

Streamlined, Speedy Recruitment

If you're experiencing problems hiring to your team then it's time to update your approach to recruitment. Time is a major factor if you want to succeed in a competitive job market. The days of multiple interviews and the process taking longer than a month from advertising to appointing are long gone.

You can be sure that if someone is applying for your job, you will only be one of many employers they will have sent their details to. Technology and web based recruitment means candidates can apply for hundreds of jobs via their mobile phone during their lunch break.

The challenge for all employers is that the pool of available people applying for jobs is low. High levels of employment mean that fewer unemployed people are looking for work. The UK leaving the EU and future planned visa restrictions will only continue to reduce numbers of available applicants.

Low unemployment means that your organisation will have to do more to tempt people away from their current employer. Your challenge is in standing out amongst other employers trying to do the same. To compete, you need to make sure not only that your job is attractive but that you are offering a competitive pay and benefits package. There is no point in streamlining your recruitment process if no one applies for your vacancy because the salary offer is below the market rate.

Thanks to the internet, candidates have access to an array of information on the pay and benefits that lots of organisations offer. Proactive and thorough applicants, i.e. the type of candidates you really want to employ, will do their homework and will only apply for jobs that pay the going rate.

You may think that a way around this is to not put a salary on the job advert. If you are thinking this then stop reading right now and immediately go and look at a popular recruitment website such as Indeed. You'll see that for many jobs, lots of your competitors are openly putting in salary details. Candidates are put off by employers who are secretive about pay. They won't waste their time on trying to find out what you are paying when they can immediately click onto and apply for another job that clearly states what they can earn.

If you don't want to advertise a salary for fear of rebellion from your current team because you are underpaying them, then this factsheet won't help as you have a much bigger problem on your hands. What you need to do instead is call me for advice on avoiding throwing money away on the financial and time losses incurred on repeated failed recruitment, or high employee turnover and how you can save money by paying your current team a market rate salary.

Another factor to keep in mind is that other organisations will be ahead of the game not only by offering competitive pay but by proactively looking to keep talent through a supportive employment culture and offering internal development and promotion opportunities.

Whilst these factors are not as significant as pay, if you don't offer training and development opportunities, it could go against you if a candidate you make an offer to is considering offers from other potential employers. As mentioned above, candidates will apply for lots of jobs at the same time as applying for yours. If they interview well and you make an offer, it follows they will potentially have the option of choosing between a range of job offers and not just yours.

Essential to successful recruitment is conducting a thorough and honest review of what pay and benefits you offer and your approach to career development by researching and comparing yourself with other employers. If you are confident you are competitive in these fundamental areas then the next step to effective recruitment is to ensure your recruitment process is efficient and fast.

Developing a process well in advance of needing to hire saves time. Here's how:

Before advertising:

1. Think about your employer brand

- Write no more than a couple of lines of clear, concise and engaging copy that defines what your organisation does and how it does it.
- Have and use a professional looking logo to stand out in a bland crowd of other adverts.

2. Think about the job offering

- Specify tasks, responsibilities and deliverables. This is not a long list of duties from the job description. Its a few lines that sum up the essentials of the job.
- Make sure you research and offer a market rate salary and competitive benefits.

3. Think about the person you need

- What essential characteristics are needed to succeed in the role? There should be no more than two or three - a long list of requirements will put people off.
- Don't fall into the trap of trying to recruit someone just like you - there is no other 'you'.

4. Think in advance about the interview

- Train your teams in effective recruitment including CV sifting, avoiding unconscious bias, conducting structured interviews, and scoring.
- Set interview dates in the diaries of everyone involved before you place the advert and make sure these don't change.

When advertising:

5. Think about your job advert

- This is your window of opportunity to hook people with your pitch as to why they should apply for your job. It must include details of the basics of salary and location.
- Your brand and reputation are important, so sing your own praises but don't go OTT!
- Put the interview date in your advert.
- Have a closing date that is only a couple of weeks on from when you place the advert - remember people changing jobs want to move fast, they won't be on the market for long and you've got to move quicker than your competitors.

6. Think about where to advertise

- As a general rule, use large online job boards, such as Indeed, LinkedIn or Reed.
- For more specialised roles, look for industry and profession specific online job boards.
- Don't forget to maximise internal opportunities – send the job advert to your team and encourage sharing it wider via social media.
- Use your organisation's online presence – Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Put it on your website's front page. Don't bury it in a page that needs umpteen clicks before it's located.

7. Think about applications and how you respond to applicants.

- Keep the application criteria as simple as possible - if you want to use an application form then keep it brief.
- As a minimum ask for a CV and a one-page covering letter as you do want people to be serious about applying for your job. If you intend to use completing a letter as part of the recruitment process, make it clear in the advert that if they don't include it then it is an automatic fail.
- Think about the candidate experience and how you can stand out from other employers at an early stage in the process. One way to do this is to send a personalised email acknowledgement to confirm safe receipt of their application.

- Many employers don't bother to acknowledge applications and a little politeness can go a long way. Remember – online platforms allow candidates to share their experiences and most people only comment when an experience is bad. A poor candidate experience can have a negative effect on your brand reputation. A bad review will forever pop up in an online search which can impact on the success of future recruitment.

After advertising:

8. Sifting

- Set aside time in your diary to sift applications on the day of the application deadline.
- Don't take an ad hoc approach to sifting. Seeing more than one CV at a time, side by side, decreases gender biases and increases the likelihood that participants are assessed as individuals based on their performance and potential, rather than gender stereotypes (Bohnet et al 2012).
- Don't reject anyone until after interviews are booked in. If candidates withdraw and you are fortunate to have a back up list, you can still invite people along.

9. Shortlisting

- Look for evidence in the information submitted to check off that they meet the minimum criteria of essentials skills, experience and abilities as well as other information you asked for.
- Time may not allow for having two or more face to face interviews. When whittling down the applications to a shortlist of people you want to invite for a formal interview, consider if you want to have a shorter phone or Skype interview first. If you can hold these outside of normal office hours this may help the candidate avoid having to take valuable time off work.

10. Interviewing

- Phone people to invite them to an interview - don't rely on email as your invite could end up in an unchecked junk folder.
- The day before the interview phone and / or text candidates to remind them of the interview time and check if they need any details of where to find the office etc.
- If you want to carry out ability tests or personality profiling as part of the process then arrange for these to be done online ahead of the interview.
- Plan the interview as if you are holding a first and second interview at the same time. I used to advocate always holding two interviews but have found this can take too long for general and non executive level jobs. One way around this is to have a brief phone interview first (see above) to check off the essentials skills, experience and abilities as well as other information you asked for.
- If it is not practical or time efficient to hold initial phone interviews then plan to hold a longer first and second interview in one go.
- Structure the first few questions of the interview around a clearly focused investigation of evidence of the specific essentials of the job role concerning skills and experience.
- Focus the majority of time on scenario questions relevant to the job. For example start questions with "Tell me about a time when you..." or "What would you do if..."
- Arrange as part of the interview for candidates to meet other team members and maybe take a tour of the building.

9. Deciding and appointing

- Score against prepared criteria and resolve to only hire the candidate whose final score is the highest, even if there is another who you like more.
- Inform the successful candidate and if possible make a verbal offer on the same day or the next day at the latest.

For practical hands-on help with your recruitment, call Michelle Prescott on 01488 639 728 or email her at mprescott@personapm.co.uk.