

BROOK ST.

IS THE PAPER CEILING HOLDING YOUR ORGANISATION BACK?

Why you might want to go degree-optional





FIRST, THERE WAS DEGREE INFLATION...

Then, the talent shortage hit.

First, there was degree inflation. Employers wouldn't consider candidates without a degree even though their daily work didn't require one. Then, the talent shortage hit. Despite an overall gloomy labour market, our research shows that:

76% of UK hiring managers still report difficulty finding skilled talent.

From an oversupply of talent to a shortage, something's got to give, and increasingly that something is the degree requirement. When you open the gate to those without a university degree, you'll not only bring in more candidates, you'll also cultivate a richer tapestry of ideas and experiences that benefits all parties.

CLEARLY, THE TALENT IS OUT THERE.

Employers in many industries are discovering the benefits of dropping the university degree requirement: manufacturing, non-clinical health care, IT, education, even finance. This should be good news to the 51% of UK workers without a university degree. Individuals without a degree can still earn +£30,000 a year for certain roles, such as skilled trades. This is above the median income of university graduates.

If you're on the fence about making the move, consider the repercussions of leaving a job open for too long:

Escalating costs

A prolonged talent search means that recruiting costs keep piling up.

Inability to reach company goals

Unfinished projects can quickly translate to missed goals and, potentially, a decline in production or profitability.

Lowered morale amongst remaining employees

Those called on to fill in for a departing colleague may be overtaxed, which is likely to affect morale over time.

Knowledge transfer gaps

When experienced employees leave, projects often slow down. Colleagues rarely have the same level of knowledge, or sufficient time to take on extra work.



51% of UK workers do not have a university degree

THE BENEFITS ARE REAL.

Waiving the degree requirement isn't practical in all instances, of course, but in many cases, a degree should be treated as a "nice to have" instead of a requirement.

Cultivating a wider variety of candidates will provide benefits you may not have anticipated:



Real-world experience

A candidate who's been on the job for a while instead of in a classroom may be more likely to hit the ground running.



Fine-tuned skills

Many workers without university degrees may possess qualifications that closely align with the job they'll be doing.



Diverse viewpoints

Building a team of workers from different walks of life and experience sparks true innovation.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR.



1.

Equivalent work experience

Many individuals gain valuable skills and knowledge through hands-on experience in their fields. This practical expertise can often surpass what is learned in a traditional classroom setting. Employers should recognise and value this experience as it directly translates to job performance.



2.

Associate degrees and certifications

Community colleges and vocational schools offer courses and qualifications that can be highly relevant to specific industries. These programmes are often more focused and practical, providing students with the skills they need to excel in their chosen fields.



3.

Soft skills

Skills like communication, teamwork, adaptability and problem-solving are key indicators of adaptability and learning readiness. Some candidates may feature these skills on their CVs, but others can be explored during the hiring process.



4.

Academic achievements and volunteering

Academic achievements outside of a university degree, such as specialised courses or extracurricular activities, can be indicative of a candidate's capabilities. Extracurricular or volunteer work can be a great showcase for tech skills or leadership abilities.

EXPECT TO RESKILL.

If you do hire someone who doesn't "fit the cookie-cutter mould," you'll have to invest in a training or upskilling programme. There are scores of free or low-cost options available, either in person or online.

Third-party options: There are many existing online learning programmes offered by organisations, businesses and educational institutions. It's likely one of these offers the type of training your team needs.

Create your own curriculum: If you don't find a suitable solution from a third-party source, you can create your own programme, perhaps leveraging online courses and blending them with workshops and hands-on learning.

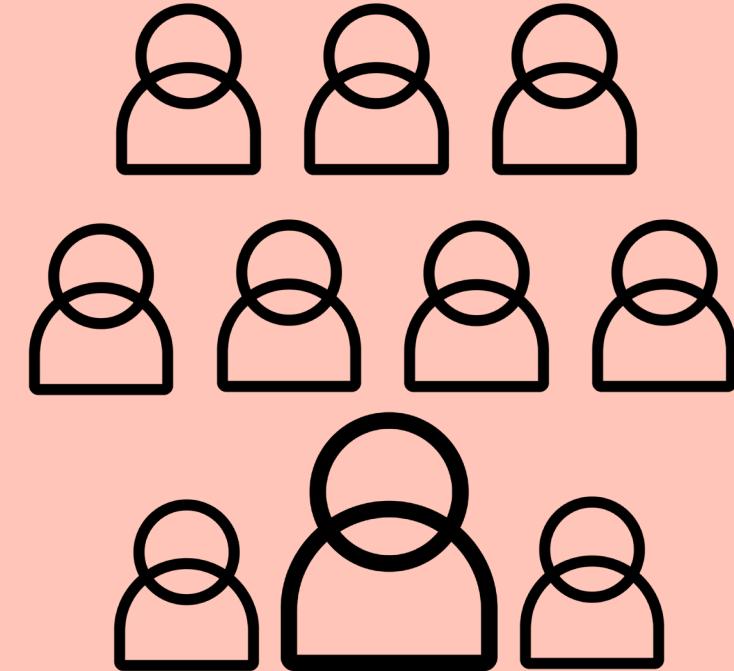
Whichever route you choose, make sure that your programme aligns with business objectives and is flexible enough to meet the needs of all learners. One effective approach is micro-learning, where units are broken down into easily digestible chunks.



GRADUATES STILL NEEDED.

The long-term outlook still favours graduates over non-graduates, with overall expected lifetime earnings growing with each step on the educational ladder. However, there are some very notable exceptions—including Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Both of these uber-successful men dropped out of college, never to return.

The tech industry, in particular, seems receptive to alternative educational backgrounds. For example, Fortune's Future 50 list highlights innovative companies poised for long-term growth despite global challenges. A full 10% of the CEOs on this list did not graduate from university, signalling that technical expertise and visionary leadership often outweigh formal education.



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A FINAL THOUGHT.

About the only downside to dropping the degree requirement is the likelihood you'll receive many more applicants.

But in a talent shortage, is this really a disadvantage?

For a shortcut to a pipeline of qualified talent, find out [what Brook Street can do for you.](#)

[Contact us](#)

