

Despite the Frills, Values Can Still Be the Focus

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I sit anxiously as I critique my new charcoal colored suit I picked up a few months ago from the department store in the city. I think to myself that the tailor did a great job with the fit. Thank goodness she was able to hem the pants just perfectly. I fidget with my bag that contains multiple resumes, my iPad, business cards, and a bottle of water that is now only half full. I look around the lobby and notice the ever revolving front door with smiling employees laughing and talking on their way into the building. I cannot help but think how incredible the opportunity is to be sitting here waiting for the interview of a lifetime. My palms start to sweat as I take another sip of water. I want this so badly.

What if they don't want me?

What if I say the wrong thing?

What if I let my dream job slip through my hands?

I think about my mother's words, "They would be lucky to have you" and "Don't forget, you are interviewing them, too." I know she is right, but I've wanted to work here for as long as I can remember. The company has an incredible reputation for work-life balance, professional development, community service, diversity, and inclusion amongst employees, and most importantly, the freedom to pursue creative ideas.

A young woman wearing jeans and a polo shirt walks over to me with her arm outstretched and a smile on her face. I stand as she says, "Welcome to Google. We're happy to have you here. Come with me."

PAUSE.

I immediately think back to freshmen year of college. I don't hear screaming door chants. I don't see balloon arches. I don't see 65 women, seemingly dressed as J. Crew models, walking towards me with an overused grin. I don't see petit-fours on silver trays and a glass punch bowl from 1945. I don't see napkins embossed with an animal (turtle, squirrel, lion – you name it, I've seen it). I don't see employees dressed up to dance around on a stage. I don't see a chocolate fountain. And I don't see the head of recruitment orchestrating it all as if it were a puppet show.

Why can a Fortune 500 company recruit the best and brightest, the top professionals from around the world, without balloon arches, chants, and special napkins? Because those tactics are not effective. At what point in our hundred plus years of being *values-based organizations* did we decide that we needed balloon arches to effectively recruit the best women? Google certainly doesn't need embossed napkins to recruit their employees.

Each year, Google receives one million applications for employment, with less than 0.5% of applicants receiving a job offer (Gordon, 2012). Why do so many people want to work for this company? An easy search will lead you to the mission and vision behind Google: focus on the consumer, do good for the community, embrace culture and diversity in the workplace, and strive for excellence on both a personal and professional level. One comment that especially caught my eye states, "At Google, we don't just accept difference - we celebrate it, we support it, and we thrive on it..." ("How we hire," n.d.). That is powerful!

What if our organizations, instead of getting caught up on the frills during the formal recruitment process, focused more on the conversation about WHO we are, WHAT we believe, and WHY we are a values-based organization? And, what if, instead of having these conversations during one week of the entire year, these conversations were had on a regular and consistent basis? Our organizations were founded on values just as powerful as Google's, without the decorations and door chants, punchbowls and chocolate fountains, skits and matching outfits. I believe we can have a values-based, formal recruitment process if we focus less on the frills and more on what matters: our missions and devotion to the development of our members.

We can look to numerous international corporations for examples of effective recruitment. In December 2013, Southwest Airlines had 10,000 applications submitted through their website in just two hours and ten minutes. I can guarantee they did not dance around on stage or build a tri-pod with their CEO to get those 10,000 applicants to hit the submit button. Southwest clearly explains who they are, what they are about, and the values that are the foundation of their organization, and they live those same values day to day. Their website states, "The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit." The company's culture is centered around "A Warrior Spirit, A Servant's Heart, and A Fun-LUVing Attitude." Not only do they state this, but they also follow through with their Charitable Giving initiatives, sponsoring and supporting families with serious illnesses, those serving in the military, children and youth, disaster response, and the environment ("Mission and Vision of Southwest," n.d.).

By continuing to hide behind the glitz and glamour, we are claiming that our organizations are unable to have a formal recruitment process focused on values. As national organizations and university administrators, it is our responsibility to take a step back and assess what is important. Formal recruitment, just like a Google interview, can be a successful, values-based process without the unnecessary decorations and chants.

If Google and Southwest can do it, why can't we?

To develop strategies on improving our current Panhellenic formal recruitment process, we can revisit Southwest Airlines and analyze their hiring process. Southwest's approach to recruitment allows them to be employer of choice in the airline industry due to their behavior-based, conversational style of interviewing and their commitment to their mission once hired. Libby Sartain, Director of Human Resources at Southwest, mentioned that people interviewing feel that they are having a conversation with a friend, and many have shared very personal information during their interview due to this level of comfort. The organizations that are doing well in our recruitment processes, those who are truly values-based recruiters, are recruiting just as Southwest does – by having meaningful and personal conversations and creating strong friendships in doing so. Beginning with their recruitment process, Southwest takes great care to find employees that fit into their organization. Southwest recognizes the importance of socializing employees to become committed to their company, and the result is an incredibly strong culture with payoffs to the bottom line (Stroh, Northcraft, & Neale, 2002). Making our recruitment process more meaningful does not necessarily mean we need to remove all of the frills that our sorority women enjoy. However, it does mean that we need to change our focus. By educating our first-year students, developing our recruitment counselor program, and empowering our recruitment officers we can begin to focus on what really matters.

It is important that we target potential new members early in their first year, whether it is during summer orientation or the first few weeks of class. This is our opportunity to provide

them with the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a sorority woman, what the expectations are, and how they can develop into a stronger leader because of their membership in a Greek-letter organization. By exposing potential new members to our values earlier in their collegiate career, we can also negate the effect of stereotypes that are often engrained within their first semester on campus.

Additionally, recruitment counselors can be incredible resources if selected and trained properly. These women are the worker bees in our recruitment processes. Their actions and voices are incredibly loud in the eyes and ears of a potential new member and the opportunity to have an independent peer explain and model the quintessential sorority woman is invaluable. By developing a training curriculum that allows each recruitment counselor to truly understand what her values are and how to have values-driven conversations with potential new members, the idea of a values-based recruitment process is attainable.

Finally, we can focus on the recruitment officers in our chapters. How can we provide them with the information and tools necessary to focus less on the glam and more on the conversation? Providing recruitment officers with a scheduled and regular open forum to discuss the state of recruitment and how to improve the process will encourage them to work together as a community to change the status quo. By giving these women a voice and a venue to share their thoughts and suggestions, it is possible that positive changes can be made within our organizations.

It is important to note that many of our communities are striving to provide a truly values-based process for potential new members and members alike. It is our role as fraternity and sorority advisors (campus-based and headquarters staff) to collaborate to ensure the women joining our organizations can see past the decorations and chants to understand our values and are able to articulate them to others. By combining our efforts, I believe we can have a formal recruitment process that is focused less on the chocolate fountains and embossed napkins and more on what is important: our values.

References

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