How to Attract Promising Talent

Recruiting talented engineers is not easy, as Bayer has to compete with many other companies at its various sites. The strategy to show prospective employees what makes Bayer so attractive is succeeding. The United States is a case in point.

Any company supplying products to the health care and agricultural sectors and whose materials we encounter in many areas of daily life is just great!” Meredith Boyd is really enthusiastic when she talks about Bayer’s range of products and how they have improved people’s lives. Basically, this is the very reason why she submitted an application for practical training at the company back in 2011 – with success. The future chemical engineer spent 12 weeks learning all the various aspects of MDI production, an important starting material for rigid polyurethane foams, used, for example, to insulate refrigerators and buildings. “I learned a lot,” Boyd recalls from her summer at Bayer MaterialScience’s Baytown site in 2011. She also met many nice colleagues, who were extremely helpful in explaining everything and showing her the ropes. They were friendly and fun to be with too.

Meredith Boyd could actually imagine working for Bayer after completing her Bachelor’s degree. And her talks with Human Resources staff made it clear that the company also showed great interest in her as well. She appeared to have good prospects for a job at Bayer Technology Services – Bayer’s portal of entry for young engineers.

So, she lost no time in applying for a fulltime position in the fall of 2011. After receiving a firm job offer following an interview in November, she stopped all further efforts to find employment elsewhere. “Obviously, I applied to other companies as well in order to keep as many options open as possible,” she explains. “But I really only wanted to go to Bayer.”

Meredith Boyd ultimately moved from the Northeastern corner of the United States to Houston in June 2012. Since then she commutes every day to Baytown, located in the eastern part of the city. She is particularly pleased to have ended up with Bayer Technology Services within the Bayer Group. “We support all of the other subgroups and, as such, we cover the entire diversity of the Group in terms of content,” says Meredith. In fact, her initial projects highlighted the broad spectrum of her new employer. The first challenge involved a recombinant factor VIII product for the treatment of hemophilia A, manufactured by the subgroup Bayer HealthCare. Meredith Boyd’s task was to take care of the safety aspects of a modified production process introduced at the company’s site in Berkeley, California.

In the meantime, she is back at Bayer MaterialScience in Baytown. Here, too, she is concerned with plant safety. Among other things, Boyd is working on measures to prevent overpressure-induced incidents, as well as coming up with countermeasures to help in case such emergencies nevertheless occur.

The fact that Meredith Boyd chose Bayer of her own accord is a strike of luck for Roxanne Williams. Among other responsibilities, the Human Resources (HR) Business Partner at Bayer Technology Services in the United States is charged with hiring talented young engineers. And they do not always stumble onto the company on their own. “Many people still only associate Bayer with Aspirin and have no idea that the Group offers such a wide range of assignments for engineers,” explains the HR expert. Depending on the various regions of the U.S., there can be

Even after two years with Bayer, Elias Keedy still has the chance to learn something new every day – and not just at the time of planned turnarounds.
BMS Baytown Vision and Values

We will be recognized as the premier Bayer MaterialScience manufacturing site.

As “One Business -- One Team” we will deliver the best goods and services to the global business with an urgency for proactive change that consistently demonstrates:

- Leading safety & environmental performance
- Reliable and efficient operations
- Competitive, superior quality materials that drive market growth
- Innovative technology & process advancements

We will accomplish our vision through a “can do” attitude and work culture that values our people and our community.
lots of other companies that are considered potentially attractive employers. Specifically the Gulf Coast area of Texas, where Baytown is located, is teeming with oil and gas companies. “It is quite obvious that they need engineers,” says Williams. “However, we have to make an active effort to explain that Bayer also employs engineers.” It is equally important to show that the range of engineering work at Bayer is much wider than it is in the oil and gas industries.

That is why the team of recruiters with representatives from all of the Bayer subgroups has concentrated on spreading this message specifically among prospective engineers at universities. “A number of our engineers will be retiring in the coming years,” says Williams to stress the importance of this strategy. “With this in mind, we have to start early to ensure we have enough adequate engineering talent to feed the pipeline.”

The U.S. team is part of a global Recruiting & Development Platform. Representatives from each of the Bayer subgroups, together with managers from Bayer Technology Services, determine jointly in this team how many engineers with which qualifications will be required in the years ahead. Based on this information, the active search for new employees then begins. For some three years, the recruiting team has even intensified its activities. “In the next years many colleagues will reach the age at which people in the States can begin to think about retirement,” explains Williams.

Roxanne Williams wants to attract good engineers to Bayer.

“The case of Meredith Boyd shows that you don’t always have to search too far away to find good people! “We look very closely whether there are suitable candidates among the many summer interns who come to Bayer every year – and if so, we’ll make them an offer at the end of their internship,” says Williams. Nor do they wait to see if new engineers come across the company on their own.

Another method of targeting young talent is through selective job ads. This is how Dr. Jim Green found his way to Bayer Technology Services in Berkeley. “Following several different internships in the biotech sector, I wanted to specialize in the field of biologicals after earning my PhD, which is why the position at Bayer in Berkeley caught my eye,” the chemical engineer says. This is where Bayer HealthCare produces the recombinant factor VIII treatment – a biological. He interviewed for the job in Berkeley in May 2011 and moved to the West coast two weeks later. As he is an engineer, he started with Bayer Technology Services, which assists Bayer HealthCare with several projects. It is this service function, involving project-related thinking and designing and testing process modules, that has appealed to him ever since – as well as the fact that he will have the opportunity to spend some time in Germany in 2013.

To specifically target prospective graduates, the team of cross-subgroup recruiters has strengthened its presence at the career fairs held at prestigious universities in the U.S. Employees manning the information booths not only present details of the company as a whole, but also inform future graduates about the interesting career opportunities at Bayer. This includes working conditions, where Bayer scores particularly high thanks to a number of measures ensuring a good work-life balance. Compared with other employers in the United States, Bayer offers, for example, relatively generous vacation time, alternative work schedules and parental leave. In addition, employees who participate in charitable activities receive paid leave via Bayer’s volunteering program.

Elias Keedy became acquainted with Bayer at one of these university events. Born in Lebanon, Keedy transferred to the University of Houston in 2008 to gain a Masters in industrial engineering after earning a Bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering in Beirut. “I immediately noticed Bayer’s scientific spirit at the booth and I liked that,” says Keedy, recalling his impressions at the career fair. He also liked the fact that the people took the time for him and his questions. As a Lebanese student in the U.S., the international orientation of the German company also appealed to him – as well as the importance of the products. “All of them innovations that change
A GLOBAL NETWORK SEARCHING FOR TALENTED PEOPLE

Bayer Technology Services is the worldwide entry portal for engineers employed within the Bayer Group. The service company hires young talent based on the expected demand in the individual geographic regions and subgroups. They usually work within Bayer Technology Services for several years before many of them transfer to other parts of the Group, depending on specific needs of the subgroups. By this time, almost all of them will have gained experience with at least one of these subgroups – through projects carried out by Bayer Technology Services at their various locations.

In their search for talented young engineers, the Human Resources experts at Bayer Technology Services leave nothing to chance. Instead of waiting to see who chooses the company, they actively cultivate close relations with numerous prestigious universities throughout the world. In Germany ten technical universities form the core of this network; a further nine universities are targeted in the United States, including the University of Houston in Texas mentioned in the main article. More recently, Bayer Technology Services has expanded its contacts to top Asian universities. In China alone six renowned universities belong to the network. With the diversity of these contacts, the company can be sure to obtain young talent with a wide spectrum of knowledge, skills and personal qualities for the Bayer Group.

By far not everyone begins with a permanent position. Every year some 100 young or future engineers complete an internship program with Bayer Technology Services. This gives both sides the opportunity to get to know one another.

people’s lives in a positive way. I could immediately see myself wanting to be a part of this company.”

He applied for a position in January 2011 and interviewed for a job in March. By July, Keedy had started his first day of work at the Baytown site, where he is also participating in the new Engineer program. In the first six months, he “only concentrated on learning”, and everyone helped. He now works at the Bayer MaterialScience’s MDI production facility where Meredith Boyd spent her internship. Keedy belongs to the team working on process control and troubleshooting. He continues to learn something new every day and is very happy. As a newly engaged engineer, he is closely supported by his management and HR. This includes special courses, for example, to improve his communication skills. Apart from that, he now spends little time in the classroom. He is pleased about this arrangement because he prefers to learn by working directly with the machines – in other words, learning by doing.

Keedy likes the fact that after just half a year he was already allowed to meet with customers. And he also finds it preferable that the trainee phase does not follow a strict pattern of two months here and then four weeks there. “I am generally able to steer things in the direction I want, based on my own interests,” says Keedy. For example, he himself was allowed to choose the plant where he was supposed to gain process control experience. He also has a mentor, an experienced employee at the job with whom he meets twice a month to discuss all sorts of aspects of the work.

After the two years it may well be that Keedy will transfer to a different Bayer company, which is actually the typical path for many engineers who begin at Bayer Technology Services. He would like that, but in any case, he plans to complete his PhD studies before the end of the year.

Roxanne Williams is happy about the success of her recruitment efforts. “We hired 17 engineers in 2011 and 2012, and there will be 10 new hires over the course of this year.” This is a good number to cover demand for the near future, but the recruiting efforts will have to continue. Williams: “The only way to prevent the potential loss of know-how is to start early with the hiring and development of young talent.”