

# New ways to recruit and retain the right people

The Secrets of Great Hiring Success

*Expert knowledge means success*

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**Note:** This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

## Introduction

All companies in today's business world deal with change as part of their daily working lives. The changes encompass all aspects of the business, and the issues surrounding recruitment and employment of staff are certainly no exception. Legal requirements, 'Good Practice' standards and industry requirements frame the whole process from the initial decision to recruit, to the developing relationship with the employee.

If recruitment is an issue that is new to your remit, your first step should be to seek advice and guidance<sup>1</sup>. In some instances you will be able to resource this advice from within your own organisation, but if this isn't the case then support can be gained from various outside organisations who are specialists in a particular field. If you require guidance on relevant legislation, contracts of employment or similar documentation then consult your company's solicitors. Your company may have a representing body that could provide support, or you could seek the advice of specialist human resources or recruitment consultancies. Whichever route you decide to take, this approach will ensure, that at all stages you will be working within the law and pursuing a policy of 'Best Practice'.

This publication focuses on some of the major issues that need consideration when embarking upon a recruitment campaign, however small.

## The facts first - how do people usually recruit?

- **Traditional Selection Methods:** Traditionally, most organisations use a combination of application, interviews, CVs and employment reference checks. These methods are best described as subjective, qualitative or clinical. Traditional selection methods are highly vulnerable to data distortion or falsification. CVs are often exaggerated. Interview skills have frequently been trained in candidates. Employer references are often guarded and distorted due to fear of litigation. These methods provide useful, but only

limited information.

- **Empirical Selection Methods:** Empirical hiring methods use applications, interviews, Human Factors Testing, professional background checks, Talent-Performance Research, Statistical Process Improvements (Deming), and Cost-Benefit Analysis. The empirical method adds objective data collection and analysis to the hiring process. The data collection also can make the hiring process more defensible to challenges of discrimination on employment, being based on standardisation, consistency, and objectivity. Human factors testing is not highly vulnerable to distortion. Validity indicators also help to verify the authenticity of the candidate's responses.



Predictors of On-the-Job Performance <sup>2</sup>	% accuracy
Interviews	14%
Reference Checks + Interviews	26%
Personality Testing + Reference Checks + Interviews	38%
Ability-Personality Testing + Reference Checks + Interviewing	54%
Interests-Abilities-Personality Testing + Reference Checks + Interviews	66%
Job Matching (performance benchmarking) + all of the above	75%

## The decision to recruit

Before any recruitment is initiated, take a step back and consider what mechanisms are currently in place to assist with the actual recruitment campaign and support of the new recruit.

Take time to meet with the parties surrounding the position you wish to recruit for. Use your job description as a basis for this meeting to verify all the responsibilities of the role. A job description contains the main function or role of the job, it will describe, in detail, WHAT is to be done i.e. purpose, scope and duties, responsibilities of the job. Butler Wilkinson (see contact details on the first page) often find that over a period of time positions evolve, very often into a role quite different to the original job description. By taking this action you will ensure that any advertising you undertake, instructions to recruitment agencies and eventually training will be accurate and

effective: A definite step towards saving money.

Once the job description has been verified and adjusted accordingly, consider the person specification. This should include details of the knowledge and skills that the ideal person would possess - details of the education, qualifications and experience required to perform the role.

What are you looking for in a candidate? - Socrates said it over 2,000 years ago: "Know thyself." He was saying that self-knowledge was the beginning of wisdom. It still is.

Look for these signs in candidates when you undertake the interview:

- Intrapersonal - ability to know oneself, ones feelings, feel positive about what one is doing in life;
- Interpersonal - ability to interact, relate well with others, have good social skills;
- Adaptability - ability to be flexible, realistic, solve problems;
- Stress management - ability to work well under pressure without losing control;
- General mood - ability to be optimistic, cheerful, create a positive atmosphere in workplace.

You will now be at the point where effective advertising can be placed and/or recruitment agencies contacted.

All advertising should be clear and concise, and give due consideration to the company image. Once completed, read your copy again with a fresh eye. Would you apply for this role? If the answer is no because the copy is lacking interest, start again. Copy is too expensive to waste.

If you decide to utilise the services of recruitment agencies, set aside time to fully discuss the position with the consultant at your chosen agency. The more information you are able to provide, the more relevant the CVs you receive will be. A very common complaint from companies who have used agencies is that they receive too many CVs that are often unsuitable. Similarly, a common complaint from agencies is that companies often provide inadequate information and then expect to receive ideal applicants. The moral of the tale is: If you wish to receive a value for money service from recruitment agencies, take time to develop a mutually beneficial working

relationship.

You are now at the stage of waiting to receive your response. Having taken these few steps, you will have done your utmost to ensure that the response you receive is relevant and the candidates that have applied are interested in the position you have to offer.

## Selecting the candidate

Once you have received all of the responses, use your job description and person specification to start building a list of those candidates you wish to interview. This process should be relatively straightforward now that you are clear about your actual requirements. Make sure that those candidates you have decided are not suitable, receive a regret letter immediately.

The interview timetable should be outlined and agreed with any other parties involved in the selection process. The interviews should be as close as possible, firstly to avoid delays in responses to those who have attended interviews, and secondly to ensure that all information derived from this stage of the process is discussed and compared while it is fresh in everyone's mind.

When writing to your candidates to offer an interview, ensure that they are given sufficient time to make any necessary arrangements. Include your contact number in the letter, enabling them to contact you if they have any difficulty attending the time offered to them. You certainly wouldn't wish to miss your ideal candidate over a difficulty that could easily be rectified. Before any interviews commence draft your interview plan. The interviews themselves should be requesting the same information regarding experience and suitability, otherwise meaningful comparisons cannot be made. All those involved in this stage of the process should be aware of, and in agreement with the draft interview plan.

It can be extremely useful to take one or two elements of the job and frame questions around those aspects. To explain how this method works, two examples are listed next:

## Example questions for the post of Customer Service Clerk

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**Question:**

Have you ever taken a complaint from a customer?

**Question:**

What was the nature of the complaint?

**Question:**

What was said/actioned by you during the call?

**Question:**

What was the final outcome?

**Question:**

Would you do anything differently if the same/similar situation occurred in the future?

## Example questions for the post of Department Manager

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**Question:**

Have you worked within an environment where they had to adhere to strict budgets and timescales?

**Question:**

Who was responsible for setting the budgets/timescales?

**Question:**

Were you able to adhere to the budgets/timescales?

**Question:**

If not, what were the reasons for going over budget/time?

By using this method of questioning you are asking your candidate to provide you with evidence of their ability to undertake certain aspects of the role. It is most effective if situations are chosen that are most likely to be experienced in the role. Your first question should establish whether or not the candidate has experienced this or a similar situation previously. Use your following questions as a guideline, you may find your candidate explains the whole scenario, answering most of your questions, without prompts from you. If all candidates are asked exactly the same questions you are collecting more comparable information to assist in your decision making.

If more than one person from inside the organisation is assisting in the interview process, it's useful to devise a simple checklist for the interview itself. All

interview notes can be written on this sheet, again enabling straightforward and efficient discussions about each candidate once this stage is completed.

All interviews should be conducted in a quiet, confidential environment, where candidates are able to concentrate, and feel comfortable discussing their personal information. Interruptions must be avoided at all costs, and candidates should be informed that you will be taking notes. When taking your notes, be careful not to immediately scribble when a comment that could be conceived as negative has been made. You should also avoid facial expressions or body language that provide an insight into your feelings about the candidate, particularly expressions like frowning! Similarly, verbal comments that provide an understanding of your assessment of the candidate should also be avoided.

The interview process can be, and often is, a subjective process. Interviewers are after all like anyone else - the sum total of their upbringing influences opinions and so on, and everything around us has an impact on how we think. What you need to do as an interviewer, is reduce the likelihood of your opinions entering into the interview process.

Design a format that will allow all those involved to be objective, concentrating on the actual experience and abilities that are required in the role, matching each candidate to those requirements.

One interview is often adequate for positions up to a certain level; what that level is will differ between organisations. For some positions however you will feel the need for an extended selection process. That extension may mean a second interview stage. In addition, you may decide to introduce psychometric testing in some format.

Psychometric testing can provide valuable, objective information about your candidate, in addition to the information you can gather from their previous education, experience and from the interview already attended. Most valuable for the selection process would be the use of Ability Tests or Personality Questionnaires.

Ability tests will give you a focused indication as to an individual's ability to perform a task or function that is involved in the job. More than one test will allow you to cover more than one particular ability. If you

decide to utilise this option, job analysis should take place prior to its introduction. This will ensure that the chosen tests accurately reflect the abilities required to perform the job.

Personality Questionnaires are designed to assess the candidate's typical or preferred way of behaviour at the work place. The information gained can be used to create a framework for the second interview, discussing various aspects of the report with the candidate and establishing how their style is likely to complement the role.

Both of these methods can provide you with additional information to assist in your decision making. They cannot, however, be used as selection tools in isolation.

By the end of this process you will have a variety of information about your candidates and should be in a position to make an informed decision. Once the decision is made, letters should be forwarded to all candidates without delay, thanking them for their interest in your organisation.

## Welcoming your new recruit

The first few weeks for your new recruit are crucial. It is during these weeks that an induction to the company should take place, any necessary training should take place, and your new employee learns what is expected of him/her.

Take time to prepare for this period, considering fundamentals such as desk space, telephone lines, car parking etc., as well as deciding who will be responsible for training and monitoring their progress. Certainly, their first week should include an induction covering areas such as; a list of staff members and their responsibilities, health and safety issues, fire procedures, the company's principle business areas, competitors and so on.

Their training and or development programme should be discussed early on, and a date made to discuss their progress. This initial programme will set the parameters for the future working relationship, which should be centred on accountability and responsibility.

On the assumption that your new employee remains with your organisation, regular appraisals to discuss progress, potential for progression etc., should take place.

## Leavers

It is a good idea to conduct some form of exit interview for all leavers. This process, if carried out well, will provide valuable and often useful information about your organisation. Including questions that explore whether an employee would recommend your company to others, or if the person would consider returning in the future.

Certainly, in some instances, employees may leave, extend and broaden their skills elsewhere, and return in the future with extremely valuable experience. Or they may simply regret leaving; this returner would not need the training and adjustment period that an individual new to the organisation would need.

## Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

### Acknowledgement

<sup>1</sup> This publication was written for us by Shelley Cushway, a consultant specialising in the scientific approach to recruitment.

<sup>2</sup> References/Sources: John E. Hunter and Ronda F Hunter, Validity and Utility of Alternative Predictors of Job Performance, *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 96, No. 1, 1984, p. 90; Robert P Tett, Douglas Jackson and Mitchell Rothstein, Personality Measures as Predictors of Job Performance: A meta-analytical review, *Personnel Psychology*, Winter 1991, p. 703. Michigan State University's School of Business.

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