

## An Employer's Guide to Recruitment Best Practice

This guide has been designed for any Hiring Manager or HR professional looking to minimise the risk of interviewing candidates who then choose to join one of their competitors.

Read on to learn 43 ways to attract and then secure the very best talent for your organisation:

### **Protect and enhance your employer-brand:**

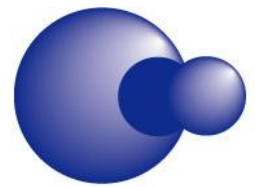
1. Recruitment is also marketing. Your recruitment process helps create your employer-brand which will fundamentally impact your ability to attract the best talent in the future.
2. A poorly designed interview or interview process leaves the candidate with an unflattering view of your company. Research suggests that candidates tell at least 7 people when they go for an interview. They are therefore likely to share an unfavourable view with other potential applicants and customers.
3. Make sure that your first approach to candidates is performed in a professional, courteous and knowledgeable way. The candidates who don't join you now may be right for your company in the future, so it is important to leave them with a positive view of your organisation
4. Make sure that all candidates get a response, even to a speculative approach. Candidates share with each other the companies that couldn't be bothered to respond.

### **Use your internal network:**

5. Ask peers and colleagues for their recommendations. However, make sure you create professional distance between the recommender and the candidate.
6. Don't assume that a recommended candidate is right for the role because he is a friend of an employee. Ensure that all candidates (internal, recommended & external) follow the same rigorous process. Your company will be perceived as more professional and the successful candidate will appreciate that they have been selected on merit.
7. Many hiring managers find themselves in an awkward position when they believe that a recommended candidate is not a good fit for the role, particularly when represented by an enthusiastic employee. Consider using an independent agent (internal or external) to insulate the manager from this risk.

### **Your recruitment process:**

8. Design an interview process at the commencement of the project and make sure that all candidates understand it. A structured process inspires confidence; an unstructured process makes a candidate feel that recruitment is a low priority for you.
9. Ask the candidate to tell you about any other companies they are speaking to and ensure your timescales are compatible. You may need to adapt your process as many offers are rejected simply because a candidate feels they have to quickly accept an offer they've already received.
10. If you are working with a recruitment partner or agency, make sure you invest the time for them to understand your company culture. Good Recruiters will spend much of their time selecting candidates based on soft skills, so make sure they understand what to look for.
11. Make sure that you are clear with all candidates why a new position has arisen. If you tell them it's because of growth and they find out, via their own research, that you are replacing an employee, the candidate may become suspicious about other information you give them.
12. Remember that the job specification is also your sales document. Take the writing of the document seriously, avoiding the temptation to quickly alter an old document. A professional document suggests a professional employer.
13. Test the key selection criteria in the specification with your colleagues and other decision makers before sending to candidates. You can waste a lot of time if you try and reach consensus late in the process.
14. Make sure that you keep the interview process moving at an appropriate pace. You should invest time to excite candidates about your role; if you delay the process, good candidates will



lose interest or explore options with your competitors. Ideally, you should leave no more than 1-2 weeks between each step in the process, dependant on the seniority of the position.

15. At the latter stages of your process, include a step that requires the candidate to invest time in preparation, such as a presentation. As well as allowing you to examine many of the key skills you are looking for, you are also testing the candidate's commitment to the process.

### **Invest your time with the right candidates:**

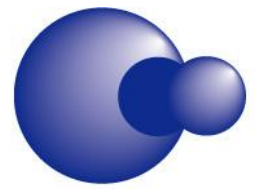
16. Check and double-check the details of the candidate's current package making sure that you are comparing like for like. You shouldn't negotiate now but you do need to make sure that you do not uncover surprises at the offer stage.
17. Have a rigorous pre-screening process. Use telephone interviewing to minimise the number of candidates you meet face-to-face. Aim for a ratio of around 4 first face-to-face interviews per offer, dependant of course on your role and your market.
18. When hiring a number of technical staff, use on-line testing tools as part of your screening process. Knowing that a candidate scored "83%" is much more insightful than an interviewer stating "they seem OK". What's more, if you design the test well, you'll also spot the candidate that scored highly in 4 out of 5 areas and significantly lower in another – rather than discount that candidate you may consider some specific training.
19. Pre-screen sales staff by sending them a pro-forma asking them to produce a written sales proposition (a covering letter) and detailed sales figures and earnings. Let the candidate know that you will be verifying these figures against salary documentation at the reference stage.

### **Train your interviewers:**

20. Ensure that each interviewer knows which role they are hiring for. Publish and discuss the job specification with each interviewer in advance.
21. Prepare before the interview as you would before a customer visit. Candidates will respect your professionalism if you are pre-prepared. Conversely, they will view your image negatively if you are reading the CV for the first time whilst meeting them.
22. Make sure that you get feedback to candidates as quickly as possible, ideally within 24 hours. Positive feedback given quickly has more impact; delayed feedback sends the message to the candidate that they are second best even if that is not your intention.
23. Makes sure you balance the interview properly. As a rule-of-thumb, the interviewer should speak 30% of the time, leaving the candidate to contribute for 70% of the session.
24. Psychometric profiling can be a valuable and effective tool in the interview process. Some tools will provide you with suggested interview questions alongside the candidates preferred work-style.
25. If using psychometric profiling, ask a representative sample of your existing team to perform the process and design a preferred work-style for the job. You will need to work with someone trained in your chosen tool to do this, but it doesn't need to be costly or time-consuming.

### **Ask the right questions:**

26. Candidates do reject offers when they feel that they haven't fully understood the role, or that the company hasn't fully understood their skills. Detailed and structured interviewing gives both parties the opportunity to explore the potential match effectively.
27. Avoid assuming the answer to your subsequent questions based on one 'good' answer. Keep drilling-down for more detail. Find out the specific contribution that the candidate made to each claimed success.
28. Avoid the '*self-fulfilling prophecy effect*', where interviewers ask questions expecting to confirm initial impressions of candidates gained either before the interview or in its early stages.
29. Beware of the '*stereotyping effect*', where the interviewer assumes that particular characteristics are typical of members of a particular group – for example, employees from a particular company.



30. Be careful to avoid the '*similar-to-me effect*'. This is where the interviewer gives preference to candidates they feel have a similar background to themselves.
31. Ask open questions. Avoid leading questions, such as, "We love working hard here. Do you like working hard?"

### **Sell the opportunity:**

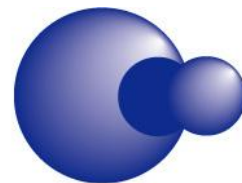
32. Avoid complacency when presenting your company to the candidate. Many employers assume that all candidates know their company and already want to work for them. Ensure that you start from basics and sell the opportunity fully.
33. If you have a well-known employer-brand but are now hiring in a new territory or sector don't forget that it is even more important to go back and sell the basics. Many companies expect their employer-brand to automatically transfer to a new market; avoid this mistake by selling your vision to the candidates as you did in your original market.
34. Remember all good candidates have a choice. They're sitting opposite you asking themselves "*what's in it for me*". Make sure you understand what they're looking for and honestly sell the opportunity.
35. Be honest, tell the candidate about the negatives as well as the positives. Good candidates know that every job has a downside; if you uncover the negative aspects for them, they'll spend less time looking for that information and focus on the up-side. They'll appreciate your honesty, a trait that is highly valued by many, and may take that into account when considering multiple offers.

### **Get the offer right, first time:**

36. Most offers are rejected because of a lack of attention to detail when understanding the candidate's current package. Employers discuss and agree a proposal internally believing that the candidate will view the package as an increase in remuneration only to find that the candidate is disappointed by the offer
37. Re-check the details of the candidate's current overall remuneration package, before structuring your own offer. A candidate will compare the real difference between their current package and your offer, including pension contributions, additional costs associated with travelling, training allowances and bonuses. Make sure you have a sound understanding of these figures before requesting internal acceptance from others.
38. Set the expectation with the candidate that you will make a single offer based on fair market value. Many employers find that they can avoid several rounds of renegotiation via this technique.
39. Remember that the candidate will need to 'sell' the benefits of the role and the package to his/her spouse and friends. If you pre-qualify the offer yourself from their viewpoint you're much more likely to have your offer accepted.
40. In a competitive market, the good candidate may receive a counter-offer from his/her existing employer. Counter that possibility during the verbal offer process by refreshing the Candidates reasons for wishing to move.
41. Make sure the offer paperwork arrives quickly with the candidate, ideally within 48 hours, but definitely within one week of the verbal offer. Use e-mail to send an advance copy of the offer letter and follow-up quickly with a hard-copy, along with contract and other associated paperwork.
42. Even when the candidate has accepted, they will be put under pressure by their existing employer or other prospective employers to stay open to their offers. When the candidate accepts your offer, make them feel welcome. Call the candidate and explain that you are looking forward to them joining the team. If possible have other team members who were involved in the process send a welcoming e-mail.

### **Look after your existing employees:**

43. Involve a number of your employees in the recruitment process. The process of selling their company and their job to someone else refreshes their positive reasons for working for your company reducing the risk of them being open to an approach from your competitors.



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## Who wrote this guide?



Derek Brown is a Fellow of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation, a Member of the Institute of Directors and has been the Managing Director of Technology Resourcing Ltd since 1995. He started his career as an Engineer with a controls systems company, before progressing into project management. He joined the recruitment industry in 1988 and has since worked in senior management roles for several organisations, specialising in the recruitment of railway engineering professionals since 1991.

Technology Resourcing are a leading railway recruitment company, supplying Engineers, Managers and associated project controls and support personnel into permanent staff appointments, contract assignments and independent consultancy roles. They are Link-up accredited in 14 categories, to supply recruitment services into both national rail and underground companies, and are Corporate Members of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation.

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