

Guide:

6 Essential Steps for a Successful Recruiting Process

Executive summary

A study conducted by Deloitte in 2014 concluded that “Today’s HR organisation is no longer judged by administrative efficiency – it is judged by its ability to acquire, develop, retain and help manage talent.” Its success will ultimately be measured by the impact each hire has on the organisation itself, from improved staff engagement and employee productivity to higher retention levels and reduced turnover. But there are challenges in achieving these things.

Twenty years ago, McKinsey’s coined the phrase ‘war for talent’ to mean the battle between organisations to secure the best people. Today, the ‘war’ continues and looks to be entering its most fiercely competitive phase, as talent acquisition remains one of the most urgent issues for Employers. And there are no signs of this waning anytime soon.

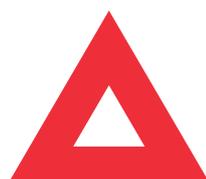
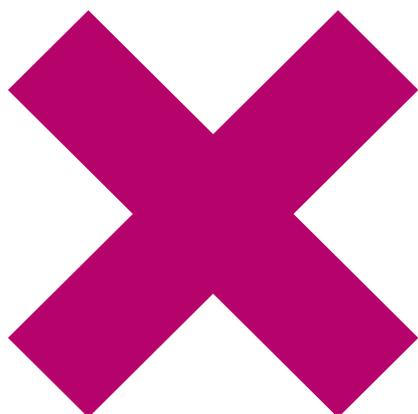
In areas such as Oxford and the surrounding region, employment levels are so high that the pool of available talent is shrinking. This means that organisations need to work harder to effectively position themselves as employers of choice – not just because there is a scarcity of talent but also because of the way in which candidate behaviour has evolved in recent years, too.

The proliferation of social media and the continued adoption of smartphones and tablets have impacted the ways that candidates both engage and wish to search and apply for jobs. These two developments alone have served as a catalyst in reshaping that most decisive stage in the hiring process – the interview.

Indeed, the perception of the interview has graduated from being regarded as a one-way to very much a two-way process. Candidates now see a job interview as an opportunity to assess the suitability of the organisation as a potential Employer as much as it is about the latter determining whether the applicant will be the right fit for them.

Every company wants the best employees to join them, yet the odds of doing so and on a consistent basis are not as high as most Employers would like them to be. However, the odds can be restacked in your favour by having an effective recruitment strategy in place.

Stephen Covey, author of the hugely successful book ‘7 Habits of Highly Effective People’ said, “Stop setting goals. Goals are pure fantasy unless you have a specific plan to achieve them.” In this guide, we explore all aspects of how to develop a recruitment process in greater detail. Specifically, we seek to show how hiring managers can maximise the return they currently get on their recruitment, and why having a well-planned recruitment and selection process can make the difference between a good or poor hiring decision.



STEP 1: Define the proposition

Knowing that you want the 'best candidate' for each vacancy that needs filling is all very well, but unless you are clear about what the 'best' looks like you run the risk of losing out on the talent you really need.

Defining the right person, irrespective of position, is critical. It gives you as an Employer a clear and concise understanding of what skills, abilities and attributes you need to look out for. This in turn leads to a more efficient, effective and fair recruitment process.

Think carefully about the role, what is required of the successful incumbent and how it fits into the department's

and the organisation's future plans. Where does the role sit in the here and now, will this change further down the line and if so, in what way? How has the role come about in the first place – is it a newly created position? If it's a replacement, are you looking for a like-for-like Candidate or could this be an opportunity to re-scope the role?

There are a lot of questions to be asked, but knowing the answers will enable you to better focus your recruitment efforts and ensure that you are communicating the right message to the right people, in the right way and at the right time.

STEP 2: Focus on the detail

Once you are clear on who you need, start the recruitment process by producing a job description that covers the following:

Job title and summary of the role: Make the job title accurately reflect the nature of the role itself. There have been a number of instances in the past when Employers have used job titles that have not only baffled us (and we've seen literally thousands over the years) but also the very Candidates they hope to attract. So, make sure it is relevant, easily identifiable and appeals to the right people.

Key responsibilities: As we mentioned above, the way Candidates search for jobs has evolved and it is quite possible that the role you are looking to fill has also evolved since it was first conceived – especially if the previous post holder was in situ for some time. Be clear on the essential functions of the role and emphasise the top five or 10 responsibilities. When describing them, always use active verbs such as 'selling', 'calculating', 'monitoring' or 'supporting' instead of vague terms such as 'responsible for' or 'liaising' with, which do little to add value or 'sell' the role to a prospective Candidate.

Chain of command: You know where the role sits within the business, so who does the post holder report to?

Practical factors: Assuming you don't want to be inundated by plethora of CVs from applicants who are unqualified and unsuitable for the job, make sure you include as much detail about the position as you can. Consider the qualifications that are mandatory along with those that are preferred, and include information about the location, hours of work and whether the role is permanent or temporary.

Salary and benefits: There is no hard and fast rule about whether or not to include salary details in your job adverts, but adding it can help to increase application rates. This is important for setting the right expectations and leaving it out could raise concern among some Candidates who could question if you're really sure about what you want or are prepared to pay.

However, salary is not the only way to make a role more appealing. Having an attractive benefits package can increase its appeal. So, be clear on what you offer, whether it's flexible working, gym membership, subsidised food and drink, profit sharing or additional holidays.

STEP 3: Assess your hiring options

Now you are clear on what your ideal Candidate looks like, the next step is deciding the most appropriate format to communicate your vacancy.

There is a wealth of options at your disposal but the key is understanding the behaviours of the Candidate of most importance to you – where do they ‘hang out’ online, how do they like to receive information, and what tactics will generate the greatest return on your recruitment investment? There is, of course, no single silver bullet solution; rather, a combination of attraction strategies that have been proven to be the most effective:

Your company website: It may seem an obvious place to start, but advertising your vacancies on your own website is a must. Having a dedicated Careers page is ideal if you are a high-volume Employer, but for ad hoc recruitment it isn’t necessary. As long as potential Candidates can easily find the details of the role and instructions on how to apply, it can be just as effective if the role is promoted in your News pages.

Be sure to include links in the advert that direct potential Candidates to those areas of the website that have relevance to the job in hand. After all, the more they get to learn about the organisation, the more informed they will be when it comes to interview.

Recruitment Agencies: According to the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, 56% of all vacancies will be filled by Recruitment Agencies by the end of 2018 – an increase from 45% in 2016. There are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, it is getting harder to find the best talent given the large number of people in the market and the few who are on the market. This is where Recruitment Agencies often come into their own. Most good agencies have developed a network of Candidates over a period of years that they can tap into when a suitable vacancy arises.

Secondly, especially in Oxfordshire, location presents a particular challenge for many Employers in the area, as our own survey highlighted. This is compounded by the lack of time that hiring managers say they can commit to their recruitment process. Not to mention the negative impact this can have on the quality of the hire they make. Recruitment Agencies can mitigate this risk and speed up your time to hire which, by default, reduces your cost per hire too.

Social media: According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center, over 1 in 3 (35%) of jobseekers have searched for their next role on Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook. More than 1 in 5 (22%) have submitted an application via one of these platforms. There is a high probability that the Candidates you wish to attract are active on social media, so it makes sense that you should be too; LinkedIn alone has over 23 million registered users in the UK – that’s two-thirds of the working population.

Advertising: This can take many forms, ranging from running recruitment advertisements in the local press or trade publications and sector websites, to job boards, sponsored email and social media campaigns, and even radio or TV.

As most job postings are digital, the challenge is to make it stand out in an increasingly crowded online jobs marketplace – and that means making a fast first impression. It needs to not only be creative enough to appeal to the eye, it also has to be ‘discoverable’ – you can increase the ease with which your posting can be found in search engines through the strategic use of relevant key words and suitable graphics.

STEP 4: Prepare for interview

The interview is a two-way process, and it is not just the Candidate who has to prepare for it. As the Employer, the interview process represents an opportunity to showcase all that is good about the organisation, regardless of whether the Candidate is successful in their application or not. More important is the need to consider the most effective way to identify and assess the suitability of the Candidate and their potential to perform the job:

Screening Candidates: Chances are you will receive a lot of applications – many of which will not be relevant, but this is par for the course in recruiting unless you work with a Recruitment Agency who will screen all the CVs that come in for you; thereby, saving you considerable time. Either way, standout CVs do just that – when you have a clear understanding of what you are looking for, they become obvious.

That said, be careful not to overly rely on key words as a means for screening potential Candidates for interview. While an estimated 70% of CVs are passed through an Employer's applicant tracking system (ATS), not all Candidates will optimise their CVs with key words and phrases. It may take a little longer to physically read each application you receive, but doing so could reveal a strong Candidate whose CV may not have successfully passed the ATS test.

Decide the interview team: With your shortlist of Candidates confirmed, the next step is to agree who will be part of the interview team. The optimum number of interviewers is two or three at a push. Any more than that and you risk the Candidate feeling intimidated, self-conscious or inhibited from freely sharing information and allowing their personality to shine through. This is not an interrogation, so create an environment that is comfortable and provides the opportunity for the Candidates to express themselves.

Over the course of a typical two-stage interview process the team should consist of the line manager who the new hire will directly report to, someone from human

resources (or other relevant senior manager if no HR department exists), and a member of the team that the successful Candidate will become part of. Yes, the job of the Candidate is to 'sell' themselves to you but equally you need to promote your organisation – and its people – to them as an Employer of choice too. So, make sure that the members of the interview team are representative of the business as whole.

Prepare the Candidate for interview: When arranging the interview with the Candidate, let them know who will be present, the format it will take, if they need to prepare any materials or presentation, and the approximate duration it will take. This simple gesture not only manages the expectations of the Candidate, it also gives the impression that the role is important to you and that you value your employees. This in turn raises their perception of you as an Employer of choice.

Ask the right questions: A CV can tell you a lot about a Candidate's potential for a role, but an interview will unearth their suitability and 'fit'. How you phrase a question can determine how much you will get from them. It's no different to assuming the role of a TV chat show host – your questions should be based around such open questions as who, what, when, why and how. For instance, you could ask:

- Why is this position of interest to you?
- What is your understanding of the role?
- How does this role compare to your most recent position?
- What do you consider to be the most important aspects of this role?
- When have you had to ask for help?
- What has been the biggest challenge in your career and how did you overcome it?
- How do you like to be managed?
- What is your biggest career success to date?

STEP 4: Continued...

There will be times when the responses are either unclear and require clarity or further exploration, so you need to ask the Candidate to elaborate on the given answer:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What lessons did you learn from that experience?
- How would you do things differently if you had the chance to do so?
- What was the impact of that and how did it make you feel?

All of the above are aimed at enabling you to assess their suitability for the role, now you need to provide the opportunity to let the Candidate find out if you are the right fit for them.

The Candidate will invariably already have an opinion and perception of the organisation, having applied in the first place followed by their preparation for the interview itself. This will have been garnered by referring to the company website, blog, news articles, search engine results to see what has been written about the business in the public domain, social media profiles, and its overall branding and marketing. For them, the interview offers them the chance to get a better understanding of what it would be like to work for the business and truly buy-in to the role. Allow time for Candidates to ask questions and prepare your responses to likely questions in advance.

Manage expectations: One of the most frustrating parts of the recruitment process for Candidates is the lack of communication received by Employers after the interview has taken place. Be clear about the next steps and tell them when they can expect a decision.

The sooner you make the offer, the quicker you can secure the talent you need and get back to performing those other essential tasks that have been put on the backburner during the hiring process. Irrespective of whether you think someone is a good fit or not, let them know because failure to do so could cost you more than you realise.

According to a survey by LinkedIn, 80% of HR managers agree that a strong Employer brand makes it easier to recruit top talent. Yet a poor recruitment experience can detrimentally affect it, as was the case with Virgin Media.

In 2014, the telecoms company undertook a 'Rejected Candidate Survey' of all those who had applied to work for the company over the previous 12 months but were unsuccessful. It found that 6% of applicants had been Virgin Media customers but had switched to a competitor as a direct reaction to a poor Candidate experience. In monetary terms, this 6% equated to £4.4 million in lost revenues.

STEP 5: Select the best Candidate

The interviews are complete and you have a good idea as to who you will offer the position to. But any delay in making an offer could put paid to all your hard work during the recruitment process. Indeed, 54% of Employers say they have lost qualified Candidates because of a lengthy recruitment process, according to recent research.

Of course, at this stage, all you know about the Candidate is what they have told and shared with you. Before making a final offer, it is important to do your homework in order to consolidate your feeling that this is indeed the right person for the role. Pre-employment screening checks will enable you to do just that:

Reference checks: The cost of a bad hire can range from £8,000-£12,000, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. A thorough reference check can be the deciding factor over whether your preferred Candidate is offered the position or not. When speaking with former Employers, you can ask:

- What role and responsibilities did the Candidate have?
- What were their strengths and weaknesses?
- How did they fit in with the culture of the organisation?
- What were their dates of employment?
- How would you describe their performance?
- Would you re-hire the Candidate in the future?
- What salary did the Candidate receive?
- How much time off did the Candidate have for sickness?

Decide on the package: At the outset, you decided what the role would look like and the salary you were prepared to offer. Now you need to marry these things to the Candidate you have chosen as your ideal hire. Is the initial salary sufficient or will you need to revise it in order to secure the talent you need? If this isn't an option due to budget restraints, could you consider improving the benefits package – after all, how much will an extra day for holiday really cost you, especially if it helps sway the Candidate to accept the offer?

Pitch then offer: Time is of the essence, so always call the Candidate and make a verbal offer. Not only does this make them feel valued, it opens negotiations between you. We're in a candidate-driven market and it would be foolish to think that a Candidate will accept the first offer they receive.

Prepare your pitch and know your bargaining position – the maximum salary you can go up to, or the extra benefits you can include as part of their overall package. Remember, the rule of thumb is that Candidates will expect a 10% pay increase on their current role, so make sure the offer is attractive enough to lure them away.

Once agreed, confirm the details in writing with a formal offer letter that also confirms the date when employment will commence, conditions of offer (such as subject to successful references), and give them a clearly defined timeframe within which to respond and confirm the offer.

Candidates who are in demand are often juggling multiple job interviews and negotiating salaries with other Employers. So, be sure to make your best offer but don't allow yourself to be left hanging until the Candidate has made their mind up – yes, they are making an important career decision, but any delay could see you miss out on another applicant.

Consolidate the 'sale': Making and accepting an offer is like a sales transaction – you are the buyer who needs to procure the services of the Candidate. But if the decision over whether to accept the offer or not is dragging on too long, you need to force the matter. Simply asking the question, "We interviewed a couple of great Candidates and we need to let them know the outcome of their application. Can we inform them that the job has now been filled?"

If your preferred choice is still umming and ahing, then they're not the right Candidate for you – who would want someone on their team that is be prepared to let someone else lose out on a job they really want?

STEP 6: Onboard early

While the hiring process may end when the successful Candidate enters the organisation on the first day of their new job, the recruitment process doesn't. The investment you made in securing the talent you need can only be returned if your new hire remains in place for some time. So, the only way to ensure a maximum return on that investment is to have an effective onboarding strategy in place.

But onboarding starts as soon as the offer has been accepted. It is at this point when Employers need to engage the Candidate and begin to make them feel part of the team before they even start in their new role. This is perhaps the most critical stage of the entire hiring process – it is also the moment that your new hire is most susceptible to counter offers.

Indeed, bridging the gap between job offer and start-date with regular communication ensures that the Candidate knows that they remain front of mind – especially those who are serving long notice periods. When day one comes along, the focus then is on ensuring they have what they need to get off to the best possible start.

We have all seen those pictures of desks populated with branded stationary and shiny new gadgets, but these things mean nothing if the underlying support isn't there. In fact, according to a report published in Personnel Today, more than 1 in 3 employees say they have had a poor onboarding experience.

Moreover, over half (56%) had no induction programme or initial training at all which, combined with a lack of guidance from their new Employer, is the reason why as many as 1 in 7 Candidates have left a job with their first week. So, it is important to create a check list of the things that need to be in place and ensure that everyone involved in the onboarding process – line manager, HR, team 'buddy', other departments – are fully briefed on their roles and responsibilities.

Remember, integrating a new hire into the business isn't down to one individual or department – it is a collective responsibility. It is also an opportunity to impress and show your new hire that you do live up to the expectations you set during the interview process. Get the onboarding process right and your new employee could be one of the best hires you ever make.



Conclusion

Recruitment is one of the most important roles that any business has to perform. But it isn't easy and the lack of available talent is making it increasingly difficult to find and attract the talent that is needed to drive the organisation forward.

What's more, according to figures from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, 22% of Employers plan to increase their workforces between now and the end of 2018 – competition between organisations is set to intensify as is the need to ensure they have a robust recruitment process in place.

But as we have shown in this guide, the steps that need to be taken to achieve hiring success are not giant leaps into the unknown. And many of them you may already be doing that.

Allen Associates has partnered with many of Oxfordshire's most exciting fast-growth and large-scale Employers over the last 20 years. We are one of the largest independent Recruitment Agencies in the area and have recently been awarded Gold status by Investors in People for the second time. The investment we make in our own people reflects the investment we make in ensuring you get the right people for your business. Let us help you with your next hire.

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