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## **Best Practice Recruitment – an Experienced Manager’s Perspective**

It is an obvious but often forgotten fact that losing a valuable employee is a costly event. The temporary void left by the departing employee is not only a frustration for the manager and the remaining employees but there is also a hard cost attached to it. Combine this with the recruitment and training of his/her replacement and you’re typically facing a direct and sizeable cost of \$70k or more excluding any lost patronage which in itself, can be quite devastating to your business. Recruiting the best possible talent is not a task to be taken lightly. Finding and keeping the right talent to best fit the role is very difficult, more so for those roles that are specialist in nature and/or that require a number of skill sets. So it pays to get the recruitment process right – not only to hire a person right for the job but also someone who fits in well within the company’s DNA and is there for the long term.

The best practice recruitment process involves many steps and must be taken as a project and not another painful task to be “ticked off” on a To-Do List. The foundations of successful companies are good people. And keeping good people motivated and happy are key ingredients of this process. However, no matter how good you are as an employer, some good employees move on. Managers must be prepared for this eventuality by providing good succession planning and considered risk management as part of their planning process – more on this in a future article. This article specifically focuses on the best practice recruitment process – key steps condensed from many years of “hands-on” managerial experience – all targeted to give you the greatest opportunity of landing the best talent for the role.

### 1. Understand the role and availability of suitable individuals

What are the tasks and responsibilities of the current role? At this point, it may be a good opportunity to evaluate the current organisational structure and operating model of the business and consider any options to make changes. What is the supply versus demand status for the required skill set? Be aware of which skilled individuals are in plentiful supply and consider training and/or re-structuring the process, department or business to suit this availability. It may mean considering outsourcing a more difficult/easy part of the role thereby allowing you to consider other skills and qualifications. There is no point chasing a person who does not exist and if they do, they’re demanding a salary package that exceeds your budget allowance, with the added concern they may be easily tempted away by another employer who is equally desperate for that rare skill set.

### 2. Understand the Business’s Short & Long Term Plans

Is this a short term or long term role? Are there plans to move into another market, take on other products and/or services? Will there be new products and/or services in 1, 2 or 5 years’ time? When does the current office/factory lease expire? Are there plans to move to another suburb?

### 3. Develop or Update the Position Guide

This is a must. Not only does the employee need to understand their role within the organisation but you as the employer needs to have clarity on the specific roles and responsibilities of the employee. Undertaking this step at this stage of the process will help you better understand the attributes and other qualities that you’re after to fill this role.

### 4. Develop an Analysis Matrix

This is a simple table listing the main responsibilities and corresponding attributes required from the applicant, the relative importance and weighting placed on that attribute and a corresponding score for the applicant. It is only a tool which allows you to compare scores between applicants – against each attribute and on the total. Keep the number of attributes to between 7 and 12. This analysis provides a focus on the suitability and expected performance of each applicant against each listed attribute.

### 5. Develop a List of Interview Questions

As part of the process to fully understand the responsibilities of the role and the attributes, qualifications and other qualities that you require of the individual, this is an excellent time to list out the questions to ask at the interview stages. Well thought out questions will minimise an artificial rehearsed answer and maximise the probability of receiving a genuine response from the applicant. One of the interview questions should request at least 2 referees, preferably, immediate reporting managers at previous companies. At the end of this step it may mean that the Position Guide and Analysis Matrix are adjusted - that’s fine, it’s all part of understanding the best fit for the role.

### 6. Consider People from Within the Organisation

On the face of it, this should be an obvious step, however, it is surprising how many managers fail to look within their own employee base. A successful internal applicant not only has a motivational impact on the individual but also on other employees as it demonstrates there are opportunities for advancement within the organisation. It also has an immediate benefit to the company as it allows you to better manage the vacated roles and possibly avoid hiring part-time help.

### 7. Consider Your Network

Another obvious but rarely used step in the recruitment process is to consider potential applicants from the company employees’ network of family, friends and acquaintances. LinkedIn and other social media outlets have greatly simplified this process, however, still not widely practiced. Downsides include the potential pitfalls of employing family and friends, the stigma and “tit for tat” associated with “poaching” or “head hunting” another company’s employee

### 8. Recruit a Recruiter

Like many good operators in many industries, the genuine recruiters suffer the negative image set by the poor recruiters. Many an employer will tell you that the “typical” recruiter will only “flick and recommend” as many applicants as possible with the sole motivation to make a quick sale (and commission) and move on – and, unfortunately, there are many examples to support this view. However, there are many good recruiters who want the sale but want it knowing they will follow an honest and detailed process which places a good fit for the role – the prime motivation is repeat business from a long term client.

### 9. Employer Does its Own Recruiting

This is dependent on the availability of time and skill set to follow through on these steps. If you decide to undertake your own recruitment, then consider your budget and the best outlet(s) for the advertisement and other search options. Seek, LinkedIn, CareerOne, etc and even the hard print national and local newspapers all have their specific qualities and advantages dependent

on location, type of role, private or government position, etc. It is very important that you clearly describe the role and responsibilities of the position; the experience, qualifications and attributes required; where the role is based; how to apply and of course a link to the company's website. It is very important that the serious applicant takes the time to understand your company, your products, culture, etc – and at least, prior to the 1st face-to-face interview.

10. 1st Cut: All applications will typically arrive as an email. A first pass review should be undertaken and a short list made of suitable applicants. Each shortlisted applicant should be given a preliminary rating – this will help you approach the interviews in priority order. Immediately respond to those that are not considered suitable for the role.
11. 1st Interview - Phone: With a copy of the covering letter, resume and other submitted documents, conduct a phone interview using some of the key questions outlined previously. It is important that this process is succinct – the objective is to determine if the applicant will make the shortlist for a face-to-face interview. Make notes. This 20 to 30 minute phone call will provide a face-to-face interview shortlist of 3 to 5 people, however, the number of quality applicants may dictate more or less.
12. 2nd + Other Interviews – in Person  
Invite the shortlisted applicants to a face-to-face interview. This is the stage where asking the right questions will make the difference. On the same visit, and if the role warrants it, it may be advisable to organise a separate interview with other senior people within the organisation who bring a different but relevant perspective to the evaluation process. Wherever possible this should be a separate one-on-one interview. This not only avoids unnecessary applicant nerves associated with facing a "panel" of interviewers but it also allows the interviewers to compare notes especially on responses given to similar questions. Personal presentation, timeliness, persona and other aspects are important and will be on show and should be noted on. For senior roles, there may be a requirement to have the shortlisted applicants come in for other subsequent in person interviews. There may be other questions - from both you and the applicant - to ask and review and possibly other opinions from other senior employer representatives before a final decision is made.
13. Psychometrics Testing & Personality Appraisals  
This step is optional. There are many arguments for and against on their effectiveness. If undertaken, like all factors, it should only be used as one of many indicators. To use the result of a Psychometric Test & Assessment as the deciding factor is dangerous.
14. Analysis  
Complete the Analysis Matrix paying attention to use a similar reference point when scoring each applicant against each attribute and ability. A suggestion maybe to compare to a fictitious ideal individual who has the highest score of 10 on all qualities and attributes.
15. References  
This is the last step prior to making a final decision. Typically this will happen only on the preferred applicant, however, it may be the case that there are 2 or 3 applicants at this point and all quite suitable for the role. Again, the recommendation is to compile a list of questions to ask the referees – some of these will result from concerns that came up during the interview process, others may be to confirm an answer given by the applicant, and others maybe to garner additional information. Add this feedback into the Analysis Matrix and compare the final scores and use this to help decide who the successful applicant should be.
16. Decide  
Make the decision, notify the successful applicant and follow through on the Employment Contract, Position Guide and other relevant paperwork. Immediately notify and thank the other applicants. It is very important that you keep the confidence of the successful applicant.
17. Mentor, Coach & Train: To give the individual every chance of success and protect your investment in time and money, it is necessary to adequately induct the individual into his/her new role but more importantly develop and implement a plan of on-going mentoring/coaching and customised training. On many occasions, a lot of time and effort and direct cost has been dedicated to recruit the right individual and then the new employee is left to flounder around in their new role, extending the time it will take him/her to come up to full productivity.

In summary, best practice recruitment is never an easy and quickly implemented responsibility. In addition to the unplanned issues and frustrations a highly valued departing employee causes, there are the issues of finding the time to undertake a thorough recruitment process. Typically, this pressure falls on you or other senior management. And in many instances, this pressure translates to a rushed process and a rushed decision which invariably causes further issues – shortcuts very rarely provide successful long term solutions. Conversely, it is rare to have a situation where an employer can spend infinity number of hours and money searching for the ideal applicant. It is a matter of applying a thorough process and striking the right balance. When it's all said and done, best practice recruitment requires a well thought out, methodical and thorough approach and disciplined undertaking. And even then, there are no cast-iron guarantees that you have the right fit you think you have. However, this method will minimise the risk and give you and the company the best opportunity to continue building a successful team to grow the business – there is no argument, good people make good companies – this is the difference.