

Extract from the document titled, “Perfect recruitment”. Author unknown.

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Perfect Recruitment – Introduction

Perfect recruitment means getting the right person for the right job every time. It means never having to say “Sorry, I made a mistake” or “Pity, but that appointment just didn’t work out”. It means never having to sack someone for incompetence. It means never having to accept someone’s resignation because they have found a better job. Perfect recruitment means that the person and the job suit each other to perfection.

Yet as every one knows, perfection is an impossible dream. Nothing in this world is ever perfect. None of us is ever going to get it right every time, especially where human beings are concerned. I fondly remember the story I heard some years ago of the distinguished professor of business psychology who had made a name for himself helping companies recruit and select perfect candidates. He was asked to advise an international company on the appointment of a finance director. Two years later that finance director upped and ran off with several million pounds of company money. He was last heard of somewhere in Argentina. Yet I know for a fact that the famous professor continued to ply his trade of advising companies on their recruitment and helping them select the best. And why not? Everyone knows that you can’t predict perfection. Even the best, most highly acclaimed and paid consultants, who have spent a lifetime recruiting people, are oh-so fallible.

All you can do is reduce the odds of making a mistake. That is what this is about, to set out the steps, which lead along the path to the discovery of an excellent new recruit? It is a guide towards perfect recruitment.

The first step is to know what you are looking for. What does the job entail? What is the culture of the organization that the successful candidate will join? What are the skills, aptitudes, attitudes, qualities required in such a candidate? These days these skills and qualities are likely to be called the necessary ‘competencies’ for the job. But you need to consider not just the competencies required now. Organizations and jobs are changing at such a rate that the job demands are unlikely to be the same in a few years time. Unless you want to fire and start again, you had better consider that these changes are likely to be, and whether a key competency isn’t the ability and willingness to change and adapt along with them.

Then comes finding the candidate. This would seem easy in the days of high unemployment. But fishing in the right pool to get a good catch, but not so large as to get overwhelmed by weight of applicants, is the trick. Like all tricks, it is easier said than done. Should you use a consultant to help you get a short list, or are you better advised doing it yourself?

Selection is often the most difficult aspect of the recruitment process. These days there are tests, assessment centers, statistical analysis, application forms, structured interviews, panel interviews, work samples and numerous other gizmos to help (or further confuse the bewildered)

Finally, there is the follow – up and the post-mortem. Specialists are fond of saying that the recruitment is only one part of the successful management of people. It's true.

Perfect recruitment won't solve all your problems. The problem may not even be recruitment. I was once asked to select a sales director for a small firm. The company had appointed three previous sales directors, each of whom had lasted a year or so. The company believed that they were recruiting the right sort of person. It soon became obvious that this wasn't the problem at all. The explanation for the turnover of good people was that the existing directors had not been able to accept the 'upstart' on the board. They had their well-trained ways of doing things and each new recruit had rocked the boat. Each new sales director had tried to set the sales policy and move the organization forward, but had been blocked by the old 'guard'. Team buildings for the new board, efforts to induct the new newcomer, a build up of mutual trust and learning were required, not better recruitment.

Perfect recruitment is like professional gambling. Many of us have a flutter once or twice a year. We stake 50p each way on the Grand National and choose the horse because we like its name or the jockey smiles a lot. We usually lose. The professionals study forms. They look at the course, the conditions of the turf, the jockey, the horse, the track record, the length of the race a particular horse prefer, then they make a calculated guess. They don't get it right every time, but they make a better job of it than we amateurs.

Specifying the competencies:

The perfect recruitment campaign starts with drawing up the specifications for the perfect candidate. No such paragon may exist, but identifying the qualities you are seeking in your ideal applicant gives you a goal to aim for.

Job analysis:

Job analysis is the process of collecting and analyzing information about the job. It should include the context in which the job is performed and the task and responsibilities involved. This provides the basis for the job description.

Many recruiters ignore job analysis altogether. They move straight into the job description. This is unwise. Job analysis is the foundation stone of successful staff selection. Without it, you cannot know what you are aiming for when assessing candidates. It is like shooting in the dark.

Performance criteria:

There is growing view that job analysis is insufficient in itself to arrive at the qualities necessary to perform a specific job. Some experts argue that there is an inherent weakness in the job analysis approach – that the inferred links, between what a job demands and the personal qualities that will supposedly enable a job holder to meet those

demands, are typically based as much on faith and the experience of the job analyst as on empirically demonstrable connection.

Person specification:

The job description relates to what the jobholder does or expects to do. The person specification tells you what are the main characteristics of successful jobholders. You then know what qualities to assess in candidates.

This area of recruitment has given rise to considerable debate in recent years. Several factors have combined to cause a shift of emphasis in the qualities many companies look for in a successful job applicant. The term ‘competencies’ is often used in this context to describe people’s ability to perform certain functions, either technical or inter-personal, such as being a team leader.

Transferable Skills:

Behavioral characteristics:

Hard and soft skills:

Key Points:

- Draw up specifications for an ideal job candidate,
- Arrive at a job description
- Take account of company culture
- Pinpoint key elements of the job
- Identify medium-term challenges
- The reward package is broader than money,
- Examine job output as well as content,
- Make an inventory of the competencies the job requires,
- Look for transferable skills,
- Behavior characteristics indicate superior performance,
- Be aware of hard and soft skills,
- Generic skills can be found in all jobs,
- Compare high performers in your organization with average performers,
- Look for long-term potential

Finding the candidate:

Once you have decided on the type of candidate you are seeking, the next stage is to attract the attention of the right caliber of applicants. You have two choices – do you do it yourself or do you employ someone to do it on your behalf?

Advertising:

When it comes to media advertising, there are a lot of decisions to be made. So you advertise in the trade press, the local press or the national press, for example? The answer to these questions will depend largely on the nature of the job and how much you are prepared to spend.

D-I-Y Advertising:

If you do decide to do your own advertising there are a number of pitfalls to avoid. Always aim to keep the advertisement simple and to the point. That way you won't blur your message and you will keep the costs down. Too often people try to copy the high flown language of the major multinationals (which have huge budgets for such advertising) and end up with gobbledy-gook, which is simply a waste of space and money.

Ingredients of the job:

The four key element of a job advertisement:

- The nature of the company/organization concerned and it's location,
- What the job entails,
- The technical and social competencies required,
- The reward in offer.

Considerations:

Enticing

Discrimination

Screening the applicants

Application forms

Arriving at shortlist

Rejection

Negative option letter

Losing the good applicant

The good applicants probably have sufficient confidence in their job seeking abilities to back out if you treat them badly. That may mean you loose all the good candidates in order to retain the mediocre ones.

References

References are essentially a way of double-checking whether what the job applicant has told you about his or her qualifications and experience is in fact true.

- Personal reference
- Job reference

The art of exaggeration

Interviewing the referee

Competency-based reference

Written versus verbal references

Key points

- Application forms enable candidates to be screened against the same criteria.
- Application forms can cover ethnic origin and identity the more serious candidates,
- Application forms can blunt initiative,
- Divide candidates into 'definite' and 'possible' to arrive at a shortlist,
- Keep applicants informed and always send a rejection letter,
- Don't keep candidates waiting forever,
- Don't put too much faith in references,
- Consider the telephone reference rather than the written one,
- Ask specific questions of referees to avoid vague answers,
- Make those questions those questions job and competency specific.

The interview

The face-to-face interview is by far the most popular method of assessing job candidates. Yet research shows that the typical, unstructured interview is a poor way to predict which candidate is best suited to the job, it is little better than random choice – you might just as well pick the names out of a hat. Despite such evidence, recruiters persist in making it their favorite method. Most managers believe they are good at interviewing and those interviews are useful selection tools.

Good and bad interviewing

The interview is definitely here to stay.

The pitfalls

The value of interviewing will be enhanced if the numerous pitfalls that many recruiters fall into are avoided. These traps for the unwary are epitomized by a number of typical interviewing styles:

1. *The Waffler.*
2. *The Psycho-Analyst.*

3. *The Historian.*
4. *The Aggressor.*

The perfect interview

The perfect interviewer eschews all the above pitfalls and is a very different character to those described:

5. *The Fact Finder.*

Candidates to guard against

However well prepared the interviewer is, there is, of course, no guarantee that the candidate on the shortlist will turn out to have the ideal qualities being sought. Although they look good on paper, they may well spring some surprises on the interviewer. Here are some typical candidates that vigilant interviewer should guard against:

1. *The Dandy.*
2. *The Know-all*
3. *The Frightened Mouse.*
4. *The Misfit.*

The dos and don'ts of interviewing

There are a number of useful tips on how to get the best out of interviews.

- *Draw up a plan of campaigning.*
- *Avoid interruptions*
- *Put the candidate at ease.*
- *Be aware of body language.*
- *Don't rush.*
- *Make notes.*
- *Let the candidate do the talking*
- *Avoid prejudice*
- *Avoid negative screening*
- *Don't make hasty decisions.*

Panel interviewing

Panel interviewing, in which a group of experts question the job applicant, are rarely found in private sector recruitment these days, although government agencies and some institutions still favor them.

Probing personal details

How far into a person's private life should a recruiter be allowed to probe at a job interview? In countries like Holland there is a general trend, supported by legislation, towards discouraging interviewers from asking personal details, which are not relevant to the job application.

Testing and assessment

You have done the interviewing and the candidates looks good, sound good and seems to posses the kind of skill you have isolated as being appropriate for the job. What's to stop you going ahead with the hiring process? Quiet a lot, if the experts are to be believed. Research shown that interviewing on it's own is far from inaccurate way of predicting who is the best person to fill a particular vacancy.

Assessment centres:

- *Exercises.*
- *Fact Finding*
- *Psychological testing*
- *Types of tests.*

Follow-up

All your efforts to conduct a perfect recruitment campaign could be in vain if you fail to carry out the proper follow-up procedure. Your perfect recruit, if you have carried out a thorough search, will be a person of high caliber. If the expectations you raised at the interview fail to materialize, your chosen candidate may soon be looking for a new outlet for his or her talents. If you fail to make the new recruit feel welcome or to provide an adequate induction programme, the impression will be of an uncaring organization – and certainly not one on which to base future career.