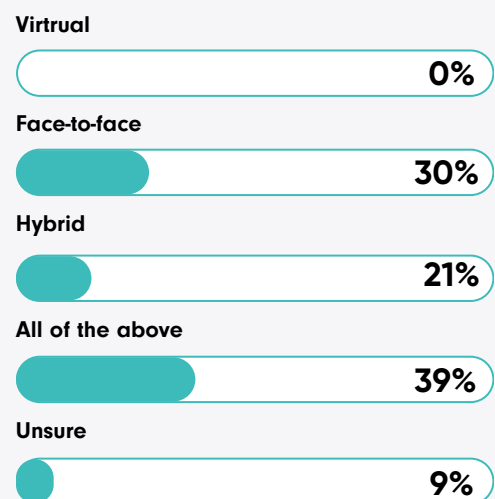
It's clear that some employers still see value in the traditional large-scale career fair (particularly for brand visibility), however there are others are shifting towards a more strategic approach.

Some organisations are focusing on "hotspot" universities where they want to increase applications, while others are calling on their existing workforce and sending business representatives, rather than just recruitment teams, to speak directly with students. This approach not only improves the quality of engagement but also provides students with a more authentic insight into company culture.

Other ideas include the running of masterclasses and live project briefs with students, creating opportunities for deeper interaction beyond the typical handshake-and-brochure exchange, or the growing importance of work experience partnerships, ensuring that engagement efforts lead to tangible outcomes for students.

We asked the employer community:

### When engaging with universities, what type of delivery are you looking at?



## The Great Merchandise Debate

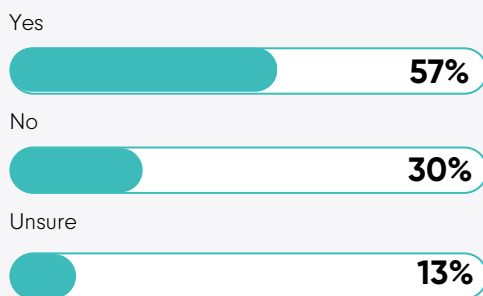
Merchandise at careers fairs: useful engagement tool or outdated gimmick? The group was divided. On one hand, sustainability concerns and budget constraints have led many to phase out traditional freebies like pens, notebooks, and water bottles. Some firms have replaced them with QR codes leading to prize draws, while others have scrapped giveaways altogether, opting instead for digital engagement tools.

Students care about sustainability, but often when it comes down to it, they still want something to take away.

Several businesses shared creative alternatives, such as interactive stand experiences, sign-ups for exclusive webinars, or offering practical career tools like CV workshops instead of physical freebies. The consensus? The best approach is one that balances sustainability with meaningful engagement.

We asked the employer community:

### Are you offering merchandise when at university campuses?



## What's Next for Campus Engagement?

The discussion wrapped up with a focus on the future. With employers increasingly looking for ways to engage with students beyond the traditional careers fair model, several key trends emerged:

- **More targeted engagement:**

Companies are shifting away from generalist events towards partnerships with universities that align with their hiring needs.

- **Hybrid Models:**

A mix of virtual and in-person engagement allows for broader reach while keeping costs manageable.

- **Sustainable recruitment:**

Organisations are exploring new ways to attract students without the need for wasteful giveaways.

- **Greater involvement from business teams:**

Sending employees, rather than just recruiters, is helping to create more meaningful interactions.

While there's no one-size-fits-all answer to campus engagement, one thing is clear: employers are rethinking their approach, experimenting with new ideas, and focusing on long-term impact over short-term visibility. And if this roundtable is anything to go by, the future of campus engagement is looking a lot more strategic, sustainable, and student-focused.

Our thanks to everyone who attended and gave valuable insight in the sessions.

Now in our third year, the Roundtable has seen huge success in gathering employers to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing early talent recruitment.



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