

Top tips for great recruitment

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Right people with the right skills at the right time

It is important to spend some time identifying future staffing needs, this will assist in avoiding either a lack of workers at critical times or being forced to quickly fill a role even if the person is not the ideal candidate.

Look at your workforce statistics:

- do you have a group or type of employee that are more likely to resign?
- Is there a critical skill set or job task that would affect the business if an incumbent left?
- Are there any industry skill shortages you should be considering?

Plan now and consider training employees in advance, commence passive recruitment campaigns, talking with staff about their future plans to address any concerns/future problems.

Keeping an active eye on your staffing levels will be critical for your long term success. If your workforce is relatively stable, consider training staff in other work areas to ensure adequate coverage for extended leave, look at succession planning. If your business is changing, look at up-skilling your staff to meet additional client demands.

The cost of turnover is estimated to be between 2 and 3 times a person's annual salary, based on this alone you can't afford to make too many recruitment mistakes.

Replace, Renew or Rejig

Just because you have had a staff member leave, does not necessarily mean that that role should automatically be replaced.

Consider the current/former incumbent,

- What skills did they bring outside the scope of the role that were valuable to your company
- Culturally, behaviourally and personality wise, what about the current/former incumbent would you want to replicate/avoid
- If you had no restrictions, what skill set would enhance the role
- Does it still need to be full time? Could it be reduced to a part time role or perhaps job share? Would this change the skills you could attract?

Consider other roles/people in your organisation;

- Can someone be promoted or trained to take on this role
- Can the role functions be split across other staff
- If an existing staff member took on this role, what would happen with their role

What level is this role

- Is experience essential
- Do they require a specific qualification or certificate
- Has the role changed, can you make the role an entry level or trainee role
- Is it a start-up or developing role, how should the position description and job search criteria reflect this

Take your time to review the position description. Update, amend or create as necessary. Determine which qualifications, skills and experience are essential compared with those that are preferred. Review your salary range against other advertised positions or salary survey data to ensure that you are marketing the role for the best response.

Recruitment Sources

How are you going to bring staff into your organisation? What avenues are available to you, what time and cost pressures are you facing? These questions will help to drive how you commence the recruitment process.

Internal Recruitment

If you don't have a dedicated HR person, identify the staff member that will be charged with the responsibility of managing the recruitment process.

They will be required to:

- Write and place the job ad
- Screen applications
- Prepare a shortlist
- Commence initial recruitment processes
- Manage queries from applicants
- Ensure applicants are advised of their progress
- Complete reference checking
- Negotiate offer
- Arrange for contract to be prepared
- Complete necessary follow-up

The person charged with this role will need to have to time necessary to follow the recruitment from start to end. If you do not have personnel with the necessary time or resources, you may need to consider an alternative.

Recruitment Agencies

For a fee most agencies will obtain a job brief, prepare the job ad, short list and pre-screen applicants for you. They will also complete reference checking and undertake offer negotiation to complete the process.

Often a business is only required to ensure necessary time for conducting interviews.

Most recruitment agencies will offer a guarantee or free replacement if the person doesn't work out.

Recruitment Agencies typically charge a fee based on a percentage of the new employees salary package, this will range between 10%-25%. Increasingly there are a few with flat fees (particularly for admin roles).

Contracted Recruiter

If you have a number of roles to be filled for a specific project or time of year you may want to consider employing someone for a short period of time to manage this. If you have a high volume need (eg peak season or perhaps for graduate recruitment) and particularly if you are recruiting multiple roles this may be a cheaper alternative than using an agency.

Internal Recruitment Bonus Schemes

Many organisations offer incentives to existing staff to assist in finding suitable new employees. Consider using an "Employee Referral Program", which rewards staff for directing good people to your vacancies, without the time or cost of using other recruitment avenues. Payments can be provided after the probation period is completed to ensure the new worker is working effectively in their role.

Networks and Associations

Consider your business associates and networks, do they know someone, raise the topic of staffing with a client or other contact, do you both need a similar role filled and could you share the cost. How might you be able to tap into the passive job market.

Online and Social Media sources

Have you used this medium before? Look at the search functions on Seek, MyCareer and LinkedIn. Does your website have a careers page, do you post job vacancies here. LinkedIn now offer a range of products to passively recruit candidates.

What makes you stand out?

- Is it a great role
- A great company
- Do you have an aspect of your business that is unique?
- What reasons would people have to join your firm?

Develop a statement that encompasses all that is good about your firm, use this in your website, on your job ads, in any recruitment material etc.

Consider your brand, what do current employees tell others about your firm when asked, “great team, friendly work environment, challenging work, great facilities and resources”. Consider that in many instances someone will be leaving a current job to apply for yours, there needs to be something in it for them to make that change. If you can only match salary or you pay below average, what else is in it for the candidate to consider your role over others.

Do you pay better than your competition?

Survey your local job market and analyse the compensation people in your industry attract. If your budget isn't at the high end, consider what that may mean in terms of compromising the level of skills, qualifications or experience you can afford. It will be a rare event that you will attract a highly qualified candidate who is willing to be paid less than market rates.

Paying better than average will assist in attracting and keeping the best candidates. This approach takes money 'off the table' and allows you to focus on the candidate and their fit in your organisation.

Advertising

There are a range of options when it comes to Advertising a vacancy. Consider the following:

Online – Seek.com.au and LinkedIn.com.au are the two main on-line recruitment advertisement options for you. Job ads are relatively inexpensive to place (around \$380 per ad) and they will generally remain online for a month. They can also be refreshed or edited /amended throughout the month if you need to adjust the job ad based on the applications being received.

Newspaper Advertisements – these are still being used particularly at a local (suburban newspaper) level. Many newspaper ads are now also linked with an online affiliation, so a newspaper ad will also be placed online aswell. You may find that some positions receive a better response rate when advertised in the paper rather than online, it may be helpful to keep statistics of what medium you receive your responses via, to assist with advertising in the future.

Company Website – if people are following your website advertising vacancies may attract suitable candidates. It will also let clients know of vacancies which may tap into their broader networks.

Professional Association Websites - Many associations have websites and other publications which for a small fee will enable jobs to be advertised. There are often beneficial as they specifically target people already in or interested in your industry.

School/University Career Centres – for school entry or graduate positions, consider advertising directly on school job boards. You can also target specific schools or department based on their study areas. Technical/TAFE schools for trades people, Business Schools for Accounting or legal staff etc.

When advertising consider how broad or narrow you want your pool of applicants to come from. Having a large list of essential qualifications and skills, setting a clear salary range and only considering people who have prior experience in the role will significantly reduce the number of candidates you receive. On the other hand, only loosely defining the role within the job ad, could leave you swamped with applications from a large number of unsuitable candidates.

If you only want a small ad, ensure you redirect interested candidates to your website for more information. This could include a copy of the position description, or a document that outlines the selection criteria.

Shortlisting

An application letter and resume is in most instances the only information you will have about a potential worker. Depending on the size of the response and the urgency of the fill requirements, you may choose to take a 'tight' or 'loose' approach to shortlisting.

Respond immediately to candidates, acknowledging their application has been received and how the process will work. It is often a simple technique to advise the applicant that should they not hear from you by a certain date that their application should be deemed unsuccessful. Due to privacy legislation you should not keep resumes on file for a later date (data should only be kept for the reason it was collected, as such if the vacancy no longer exists you would have to seek permission from the candidate to keep their data for other than the original purpose).

Check for spelling and review the cover letter, this will give clues as to how much thought they have put into their application and gives information about their general writing ability. Spelling errors and poor grammar should be noted. Candidates are given lots of information via the internet, career counselors and recruitment agencies on the application process and the quality of their application. These should be of a high standard.

Screen candidates against the prioritized qualifications and criteria established, create a yes (those candidates that closely match your criteria), no (those candidates that do not meet key selection criteria) and maybe (those who have some of the criteria or who have a work history that is worth further consideration) pile.

Look for:

- the most important skills,
- the most relevant experience
- the desired educational level, and
- the other most important factors that you will consider in candidate selection.

Set aside a block of time whenever possible. Part of resume screening is comparing one candidate's qualifications and credentials to those listed in the other resumes you have received.

Make a decision as to whether you will review an application that does not come with a cover letter (have you advertised this fact), do they get moved to the maybe pile to consider only after other applicants are screened first.

Have they customised their application for you and your business. Generic applications are typically easy to spot, if the applicant hasn't spent a few minutes looking at your website or getting your name correct do you really want them on your payroll?

Consider any red flags during your resume review, particularly when they are unexplained on the resume or in the cover letter, include:

- employment gaps,
- evidence of decreasing responsibility,
- evidence of a career that has reached a plateau or gone backwards,
- living in another state

- short term employment at several jobs (that are not contract roles), and
- multiple shifts in career path.

If your short list is not as short as you would like it, or you would like more information on a candidate that isn't in their resume, consider phone screening candidates prior to bringing them in for interview.

If there is a delay in the shortlisting process (staff members on leave, budget issues, other deadlines that will impact on recruitment), contact the candidates you are interested in and explain that you remain interested, and advise of the date that recruitment will recommence.

Interviewing

Preparing for the interview is important. If there is more than one person on the interview panel you should ensure you meet prior to the interview to clarify the requirements of the job, and discuss how the interview will be structured.

Consider the interview environment, what impression of your business are you conveying. Do you have to move files of the seat to allow the candidate to sit down? Do they have to walk past a high noise area or rubbish pile to get to the meeting room, what are your first impressions going to be?

Look at your selection criteria and develop questions around these. If you need someone with good networking skills or problem solving skills, then you will need to frame questions that address these. If you need to ensure a candidate has the necessary technical knowledge, then questions to draw out this information are essential.

In setting out your questions you should ensure the questions are documented and are given to each candidate. This will:

1. assist in comparing candidates (as you will be able to compare answers to the same series of questions),
2. keep interviews on track, particularly if the candidate (or the interviewer) are going off tangent
3. help those new to interviewing
4. help avoid issues surrounding discrimination or unfairness.

The wording of your questions should also have some variety, some positively worded and others seeking problems, or negatives. The range of questions can also include the following:

- Fact based – simply clarifying resume or candidate data, these require short answers that can later be probed if needed. “What University did you go to”, “Who did you report to at XYZ company”.
- Behavioural questions – this requires you to ask questions about the candidates role in actual experiences and uses the theory that ‘past behaviour is a true indicator of future behaviour’. Ask about a work experience they have had that will display the trait you are after (problem solving, team work, delegation skills) ask them to go into detail ensuring they highlight their involvement. With probing, it is difficult for a candidate to ‘make-up’ these answers. Further to this you can always use reference checking to verify any facts you think need double-checking.
- Situational or hypothetical questions – used carefully, many candidates practice these, so they give you the answer you expect, not necessarily what they would do.

There are some questions that due to discrimination legislation you are not allowed to ask. Questions about race, religion, political affiliation, parental or carer status, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation etc. If it's not specific to the job, it generally shouldn't be asked.

Steps for a great interview

Introduction – General chat, weather, traffic, how they got to the interview, explain how the interview process will work, then ask some factual questions to get the ball rolling.

Questioning – This will form the largest part of the interview, refer to your question sheet and probe for further information if the candidate isn't forthcoming.

It is useful to appreciate that the candidate is probably nervous and trying to impress, however they shouldn't be 'let off the hook' by not going into enough detail for you to make an assessment on them.

Conclusion – Give the candidate an opportunity to ask you any questions they may have, describe the next steps in the process. Ensure you have covered off on final questions like 'salary expectations' and 'expected availability to start', you may also consider asking whether they have any leave booked. Thank the candidate for coming in and walk them out.

Other Hints and Tips

- Take notes – this will assist when comparing candidates at a later stage
- Ensure they are nice and have the skills – if you 'like' a candidate because they seem like a good person, or you have something in common, don't let this override the fact that they don't possess key skills that you require.
- Review their resume in advance of the interview and highlight anything you want to ask or question
- Do a quick internet search on their name, LinkedIn profiles are a good source of information and can verify resume data.
- Don't talk too much, ask the questions and let the candidate do most of the talking, try not to lead the candidate to giving you the answers you want to hear.

Testing and Reference Checking

Consider introducing testing for specific roles in your organisation. If you need an administrator with word or excel skills or a specific typing speed, there are a range of tests that can be used. Many recruitment agencies have licenses for these tests and for fee will allow candidates to be tested.

Behavioural and profiling tools are also available to ascertain work and personality traits that may impact on their work, their interactions with other. They can also highlight aspects such as leadership styles or selling skills, depending on what your business needs are.

Reference checking is an essential part of the process. In most cases the referees a candidate has listed will be positive, so it is suggested that if there are any concerns or areas that need double checking, that you specifically ask these questions of the referee.

Ensure you also confirm employment dates and position level and where appropriate salary.

If you have specific qualification or licensing requirements, ensure you sight original copies. Anyone who has stated qualifications dishonestly or who fails to pass the license checks should be eliminated as a candidate.

Legal Compliance and avoiding Discrimination traps

Do not make an offer contingent on anything, a medical, a reference check, a police check etc

Ensure you make it clear at the start all the steps that have to be gone through prior to an offer being made. Although a candidate may be a front runner, you should not by-pass your recruitment process without doing the necessary checks.

The government's Fairwork website www.fairwork.gov.au has some good information of recruiting staff and meeting employment law obligations.

Saying you didn't know or you don't have HR resources in your business is no longer a justifiable excuse for getting it wrong. If you run a business, you are responsible for getting it right.

and finally....

Don't forget your induction

The onboarding process doesn't stop with a signed contract. Keep in touch with your new recruit particularly if they aren't commencing immediately.

Send company/client newsletters, update them on any changes in the workplace, invite them to training or company functions where appropriate.

When they do commence, ensure you have a formal induction process to introduce them to your workplace, systems and processes. Allocate them a 'buddy', and ensure they are given formal training along with informal/on-the-job sessions.