

Getting the right recruit

In a people business, the quality of staff is paramount. **Karl Hartey** suggests how you might improve your recruitment activity and add talent and potential to your team



LIKE MANY MANAGEMENT TASKS, the process of recruitment is not especially difficult, but it is easy to get wrong. There are many things to remember and many things to get right. Omit or forget any and you can end up with the wrong person in the wrong job, or even the right person in the wrong job. If you make a bad decision, you'll have plenty of time to regret it.

The key to getting things right is to be meticulous in your planning and execution. Decide exactly what you are looking for, specify your expectations and spell out the nature of the vacancy you are looking to fill. For example, if you are looking for an assistant, use the job description to specify the duties: telephoning to book appointments, correspondence, telephone-answering, typing-up reports, etc. Decide upon the income and benefits package, hours, sick-time and holiday time. Make sure the person taking the job knows precisely what they will have to do and what they will get in return.

Do you expect certain qualifications? Are they a regulatory necessity? What support will you give to someone studying?

Attract recruits with an advert in the appropriate medium: local or national newspaper? Professional magazine? Job centre? Or should you seek recommendations from colleagues, friends or clients? Should you try to attract someone with a direct offer?

Prioritise any CVs you receive and make calls to the candidates. Interview them on the telephone to determine their work experience, telephone skills, computer literacy, income needs and general outlook about the job and their career. Weed out the unsuitable ones.

Invite the most promising candidates to a first interview at your office. The interview should last no more than an hour (note the candidates' time-keeping and personal presentation). Cover practical issues but also develop a feel for the person sitting in front of you. Is it likely that you will be able to work happily with them? Will they fit into the team? Do their career ambitions mesh with your long-term plans?

Whittle down the number of applicants to around half-a-dozen and conduct second interviews. This is your chance to



delve deeper to see if a worthwhile connection can be made that will benefit the candidate and your business. Are they enthusiastic and motivated? What do your instincts tell you? Ask a colleague or partner to sit in the interview with you and discuss the candidates fully afterwards. Don't schedule an interview immediately before another meeting. Allow yourself time for a de-brief.

Make sure you take notes on each candidate or they will become a blur in the hours and days following.

Once you've selected a recruit and they begin work, give them time and space to get acclimatised. Don't throw them in the deep end. Get someone to show them around the office (or do it yourself). Introduce them to everyone (having warned everyone beforehand that someone new is joining) and acquaint them with any rules or routines that are peculiar to your office.

Don't forget the basics, such as where the facilities are, who makes the tea, how you organise lunch rotas and so on. How should they answer the phone – their name, the company name, with what salutation? How does the technology work? Who's in charge of stationery and personnel? Will they get a car-parking space?

Do everything you can to make the person comfortable. Remember that they will be in a pretty nervous state, in unfamiliar surroundings and rubbing shoulders with strangers.

If the recruit will be undertaking training and development activity, explain the process. Even a mature adviser has CPD requirements, so explain your attitude and procedures.

If the job involves targets, make them crystal clear. How many appointments should they schedule per day or per week? Where will they obtain leads? Should they work from a script? Who is their mentor?

If someone is expected to develop their skills, give adequate support – and also give targets and deadlines so that personal accountability is built into the relationship from the outset.

Try to imbue into recruits the philosophy and principles of your firm.

Recruitment checklist

- Create a detailed job description, indicating your expectations.
- Talk about the recruit's growth potential and where they see themselves in the next three years.
- Determine a fair income and bonus incentive scheme.
- Consider training and development activity.
- Prepare training guidelines and employment contract, attendance record, performance review schedule and bonus incentive. Have this material ready on the recruit's first day of employment.
- Create weekly, monthly and annual business goals for the whole team.
- Update your goals every day or week.

What is your culture, and how can they integrate?

Follow employment guidelines assiduously. If the recruit is on probation, give them all the help you can and then take a view as to whether the relationship is working. Talk to them and make it clear that you appreciate full and honest feedback.

Schedule regular performance reviews, perhaps at the end of each month during the first three months and, after that, on a quarterly basis. Use these to discuss the recruit's accomplishments and any skills that need improvement.

Questioning of best, worst and change is a sound way to conduct an appraisal: what is the best thing about working at this company, what is the worst and what would you change?

By reviewing staff regularly, you are asking them to live up to professional expectations. This sends a message that they are important, their work is valued and their extra effort will be rewarded. Be sure to discuss your business goals and your plans for achieving them as a team and always take time to answer staff questions.

As for remuneration, include a bonus as part of any compensation package. This spreads the financial risk between the company and the staff member and encourages him or her to become more involved in the business.

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