

Sherwin-Williams Primary Research Report

Krista Mathis, Savannah Frase, Chase Edwards, Charles Howe, & Madeline Connolly

The University of Akron

Sure-Win Williams

Sherwin-Williams Primary Research Report

Summary of Secondary Research

The purpose of the secondary research was to gather information from a variety of sources regarding recruitment and retention strategies. After gathering the information, the findings were applied to The Sherwin-Williams Company in order to recommend tactics to improve recruitment efforts in the organization.

First, the generations currently in the workforce were researched. Primarily, baby boomer, generation X, and generation Y (Millennials) were taken into account since these are the groups that contain the prime hiring targets for Sherwin. Research showed that each generation has differing preferences and respond differently to different types of recruitment tactics. In particular, Baby Boomers and Millennials have drastically different goals in regards to salary, job longevity, and types of experiences desired. Therefore, each group should be engaged differently by recruiters.

The second topic researched was the importance of employer branding. It was discovered that better company branding often leads to more successful recruitment efforts. The company's brand can be developed in many official capacities, such as social media campaigns. However, more casual mediums, including employee word of mouth, can be just as, or even more, effective on Generation X and Millennials.

Implications of Secondary Research

Upon the request of The Sherwin Williams Company, researchers analyzed the current recruitment practices used to engage Management Training Program (MTP) candidates.

Researchers compared the secondary research findings to the current practices of the company, and several potential inconsistencies arose, especially concerning branding efforts.

The first aspect questioned was brand familiarity. The secondary research showed that familiarity with a company's brand was crucial to recruiting the correct candidates. Researchers learned that Human Resources personnel at Sherwin believe that the MTP candidate pool in Northeast Ohio is very familiar with the brand. Researchers, however, were unsure that this claim was true.

The second aspect of the brand that was questioned was reputation. Prior research shows that the presence of a good reputation is monumental in attracting the best candidates. Personnel communicated to researchers that the candidate pool thinks very highly of the company, but researchers questioned the validity of this stance.

Lastly, researchers wanted to learn more about the perceptions of the Management Training Program. The researchers themselves found the program extremely unattractive, and they wondered if other potential candidates had differing opinions.

Brand familiarity, brand reputation, and attractiveness of the MTP were the basis of the primary research conducted on behalf of Sherwin. Researchers wanted to explore these areas and assemble recommendations on how the company could improve its recruitment abilities.

Conducting Primary Research

Survey: Testing Brand Familiarity and Reputation

A survey was conducted on students at The University of Akron in order to learn more about Sherwin's branding success among potential MTP candidates. The survey evaluated factors including:

1. Student knowledge of the company,
2. The influence that word of mouth has on students, and
3. Student interest in working at Sherwin.

In order to gauge how well Sherwin is branding itself, many of the questions asked participants to compare Sherwin with other local employers. Researchers chose to set up the survey in this way because companies are constantly competing with one another for job candidates. The goal of the comparison format was to emulate the competitive labor market that new graduates are entering into. The local companies that were selected for comparison were The J.M. Smucker Company, Northwestern Mutual, JOANN Stores, and The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

A total of 83 students participated in the survey. The vast majority of participants were business majors, and roughly 25% were from other colleges within the University.

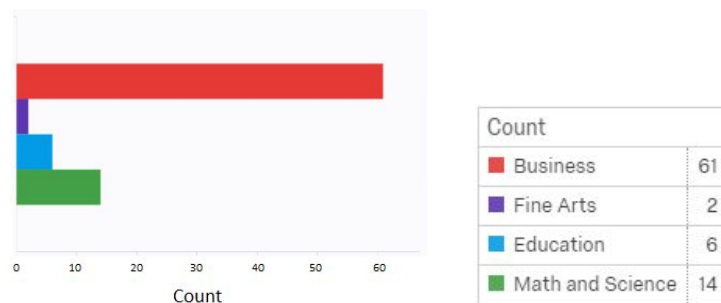


Figure 1. The breakdown of survey participants by college within the University.

The first question of the survey related to company brand as a whole. Students ranked the five employers by attractiveness. The number one represented the most attractive and five was the least attractive. The results are shown in **Figure 2**. Each bar represents the amount of times a company was ranked at that position. The J.M. Smucker Company, represented in purple, was chosen as the number one ranked company the most. Sherwin, represented in red, was ranked number three the most frequently.

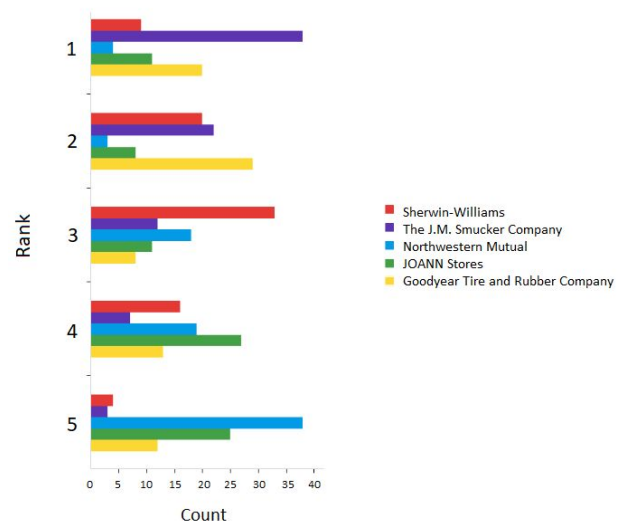


Figure 2. The results of company attractiveness rankings.

Additionally, it was chosen as number three the most out of all of the companies. (Almost half of all participants did this.) Students ranked Sherwin as the most attractive the 4th most out of the five companies. This may indicate that they don't really see it as the best, especially if all but one of the other companies were ranked number one more than Sherwin.

The next question helped determine student's interest in working at Sherwin Williams by asking "How likely would you be to pursue an interview for an internship?" Unlike the last question, there was no ranking involved. Therefore, participants could, for example, select "very likely" for more than just one company. **Table 1**, shows the results. Roughly 44% of the students responded with "likely" or "very likely." Sherwin was not far behind Goodyear with about 56% and Smucker's with approximately 57%.

		Very Unlikely		Unlikely		Moderate		Likely		Very Likely	
1	Sherwin-Williams	18.39%	16	12.64%	11	25.29%	22	28.74%	25	14.94%	13
2	JOANN Stores	19.77%	17	17.44%	15	30.23%	26	20.93%	18	11.63%	10
3	Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	15.12%	13	13.95%	12	15.12%	13	19.77%	17	36.05%	31
4	Northwestern Mutual	29.07%	25	25.58%	22	20.93%	18	16.28%	14	8.14%	7
5	The J.M. Smucker Company	13.25%	11	9.64%	8	20.48%	17	22.89%	19	33.73%	28

Table 1. Results of how likely students are to pursue an interview for an internship.

Similarly, **Table 2** shows how likely a student is to accept a job with these companies. Again Sherwin ranked well, with around 56% of the students responding with "likely" or "very likely." They were close behind Smucker's (65%) and Goodyear (66%). The results of this question are very similar to the last.

		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Moderate	Likely	Very Likely
1	Sherwin-Williams	13.95% 12	5.81% 5	24.42% 21	33.72% 29	22.09% 19
2	JOANN Stores	16.47% 14	16.47% 14	27.06% 23	27.06% 23	12.94% 11
3	Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	9.41% 8	5.88% 5	18.82% 16	24.71% 21	41.18% 35
4	Northwestern Mutual	23.53% 20	14.12% 12	23.53% 20	24.71% 21	14.12% 12
5	The J.M. Smucker Company	9.41% 8	5.88% 5	20.00% 17	24.71% 21	40.00% 34

Table 2

Next, students were asked about their familiarity with each company. Options ranged from “very little knowledge” to “very high knowledge.”

Results are shown in **Figure 3**.

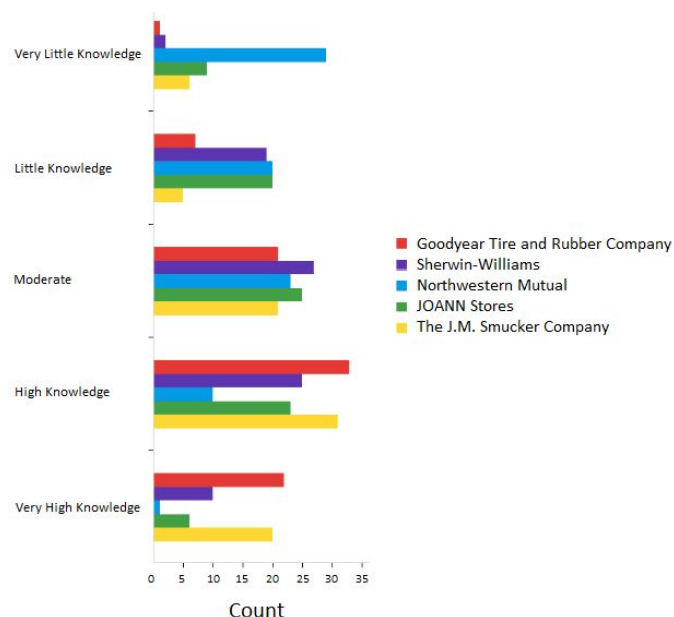


Figure 3. The level of knowledge students have about each company.

Sherwin’s most responded awareness was “moderate” and it was closely followed by high knowledge. Relatedly students were asked if they were aware that Sherwin-Williams is a local company with the headquarters in Cleveland. The results were almost an even split between “yes” and “no.” This may suggest inconsistent findings between the two questions.

To evaluate the presence of word of mouth, students were asked how many people they have heard talking about each company on campus. Options included 0-5 people, 6-10 people, or 11+ people. **Table 3** shows the results.

		0-5		6-10		11+	
1	JOANN Stores	88.24%	75	9.41%	8	2.35%	2
2	The J.M. Smucker Company	25.88%	22	34.12%	29	40.00%	34
3	Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	19.28%	16	34.94%	29	45.78%	38
4	Northwestern Mutual	67.86%	57	26.19%	22	5.95%	5
5	Sherwin-Williams	67.86%	57	22.62%	19	9.52%	8

Table 3. The number of people participants have heard talking about each company.

Sherwin fell short in this category, with 57 of the 83 students (68%) responding with 0-5 people. Both Goodyear and Smucker's had at least 40% respond with 11+. The results suggest that not many students are talking about Sherwin on campus.

Focus group

The survey was very useful in revealing trends, but more detail was needed in order to understand why Sherwin- Williams was poorly rated. Additionally, we wanted to understand how students perceived the Management Sales Training Program (MTP). To accomplish this, a focus group was conducted. The group discussion focused primarily on Sherwin- Williams instead of incorporating the other companies addressed in the survey.

Age	Count
18	2
19	2
20	1
21	2
22	1
23	2
24	1
27	1
Did not disclose.	1

The group was composed of 12 current students and one recent graduate with a median age of 21 years old. The exact breakdown of age is shown in **Table 4**. The student's area of study was very diverse compared to the sample size of the survey. The exact break down of the participant's majors is shown in **Figure 4**. Business majors made up only 8% of the group. The number of years the students had spent in college was also captured and is **Table 4**. shown in **Figure 5**. None of the participants had ever worked for Sherwin- Williams, and only two people knew someone who worked at the company.

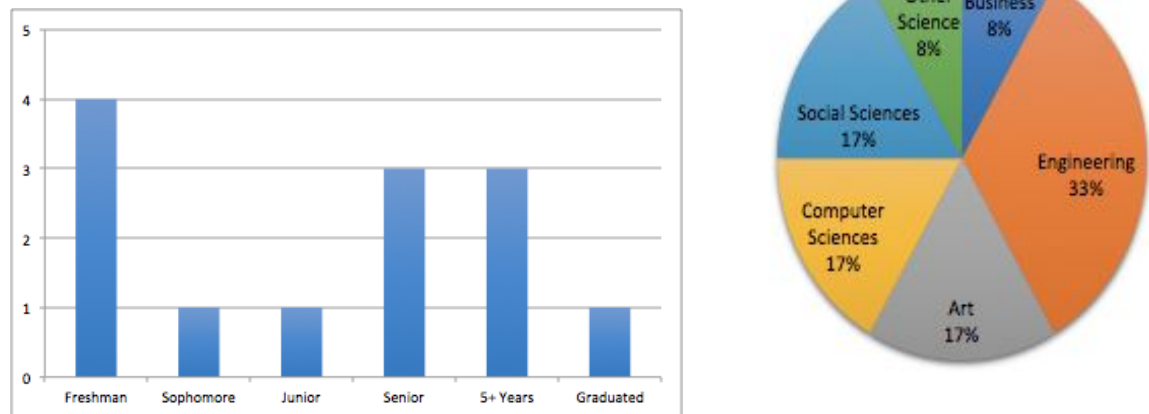


Figure 5. The age breakdown of focus group participants.

In order to understand the student's thoughts on the company and MTP, the following questions were asked. Additionally, we wanted to know what advice students had for companies seeking involvement and publicity on campus.

- What do you know about Sherwin- Williams as an employer?
- Have you ever heard of the Management Sales Training Program (MTP)?
- What is appealing about this position?
- What is unappealing about this position?

- Have you ever seen Sherwin- Williams on campus before?
- What do you think a company should do to get involved and noticed on campus?

The focus group discussion revealed that students know very little about The Sherwin-Williams Company. When asked what they knew, all participants mentioned the word paint; a handful mentioned it was a national company; and even fewer mentioned that it was a known sponsor of the Cleveland Indians. All participants were unaware that the company is actually international. Only half knew that it is headquartered in Cleveland, supporting results from the survey. Additionally, no one was able to provide commentary on Sherwin's reputation as an employer. None had ever heard anything positive nor negative about the company.

Once we understood the general perception of the company, we distributed copies of the MTP job description, as well as a flyer used to advertise the position at career events. Participants were given time to read over the documentation. During the ensuing discussion, it was discovered that none of the participants had ever heard of this position before, even though Sherwin recruiters are targeting soon-to-be college graduates. Few students could identify appealing features of the role. One mentioned that they liked the prospect of relocation, one mentioned the opportunities for promotion, and another liked that the employer was not seeking a degree specific candidate. Another student expressed interest in the healthcare benefits described.

When asked to explain what was unappealing about the MTP, participants were much more interested in participating. Most of the feedback given involved one or more of the following topics:

1. Dislike at the mentioning of “self study modules”
2. Discontent that the position requires a college degree
3. Doubt that everyday responsibilities actually involve management practices
4. Unwillingness to be available to work evenings and on weekends

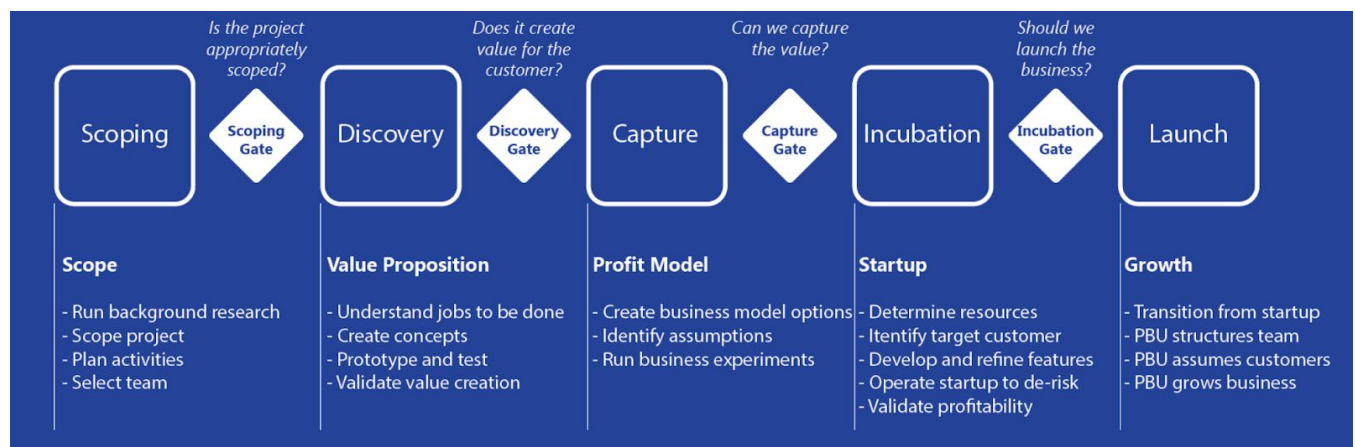
We theorize that most of these topics are unappealing only because of misunderstanding. For example, the self study modules are mentioned in the job description to inform candidates that help and training is available for individuals who have never held a role like in the MTP. Students, however, did not interpret the text in this way. Instead, they described a situation in which they repeatedly hit the spacebar of a keyboard to get through the required training. They viewed the training as a hassle rather than an asset.

Finally, participants were asked to provide tips for Sherwin- Williams on how to better recruit on campus. The group widely agreed on three general tactics. Firstly, they recommended that Sherwin hire a large number of interns. They explained that hearing student experiences at a company significantly influenced their decisions to apply for internships or full-time jobs. Secondly, the group suggested that Sherwin host, or at least sponsor, events on campus. Some of the students advocated for larger events, such as volunteer days, while others endorsed a series of smaller events. These might include mock interviews or a resume writing workshop. The final recommendation of the students was to simply advertise. Many suggested that the company take advantage of the digital signage located in many campus buildings.

Conclusion

Summary of Innovation Tools

The summary of innovation tools process model was provided to us by the Goodyear team. The model can be seen below for reference. The goal of this model is to help researchers create the best possible recommendations from the study and research. This model uses a specific process in order to come up with innovative solutions to the problems that Sherwin-Williams faces. The phases within this model, shown in **Figure 6**, include the scoping phase, discovery phase, capture phase, incubation phase, and launch phase.



The scoping phase deals with the background of the research and the project, as well as planning the activities for the project and selecting the team. Project researchers received background information on the issues from various presentations from Sherwin-Williams. These presentations explained the concerns Sherwin has with the recruitment and retention within the MTP. This is the area researchers chose to explore and improve.

The scope of the project included research on retention of different generations, staff word-of-mouth, e-recruitment, and other recruitment tactics. During this phase, general ideas for primary research activities were developed. A survey and a focus group were selected as the

mediums since they are both simple and effective methods for collecting the necessary data.

However, researchers originally wanted to send undercover shoppers into various

Sherwin-Williams stores to subtly interview workers. The goal of this strategy was to get honest opinions of the company in order to influence employee word of mouth and explore retention issues. Sherwin denied the proposal, so this research was not carried out.

Lastly within the scoping phase, the team was selected by the Honors Project Forum. Researchers considered the strengths and weaknesses of each team member to assign appropriate roles that each would excel at.

The next phase is the discovery phase which deals with the value proposition. The steps in this phase involve understanding the jobs to be done, creating concepts, prototyping and testing, and validating value creation. In this phase, the research team distributed the survey and held the focus group based on the research found during the scoping phase. This was when the hypotheses were tested.

After the discovery phase is the capture phase, which relates to the profit model. The steps in this phase are to create business model options, identify assumptions, and run business experiments. Based on the research, the create specific suggestions and options that Sherwin-Williams could implement. The assumptions made at this stage were that the sample size was large enough and that the students at the University of Akron were representative of the MTP candidate pool. Another assumption made was that what people say that they would do in a survey or focus group is actually what they would do in real life. For example when they would be willing to move. The step to run business experiments could not be performed due to research restraints set by Sherwin and the Honors Project Forum.

The last two phases of the innovation process are incubation and launch. These phases are explored in the subsequent sections of this paper.

Recommendations

Based on the focus group discussions, researchers decided it was best to split recommendations into three different categories. The first recommendation category consists of ways for Sherwin-Williams to get involved on college campuses. Some of the examples provided were made specifically for the University of Akron, but could be easily implemented at other universities. The second recommendation concerns how Sherwin can stand out on campus. The final recommendation involves improving the MTP.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Researchers recommend that Sherwin implement a “Day in the CBA” program at Akron, much like the J.M. Smucker Company does. For this event, Sherwin would have tables set up in the College of Business Administration (CBA) all day, with representatives from the company to talk about job and internship opportunities with students. Also, employees would go into classes to talk about working at Sherwin-Williams and encourage students to apply for the programs the company has to offer. Ideally, employees who are sent to talk to the classrooms would be alumni of the University so that they can relate and connect with students. Additionally, Sherwin should host additional presentations during the day about the Management Training Program.

Next, Sherwin should consider hosting a Sales Competition, similar to Deloitte's Accounting Competition. Sherwin would partner with the Fisher Institute for Professional Selling to offer an elective class for students. Eventually, Sherwin could partner with other Universities to expand the competition further. These classes would then form teams of five to seven people that would tackle a Sherwin-Williams sales challenge. At the end of the semester, the teams would present their solutions to the challenge to upper-management team members at the company. Prizes, which could include letters of recommendations and gift cards, would be awarded to the top three team presentations. Sherwin could use this competition to find prospective employees or interns, and the elective class could be open to all majors.

Another way Sherwin could get involved is by offering a Summer Leadership Program. This program would help students from all Universities gain valuable skills to help them stand out in the professional world. This Leadership Program would be held after the end of the spring semester in May. It would give participants an in-depth look at Sherwin-Williams as a company and as an employer. Employees of the company could come to the program to discuss their work and give students the chance to ask questions. Also, external speakers could be brought in to give participants tips on finding jobs, improving their resume, and other professional development advice. At the end of the program, Sherwin-Williams should encourage all participants to apply for internships, jobs, or the MTP.

RECOMMENDATION 2

In order to have a gain an advantage against other employers already established on campus, Sherwin should sponsor a large, signature event. For example, researchers envision the

company sponsoring a new kind of event called “Colors for a Cause Day.” This event would be run much like Make a Difference Day on Akron’s campus. Make a Difference Day is an event where student organizations and students come together to do service projects all over the Akron area. Colors for a Cause Day would pair students with Sherwin employees and send them to complete paint related service projects. These projects might include painting walls in a nursing home or a classroom in a low-income school district. Sherwin would need to provide paint, paint supplies, and possibly busing, snacks, and t-shirts to students who participate. This event would allow students to interact with Sherwin employees, and would allow the company to establish a better brand image within the community.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Lastly, Sherwin-Williams should focus on improving the job description of the MTP. Both the focus group and the researchers found the description to be very unclear. Researchers tried to clarify parts of the description with Sherwin-Williams employees, but found that different employees provided very different input.

Additionally, researchers suggest that the company consider allowing the trainees to choose when they want to move, which could be before the training, after the initial training, or after five years as it is now. This would allow trainees to pick where they want to end up working. For example, if a trainee wanted to end up in Ohio, Sherwin could send them to a different region, such as Chicago, for 6-12 months of training, then allow them to move back to a position in the Cleveland area.

Based on recommendations from the focus group, researchers also suggest that Sherwin consider creating a designated path for those with a Bachelors to go through the MTP and then into a position in their field, such as accounting or marketing.

Next Steps

The three recommendations of getting involved on campus, standing out on campus, and improving the Management Training Program are aimed to solve some of the issues the Sherwin Williams is having with their retention and recruitment efforts. In order to best implement these three recommendations, there must be action steps taken for each. The scope of work is defined and ongoing. Hopefully these recommendations can be implemented not only for the present, but the future.

To properly get the word out on campus, we propose to initiate a social media campaign on all major platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram). This campaign would begin three months prior to each event, and will feature one post per week on all five platforms. Additionally, an email marketing campaign should be established to directly reach out to students. Information will be gathered from the desired departments at the university so students can be emailed directly. Ideally, a two month campaign would be followed with a focused email every other week.

The final two means of advertising would be booths at job fairs and in class presenters. These will be a great way to get the word out through word of mouth. These booths will be set up at job fairs and other events, and the presenters will be alumni of the MTP that will speak

directly to CBA classes. In order to organize this effort, it is strongly recommended that a University Director should be hired to ensure that the programs run effectively and efficiently.

To help Sherwin-Williams stand out on campus for years to come, researcher would like to initiate a Colors for the Cause Day. This special day will not only promote the role of Sherwin Williams on campus, but be altruistic activities to help the local community. Researchers propose that five to seven members of the Sherwin Williams team partner with a student organization, fraternity, or sorority at the University of Akron. These representatives would also be responsible for finding a charitable client in the area in need of painting renovations. Through this partnership between Sherwin and the University of Akron students, a small competition will be held in order to determine who does the best job for their organization. At the completion of the work, an awards ceremony will take place to strengthen the community between Sherwin and the University. This will be a great opportunity for students to network with the current employees and to create heritage for the event for many years to come.

Researchers believe improving the management training program is a key to better success for Sherwin in the future. To clear up any confusion for the program, the job description needs to be re-written and gone over in-depth with the candidates. Additionally, each candidate should fill out a goal sheet during their initial interview outlining their goals for the program. This way everyone will operate under the same expectations. To accompany this, the new program must offer opportunities for training and shadow days at a corporate office at least once a month. This will allow trainees to experience corporate life; which is likely their ultimate goal. There should also be a way for exceptional candidates to test out of the program and move straight into the office. Based on the focus group research, this would be very attractive to

candidates. Finally, in order to better advertise the program, there needs to be online marketing implemented through recruiting sites such as Handshake and LinkedIn. This will allow for better exposure to students and create immensely easier recruiting methods.

The action steps for the three recommendations are effective and affordable. The overall cost of our program will not be great, but the effects will be. The biggest cost associated will be the hiring of a University Director, which would be an invaluable position responsible for the relationship between Sherwin and the University. The goal is to increase the retention and recruitment efforts of the company, and Sherwin will see the results they are looking for by implementing these recommendations.