

# World's Most Attractive Employers | 2018

Research from Universum reveals the motivations of university graduates as they enter the global workforce.



universum



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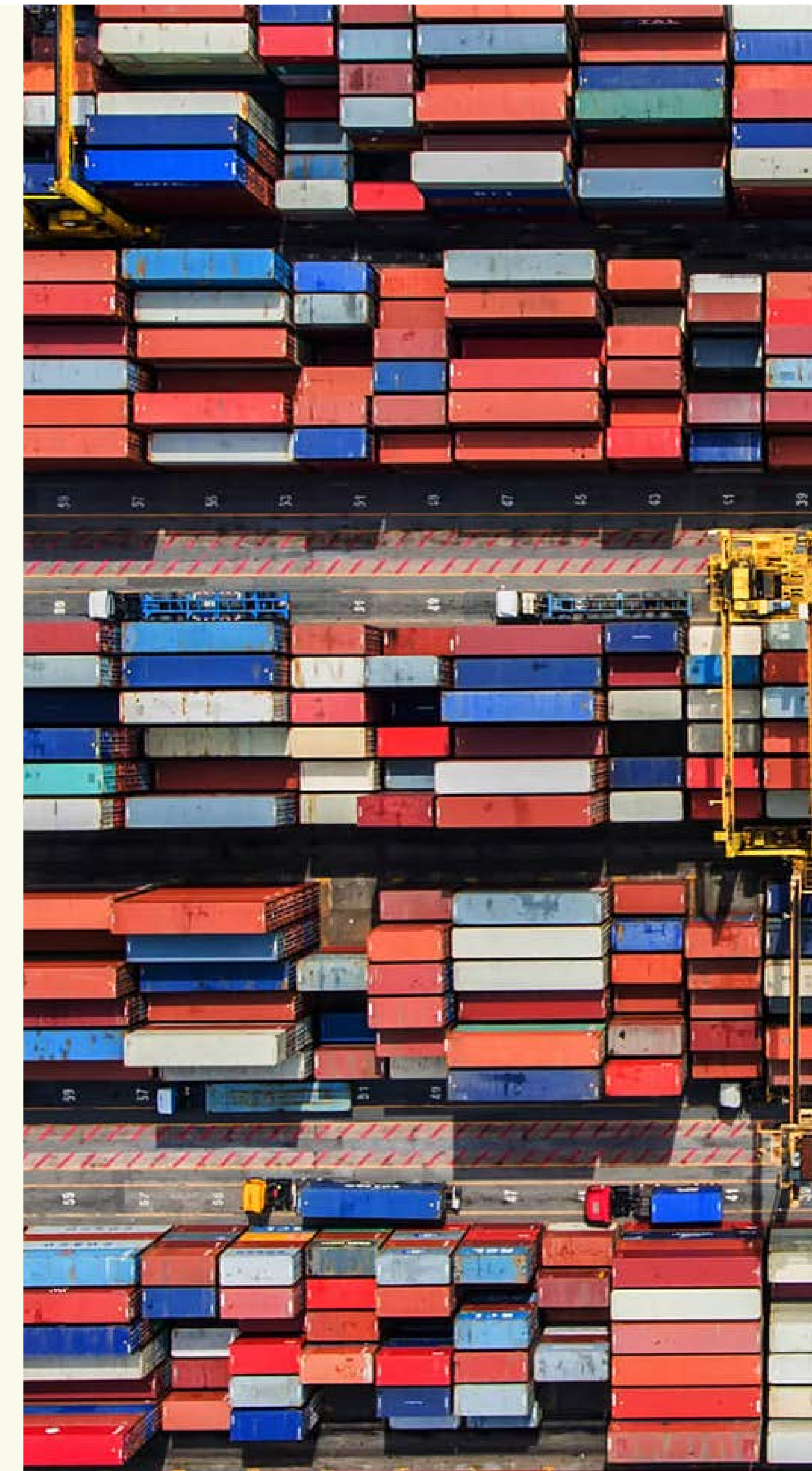
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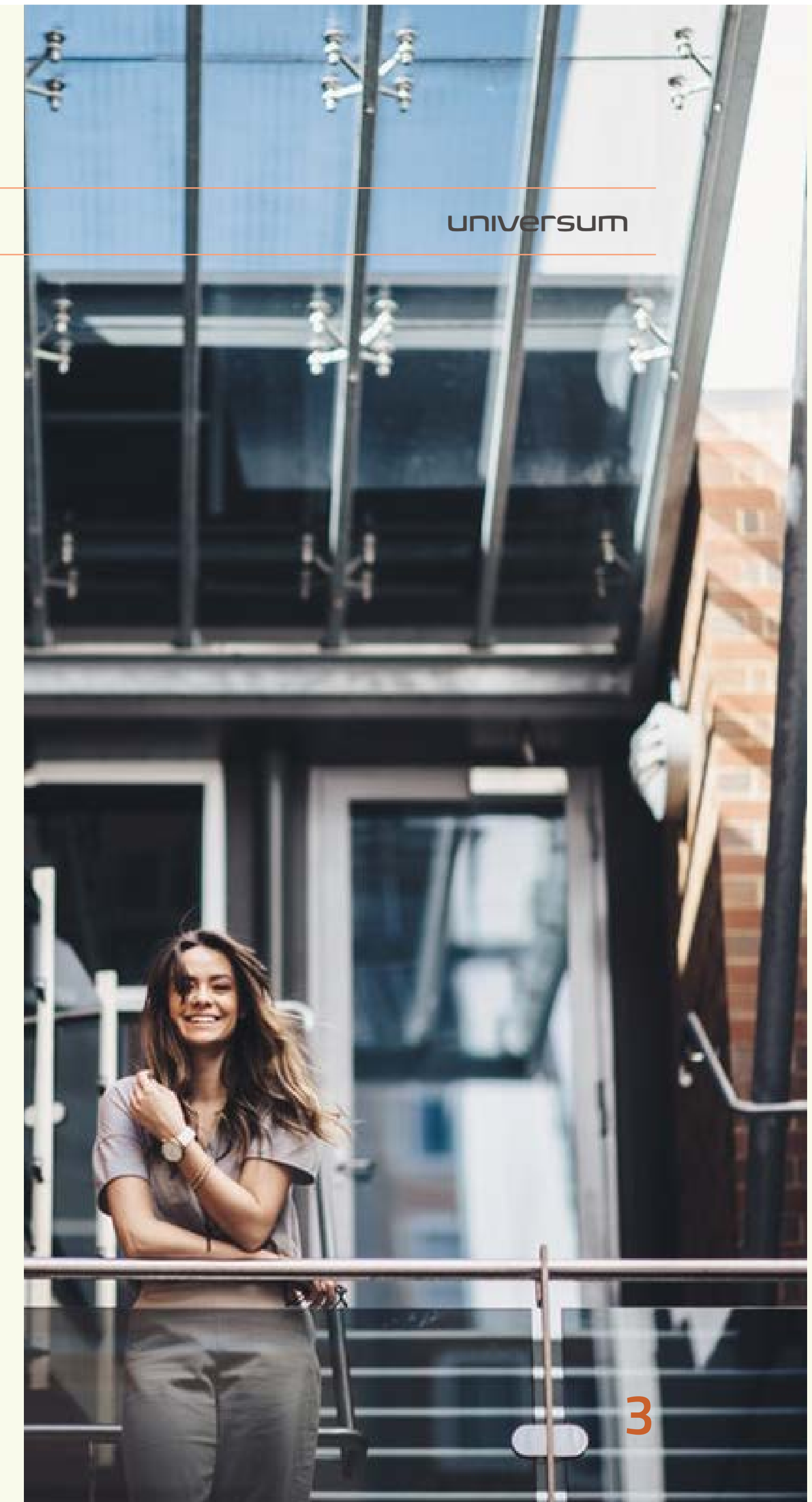
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Each year, Universum surveys over one million career seekers globally. In this study, we ask:

Which employers do students hold in highest regard, and what factors affect that decision?

The rankings chart the fortunes of individual companies' talent-attraction efforts and document students' shifting ideas about what defines an ideal employer.





# Key Findings



# Key Findings

**Work life balance is becoming a more immediate focus.**

While *work life balance* has been a dominant long-term student career goal for many years, *flexible working* has tended to be a somewhat recessive factor when it comes to the more immediate choice of employers. However, there are strong signs that this is beginning to change with the importance of flexible working growing in importance year on year for the last 5 years, particularly among much in demand IT students.

**Students in search of innovation and purpose-driven impact.**

Amazon and Volvo, two of the fastest risers across our business and engineering rankings share these two important factors in common. They both exude a strong sense of purpose and they have both taken high profile steps forward in applying AI-driven innovation to reach their goals.

**Work environment is key.**

Given the rising presence of the start-up sector in many leading countries it is unsurprising to see some of the qualities most associated with these younger, smaller companies influencing the importance of creative, dynamic and friendly work environments to students choice of employers, especially those engineering and IT students who are generally most aware of the start-up career option.

**Gen Z students are confident in their future success.**

The fact that *high future earnings* continues to be the number one attraction driver across Business and Engineering/IT students underlines the continued confidence of emerging Gen Z students that their talent is in demand and should lead to a healthy future bank balance if they can find the right employer.

**Young talent stills prefers to be built than bought.**

The other common factor is that this emerging generation continue to put a significant focus on *professional training and development*, an attraction factor that has significantly risen in importance over the last 5 years. Both these top 2 factors (development and future earning capacity) suggest that employers that favour a 'build' vs. 'buy' talent strategy continue to be more attractive to student talent.

”

Over the ten years Universum has produced this study, we see over and over that companies have the power to change their employer reputations among young people—though it requires a tremendous commitment to undertake. This year companies like Amazon, adidas and Boston Consulting Group demonstrate that by focusing on the employer value proposition and getting the message out to university students, an organization can transform its ability to recruit top talent.

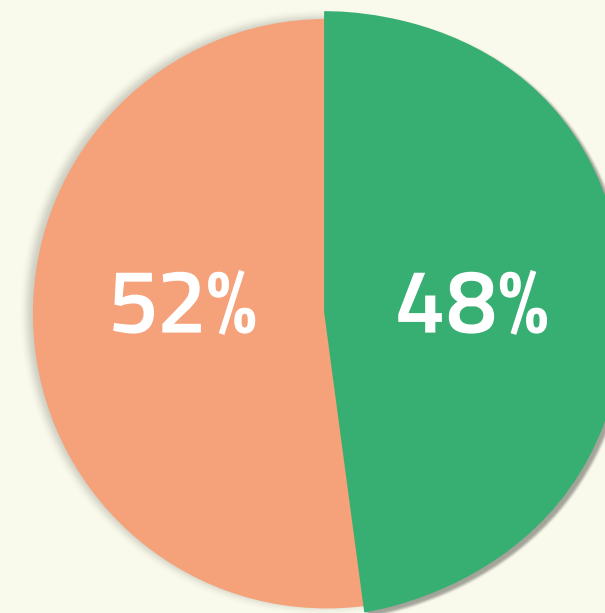
Petter Nylander, CEO, Universum

# WMAE Study Details & Demographics

Universum, a global employer brand research firm, surveyed 228,910 business, engineering and IT students in the world's 12 largest economies. The study field period took place during September 2017 to April 2018. The students were asked: (a) which employer characteristics are most influential as they weigh future employment and (b) which employer brands do they admire most. In order to be considered, a company must rank in the top 90% of employers within at least six of the 12 largest economies in the world. Universum's World's Most Attractive Employer report is now in its tenth year.

## Student Backgrounds WMAE 2018

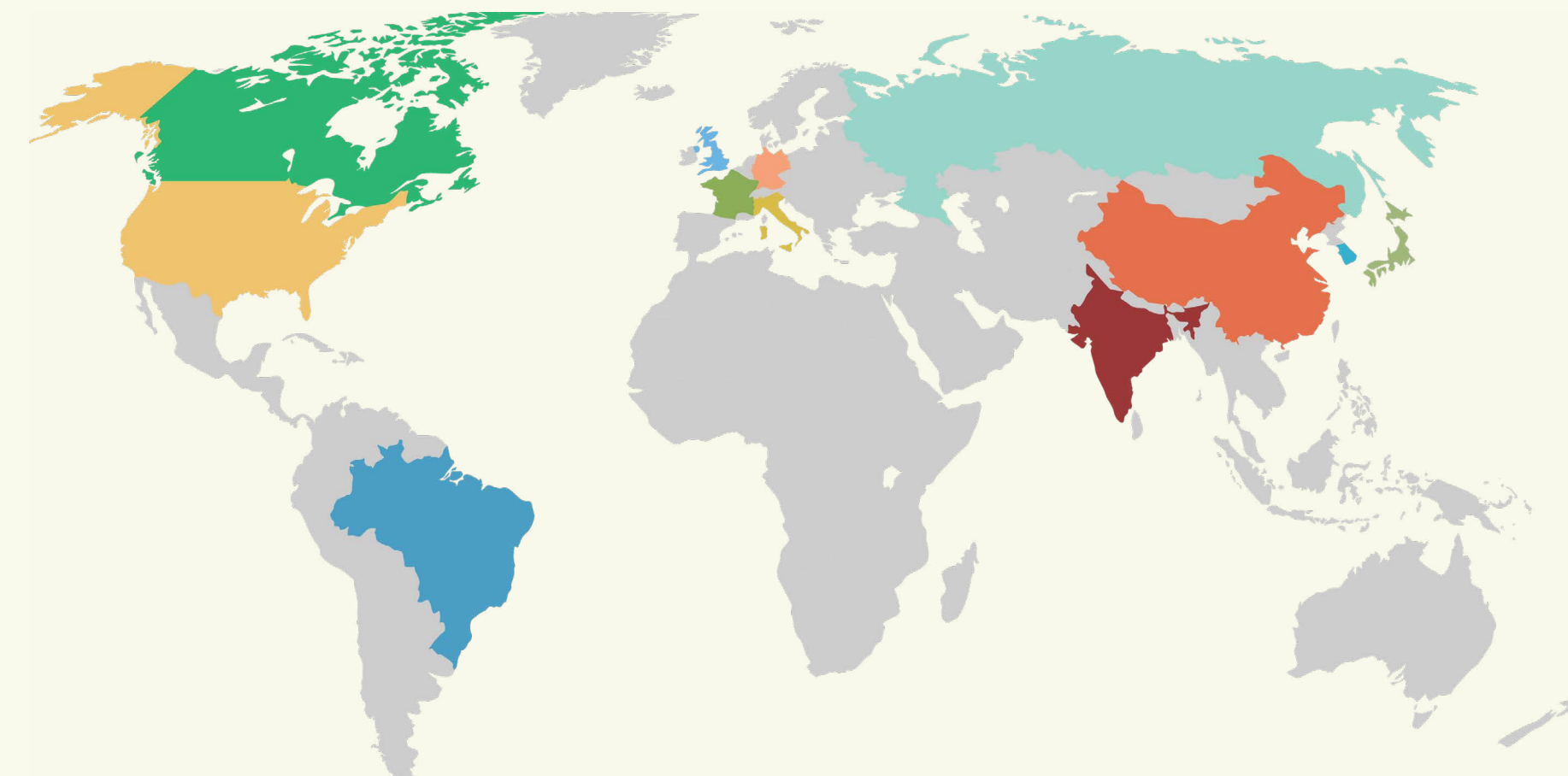
Engineering/IT  
(118,067 students)



Business  
(110,843 students)

## Research Regions WMAE 2018

Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, South Korea, the UK and the US.



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# Preferred Industries



# Preferred Industries

When asked the specific industries they hope to work in, business students are most drawn to careers in management consulting, financial services, banking, auditing and accounting. Engineering and IT students say they prefer careers in the technology, aerospace, defense, engineering and manufacturing industries. Even though the two cohorts clearly prefer different industries, the research shows they share many of the same ideal employers—suggesting that when it comes to choosing a future employer, a strong employer brand often supersedes any expectations about working in a particular industry.

Industries Preferred by Engineering/IT students	
Software, Computer Services, Multimedia...	25%
Aerospace & Defence	21%
Automotive	17%
Technology Hardware & Equipment	16%
Industrial Engineering & Manufacturing	16%
Energy	15%
Construction & Civil Engineering	12%
Management & Strategy Consulting	10%

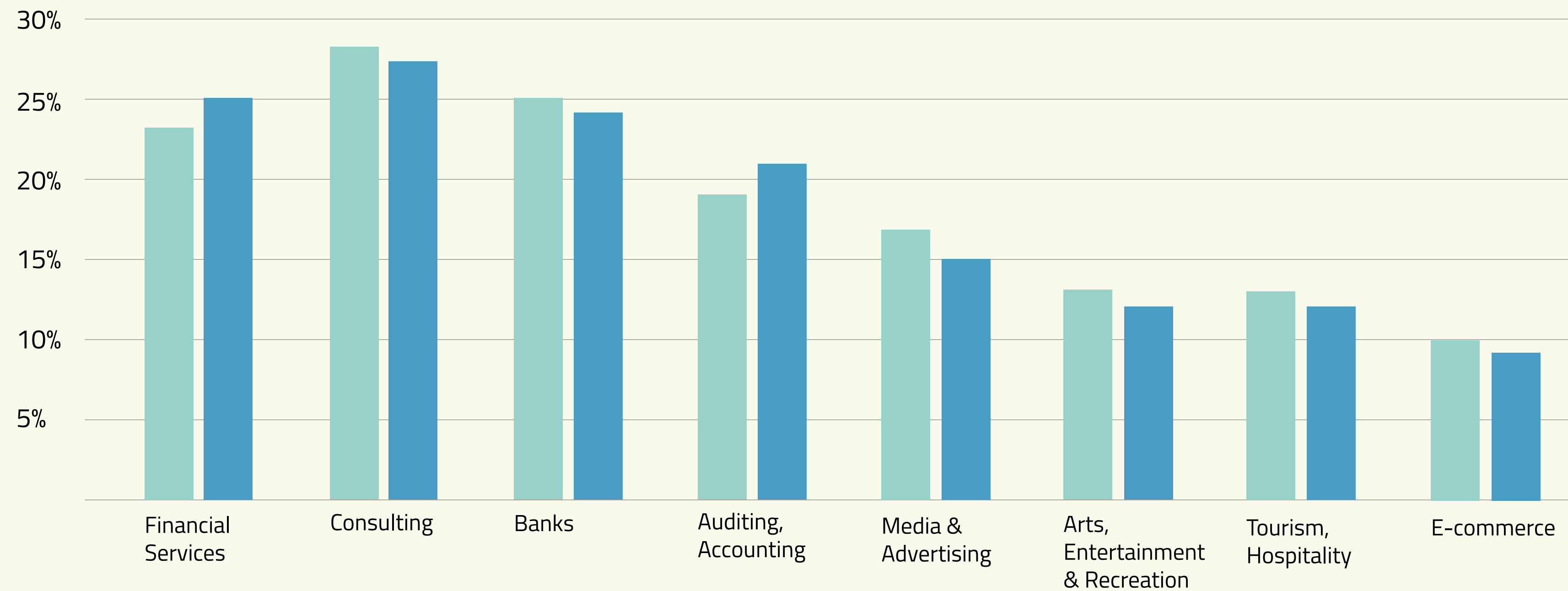
Industries Preferred by Business students	
Management & Strategy Consulting	27%
Financial Services	25%
Banks	24%
Auditing and Accounting	21%
Media and Advertising	15%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	12%
Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure Activities	12%
E-commerce	9%



# Management Consulting remains Business Students' Top Choice

Top 8 industries for Business students to work in

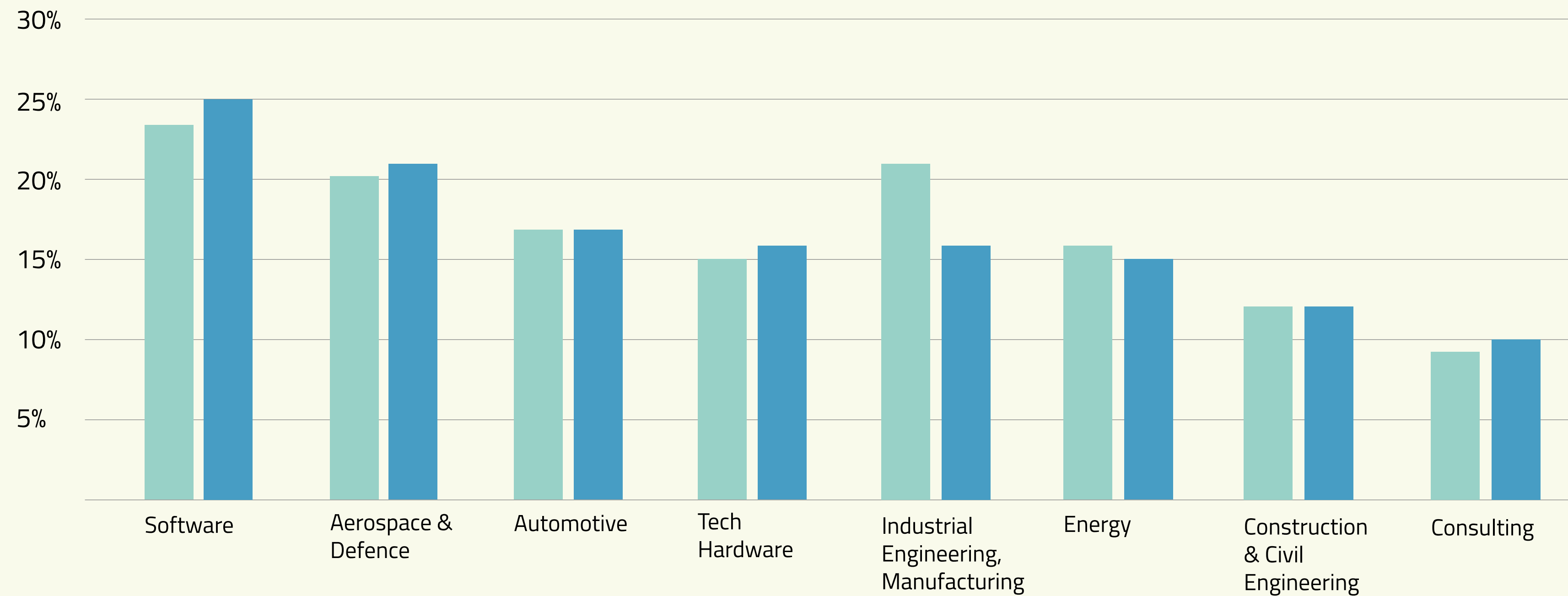
2017 2018



# Software remains Engineering/IT Students' Top Choice

Top 8 industries for Engineering/IT students to work in

2017 2018





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# World's Most Attractive Employers Ranking



Adidas has worked hard to develop a distinctive employer brand presence that genuinely reflects our culture, and have been pleased to see this reflected in the positive trajectory of our Universum rankings, particularly among the STEM and IT students.

Nanci Hogenboom, Director  
employer brand strategy, adidas





# TOP 50: World's Most Attractive Employers



## According to Business Students

Employer	2018
Google	1
Goldman Sachs	2
EY (Ernst & Young)	3
Deloitte	4
KPMG	5
PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers)	6
Apple	7
J.P. Morgan	8
McKinsey & Company	9
Microsoft	10
The Boston Consulting Group (BCG)	11
L'Oréal Group	12
Amazon	13
Morgan Stanley	14
adidas	15
Procter & Gamble (P&G)	16
BMW Group	17

Employer	2018
Nike	18
The Coca-Cola Company	19
Bain & Company	20
Bank of America Merrill Lynch	21
IBM	22
Deutsche Bank	23
Sony	24
IKEA	25
Accenture	26
Unilever	27
Johnson & Johnson	28
Citi	29
LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton	30
Nestlé	31
Facebook	32
Grant Thornton	33

Employer	2018
Barclays	34
Daimler/Mercedes Benz	35
HSBC	36
Credit Suisse	37
PepsiCo	38
HEINEKEN	39
Volkswagen Group	40
AB InBev	41
General Electrics (GE)	42
UBS	43
Samsung	44
Dell	45
Intel	46
Toyota	47
Ford Motor Company	48
Oracle	49
General Motors	50

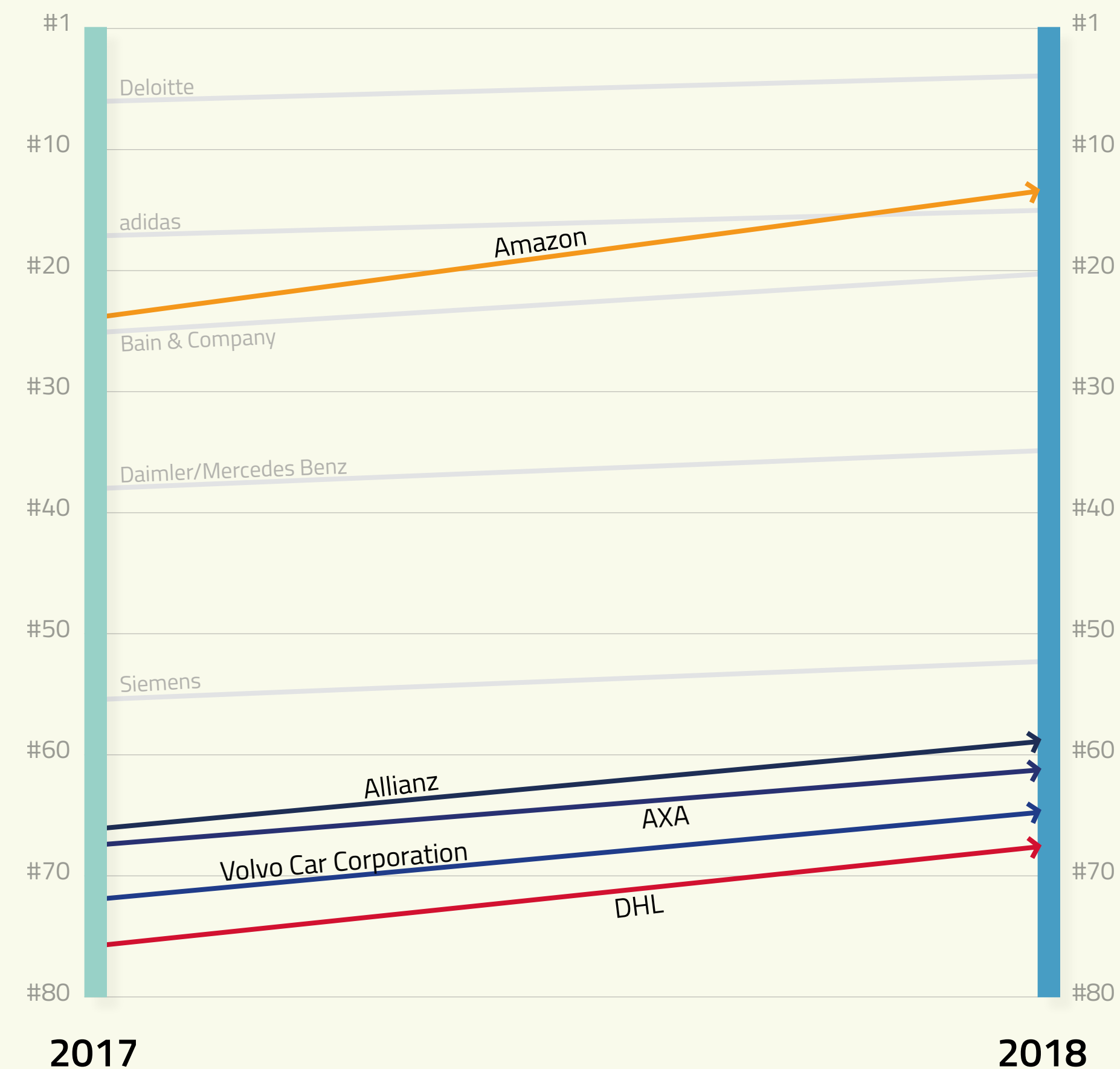
# Rising Employer Brands Among Business Students

## Amazon leaps forward in the rankings.

The biggest winner in this year's rankings is retail giant, Amazon. The leap is surprising given that the online retailer has faced strong criticism about working conditions in the company's massive global network of warehouses. Yet among business students, Amazon climbed from 26 to 13, the single-biggest gain of any global brand.

A recent study about employer branding by Forbes and SurveyMonkey supports the finding; the Forbes research found that Amazon was particularly attractive due to its two brand pillars: a willingness to pivot and adapt in pursuit of success, as well as its care for customers.<sup>1</sup>

Miriam Park, director of Amazon's university recruiting, explains that Amazon employees are inspired by the question, "What problem are we trying to solve for our customers?" To do this, says Park, the company is committed to hiring people who are "deeply curious."<sup>2</sup>



Biggest Winners in the ranking for Business Students

<sup>1</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By0FHqGU45A2UzhxME9qT2ZxZEK/view>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/15/top-amazon-recruiter-reveals-how-you-can-score-a-job-at-the-company.html>



# TOP 50: World's Most Attractive Employers



## According to Engineering/IT Students

Employer	2018
Google	1
Microsoft	2
Apple	3
BMW Group	4
Intel	5
General Electrics (GE)	6
IBM	7
Siemens	8
Samsung	9
Amazon	10
Sony	11
Ford Motor Company	12
McKinsey & Company	13
Johnson & Johnson	14
Procter & Gamble (P&G)	15
Daimler/Mercedes-Benz	16
The Coca-Cola Company	17

Employer	2018
General Motors	18
L'Oréal Group	19
Volkswagen Group	20
Goldman Sachs	21
The Boston Consulting Group (BCG)	22
Facebook	23
Toyota	24
Dell	25
adidas	26
Shell	27
Deloitte	28
Nestlé	29
IKEA	30
Unilever	31
Accenture	32
ExxonMobil	33
Volvo Car Corporation	34

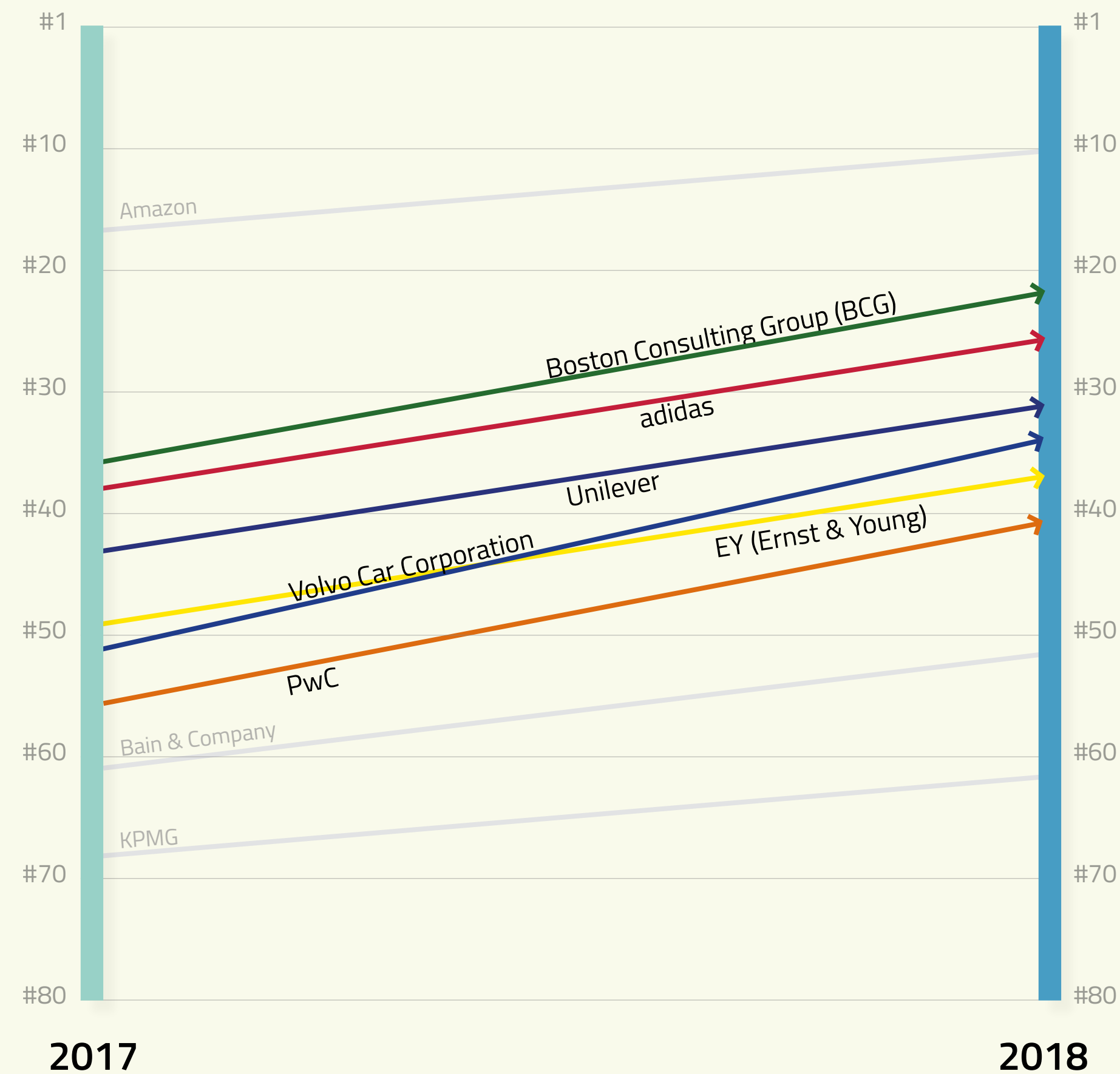
Employer	2018
J.P. Morgan	35
Nissan	36
EY (Ernst & Young)	37
3M	38
Pfizer	39
Huawei	40
PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers)	41
Bosch	42
Bayer	43
BASF	44
BP	45
Lenovo	46
Oracle	47
Cisco Systems	48
Novartis	49
PepsiCo	50

# Rising Employer Brands Among Engineering/IT Students

## Employer brand reputations more stable among engineering and IT students.

Overall, the top engineering/IT WMAE rankings showed less movement from 2017 to 2018 compared to the business student rankings. As with business students, Amazon was a big winner among tech talent—though the move was less dramatic.

Consulting firms BCG and McKinsey rose significantly in the rankings, as did EY and PwC, which also participate in the consulting space. These knowledge economy companies—which are in the business of helping clients undertake digital transformations—are themselves hungry for engineering and IT talent. A study from LinkedIn and Capgemini reveals that more than half (54%) of organizations say that “a digital talent gap is hampering their digital transformation programs.”

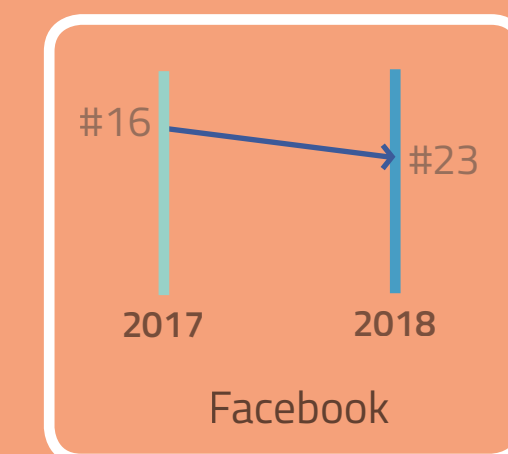


Biggest Winners in the ranking for Engineering/IT Students

## Among Engineering and IT Students, Facebook Slides While Amazon Sprints

As Amazon leaps forward in the rankings, the 2018 survey shows a steep slide for Facebook. Over the last 12 months the social giant has faced a bevy of crises—from the privacy scandal of data partner, Cambridge Analytica, to claims of Russian-funded operatives using Facebook to interfere with elections across the world. Mark Zuckerberg, once the epitome of digital innovation, now often appears tone deaf to public concerns about Facebook's power.

The changing circumstances of both players is interesting in part because both companies faced serious criticism in 2018, but Facebook has been unable to restore trust among Generation Z, particularly among those seeking careers in engineering and IT.



<sup>1</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By0FHqGU45A2UzhxME9qT2ZxZEK/view>

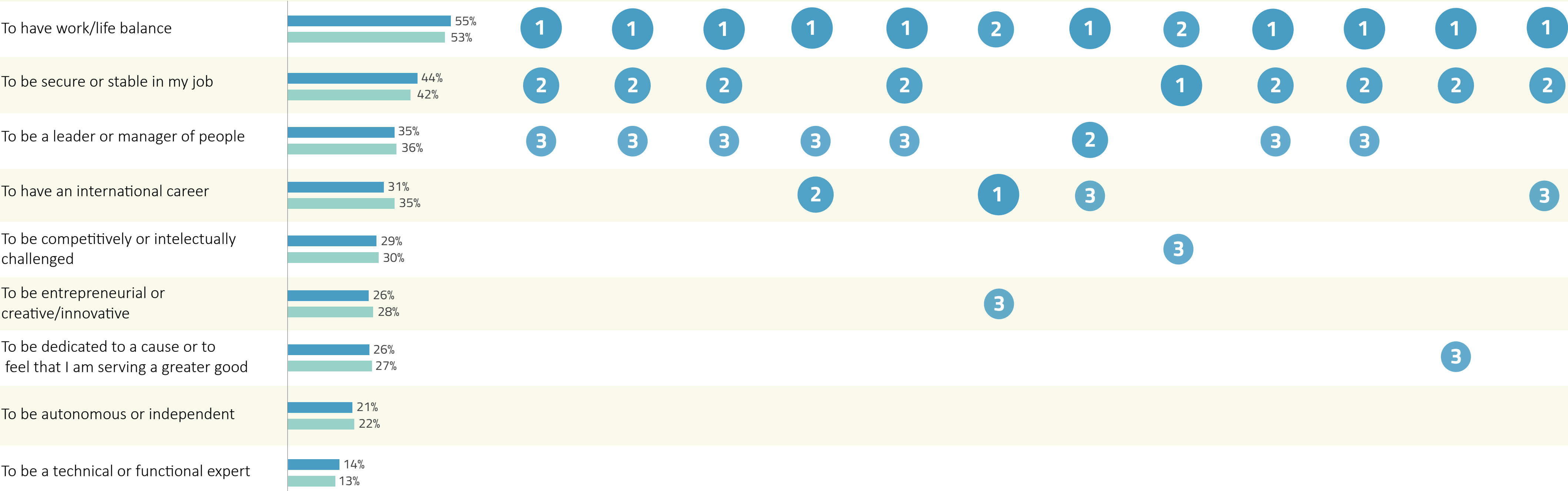
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/15/top-amazon-recruiter-reveals-how-you-can-score-a-job-at-the-company.html>



# Assessing Students' Career Goals



# Career Goals: Business Students

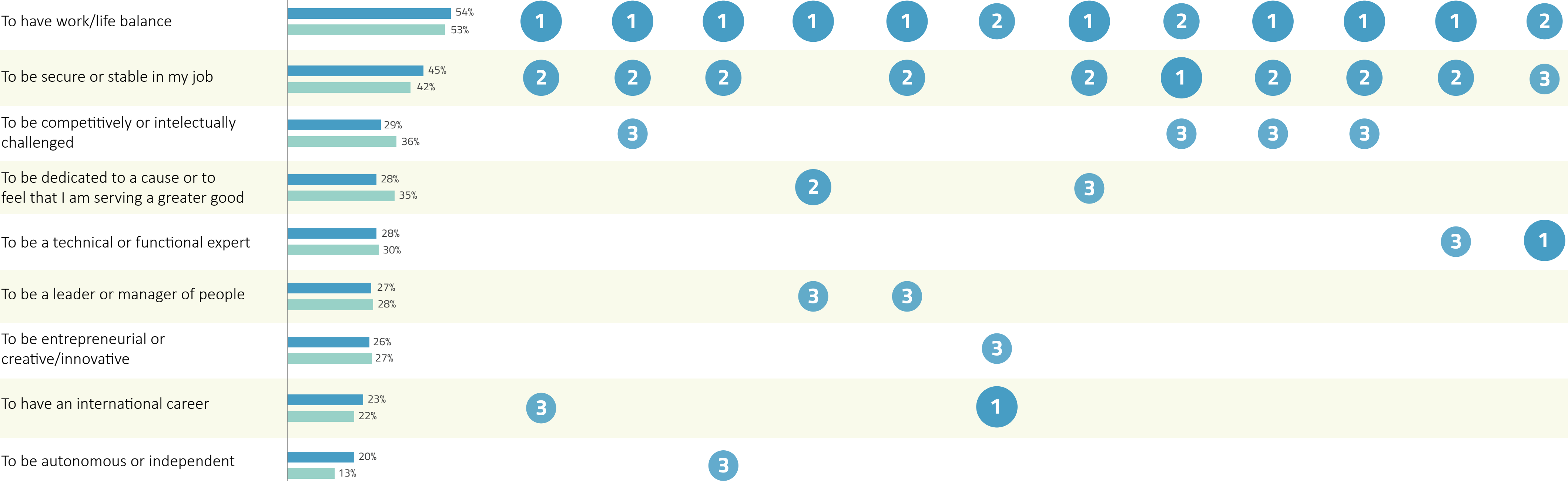


2017 2018

Career goals for Business Students - % for all countries (on left), and Top 3 per country



# Career Goals: Engineering/IT Students



2017 2018

Career goals for Engineering/IT Students - % for all countries (on left), and Top 3 per country

# Understanding career goals

## “Work/Life Balance” ... What does it mean for young professionals?

Many companies believe offering work-life balance means providing benefits for employees who have young children or who care for older parents—yet those benefits clearly do not appeal to Generation Z, which prioritizes work-life balance over all other career goals.

For younger workers, “balance” means something quite different. Consider Gen Z is the first generation to grow up understanding that technology allows you to work wherever and whenever you would like. Why work a traditional 9 to 5 schedule in a “cubicle farm” when one can just as easily work remotely—even as a digital nomad.

But is “balance” simply a matter of flexible scheduling? The research indicates otherwise. For Gen Z, seeking work-life balance is less about flexibility, and more about finding purpose and meaning in life and at work.

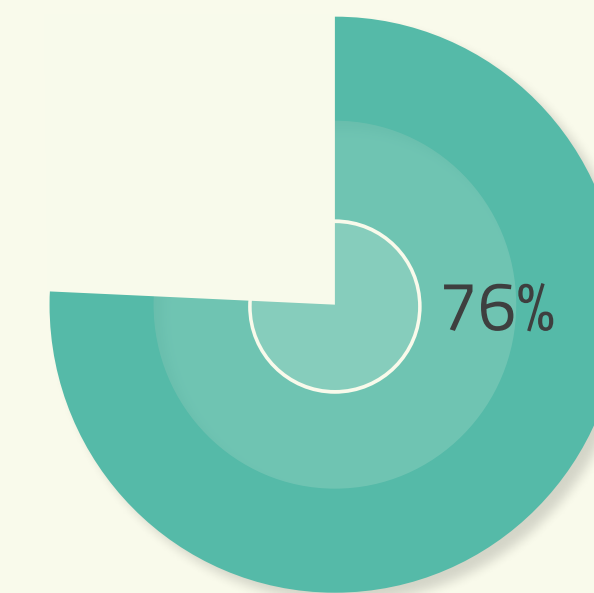
Young people prioritize work-life balance as a critical career goal and it appears they are increasingly less likely to trade-off this long-term aim for short-term career gains. While flexible working is still not among the top student attraction drivers when choosing a first employer, it has been one of the fastest rising drivers in terms of relative importance over the last 5 years). The need for “flexible work” only ranks highly in

countries where work is currently not very flexible—such as Japan and South Korea.

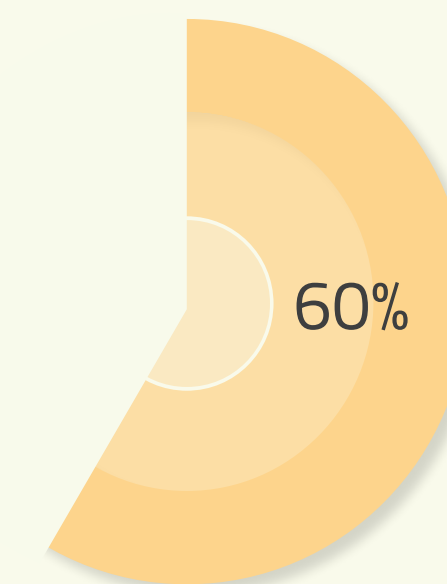
Instead, Gen Z is looking for purpose and meaning—much more so than previous generations. 76% of Gen Z teens surveyed say they want to make a career out of their hobbies. And 60% say it’s important to make an impact on the world.

Companies must carefully study the career goals and values of Generation Z to understand how work life will appeal to them, and what will be most challenging. What exactly does “balance” mean to young employees joining your organization, and how can an organization support balance in a way that doesn’t compromise work output and quality?

## Gen Z Core Values



Want to make a career out of their hobby



Want to make an impact on the world



”

While establishing a healthy work life blend has always been important to millennials, we are beginning to recognise that it is a fundamental table-stake for Gen Z.

Alison Heron, head of global employer brand at GSK

## Balancing Global Positioning and Local Needs

The Universum research clearly shows that while student's career and company preferences remain relatively stable from year to year, key differences exist between regions. High future earnings is a top priority for students in the UK and Russia, for example, while students in Japan and South Korea prioritize a company that has respect for its employees. Students in France and Italy are seeking out challenging work, while students in Brazil value professional training and development. And these priorities change when considering business students versus engineering and IT students.

The diversity of preferences by region and discipline pose a challenge for global organizations with recruiting efforts in multiple regions. How to develop an employer brand that is both consistent and adaptable? And even more, how does one operationalize this type of flexibility?

”

Honing your employer brand requires delicate research and planning. While it's critical to have a consistent global message, companies must ensure the message makes sense in local markets.

The most successful companies have two or three key employer brand pillars, but then also develop regional positioning that ties the big message to local needs. To get this done, your most powerful messaging comes from local employees. Let them speak about what it means to work for your company ... what your brand's values mean to them personally.

Jacinta Waak, Head of Research, Universum



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# Top Employer Brand Attributes



# Business Top 10 Preferences



1. High future earnings		2		1	2	1	2	1	1	2	
2. Professional training and development	2		2				3	2	2	3	
3. Leaders who will support my development		1			3				3	1	
4. A creative and dynamic work environment			3			3					
5. A friendly work environment										3	
6. Good reference for future career		1		1	2						
7. Respect for its people										1	1
8. Secure employment		3									3
9. Leadership opportunities						2					
10. Market success								3			

- Employer Reputation & Image
- People & Culture
- Remuneration & Advancement Opportunities
- Job Characteristics

Top 10 preferences for Business students, and top 3 attributes per country (if on the list)



# Engineering/IT Top 10 Preferences



1. High future earnings		3		3	3		3	2	1		
2. Innovation		1	3		2	1			2	2	
3. Professional training and development		2		2			2	1	3		
4. A creative and dynamic work environment			2			2				1	
5. A friendly work environment				2							3
6. Good reference for future career		1	1								
7. Leaders who will support my development									3		
8. Secure employment											2
9. Competitive base salary											
10. Respect for its people					1			3		1	1

- Employer Reputation & Image
- People & Culture
- Remuneration & Advancement Opportunities
- Job Characteristics

Top 10 preferences for Engineering/IT Students, and the top attributes per country (if on the list)

# Understanding ideal brand attributes...

## Understanding students' desire for "high future earnings."

One of the top-cited factors across business students and engineering/IT students was "high future earnings"—a decision-driver at the #1 spot for business students and engineering/IT students.

In the strongest economies, students in high-demand fields are commanding competitive salaries and generous signing bonuses. For some organizations, healthy compensation packages (and the expectation of future salary growth) are intended to make up for other perceived deficits—whether because a company is located in a less desirable location, or an organization with a less-recognized employer brand.

However, David Brown, CEO of the US division of Hays, explains that generous compensation often isn't enough to recruit sought-after young professionals, particularly in IT. "While salary is important for attraction, IT candidates are looking for a job that ticks multiple boxes and under the right circumstances would consider a role even if it didn't offer the salary they were hoping for," says Brown. "In fact, 71% tell us they would take a pay cut for their ideal job."<sup>4</sup>

## Building a "creative" and "friendly" employer brand and culture

A top priority for engineering and IT students is finding "friendly" companies that allow them to be creative. To that end, we see many organizations striving to be more "human," emphasizing employee stories with "day in the life" videos and employee blogging. Embracing startup culture, some companies are also providing on-site locations to relax and play, hoping young people will be attracted to organizations that blur the line between college life and work life.

Companies have found, however, that the process of building more "human" brands can be fraught with challenge. A user on Reddit (redkinoko), the anonymous online community, recently shared a story about their workplace culture that illustrates the peril of brands embracing "friendly" ... "[The company] had an entire area devoted to foosball, pinball, billiards, console gaming, and videoke booths on the ground floor and it was clearly visible because of the glass windows on street level. Oddly enough, nobody ever used them, and the place was almost always empty save for a few people who use the internet kiosks." The individual goes on to explain, "People who do use the facility often found it used against them during performance evaluations, even when their use wasn't excessive at all. After a while word got around and they started avoiding the place altogether. The irony is that their recruitment ads always tout a culture of 'work hard play hard.'"<sup>5</sup>

”  
Competing on salary alone  
won't help you stand out.

David Brown, CEO, Hays US

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/01/10/what-it-professionals-want/#39bc34a9178e>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/95t9dy/reddit\\_users\\_who\\_left\\_companies\\_that\\_nonstop\\_talk/](https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/95t9dy/reddit_users_who_left_companies_that_nonstop_talk/)

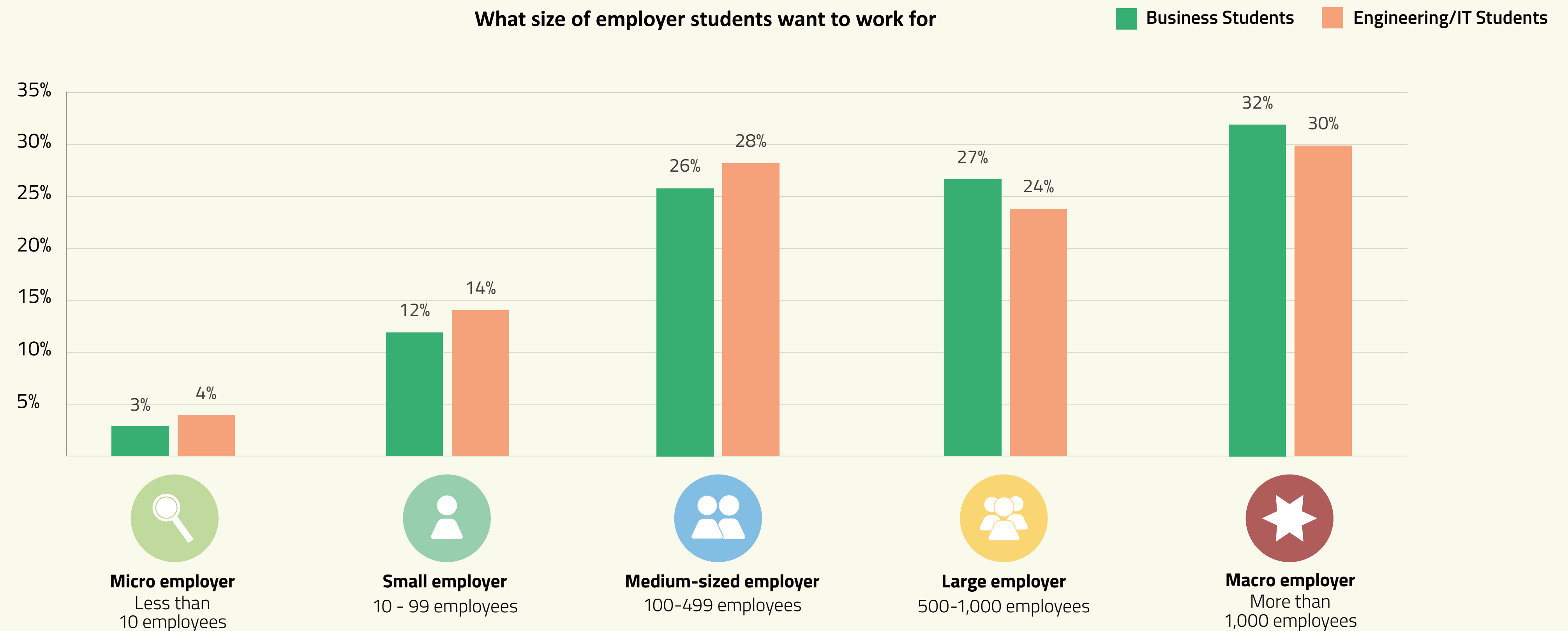


”

I learned at an internship that “we work hard and play hard” means “we want you to work 75-hour weeks, but sometimes we’ll put donuts in the breakroom.”

Reddit User: isehokie

# Ideal Company Size





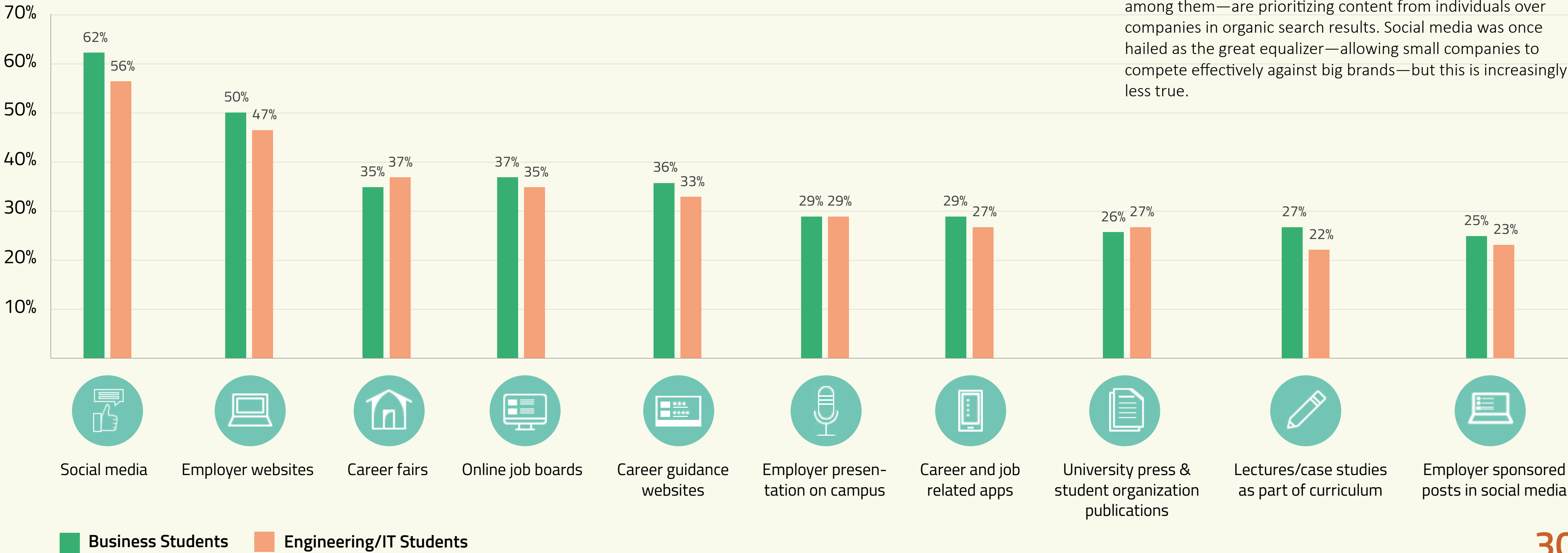


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# Communication Channels

# Top 10 Communication Channels

Where students learn about employers



**Social Media Still On Top; Poses Challenges for Employers**

Social media remains the top channel for prospects to learn about employer brands. For companies, this means increasingly relying on paid social content over organic content; this is because most social media channels—Facebook foremost among them—are prioritizing content from individuals over companies in organic search results. Social media was once hailed as the great equalizer—allowing small companies to compete effectively against big brands—but this is increasingly less true.



## Decoding Career Goals and Ideal Employer Attributes

Among the most interesting findings of the Universum research over the 30 years of surveying young people as they depart university and enter the workforce: There is a very important difference between what career seekers aspire to in the long-term, and what factors they weigh in making a more immediate choice among potential employers.

For example, a key career goal is work/life balance, but when evaluating employers, “flexible working conditions” does not rank as among the top priorities. Also, students report they want to be a leader or manager of people, but “leadership opportunities” does not rank in the Top 10 priorities when choosing an employer. And for all the discussion about Gen Z’s strongly held values and desire to influence the world, “inspiring purpose” is not the most critical consideration when weighed against other factors.

These findings do not indicate that balance, purpose and leadership opportunities are unimportant; rather, it shows that a student’s long-term values and goals do not always match short-term priorities. For employers, the issue is an important one. To what degree should your employer brand focus on aspiration versus more practical, immediate considerations? And what attributes are important for brand consideration versus attributes that lead to someone deciding on a particular job?

These tensions show that global employers must include data-driven decision-making as they hone employer branding and recruiting. The results from a more analytical approach to employer branding can be transformative





# About Universum

## **ACCESS THE NEW WORLD OF TALENT.**

Universum is a global leader in employer branding. Over the past 30 years, we have established ourselves in 50 markets globally and our diverse workforce is physically present in 20 countries. Our services include actionable research, strategic consulting, and data-driven communications and social media solutions for talent branding, sourcing, and analytics. We are a trusted partner to over 1,700 clients, including many Fortune 500 companies, as well as to global media partners that publish our annual rankings and trend reports. We work with over 2,000 universities, alumni groups, and professional organizations to gather insights from students and professionals in order to advise employers on how to attract and retain talent that fits their culture and purpose. On an annual basis, Universum surveys over 1,000,000 students and professionals worldwide. Find out more at [www.universumglobal.com](http://www.universumglobal.com)

