A Quick Guide
to Recruitment
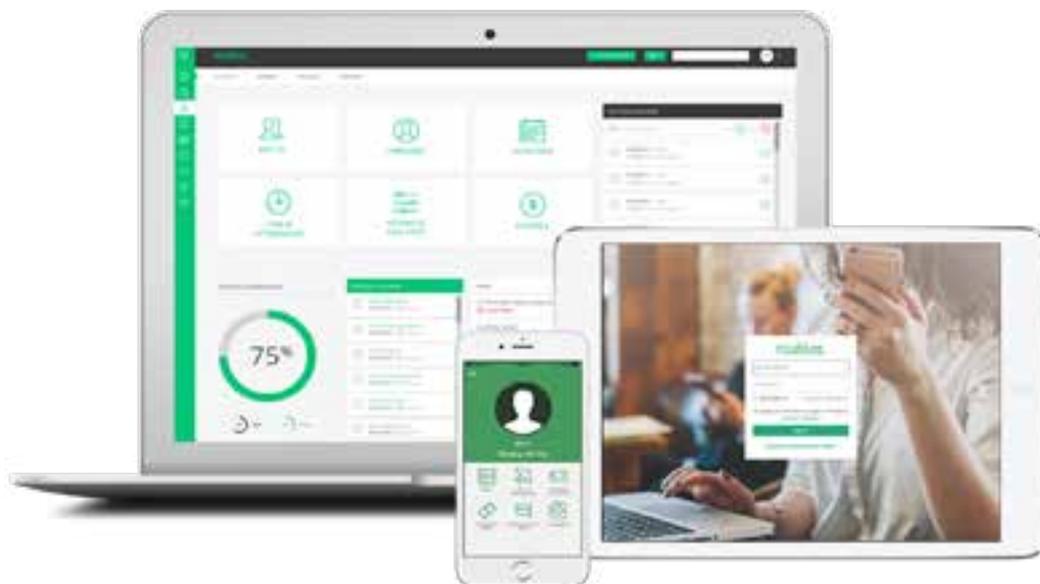
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Introduction

On average in Australia, it takes 68 days for a company to fill a vacant position. That's over two months without an employee completing vital work. While some jobs are harder to fill than others, overall recruiting time has nearly doubled since 2010.

Current trends suggest the current employment market is beneficial to employees – not employers. As of 2018, 86% of the most qualified contenders for an advertised position already had employment and weren't looking to change. This makes the market for experienced hires much more competitive. While around 75% of Australians in employment are open to being approached by recruitment agencies, there are so many ways you can fine-tune your recruitment policy, sourcing, and general process in order to ensure you hire the best candidate for the role.

This guide has been designed to give you a summary of the fundamentals of recruitment and best practice for each step of the process to give you the best chance of building your ideal workforce.

Developing a Recruitment Policy

A recruitment policy is an internal document that summarises your recruitment goals. It aims to provide:

· A basis for compliance with legal obligations, and in cases of dispute, provide evidence.

· Transparency in recruitment processes.

· Consistency across the organisation.

· Information about how the organisation recruits.

It should reflect your organisation's strategic and operational objectives while assisting in the promotion of the organisation to new applicants.

The recruitment policy may include:

· Introduction: a statement of the organisation's mission and values.

· Policy statement: this clarifies the basis of recruitment, normally on merit.

· Qualifying criteria: and antidiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions.

· Position on internal applicants: explaining the process and criteria for promotion.

· Legal information: the contents should comply with current employment law, particularly with regards to discrimination and employment contracts.

· Recruitment process description: e.g. approval to proceed with recruitment, advertising policy, selection procedures, parameters regulating the employment of casual and contract employees.

· Selection policy: detailing selection criteria, and how the organisation will choose the candidate.

· Specific requirements: e.g. appeal procedures, graduate recruitment programs, conflicts of interest, union considerations.

· Appendices of related information: e.g. employment committee, reference to related procedural documents.

Candidate Selection Policies

Selection policies outline how the organisation will select the candidate for the job, and the goals they have for selection. This includes the people involved, methods used, companywide requirements, and compliance with other policies. Sometimes this is combined with the recruitment policy.

Selection policies should incorporate:

· The company's approach to Equal Employment Opportunity.

· Selection panel composition.

· How line managers will be involved i.e. short-listing panel, interviews etc.

· Timeframes for recruitment, selection interviews, and appointment.

· Preferred selection techniques and when they will be used.

· Reporting on selection to key stakeholders during the process.

· Instances when outsourcing selection is used.

· Parameters for the use of budgets.

Sourcing Candidates

Sourcing candidates can often be a stressful task, and it can be difficult to know if you've chosen the right method. This section outlines the advantages of internal and external sourcing, as well as how to write the best job advertisement to hire your ideal candidate. You won't necessarily source from just one place, so be sure to keep your options open and your ear to the ground for talent, and combine approaches if need be.

Internal sourcing

Internal recruitment means positions are filled by transferring or promoting employees within your organisation. This could be achieved by:

• direct appointment or promotion.
• a sideways movement from another department to provide training or development to an employee – this could be permanent or temporarily as a secondment.
• advertising internally to allow existing employees the opportunity to put themselves forward for the role.
• asking for referrals from existing employees of individuals they know who may be suited to the role.

Advantages:
• Improves employee satisfaction: current employees may be motivated by the possibility of expanding their career, learning new skills, or enriching their jobs. This could increase employee satisfaction while reducing employee turnover.

• Facilitates succession planning: internal recruitment processes help identify employees with high potential.
• Offers the opportunity to reward high-performing employees.
• Is cost-effective.

Disadvantages:
• Internal candidates not selected may resent those who were, creating tension.
• A weak performance measurement process may not identify the right internal candidates.
• Workplace cultures can often benefit from the fresh influence of new talent, and internal sourcing reinforces the current workplace climate.

External sourcing

External recruitment is the sourcing of candidates from outside the organisation through avenues such as:

• direct advertising across social media, online, and print-based publications.
• referrals from colleagues.
• direct head-hunting from competitors.
• recruitment agencies.
• professional association job boards.
• educational institutions i.e. graduate recruitment, internships etc.

Advantages:
External sourcing gives you access to skills and experience that don't currently exist within your organisation. This means new talent you wouldn't otherwise have, and a larger pool of candidates, ensuring the best applicant is given the job.

Disadvantages:
- Advertising and recruitment agencies are expensive.
- It can be time-consuming: advertising and notice periods mean the position may remain unfilled for longer.
- Existing employees may feel more deserving of the role and show resentment.

Writing the Job Advertisement

When you write a job advertisement, you aren't just looking for a candidate. This is an opportunity to advertise your business. Within your ad you can espouse the values and benefits of your company. This will help attract a higher calibre of candidate, while ensuring they know what to expect of the role.

When writing the perfect job advertisement, always keep the following in mind:

Ensure it complies with legislation.
Be aware of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws and anti-discrimination laws.

Be realistic and honest.
Don't attract candidates with enticements or promises that the role or organisation cannot fulfil. Focus on the positive things about the role, without exaggerating.

Know your target audience.
If you're looking for a recent graduate, post the role to university job boards. If you need industry accreditation, talk to industry bodies with access to candidates. Target your advertising to the people you want in the role.

Know your limits.
Keep your budget and the time available in mind. For example, paper-based advertisements can be expensive and time-consuming. Conversely, online job boards are inexpensive and can be posted in minutes.

Keep in mind your customers and other stakeholders.
Be consistent with your company values and image. For example, a not-for-profit may promote more intangible benefits of the job opportunity as opposed to financial rewards.

When considering how to position the role you are advertising, it might help to adopt the AIDA principal, used by marketers world-wide, as a framework for writing a great job ad.

Attention

The advertisement needs something in its headline or appearance to attract the attention of the desired candidates. For example, a wildlife association may use images of animals to attract candidates with an interest in animal welfare.

Interest

Your advertisement should draw interest from individuals who have the right qualifications to be a successful candidate. Provide enough information for the candidate to make an informed decision about applying. State essential qualifications, knowledge, skills, training, the benefits of the role, and the remuneration range. This should help filter out those who aren't suitable for the role.

Desire

Candidates should want to apply for the role, so advertisements should highlight value. Why would candidates want to work for you? Explain the benefits and positive aspects of the role. This could be company culture, flexible work hours, opportunities for advancement etc. This section helps promote what makes working for your company so great, whether it be brand affiliation or even family orientation.

Action

This is the call to action: the details on how to apply. This could be the closing date, whom to contact for more information, and application process details. This section may vary between your advertising platforms.

Assessing Candidates

Assessing candidates is not a one-way street. They are also sizing up the organisation, deciding whether it is a place they could see themselves working. This is a difficult step, and organisations should plan ahead so they are in agreement on selection methods.

Choosing a Selection Method

When deciding on the best selection method for your organisation, you should reflect on your organisation's selection policy. Also consider factors such as the salary offered, the position advertised, and where your desired candidate might look for work.

Establishing Selection Criteria

Selection criteria help you make objective decisions about the best candidates. Clearly explained selection criteria also makes selection decisions transparent and justifiable.

Start by identifying factors essential or desirable to successfully perform in the role. The development of these criteria should link to job analysis and design processes, and the position description you're using for recruitment.

When developing selection criteria, ask:

- What does the successful candidate need to be effective in this role? E.g. knowledge, skills, behaviour, education, qualifications.
- How important is it to the role? Separate criteria according to which are essential, and which are desirable in order to perform well in the role.

- What level is required? Look at job requirements to establish the standard applicants should be operating at for each requirement.

Tip: When determining if criteria are essential or desirable, consider whether the knowledge or skill can be easily learned on the job.

The selection criteria often lend themselves to particular selection methods which will help you to identify the best candidate for the role.

When you're using an external recruitment provider, be very clear on your selection criteria so they understand which candidates they should be recruiting for you. Position descriptions are useful, but also subjective. Good recruiters will work with you to identify your selection criteria.

Assessing Candidate Applications

Those involved in the selection process should study each application and measure the candidates against the selection criteria. All applications should be treated with confidentiality.

This first level of assessment will identify candidates who meet requirements. From this group you can identify strong applicants who meet or exceed the selection criteria and should advance to the selection process.

Those who don't should be advised as early as possible, and given feedback where possible about their application. If you don't have an automated Applicant Tracking System (ATS), it may help to use a spreadsheet for applicant details.

Tip: When working with an external recruiter, request a minimum and maximum number of candidates that you would like provided for review.

Conducting Interviews

Interviews are the most commonly used selection tool. Interviews can be face-to-face, over the phone, or online, and focus on asking the candidate questions to ascertain their suitability for the role. You may use a series of multiple interviews or include other selection techniques in conjunction with interview.

Interviews often include discussion regarding candidate knowledge, skills, and experience, but they also provide opportunities for employers to assess intangible candidate attributes, such as behaviour, fit for the organisation, and personal qualities.

Conversely, interviews allow candidates to gain information about the organisation and role they've applied for.

Structured or directive interviews

Structured interviews focus on specific questions and subject areas. Questions don't vary between candidates except in response to candidate answers if interviewers need clarification. They are straightforward, assessing the relationship between the applicant's experience and job specifications. They often include an assessment scale for interviewers to quantify candidate responses.

Advantages

Structured interviews are consistent. Controlling the questions means an easier comparison of the answers between candidates. They are also easy to conduct and useful for keeping to time constraints.

Disadvantages

The rigidity of these interviews means there isn't the opportunity for interviewers to expand their questions into areas where candidates may have undiscovered skills. They can also be seen by the candidate as one-sided and formal, potentially reducing their interest in the position.

Example questions:

· Give an example of when you conveyed negative feedback to an employee about performance. What did you do? What was the outcome?

· Which switchboards have you worked with before? What training did you receive? How long have you worked with each?

· What three words would your previous supervisors use to describe your work?

Unstructured or non-directive interviews

Unstructured interviews are more unplanned, guided by the interviewer based on material from the candidate. Applicants tend to do more of the talking in unstructured interviews.

Example questions:
· Tell me something about yourself
· Can you expand on that example?
· How did that make you feel?
· What did you learn from that?

Advantages
These interviews can be more relaxed, meaning applicants feel more open to share more of themselves and their personality, as opposed to prepared responses.

Disadvantages
Unstructured interviews often require more experienced interviewers to gather enough information to compare applicants. This is difficult when trying to address selection criteria.

Behavioural interviews
Behavioural interviews are based on competencies needed for the role. Questions tend to delve into specific life events that give insight into how candidates would perform. They might be asked to give an example of a situation they've experienced. Questions are crafted around how the candidate responded, the outcomes, and what they learnt.

Advantages
Interviewers can examine past behaviours as a predictor of future behaviours. This technique combines structured and unstructured interviews and allows candidates to pull from life experiences as well as previous roles.

Disadvantages
These interviews assume individuals repeat behaviours in similar situations. Inexperienced interviewers might struggle to assess the relevant details of the scenario objectively.

Example questions:

· Describe a time you had to change someone's mind. How did you proceed? Were you successful?
· What is the most difficult thing you've organised? What did you do?

Panel interviews
Used mainly in larger organisations, panel interviews involve two or more interviewers. Panels often include HR representatives, the supervisor or manager, and other key stakeholders from the team/organisation. They should be meticulously planned with all interviewers and can use a combination of interview techniques.

Advantages
Panel interviews can produce more unbiased outcomes because they need consensus from multiple opinions. Furthermore, they can provide a more complete view of the applicant when viewed from various perspectives.

Disadvantages
These interviews are more difficult to arrange around individual schedules. It can also be intimidating to candidates and may take longer to come to a consensus with a larger panel.

Group interviews

Group interviews are when an individual or panel interview candidates together, or candidates are brought together to interact while observed. This technique is often used for bulk recruitment in retail environments or graduate recruitment, and to identify candidates with desired competencies in leadership. Group interview activities often include work simulation activities where candidates participate in a discussion that simulates a similar job task or activity.

Advantages

These interviews save time and money and help assess how candidates interact with others.

Disadvantages

This interview type may overlook strong candidates who struggle in group settings but who thrive in one-on-one interactions.

Tips for preparing for a good interview

- Interviewers should thoroughly understand the role.
- Interview location should be appropriate: quiet, well-lit, and distraction-free, with enough space for everyone.
- Interview details should be conveyed ahead of time, including directions, details of who will be involved, interview length, what the candidate should expect, and anything they should bring or prepare.

- Questions should be prepared ahead of time, and interviewers should be familiar with both questions and the candidate's application.
- Ensure there is enough time for each interview and a review before the next candidate arrives.
- Small talk works wonders. A little chat or offering a beverage before the interview can put the candidate at ease.
- Use selection criteria, position description, and the person specification as the foundation for the questions you ask

Starting the interview

Start the interview with introductory information about your organisation, team, and the role. Introduce interviewers, who they are, and how they relate to the position. Outline how the selection process will proceed, including other processes involved like testing or reference checks, and then explain the structure of the interview. This ensures the candidate has all the information needed to excel.

Keep the interview relevant and informative. The focus should be on objective information gathering, particularly:

- Skills and knowledge
- Work history and professional experience
- Education and training
- Personal attributes and behaviour

Explain how the candidate has reached this stage i.e. "We are impressed with the breadth of your experience in the industry." Interviewers should give candidates their full attention. Allow the candidate to qualify any answers and talk freely.

Taking notes helps to recall key points about candidates. However, these notes may be made available to candidates under privacy law requirements, so as in all aspects of the interview, be polite and attentive.

Interview questions

Beginning the interview with easy questions not only establishes rapport but also helps naturally build to more complex questions. Questions must be job-related to avoid information which may allow discrimination. This also helps preserve time constraints.

Use open-ended questions where possible. This allows candidates to elaborate and express themselves. A helpful tip is to start questions with "Why", "What", "When", "Where" and "How".

Don't:
- Overcomplicate things. Use simple terminology and ask clear, direct questions.
- Make snap judgements based on appearance or first interaction.
- Be rude, aggressive, patronizing or inattentive. You're representing your organisation.
- Use terms such as "boy", "girl" or any terms of endearment.

- Ask inappropriate or discriminatory questions.
- Take over the interview. Don't cut applicants short unless necessary.
- Try to lead candidates into an answer.
- Take too may notes – it may distract candidates and cause them to lose their train of thought.

Candidate Aptitude and Ability Testing

Testing as a selection tool helps to get an accurate picture of candidate levels of aptitude and ability and is particularly useful in roles where technical ability is critical.

Tests may include:

- General ability tests: measuring verbal, numerical, speed, spatial strength, coordination and perceptual skills.
- Specific aptitude tests (or work sample): these relate to tasks, equipment, tools, or technology specific to the role or organisation.
- Personality tests (also known as psychological profiles): 40% of employers in Australia ask candidates or employees to undergo this kind of testing. While designed to assess personality characteristics required for a role, research suggests the link between test outcomes and actual performance is often tenuous.

As with questions, recruiters must ensure tests are relevant to the role, so ensure you do your research before implementing aptitude or

ability tests and employ psychological or other professionals where required.

Tests are useful in providing evidence of skills that candidates can only otherwise claim, however they should only be used to complement other selection techniques.

Referee and Background Checks

Recruiters can contact a candidate's previous employers to determine whether they're the right person based on prior performance. While reference checks can provide biased reviews of candidates, with the right questions, they can still be valuable. Ensure you complete these before offering any positions.

When approaching previous employers, address any previous employment issues raised by the candidate. You should also confirm:

• Term and type of employment
• Job role and responsibilities
• Reason for leaving

You may also wish to check:

• Claims on resumes regarding employment history
• Police and financial records
• Accuracy and authenticity of certificates/ qualifications with educational institutions and training providers

Job Trials

Job trials give employers and candidates a better idea of how candidates will perform in the role. They're best used where it's difficult to ascertain how candidates will perform from other selection techniques and where it's possible for candidates to step into the role with little preparation for a short time.

These are often used in customer service, hospitality, and retail. Employers should be prepared to pay candidates for any substantial trial.

The Final Decision

You can either withhold judgement until all processes are complete or decide after each candidate completes their selection process, gradually narrowing the options until only the best are left. The decision should be objective and based on all information, from interviews through to background checks.

Once the selection processes are complete, make a decision. Lengthy processes can result in candidates accepting other roles or losing interest.

Making an Offer

Making an offer is the most rewarding part of the whole recruitment process. You have the opportunity to make someone's day. You are offering them the job they have worked so hard to attain, while providing the company with a valuable new talent. It should feel like the success that it is.

Start by making an initial verbal job offer over the phone. This must be followed immediately by written confirmation of the job offer and proposed terms of employment. A full employment contract should follow for the new employee to sign and return.

Unsuccessful candidates

Every candidate who applied should be informed of the outcome of their application regardless of the stage they reached. Candidates who were interviewed by phone or in person should be called so they can receive verbal feedback. All other applicants can be e-mailed with a covering statement regarding the calibre of the candidates and details of the selection process.

Ensure you wait until your preferred candidate has accepted their offer before letting your other choices know they have been unsuccessful.

Conclusion

At its heart, recruitment is about selecting the best person for the job. Whether the selection comes from within your existing pool of employees, or from other sources, effective recruitment processes should mean another high calibre employee comes on board to advance your company success and brand.

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