

A guide

**to common
recruitment
challenges
and the most
effective
strategies
to overcome
them**

In our recent report “**the five biggest challenges facing recruiters in 2019**” we explored five of the most significant obstacles facing recruiting teams in 2019.

The report highlighted why it’s imperative for hiring managers, HR departments and recruitment managers to understand the implications for talent acquisition. By understanding how these areas are having an impact upon recruitment practices, it will become easier for businesses to develop cohesive strategies which can improve both attraction and retention policies.

In this follow-up guide, **we explore five practical and easy-to-implement strategies which can overcome the most common recruitment challenges.** These strategies can be used individually or collectively as a package to enhance recruitment practices.

Strategy #1

Understanding the correlation between capability versus qualifications

One of the hardest elements for any recruiter is understanding the correlation between capability and qualifications. It's easy to dismiss potential candidates because they may not have the specific qualifications required for the role despite having a clear capability, drive, and passion.

The issue of capability vs qualifications can be part of the rationale behind the UK's gender pay gap. A frequently cited statistic from a 2014 Hewlett Packard internal report revealed that;

“Men apply for a job when they have 60% of the listed job attributes, whilst women wait until they have 100%”



100%



60%

If we consider that women are put off by the terminology of certain job adverts, then perhaps we can start to reconsider our phrasing. By changing the way in which we frame our job descriptions, we may begin to see a much wider pool of talent applying for these positions.

Language is a key part of this as it is a known barrier for many job hunters. Unconscious gender bias can often be viewed in job adverts, and it's clear that many candidates are put off from applying as a result of phrasing.

Wise, the campaign for gender balance in science, technology, and engineering has [published guidance](#) which explains how simply changing terminology can widen the diversity of applicants. They suggest using inviting and positive language to reinforce the benefits of the job role, and to limit the use of “requirements” to demonstrate greater flexibility.

“The purpose of a job description is to persuade someone to apply, not to scare them off. Avoid language which describes a singular focus or narrow set of abilities, Highly qualified talent is unlikely to self-identify this way”

Strategy #1 Continued...

Another barrier to recruitment in 2019 is the diverse and changing nature of HR, marketing, finance, and administrative teams.

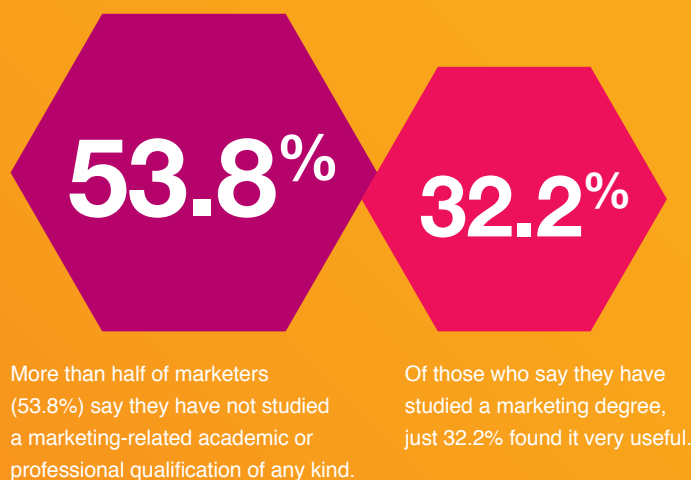
From a recruitment perspective, it's increasingly important to look for diversity within departments. Whilst there will always be a need for traditional roles such as credit controllers, administrators and account managers, they will soon need to be supplemented by other skilled roles such as statisticians, project managers, and digital automisers. These are new roles which will evolve and develop alongside the changing nature of the professions. Having an awareness of the new skills sets required for the new digital world means that recruiters must think outside of the box and look at the wider transferrable skills of candidates.

Whereas traditionally, recruiters would look to hire marketing, finance or HR graduates to fill entry-level positions, now is the time to look at what skills candidates can bring from other areas.

For instance, graduates in subjects such as mathematics, science, psychology or even geography can bring new analytical and data mapping skills to the table.

For professions such as marketing and PR, the debate over the validity of dedicated marketing and PR degrees continues to be a hot topic. Despite degrees in these areas being mainstream for over 15 years, there are still arguments to be had over the benefits of experiences versus theoretical knowledge. Marketing Week's [2019 Career and Salary Survey](#) shows that the debate will continue for some time; More than half of marketers (53.8%) say they have not studied a marketing-related academic or professional qualification of any kind. Of those who say they have studied a marketing degree, just 32.2% found it very useful.

In an [interview](#) with Marketing Week, Stephan Croix, chief sales and brand officer at Pizza Hut Europe shares his view that recruiters need to widen their perspective when it comes to transferrable skills.



“I think the way marketing evolves is really important. Right now, the industry is trying to recruit performance marketers and that’s a topic that was probably not taught in a marketing degree five or 10 years ago, yet that is a skill that is really important to have in every department,”

“People are joining the team who are not traditional marketers. There are the data scientists and performance marketers who add a lot of value for the commercial part of marketing, but then psychology is a really interesting field for marketers if you think about understanding the consumer journey, extracting the right insights from consumers or crafting strategy.”

Strategy #2

Your reputation will precede you

Another key aspect of recruitment is understanding that we are now living in a candidate-driven market. No longer can businesses sit back and expect candidates to make all the moves; we're now living in a world where businesses also need to 'sell themselves' to the candidate. This means that brand reputation is an increasingly important factor.

Traditionally, job hunters were driven by salary and job titles. But in today's changing society, prospective employees are looking to become advocates. They want to be passionate about their work and believe in what they are doing. Therefore, it's important to consider what stakeholders are saying about your business.

Prior to applying for any position, job hunters will undertake their due diligence to see if the company is the right fit for them. They want to work for an organisation which will offer clear career progression, invest in staff health and wellbeing policies and operate in an ethical and moral fashion. According to [Glassdoor](#), 84% of job seekers believe that a company's reputation matters. For those brands who are struggling to recruit, perhaps a reputational issue can be at the heart of the issue.

If you believe that your reputation precedes you, then it could be wise to implement a proactive, rather than reactive recruitment marketing strategy.

Use your social media, content marketing, and PR channels to continually offer a 'drip feed' approach to what makes you stand out as an employer of choice. You need to 'sell the story' of why someone would want to work for you and encourage applicants to continually send in prospective CVs and covering letters. This approach will not only aid your reactive recruitment activities, but it can allow you to build stronger relationships with candidates who are keen to work specifically for you.

Another thought that many businesses often forget to consider is whether their temporary staffing recruitment policies are as effective as their permanent counterpart. In a world where the gig economy is growing and short-term contracts are an increasingly popular choice, it's wise to ensure that your temporary recruitment practices are given the same care and attention as your permanent recruitment strategies.

From a brand reputational perspective, it's important that all potential candidates (regardless of job role or contract length) feel that they have had a positive experience. Your internal teams should welcome all staff and help them feel part of the team, even if they are just there as temporary cover. They should be given access to the same benefits as permanent employees and shown the same levels of respect throughout the whole recruitment and onboarding processes. After all, you never know who they may speak to about their experiences.



84%

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Strategy #3

It's more than just a job role; it's a whole package

Great recruiters go beyond the job role. They sell a 'package' and a 'lifestyle'. Today's savvy job seekers aren't focused solely upon salary, they want to know how the job will fit in with their lifestyles.

Recruitment is a competitive market. Thanks to their transferrable skills, candidates now have more choice than ever before which means that hiring managers need to think creatively about what benefits and rewards can make up a strong package. Firms which continue to invest in their employees far beyond the recruitment and onboarding stage can see greater loyalty and engagement in their candidates. For example, those firms which invest heavily into staff development and training opportunities can expect to see much higher productivity and brand advocacy. Indeed, if they use the right HRIS, they can literally track the impact of any training investment, justifying any spend and showing a clear return on investment.

Similarly, those firms who place an emphasis upon health and wellbeing strategies can expect to see greater levels of applications and improved retention levels. Research from Glassdoor also suggests that more than 40% of Millennials will select employers based on their health and wellbeing package. This demonstrates that it's vital to consider what you can offer to employees and how it's relevant to their career.

The growth of external organisations such as [Perkbox](#) shows that corporate perks are attractive, but it's important to retain sight of what is offered to avoid them being seen as meaningless 'gimmicks'. Companies need to consider what their employees want and need. Whilst fully stocked fridges and gym memberships may seem great initially, the novelty will soon wear off if employees are expected to be working long after their contracted hours are passed. Simple tasks such as restricting access to emails after hours or encouraging employees to enjoy a full lunch break can be valued extremely highly as it suggests a working culture which places its employees first.

In a 2019 e-book, Glassdoor noted two key statements of interest

- 93% of employees/job seekers say it is important to be thoughtful and informed about all aspects of a company (e.g. culture, values, mission, business model, future plans, pros and cons about the workplace) prior to accepting a job offer.
- When it comes to making a job seeker complete the application process for your open job, the most important factor is a convenient, easy commute (48%), followed closely by a good work-life balance (47%) and company culture (35%).



Strategy #4

Making the most of technology to improve your talent acquisition strategy

If a business is struggling to attract candidates to a role, then the priority should be to review the talent acquisition strategy. Too often, application processes are slow or complicated when advances in technology mean that they should be easier than ever before.

There's no denying that recruitment is a lengthy and costly experience. Simple steps for example introducing initial stage video interviews via Skype would allow recruiters to screen candidates before the face to face interview stage, saving time and budget and allowing for greater flexibility for 'out of office hours' interviews.

In addition, investing in a dedicated Applicant Tracking System allows businesses to make the process far more efficient. Whether it's automatically posting job adverts onto jobs boards, filtering weaker applications or even scheduling and managing interview processes, it's clear that a well-chosen ATS will attract new talent in a cost-effective way. What's more, the right ATS can be used to inform onboarding procedures by automatically requesting reference information and compliance documentation.

Using an ATS is a big part of connecting with Millennial and Gen Z workforces as applicants can apply easily from their phone/tablet and receive automated notifications to continually inform them of their application status. In a world where time is money, can firms really afford to spend numerous man hours filtering through the vast number of applications when an automated pre-screening system will do it on their behalf?

By allowing automation to handle the smaller time-consuming tasks, hiring managers can instead focus upon the analytical side of recruitment and retention.

With a wealth of HR technology available, it's now easy to use reporting features to see where potential candidates are dropping out of the application process. For example, if they are registering their details and uploading their CVs yet neglecting to submit any further documentation (such as pre-selection tasks) then it may be wise to see if any changes are made at this stage to make improvements.

Looking ahead, a carefully chosen HR Information System (such as [Sidekick](#) or [Betterworks](#)) can allow HR departments to track the productivity of new recruits, identify strengths and weaknesses and monitor the impact of training opportunities. These insights will not only allow firms to convert their talent acquisition into staff retention strategies, but they can be used in a predictive fashion, allowing HR departments to identify future areas for recruitment.

Strategy #5

Make sure that you're prepared for the future

For any recruitment strategy to be successful, it's important that businesses understand the impact of the challenges discussed in our guide to 'The five biggest challenges facing recruiters in 2019'. This understanding will be vital if they wish to ensure that they are fully prepared for the future.

If you think that you will be impacted by the lasting effects caused by Brexit, then now is the time to commence your workforce planning strategy so that any issues are minimised. If your business employs a high levels of EU nationals, then you may need to consider how you will upskill your existing workforce to address any potential skills shortage caused by immigration issues. From a training and development perspective, it's interesting to see that the [CIPD](#) have noted that;

“Organisations that employ EU nationals are significantly more likely than employers that don't recruit EU nationals to be investing in training and seeking to recruit from a wider range of under-represented or disadvantaged groups, such as older workers or those from minority ethnic backgrounds.”

This suggests that it is unlikely that we'll see a catalyst for improving skills investment post-Brexit. Considering we're facing a global skills shortage this is a short-sighted viewpoint. Those who are taking the time to upskill and manage the career development of their staff will be greater placed to cope with the changing demands of the workforce.

From a dedicated recruitment perspective, it's clear that automation is changing the way in which we source new talent. Hiring managers need to be aware of how entire professions are evolving and understand how these changes can impact upon a wider business strategy. Whilst investing in automation software is key to improving talent acquisition efficiency, it's important to still consider the human element of recruitment.

As it stands, recruitment strategies are changing rapidly and businesses who do not keep up with these changes will struggle to attract high quality candidates and retain existing staff.

If you would like any further advice or guidance on how your business is poised to cope with the challenges facing recruitment today, please get in touch.

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Oxford:
01865 335 600

London:
0203 800 1920

jobs@allen-associates.co.uk