



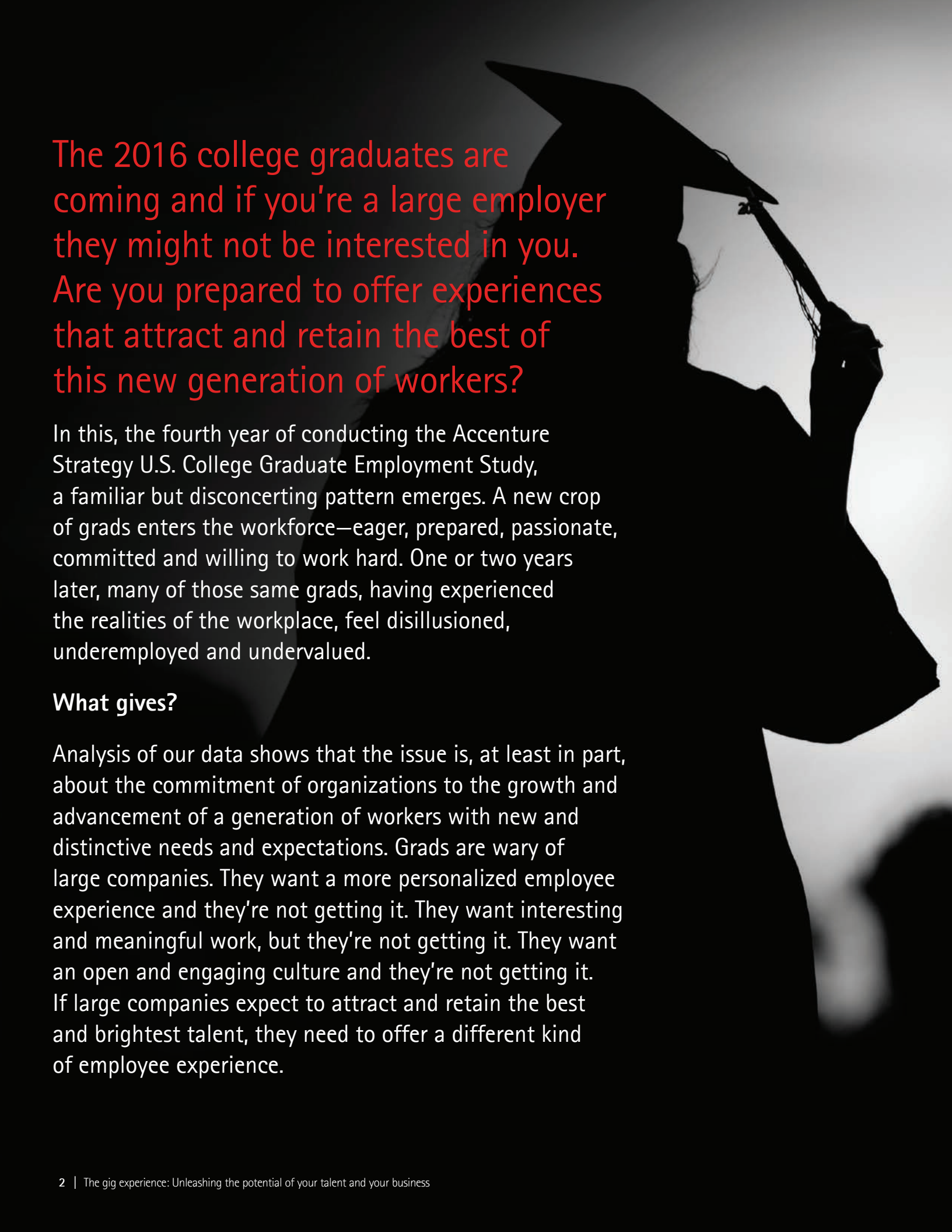
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The gig experience:  
Unleashing the  
potential of your  
talent and your  
business

High performance. Delivered.

Insights from the Accenture  
Strategy 2016 U.S. College  
Graduate Employment Study

By David Smith, Katherine LaVelle,  
Mary Lyons and Yaarit Silverstone

A black and white silhouette of a person wearing a graduation cap and gown, holding the tassel of the cap. The person is positioned on the right side of the frame, facing left. The background is a light, hazy gradient.

The 2016 college graduates are coming and if you're a large employer they might not be interested in you. Are you prepared to offer experiences that attract and retain the best of this new generation of workers?

In this, the fourth year of conducting the Accenture Strategy U.S. College Graduate Employment Study, a familiar but disconcerting pattern emerges. A new crop of grads enters the workforce—eager, prepared, passionate, committed and willing to work hard. One or two years later, many of those same grads, having experienced the realities of the workplace, feel disillusioned, underemployed and undervalued.

### **What gives?**

Analysis of our data shows that the issue is, at least in part, about the commitment of organizations to the growth and advancement of a generation of workers with new and distinctive needs and expectations. Grads are wary of large companies. They want a more personalized employee experience and they're not getting it. They want interesting and meaningful work, but they're not getting it. They want an open and engaging culture and they're not getting it. If large companies expect to attract and retain the best and brightest talent, they need to offer a different kind of employee experience.

# University grads are passionate, committed and willing to work hard but maybe not for your organization

Passion and commitment are more than apparent across this year's university graduates. Asked why they chose their primary major in college, 69 percent said it was because they were passionate about their area of study. By contrast, just 42 percent said it was because there are abundant job opportunities in that field and only 23 percent indicated that their choice was influenced by how much money they could make.

Despite an often widespread belief that millennials are serial job hoppers, 69 percent of this year's grads expect to stay with their first job for at least three years. One-third indicated they would stay for five years or longer.

They expect to work hard, too. More than half (51 percent) are willing to have meetings or conference calls outside standard business hours. Fifty two percent are willing to work in the evenings or on weekends. And almost three-fourths of grads (72 percent) are willing to relocate or move to another state for a job offer.

What kind of employee experience is desired by new and recent university graduates? Corporate culture matters to this generation. In fact, 70 percent of new grads and 74 percent of recent grads would choose to work at an organization with an engaging, positive social atmosphere even if it meant accepting a lower salary.

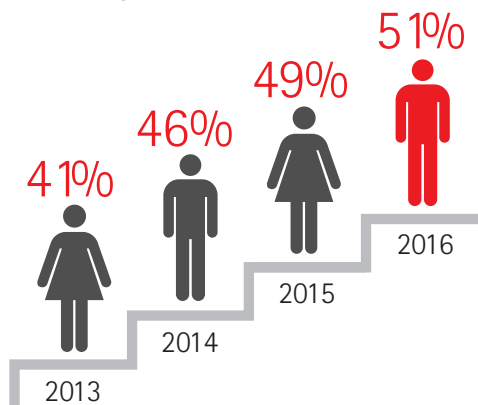
Almost all (92 percent) of 2016 graduates say it is important to be employed at an organization that demonstrates social responsibility. Salary and benefits aside, 30 percent of 2016 graduates said they believe opportunities to make a difference or meaningful work are important for an employer to offer.



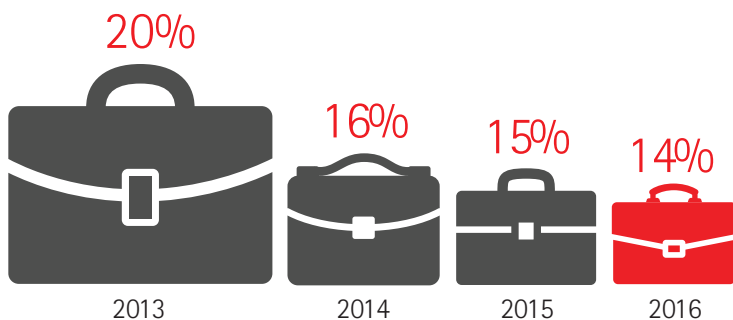
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## New and recent grads are looking for a "me" experience

Many recent grads feel underemployed and disillusioned. The percentage of recent grads who feel underemployed—working at a job that actually does not require their degree—has risen 10 percentage points (41 percent to 51 percent) over the past three years.



Grads believe that large companies are one of the culprits. In fact, 44 percent of new grads want to work either for a medium-sized business or a small, entrepreneurial or start-up business. Just 14 percent of this year's grads want to work for a large corporation—a number that has steadily fallen over the years.



What's up with that?

Our analysis suggests that the next generation of employees fear being lost in the dense forest of a large corporation. They are concerned their individual needs and talents will be neither noticed nor nurtured. They are looking for more of a "me" experience where their passions will be acknowledged and their career path customized to their interests.

**More than half** of recent graduates surveyed in 2016 feel they are underemployed—a number that has climbed steadily

**Only 1 in 7** graduates wants to work for a large company

## To be relevant, organizations need to provide multiple career paths and varied, engaging experiences

Coming over the horizon is a new development that could radically alter the relationship of employers and workers: what's being called the "gig economy." In this workforce arrangement, organizations contract with workers only for particular assignments or "gigs," rather than offering ongoing, full-time employment.

That's a development to which our new college grads say: "No thank you." Contractual, freelance work arrangements appear to be a non-starter among newer hires and this year's job seekers.

Instead, grads are looking for stability and a longer-term commitment from employers. A majority of new grads (55 percent) seek full-time employment with an organization so they can take advantage of health insurance and other benefits. That number increases to 62 percent among recent grads—those who left university in 2014 or 2015. Just 3 percent of new grads and 2 percent of recent grads prefer to work as a freelancer or independent contractor.

But the gig concept is intriguing if applied to internal corporate experiences. What if advancement in a company is less about "ladders" and more about "jungle gyms" that offers many different ways to get to the top? Instead of gig contracts, what if companies could offer gig experiences internally—project-based work, lots of lateral movement, lots of on-the-job learning, coaching and real-time feedback, and lots of ways to advance?



Grads are looking for stability and longer-term commitment from employers



For organizations wanting to attract the best and brightest, creating an internal gig experience offers compelling benefits: better learning experiences, better variety in career development and the intriguing possibility of keeping top talent engaged in the ever-changing strategy of an organization.

Education is seen as a key to advancement by this year's grads. They are increasingly indicating they will require continuing education in the form of advanced degrees to further their career—37 percent of 2016 graduates compared to 27 percent of 2015 graduates. But they're looking for a different educational experience from their employers. Grads may want some formal training. But the corporate training environment is much different today, emphasizing on-the-job experiences, coaching, collaboration and self-directed learning—learning strategies appropriate for a gig approach. Sixty-eight percent of 2016 grads expect to pursue on-the-job learning, while only 50 percent expect to pursue employer-provided formal training. This gap is even larger among recent grads: 58 percent expect on-the-job learning, with opportunities for real-time coaching and feedback, while only 38 percent look to formal training.



The corporate training environment is much different today, emphasizing on-the-job experiences, coaching, collaboration and self-directed learning

# How to create an internal gig experience

Graduates crave a culture that will both accelerate their growth and fulfill their passions. By creating a project- and team-based environment internally, organizations can provide more flexibility and opportunities to work across different roles and environments—multiple, project-based experiences with both lateral and vertical advancement and a small company “feel.”

New grads value the security of a permanent position, but at the same time are looking to build their skills through project-based positions and job rotation.

Here are some to-dos that can help employers deliver an internal gig experience.

## Hyper-personalize your talent strategy

In a world where consumers can purchase everything customized, digital natives do not accept a one-size-fits-all approach to development and advancement from their employer. Tailor and implement a comprehensive entry-level talent strategy centered around a personalized and individualized approach.

## Orient employee value proposition, hiring and career paths toward a dynamic work environment

Traditionally, hiring has been oriented to specific job profiles—a single flight plan. Today, employers need to look for talent that has the capability to be flexible and can work in different roles and environments. Organizations looking to create a more agile workforce, as well as new grads looking for multiple experiences, can benefit from this approach.



## Connect employees' work to the purpose of the organization

As noted, the feeling of being underemployed—working at a job that actually does not require their college degree—is rampant among recently hired graduates. Not every assignment can necessarily stretch an employee, but providing better job rotation and roles connected to the purpose of the organization can offer a more fulfilling employee experience.

## Re-imagine the learning and development experience

Learning needs to be more informal and experiential. Training and development must be hyper-personalized, as well—moving employees to different assignments in a team-oriented environment, supported with coaching and conversations geared towards development.

## Think "agile"

The world today has moved to sprints and scrums and just-in-time delivery and design thinking. These experiences can now be extrapolated into all areas of the company to create a talent strategy that is more agile.

## Provide a small-team feel

Create a sense of ownership and empowerment, and ensure you provide a positive atmosphere and small-team feel with personal attention to new grads.

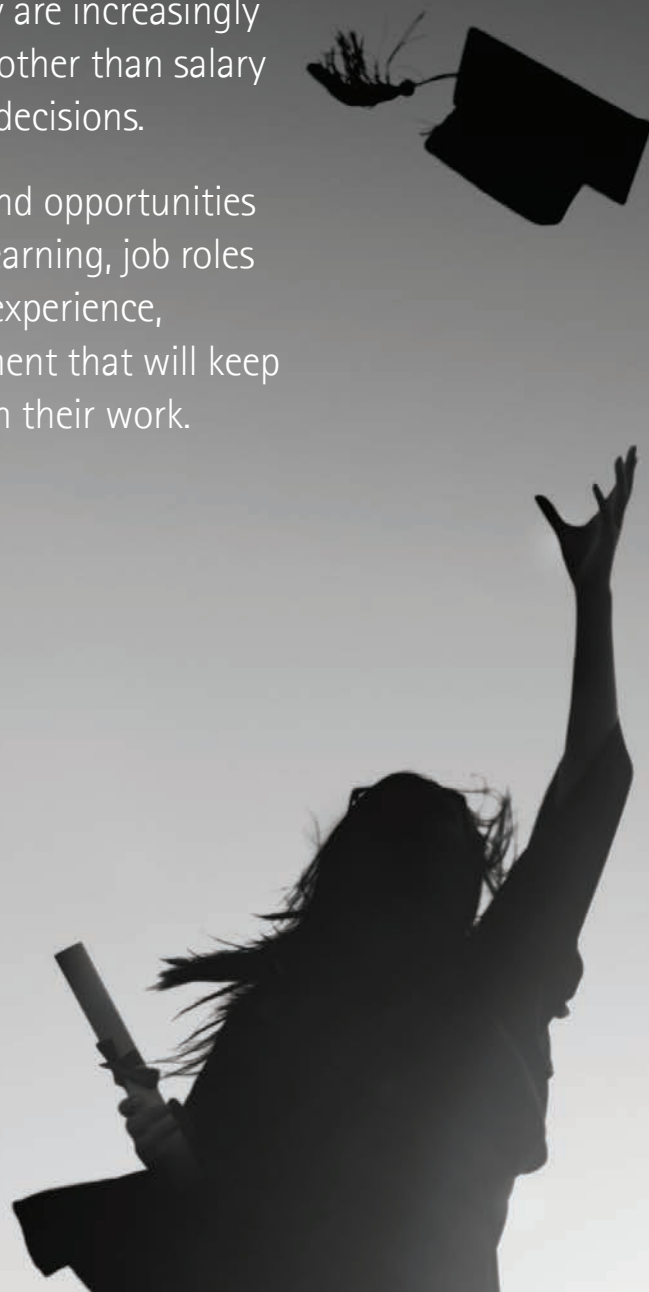




# Creating an engaged and challenged workforce

The 2016 university graduates are committed, passionate and optimistic about their job prospects, but are increasingly feeling underemployed. Grads are seeking employers that offer challenging and meaningful work, a commitment to corporate social responsibility, ongoing learning opportunities and a fun workplace culture. This new crop of talent is especially conscientious and seeking a fulfilling employee experience in their first job. They are increasingly looking at workplace culture and benefits other than salary as important factors when making career decisions.

Employers will need to provide a culture and opportunities attractive to digital natives. By orienting learning, job roles and advancement toward an internal gig experience, organizations can offer a type of employment that will keep new employees engaged and satisfied with their work.



## Join the conversation

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## About Accenture

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## About Accenture Strategy

Accenture Strategy operates at the intersection of business and technology. We bring together our capabilities in business, technology, operations and function strategy to help our clients envision and execute industry-specific strategies that support enterprise-wide transformation. Our focus on issues related to digital disruption, competitiveness, global operating models, talent and leadership helps drive both efficiencies and growth. For more information, follow @AccentureStrat or visit [www.accenture.com/strategy](http://www.accenture.com/strategy).

## About the research

In March 2016, Accenture Strategy conducted an online survey in the United States of 1,005 students graduating from college in 2016 and entering the job market, and 1,013 participants who graduated college in 2014 or 2015.