



IELYZAVETA MAKSYMETS

Human Resource Specialist and Head of Educational projects for Students at Ernst & Young

Today's corporate standards dictate that farsighted employers begin to select and develop new employees while the latter are still students. To this end, Ernst & Young works closely with higher education institutions, supporting education programmes in finance, economics, taxation and IT. Ernst & Young gives special grants to universities, presents lectures, holds competitions, offers vocational training and more. Ernst & Young was one of the first companies on the Ukrainian market to hire young specialists even before they graduate. The goal is to give students professional experience and teach them how to apply their classroom knowledge in a professional environment.

Svitlana Strelnyk, a representative of KNEU Institute of Higher Education, met with Ielyzaveta Maksymets, Human Resource Specialist and Head of Educational projects for Students at Ernst & Young. They talked about the strategic guidelines for cooperation between businesses and universities. We are presenting the full text of the interview for your attention.

THE COOPERATION OF BUSINESS AND UNIVERSITIES: *the experience of «Ernst & Young»*

Ms. Maksymets, Ernst & Young accounts for a large share of the audit and consulting services market in Ukraine. What competitive strategy does the company use?

Ernst & Young is indeed a recognized leader on the audit and consulting services market in Ukraine. At present we have almost 500 employees, who provide the highest quality services to clients. It's no coincidence that the company's motto is «Quality In Everything We Do.» People are our most valuable asset. Ernst & Young's management made the decision to implement a leadership strategy in all areas, since it understands very well that it's much more difficult to maintain a leadership position than to reach it in the first place. To interest and engage the best employees, management offers high salaries and transparent opportunities for career and professional growth.

It's well known that Ernst & Young leads in implementing education programmes for students. What sort of cooperation with universities do you practice?

Our approach to hiring students and graduates for starting positions at the company was initiated in the 1930s by one of the company's founders — Arthur Young. We hire about 100 students and graduates a year in Ukraine. The Ernst & Young Human Resources Department actively cooperates with the student job centers at universities. It's nice that students themselves express interest in us and serve as volunteers for us, helping organize student projects.

Could you please tell us about the youth institutions you cooperate with and the education projects you participate in?

Ernst & Young has cooperated with the AIESEC youth organization for many years and actively participates in students events directed at engaging students in extra-academic activity. Our employees often act as mentors or judges in various national competitions in which students participate — SIFE, the CFA Challenge, Real Start, GMC Junior and others. Participating in these projects, young people gain knowledge and skills that help them to develop leadership and organizational qualities. Taking part in such projects will give students lacking practical experience a significant competitive advantage over other candidates whose achievements are solely academic.

Today, higher education institutions are trying to give students a unique set of professional skills. However, employers still complain about the shortage of young job candidates with practical experience, analytical capabilities and problem-solving skills. What skills does your company value the most among graduates of economic universities?

Universities today are actively working with employers and various youth and educational institutions, which, of course, is important for students. After all, a university can help to develop certain competences (such as knowledge of foreign languages and the ability to work with various software products), but communication skills, an understanding of business, leadership and the ability to manage a project and work as part of a team can only be acquired by participating in public initiatives. That's why we encourage students to use their free time as productively as possible, by participating in the competitions and education programmes that companies and youth organizations offer.

Does Ernst & Young engage students from higher education institutions in its initiatives? Which programmes are the most important for undergraduates, and in which would it be expedient to participate after graduation?

Since our task is to find the best students at higher education institutions, we not only engage students via job tests and interviews, but also encourage them to participate in special projects on a voluntary basis. Thus, for the third consecutive year now, Ernst & Young is implementing its «Step into the Future» programme for students of Kyiv National Economics University named after Vadym Hetman. The project consists of a range of interesting and useful educational initiatives. More specifically, our «Ernst & Young University» provides classes on auditing, taxes, transactions and IT audits, as well as on corporate social responsibility. The classes are conducted by company specialists. At «Coffee with a Partner» meetings, students speak with top managers about career prospects, life at the company and the

secrets of success. Within the project students can also participate in open-door days and apply for jobs at the company. This year we've launched another new project — «The Young Generation of Financial Executives» — within the framework of KNEU's masters programmes. This comprehensive programme allows 50 selected students to attend a course of lectures on auditing, tax and financial management and to participate in the resolution of a profile business case. The top ten participants will receive internships with Ernst & Young's Audit Department as part of their master's work.

Internationally-recognized certificates of the sort that authoritative institutions and international organizations confer make their holders more competitive. Which such certificates does your company give out? Are such certificates taken into account when candidates apply for jobs at Ernst & Young?

During vocational training at the company, each employee has to attend a range of training courses and take exams in order to obtain professional certification. The company ensures that its employees have the chance to attain ACCA, CFA, CPA, CIA, CISA and other certificates. We have access to an on-line database with over 5,000 different personnel training courses that employees can undergo during their free time. Of course, a certificate is a certain indicator of a person's level of training, but what's more important is for a person to put his or her academic knowledge into practice at Ernst & Young.

Ielyzaveta, on behalf of Kyiv National Economics University named after Vadym Hetman, thank you for this interesting interview. We hope to talk to you again in the future!

The interview was conducted by Svitlana Strelnyk, Candidate of Economic Sciences, Institute of Higher Education, KNEU.