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Foreign students and companies get acquainted in an informal setting

Currently, Dutch companies are experiencing a lack of talented applicants, especially in the field of ICT and Engineering. Moreover, students and companies have few opportunities to meet and get to know each other well before students finish their studies. This is especially true for foreign students who intend to start their careers in the Netherlands. That is why student association Proxy approached High Tech NL in order to organize an event where students and companies could meet at Fontys University of Applied Sciences. We joined forces with Stichting Berk and an agreeable and successful afternoon was the result of this cooperation.

By Jos van Erp



International Human Capital

Students' association Proxy was only established last year. Proxy represents the foreign students at the ICT faculty of Fontys University of Applied Sciences. They already have a reputation of being very active in organizing useful and successful events. Vlad Popa (Romania) and Romina Xhaja (Albania) are members of the board. They got in contact with High Tech NL and Stichting Berk last November. Understanding the objectives of the Human Capital program of High Tech NL they got the idea to work together to organize a meet and greet at Fontys. Human Capital is what they are all about! This event took place on Wednesday March 2nd.

A variety of organizations

Eight organizations were invited by High Tech NL and Stichting Berk. Some of them are large manufacturing companies like Vanderlande Industries, Océ Technologies and CSI

Industries. Perhaps less known but very successful in its field of activities is Tobroco, a company which employs 140 people in Oisterwijk and 70 in Hungary. Other organizations, such as KE-Works, CGI and Axians, specialize in ICT solutions. Furthermore, M2i joined. M2i is a knowledge institute in the field of materials and it's located in the Delft area. These organizations have one thing in common: they are all constantly looking for people in the field of software engineering and general engineering. That's why Proxy invited its own members and students from the Engineering department.



At least 90 students gathered in the central open space

Asking questions

At 16h00 the central open space was filled with more than 90 students. At least 30 nationalities were represented. The companies and organizations were

represented by technicians and HR professionals. They had prepared a pitch introducing their activities, markets, fields of expertise and expectations for future developments including the need for new employees. After a welcome by High Tech NL, Vlad Popa, as the representative of Fontys and Proxy, explained the objectives of this event and the interactive meetings began. Every company had its own table around which interested students gathered. They not only had the opportunity to get to know the basic characteristics of the companies, but they could also ask a lot of questions. And so they did.



Inspiring discussions

It didn't take long before inspiring discussions were heard all around the open area. After 20 minutes, the guests were asked to switch tables and new meetings could start. This concept worked out well because, after five changes, nearly everybody had had the opportunity to meet with those companies they were interested in. And if not, during the breaks the students could chat one-on-one with the companies' representatives.

Be prepared!

Mr. Henk Meeuwissen represented CSI Industries, which is located in Raamsdonksveer and has a large plant in Romania, among other countries. "We know that today we will not immediately find tomorrow's new colleagues. But in two or three years the students will be looking for their first jobs. They might remember CSI, but

what is more important, by having informal discussions with a variety of companies, they get a good idea about the labor market. Besides that, I enjoyed meeting so many interesting, young



Marika Rupert (M2i): "We will organize this kind of meeting in the Delft area, too!"

people who have their future in front of them." Three Polish students were looking for internship possibilities for the summer period. They didn't find this immediately, but they were inspired to continue their quest. The representatives of the companies recognized that it makes sense to meet with (foreign) students in an early stage of their education. There are no mutual obligations, and it is easier to take the next step in the future when you have met before. One of the representatives admitted that it is more difficult to make the preparations necessary to introduce new foreign employees into their companies, compared to new Dutch employees. "They must feel at ease and so must the existing workforce. But, what is more, Dutch companies need foreign employees in the fields of embedded software and Engineering. We simply have too few young talented applicants to replace those who will retire over the next five years."

Future colleagues

Proxy not only organizes events with added value, but it turned out to be a good host as well. Drinks and pizzas were offered to the students and the companies' representatives. This allowed the guests to continue their

network activities, which they did. Maikel Kessels is a sales- and project engineer at Vanderlande Industries. He hardly had time to have a beer. "But I definitely need one because talking with so many people has made me thirsty! But it was worth every minute. I enjoyed it and I am sure that today I have met at least four or five students who might be my future colleagues. And we are more than happy to welcome them!" Cheers!



Vlad Popa and Romina Khaja turned off the lights late that evening. Vlad: "This was the first meet and great with companies but definitely not the last one." Romina adds: "We feel that we contribute to making the transition from study to a professional future smoother."



Jos van Erp, March 2016



Impressions

