

## **THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS – BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

Some people believe that recruitment is a fairly automatic process: decide a new person is required, place an advertisement, get responses, sift through CVs, interview likely candidates, make a choice. And these steps are part of it. But to be good, and find you the best people, the recruitment process involves a lot more than all that.

Some researchers have calculated that in terms of value to your company, the difference between a good worker and an average worker can be up to 70% . So if you have a manager to whom you pay €5,000 per month, a good one could be worth €3,500 more, or €42,000 per year. Even in a medium-sized organisation containing half a dozen managers, such figures mean it is in your best interests to recruit wisely.

Efficient and effective recruitment involves answering a number of questions carefully, in some detail, before coming to the final recruitment decision.

### **What do we do?**

The first question you should ask is what your company does. Yet this is not as simple as it sounds. You need to know who your customers are, where your customers are, and what the customers consider value.

For example, if you sell ice cream, your main customers might be children on the street in the summer. Kids don't care too much about quality – they just want something cold and sweet with cute flavours. But if you also sell luxury ice cream, you can market all year round, appeal to more adult tastes like vanilla and exotic fruit, and you can suggest it for dinner parties, for gourmet restaurants, for a snack to “spoil yourself”.

Before an organisation does any hiring, it needs to be clear about what it does.

### **Why is this job needed?**

In these days of downsizing, this question is most often asked in the context of whether the job should be removed, rather than whether it should be added. For example, all your ice cream salespeople already have full workloads, and you need somebody to head the new area of sales to gourmet restaurants.

### **Analysis and description**

Job analysis is meant to determine all the qualities needed to perform the job successfully. To analyse the job of the gourmet ice cream sales manager, you can look at the existing organisational chart, current sales manager job descriptions, and staff audits – anything which gives a better idea of the details of the job. You can talk to the current sales managers, especially if they have restaurant experience. You can also observe your salespeople in action.

A job analysis should produce a job description, which outlines not only the work content, but also the key characteristics of the person who will perform the job. This will be used as the basis for the advertisement. In our example, the job might be called GOURMET ICE CREAM SALES MANAGER.

### **Finding people**

In writing your advertisement, you need to be precise and clear about what you want. “Enterprising and energetic self-starter with proven ability” is probably a familiar phrase, but is meaningless, because that could describe any job. “Experience in management in ice cream or dairy food production and knowledge of the restaurant business” is more clear about what you want.

Only after all this should you place your advertisement. It needs to be targeted wisely. Placing an advertisement in the biggest local newspaper will miss people from other parts of the country, or even other countries (if you are willing to take an international hire). A newspaper might not be the best source of candidates; trade journals might be better, if you want real experts. How about a restaurant magazine, or one aimed at the dairy industry for our example?

Then again, these days, the Internet is probably the best place to advertise for new talent. Choose the websites on which you advertise just as carefully as those which would be on paper.

There are many other ways to find job applicants. Professional employment agencies can do searches for you, particularly for higher-level positions. Let your people know about new positions opening up: word-of-mouth spreads quickly, and may find people that would otherwise not notice the advertisements. Job and trade fairs are another source: if you are looking for somebody, a fair is full of potentials.

Once your advertisements have been published, you can wait for the applications to arrive: on paper or email. Then the task is to sort through them: you start the selection process.

### **Too many or too few?**

Too many applications is often the result of too broad a description of the job. Too few, and your job description may be either too restrictive in its requirements – can you ease up on something, such as “10 years’ experience” or “speaks 5 languages”? Many organisations have a picture of the ideal candidate, but you also need to be realistic.

You can eliminate some applications even before looking at the CV. Usually you should turn down anyone who didn’t apply to the correct person or address, who didn’t send the documents the job advertisement requested, or who is sending a generic application for “any” job. This means that they can’t follow simple instructions. Similarly, you should reject candidates who can’t write a decent covering letter: most jobs require some writing, and this letter is a writing sample. It doesn’t

have to be perfect, but managers in particular need to be able to produce reports that make sense.

Now you need to consider your applications in more detail. Usually this entails examining the CV. If you have very few, you can probably go straight to interview with each one. If you have a lot, you should identify those job characteristics that are “absolutely essential” (e.g. experience with the restaurant industry) and those that are simply “nice to have” (e.g. knowledge of dairy – perhaps you have decided that any food production experience is enough). If a candidate is missing any of the necessary requirements, they get rejected immediately.

After this process, you end up with a stack of promising applications. Call them and invite them in for an interview.

## **Conclusion**

A poor choice of job candidates is often the result of insufficient planning about what kind of person is needed and where to target the advertising for that position, and not enough time spent dealing with the details (such as deciding what is “must have” and what is “nice to have”). Think carefully and systematically before your next hire and you should get a good selection of applicants for the job.

Some related links (copy-paste into your browser):

*An example of recruitment in the media*

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/info/mediacentre/pressreleases/20070125.html>

*Curriculum Vitae information*

[http://jobsearch.about.com/od/curriculumvitae/Curriculum\\_Vitae.htm](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/curriculumvitae/Curriculum_Vitae.htm)

*A recruitment process used in Canada*

[http://www.hrcouncil.ca/staffing/pg004\\_e.cfm](http://www.hrcouncil.ca/staffing/pg004_e.cfm)

The recruitment process is not finished! Now you have your applicants, you need to meet them. Next month, we will be discussing the people process involved in recruitment: interviews, testing, and the final hiring decision.

## *References:*

Dessler, G. (1991). *Personnel/Human Resource Management* (5<sup>th</sup> ed). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Cook, M. (2004). *Personnel selection: Adding value through people* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons.

Statt, D.A. (2004). *Psychology and the world of work* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.