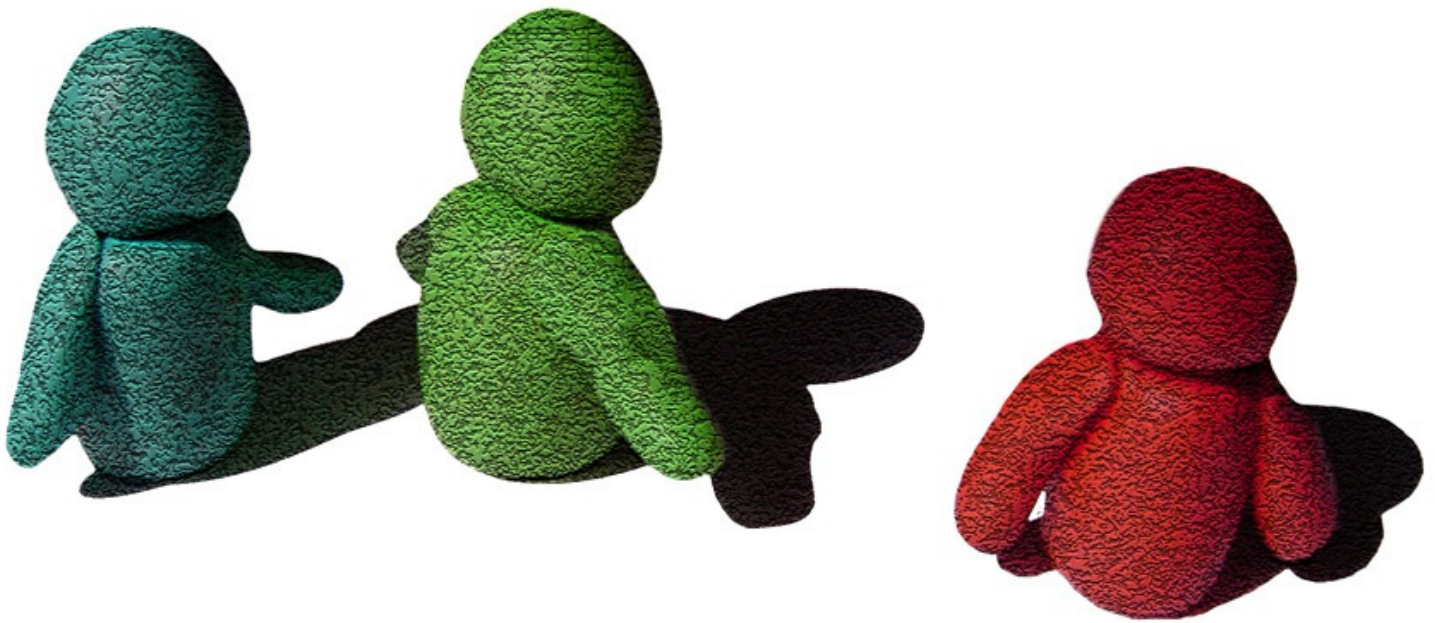


Recruitment and Selection

Hiring the people you want

Eric Garner



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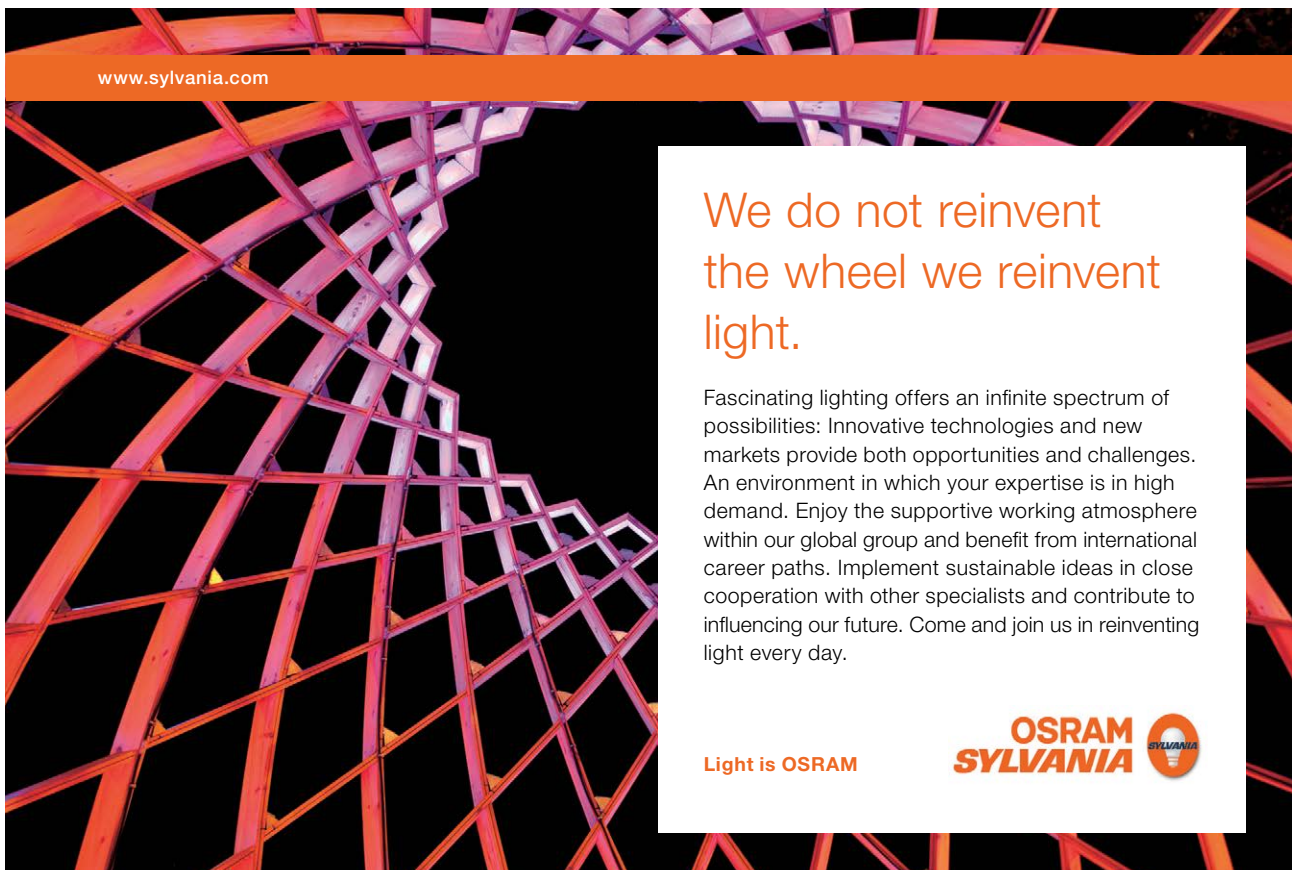
Recruitment and Selection: Hiring the people you want

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Contents

	Preface	10
1	Approaches to Recruitment	11
1.1	Your Aims in Recruitment	11
1.2	Being Fair	11
1.3	Personal Liking	12
1.4	The Systems Approach	12
1.5	Personal and Systematic	13
1.6	Roles and Methods	13
1.7	Weighing Costs and Benefits	13
1.8	Key Points	13
2	Being Fair	15
2.2	Discrimination and Business	16
2.3	Disadvantaged Groups	16
2.4	Passive and Active Measures	18
2.5	Good Practice	18
2.6	Monitoring Progress	19




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2.7	On Diversity	19
2.8	Key Points	19
3	Policy and Procedure	20
3.1	Recruitment Policy	20
3.2	The 12 Steps of Recruitment	20
3.3	Aims, Methods, and Review	21
3.4	Recruitment Methods	21
3.5	Data and Biodata	22
3.6	The Interview	22
3.7	Assessment Centres	22
3.8	Real Work Practice	23
3.9	The Best Ways to Select	23
3.10	Key Points	23
4	Groundwork	24
4.1	The Exit Interview	24
4.2	Do We Have a Vacancy?	24
4.3	The Job Analysis	25
4.4	The Job Description	25
4.5	The Person Specification	25
4.6	Disqualifiers	27



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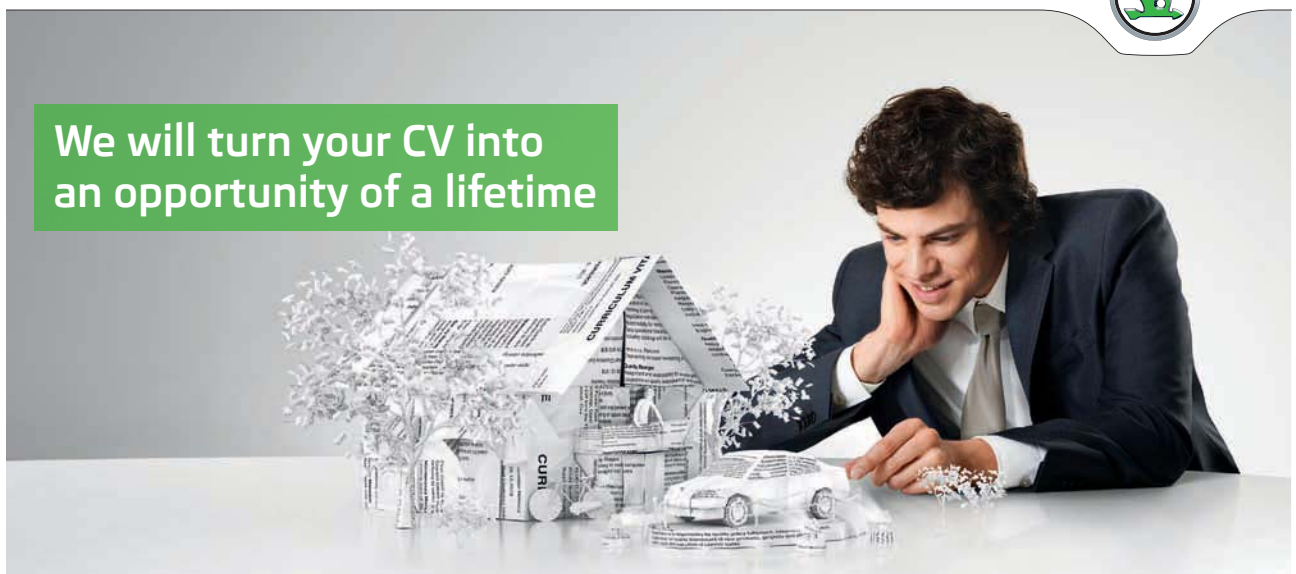
4.7	Prioritise Your Criteria	27
4.8	Key Points	28
5	The Vacancy	29
5.1	Marketing Your Vacancy	29
5.2	Internal or External?	29
5.3	Attractive and Accurate	29
5.4	The Outer Shape	30
5.5	The Inner Shape	30
5.6	Applications	32
5.7	Shortlisting	32
5.8	Key Points	32
6	The Selection Interview	33
6.1	Relying on Interviews	33
6.2	What an Interview Is	34
6.3	Context, Content, Contact	34
6.4	The Classic Interview	35
6.5	Pre-Interview Checklist	35
6.6	Interview Checklist	35
6.7	Post-Interview Checklist	36

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6.8	Special Needs	36
6.9	Key Points	36
7	Selection Interview Skills	37
7.1	Interview Formats	37
7.2	Thorough Preparation	37
7.3	The ABC of Panelwork	38
7.4	The Right Impression	38
7.5	Listening with Interest	38
7.6	Common Failings	38
7.7	Collecting Evidence	39
7.8	Key Points	39
8	Interviewer Types	40
8.1	The Stickler	40
8.2	The Helper	40
8.3	The Performer	40
8.4	The Prober	41
8.5	The Observer	41
8.6	The Questioner	41
8.7	The Enthusiast	41
8.8	The Boss	41

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8.9	The Avoider	41
8.10	Key Points	41
9	Go and No Go Questions	43
9.1	Interview Questions	43
9.2	Go and No Go Questions	44
9.3	Killer Questions	44
9.4	Discriminatory Questions	44
9.5	Starter Questions	45
9.6	Probers	45
9.7	Linkers	45
9.8	Behavioural Questions	45
9.9	A Rounded Picture	46
9.10	Fact and Feeling	46
9.11	Key Points	48
10	Selection and Appointment	49
10.1	Things that Loom Large	49
10.2	Assessing	50
10.3	Evidence not Judgment	50
10.4	Selecting	50
10.5	References	50

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10.6	Tidying Up	50
10.7	Settling In	51
10.8	Key Points	51
11	Web Resources on Recruitment and Selection	52

Preface

Introduction to Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection is one of the key processes of any business, often regarded as the most important. Sometimes the process is undertaken with little preparation because managers believe they know what kind of person they want and have a gut feel for who will do a good job for them. But this is seat-of-the-pants recruitment and fraught with dangers, not least because of the costs of getting it wrong. Instead, if you take the time to learn the skills of good hiring and selection, you'll be making wise judgments and wise decisions that will pay dividends in the end.

In this book, you'll discover a wide range of skills and techniques that will help you master the selection process. You will learn how to balance gut feel with fairness. You'll discover how to select the best recruitment method for you. You'll learn what goes into a successful recruitment campaign. And you'll master the art of effective interviews. Not only will you be able to run efficient recruitment campaigns. You'll also achieve your main aim in recruitment which is getting the people or person that you want.

Profile of Author Eric Garner

Eric Garner is an experienced management trainer with a knack for bringing the best out of individuals and teams. Eric founded ManageTrainLearn in 1995 as a corporate training company in the UK specialising in the 20 skills that people need for professional and personal success today. Since 2002, as part of KSA Training Ltd, ManageTrainLearn has been a major player in the e-learning market. Eric has a simple mission: to turn ManageTrainLearn into the best company in the world for producing and delivering quality online management products.

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1 Approaches to Recruitment

Recruitment and selection is one of the key processes of any business. It is the means by which the business sources and acquires its most precious asset, its people. When it is carried out hastily, it is fraught with dangers. When it is carried out with skill, it can be one of the most important investments you ever make. Here are some of the key considerations in your approach to recruitment.

1.1 Your Aims in Recruitment

The chief aim of recruitment is to appoint someone to your team who can do the job you want filled to the required standard of performance. While this is the chief aim of recruitment, there are 5 other aims which affect the way you meet the chief aim. These are:

1. to be cost-effective
2. to be fair
3. to meet future needs as well as present ones
4. to be consistent
5. to manage the public face of the organization.

1.2 Being Fair

Whether you work in a country where non-discrimination in recruitment is illegal or not, there are good reasons for opening up your recruitment process to the widest possible choice. As R.Kandola and J.Fullerton in their book “Managing the Mosaic: Diversity in Action” show, a fairness policy in recruitment attracts a wider and better choice of candidate, retains your best talent, (and so reduces your turnover and the need to recruit), and creates better teamwork. Being fair is not a choice but good business sense.

1.2.1 An Equal Opps Policy

An equal opportunities policy starts at the highest levels with the formulation of a statement such as the following:

“The organisation is an equal opportunities employer.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on unjustifiable or irrelevant grounds. These include: sex, colour, race, nationality, age, religious belief. Selection criteria and procedures will be kept under review to ensure that individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.”

A commitment to action to put the policy into effect must follow the formulation of the statement, together with procedures for monitoring and review, and a comprehensive communication and training programme for staff.

1.3 Personal Liking

The recruitment process is a personalised one. We like to get to know candidates; we like to find out about their life and work histories; we want to know what sort of employees they will make; and we want to be as sure as we can that this will be a relationship that will benefit both of us. This is, after all, how we pick our partners and how we pick our friends. However, to be fair and to be effective, personal liking must be balanced by a system that avoids bias and favouritism.

1.3.1 A Flexible Approach

One private business in the world of high technology talks like this about its approach to recruitment:

“It’s a demand market at present so we have our pick of the best. We’re always on the lookout for talented people. We keep our ears to the ground and like to know who’s disgruntled, who’s looking for a move. We see nothing wrong in luring good people from our competitors.

“More often than not we’ll approach the person first. If we have to use a public advertisement, we use an open advert and see what response we get. We are quite prepared to adjust the job to suit who’s available. Everyone needs to be flexible.

“We don’t use standard selection methods. We like to know the person will fit into the team. Liking someone is a major part of the decision; it has to be.”

1.4 The Systems Approach

The systems approach is at the opposite end of the scale to personalised recruitment, where people are taken on if they seem right and are liked. In a systems approach, there is a procedure for every step in the process from job analysis to person specification, from marketing the job to shortlisting candidates; from selection to making an offer. In the extreme, such an approach takes human bias out of the equation and selects according to scientific matching of job and person.

1.4.1 A Rigid Approach

This is how a public organisation approaches the recruitment of staff using the systems approach.

“Our recruitment procedures are all laid down in our selection and equal opportunities policies. There is a procedure for the authority to recruit, for writing job descriptions, for interviewing and for making selections.

Nobody is authorised to recruit unless they have been fully trained in the procedure.

“A committee oversees the process. Every step, every action, even what is said at interview is open to public scrutiny.

“There is no place for personal bias or favouritism in the procedure. Because of the systematic nature of the procedure, the system itself determines who is the right candidate for appointment (whether we like them or not). We can give reasons for each appointment going back over the last ten years.”

1.5 Personal and Systematic

It is not necessary to make a choice between the highly-personalised approach to recruitment of some organisations and the systems approach of others. You can aim for both, the personalized approach of “gut feel” and the systems approach of matching people to jobs. You simply need to recognize that organizations are more than just logic. They are dynamic systems based on how people feel about each other and build this in to your recruitment approach.

1.6 Roles and Methods

The matching process that is at the heart of recruitment and selection has always reflected the times. In the past, workers were chosen at hiring fairs; today it is likely to be high-tech. Using modern technology can reduce costs, speed up administration, and even carry out the selection process.

At the same time, the recruiter’s role has become even more multi-functional, ranging from manpower planner to job designer; lawyer to psychologist; project manager to negotiator. He or she needs to be knowledgeable about policy and legislation and have skills ranging from job analysis to interviewing.

1.7 Weighing Costs and Benefits

The benefits of the recruitment process are always delayed ones: they come in the shape of having made correct choices about people who then go on to make valuable contributions to the organisation. The costs on the other hand can be high. It is thought that it costs 2.5 times annual salary to recruit a new manager. To that figure must be added the costs of getting it wrong, such as poor performance, the cost of putting things right, the cost of recruitment re-runs and the cost of legal action.

1.7.1 The Peacock & the Magpie

Aesop tells the following fable which illustrates the dangers of personal liking over the competence-based approach of selection.

The birds of the forest convened to choose a new king. A number of candidates stepped forward to promote their cause but the favoured contender was undoubtedly the peacock. He strode in front of the judges displaying his long tail of brightly-coloured feathers. The judges were dazzled and so were the throng of onlookers.

Just as the birds were about to crown him king, the magpie spoke up. “Just one moment,” he said. “If you were to become our king, how would you defend us against the birds of the mountains such as the eagle and the kite?”

There was a long silence. The peacock didn’t know how to answer. The judges put their heads together once more and decided not to choose him for their king.

1.8 Key Points

1. The chief aim of recruitment is to appoint someone who can do the job to a required standard.
2. Recruitment needs to comply with the spirit and letter of anti-discrimination legislation.

3. The recruitment process presents an organisation's public face.
4. Pursuing an equal opportunities selection approach results in better selection decisions.
5. At one end of the spectrum of approaches to selection is the highly personal approach; at the other is the highly systematic approach.
6. The costs of getting recruitment wrong are as great as the benefits of getting it right.



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2 Being Fair



Selection and recruitment is severely hampered if we are blinkered about the kind of people who can do a job. When we discriminate against candidates because of who they are, we seriously restrict our choices, harm our business and offend people. The only kind of discrimination in recruitment and selection should be discrimination in favour of those who can do the job.

2.1 Discrimination

There are 3 kinds of discrimination: prejudice, direct discrimination, and indirect discrimination. Prejudice, or pre-judging, is “a disposition to think, feel and behave negatively towards other people on the basis of group membership”. Direct discrimination occurs when we prevent people from applying for, being shortlisted for, being considered for and being appointed for a position on the basis of group membership. And indirect discrimination occurs when conditions exist which make it harder for people from any group to compete equally with others. Depending on where you are, one, two, or all three of these may be illegal.

2.2 Discrimination and Business

Direct and indirect discrimination are bad business practices. This is because they are illogical; they are based on fear; and they are morally untenable. Evidence shows that organisations which practice fair recruitment and equal opportunities are more attractive and better regarded than those that don't.

2.3 Disadvantaged Groups

Traditionally, in Western countries, the following groups have been discriminated against more than others:

- a) Women in work
- b) Racial and ethnic minorities
- c) People with physical and mental disabilities
- d) Ex-offenders
- e) The young and the old.

Other groups may be discriminated against in certain cultures, eg those belonging to minority religious groups. Most of these groups are now the subject of anti-discrimination legislation in many countries, although forms of disadvantage can still exist.

2.3.1 Sex Discrimination

Many cultures view the role of men and women as being distinctly different. Traditionally, men are breadwinners and women are child-rearers and homemakers. Out of the deep cultural changes of the last thirty years, these stereotypes have been successfully challenged and changed. Sex discrimination legislation in many countries outlaws unfair treatment of men and women because of their sex and equal pay legislation supports the right of women and men doing like or similar work to be paid the same. Despite these moves, changes do not happen overnight. Women still earn on average less than men, are found more frequently in lower-status occupations and appear much less often in boardrooms and in management.

2.3.2 Racial Discrimination

In our multicultural world, the mix of ethnic origins in developed countries is increasing all the time. Ethnic origin can be defined as belonging to a different race, creed, colour, nationality or ethnic background from the majority population. Legislation exists in most developed countries outlawing discrimination of ethnic minorities in employment. It tends to be similar to legislation in the treatment of men and women. Despite legislation and improvement in some areas, unemployment rates are still higher for ethnic groups than whites, often by as much as three times (eg Asian women) and surveys continue to show that it is harder for some groups to find work than others. Despite these moves, changes do not happen overnight.

2.3.3 Disability Discrimination

In most developed countries, disability discrimination now exists in line with sex and race discrimination. As a guide, legislation tends to define an employee's disability as a physical impairment or mental condition that is long-term (12 months or more) and has a substantial effect on the person's day-to-day activities. While there are still barriers for some people with disabilities, many notable people, such as the blind Labour politician David Blunkett and the paraplegic Oxford professor, Stephen Hawking, have achieved outstanding success in their chosen fields despite their disabilities. According to a study by P. Prescott-Clarke, people with disabilities have the same productivity as the general population, a lower sickness and absentee rate and a better safety record.

2.3.4 Ex-Offenders

There is no discrimination legislation that prevents you from selecting or not selecting ex-offenders. However, in certain developed countries, legislation exists that allows an ex-offender to not disclose details of offences that have elapsed after a certain period of time (eg for a prison sentence of up to six months, after seven years).

Exceptions to this rule are made in certain categories, such as national security work, work with vulnerable groups - children, the old, the disabled - and self-regulatory organisations. In these cases, criminal certificates can be obtained giving details of unspent convictions. These are crucial to registered employers in high-risk employments. In some countries, employers may have access to criminal records through a Criminal Records Bureau.

2.3.5 Age Discrimination

Age discrimination was one of the last areas of discrimination to be tackled by many developed countries. Much of the origin of ageism is rooted in cultural stereotyping, believing that the so-called "prime-time frame" of 28 to 38 produces the best job candidates. Even where there is no legislation, age restrictions can imply other unlawful discrimination. In the case of *Price vs the Civil Service* in the UK, an upper age limit of 28 for an executive officer position was found to discriminate unfairly against women who could not compete equally with men of the same age.

2.4 Passive and Active Measures

When organizations need to comply with anti-discrimination legislation, it often means they follow the letter rather than the spirit of the law. Passive compliance can mean doing the minimum necessary. Active compliance, on the other hand, means identifying barriers to equal access and removing them; setting targets and monitoring progress towards them; and taking positive action. In recruitment, taking positive measures may include letting under-represented groups know of vacancies; guaranteed interviews for under-represented groups if they meet job requirements; and amending conditions to allow more opportunities for disadvantaged groups (eg crèches for mothers; job share; wheelchair access).

2.5 Good Practice

As a result of unfair discrimination cases, we now know what constitutes good recruiting practice. They include the following Do's and Don'ts:

- Do have a recruitment policy in writing
- Do train everyone who might recruit
- Do keep the same team throughout the process
- Do have an accurate job advert
- Do ask each candidate the same job-related questions

- Do keep a record of decisions about each candidate.
- Don't introduce new conditions during the process
- Don't entertain on-spec enquiries



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2.6 Monitoring Progress

When you have an equal opportunities policy and actively apply it, it means monitoring progress. In recruitment, this means assessing how you are currently doing, setting targets based on realistic representation levels, and then monitoring progress towards these targets. To do this, you will need to collect data on applicants, recruits, and leavers, and identify appropriate action to fully achieve your fairness goals.

2.7 On Diversity

Gene Griessman's words on "On Diversity" are one of the most powerful statements on diversity and fairness:

"I believe that diversity is the natural order of things - as natural as the trillion shapes and shades of the flowers of spring or leaves of autumn. I believe that diversity brings new solutions to an ever-changing environment and that sameness is not only uninteresting but limiting. Understand that those who cause no harm should not be feared, ridiculed or harmed - even if they are different. Look for the best in others. Be just. Be kind, remembering how fragile the human spirit is. Care." (Gene Griessman)

2.8 Key Points

Indirect discrimination may result if an organisation's conditions make it harder for people from certain groups to be selected.

- 1) Recruiters discriminate when they hold unreasonable and inaccurate presumptions about people from certain groups.
- 2) Discrimination is illogical, morally untenable and bad for business.
- 3) Positive action aims to give people from minority groups the same opportunities as people from majority groups.
- 4) A recruitment process needs to be openly unbiased in the way it is conducted.
- 5) Diversity is not just more interesting than conformity, but may bring new solutions too.

3 Policy and Procedure

Few organisational processes are as uncertain and unpredictable as the recruitment and selection process. That's why you should aim to manage it starting with a policy blueprint that everyone in your organisation can work to. Here are 7 key factors in managing recruitment successfully.

3.1 Recruitment Policy

It is important to have a policy on recruitment for your organization. This ensures that everyone who is involved in recruitment campaigns is working consistently towards the same goals, using the same procedures, and reviewing results with the same criteria. In this way, the process can be better managed to achieve your business aims.

3.1.1 Who? What? Why?

Whether your recruitment policy is in writing or just custom and practice, it should cover the Who? What? Why? of your procedure.

Who? you need to consider who carries out your recruitment, eg specialists, line managers or an outside agency. You can even use the team. Sandwich makers Prêt-a-manger ask potential recruits to spend a morning working with staff before the team help decide who to appoint.

What? The what? of recruitment should list your priorities in selecting: are you wanting to be fair or effective?

Why? you should decide under Why?: do we recruit on a regular basis or only when we need new people?

How? What recruiting method do you use?

Where and when? Do you go to them or do they come to you?

3.2 The 12 Steps of Recruitment

There are 12 steps in the recruitment cycle. Each stage is a sub-system of the main system and may have sub-systems itself. They are:

- 1) checking if you have a vacancy
- 2) taking the decision to recruit
- 3) writing the job description
- 4) writing the person specification
- 5) advertising the job
- 6) handling the response
- 7) shortlisting
- 8) interviewing and testing

- 9) making a selection
- 10) taking up references
- 11) appointing
- 12) managing the new recruit's start.

3.3 Aims, Methods, and Review

If you want to manage your recruitment well, you'll need to set your aims, adjust your methods to meet this aim, and regularly review how it's working. You'll need to have good administration systems working. You'll also need to decide what the best way to recruit is. There is a wide array of choices, from paper selection to formal interview; tests to a spell of work experience; and setting up assessment centres to contracting the whole exercise out to experts. Whatever you do, you need to review the results, both short-term and long-term, if you want to manage the process well.

3.3.1 Administration

The systems and sub-systems of recruitment are best managed through attention to good administration. There are some simple rules:

- appoint one person in the team to have responsibility for each vacancy. This person should know the stage that the vacancy has reached (the hour on the recruitment clock).
- open a new file on each vacancy. Ideally use computer programmes to handle large numbers or popular vacancies.
- acknowledge letters the same day they arrive
- set deadlines on each stage (eg closure of applications, dates of interviews) and allow no changes
- whittle lists down promptly
- keep people informed if there are delays
- review the list of applicants regularly.

3.4 Recruitment Methods

A key feature of your recruitment procedures is the method you use to assess candidates. Assessment methods may be a matter of personal taste or may be laid down by the organisation. It is not unusual to have different methods in the same organisation. The face-to-face interview is the most widely used method of recruiting although it is widely accepted that it can be an unreliable guide to a person's future performance potential. Other methods such as biodata, assessment centres, tests and graphology can only give unscientific predictions. In truth, there is no cast-iron method that can guarantee the selection of the best candidate or the selection of the candidate who will turn out to be the star performer we all want. In every recruitment exercise, there will always be an element of guesswork and intuition.

3.5 Data and Biodata

Data about people, known as biodata, is at the heart of making good selections. D.B.Goldsmith was the pioneer of selection techniques based on biodata. For example, when asked to find people who would become good salesmen (sic), Goldsmith found out which existing salesmen in the organisation were already performing well and listed every factor about them including gender, age, and family background. He then gave every factor a weighting and used this to draw up the ideal recruit. This approach ensured the organisation took on the same type of person. Today, this would almost certainly be regarded as discriminatory.

3.6 The Interview

The interview has traditionally been the overwhelmingly favoured method of selecting staff. Few people get a job without one. However, research shows that assessing people by means of a face-to-face discussion can be a poor way to assess them. This is because we are subjectively influenced by whether we like someone or not. We may admire things at interview - for example, a bubbly personality - that are not necessary for the job. Interviews need to be structured to work well and to focus on information needed in the job.

3.7 Assessment Centres

Assessment centres are put together by combining a range of assessment techniques in one half day or whole day session for groups of up to 12 candidates. The techniques need to be carefully prepared and may include an in-tray exercise to simulate a job problem; leaderless discussions; and formal panel interviews. Assessment centres are often used by large organisations such as the Armed forces or Civil Service for senior appointments. They have a high level of success.

"I studied English for 16 years but...
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons"
Jane, Chinese architect

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3.8 Real Work Practice

In one research company seeking to appoint a senior manager, two outstanding candidates were running neck and neck. To choose between them, they were each asked to spend a whole day on a real management problem working with members of the company.

Five skills were sought:

- a) a persuasive not coercive management style
- b) high-energy leadership
- c) action through partnership
- d) an ability to abstract
- e) excellent presentation skills.

The early front-runner soon came unstuck when it was found that she pressurised staff for information. The second candidate revealed traits that hadn't been noticed until then. She was appointed and proved a success.

3.9 The Best Ways to Select

Hunter and Hunter carried out research into what selection techniques were the most effective in predicting future job performance. The following is a list of their findings in order of effectiveness:

1. a sample of work eg a written report, a presentation
2. tests of job skills
3. the ratings of colleagues
4. test of job knowledge
5. a trial period on the job
6. assessment centres
7. biodata
8. references
9. interviews
10. academic record
11. education
12. self-assessment.

3.10 Key Points

1. A recruitment policy should indicate who recruits, where, when and in what manner.
2. The recruitment cycle consists of twelve steps, from identifying a vacancy to filling it.
3. Each stage in the recruitment cycle is a system with its own sub-systems and sub-sub systems.
4. The human touch makes the systems approach to selection more user-friendly.
5. There is no cast-iron method that can guarantee foolproof selection.
6. The interview is a universally-used but inherently flawed method of recruitment.

4 Groundwork

All good projects need good groundwork. In the case of buildings, these are solid foundations. In the case of a recruitment and selection project, it is the work that goes into establishing what job, if any, needs to be done, to what level of performance and outcomes, and what skills and attainments the person doing it will need. That's why the groundwork for effective recruitment requires the detailed study of a job analysis, a job description and the laying down of a person specification.

4.1 The Exit Interview



Every person who leaves a position either to move on elsewhere within the organisation, or to move on outside the organisation, should receive an exit interview. It is an opportunity to say thanks and to update your knowledge of the job. It is also a good way of asking if you really need to take on a person or not.

4.2 Do We Have a Vacancy?

It is highly wasteful to instigate an automatic job search when someone leaves and only then ask the question “do we really need to fill this job?”

There should be a presumption against filling a job until a clear case can be made out in its favour. It is wise to check out the alternatives. These could be:

- do nothing. You might be able to cover the job, re-organise or use new technology.
- re-allocate tasks to others in the team
- recruit but at a different level
- re-organise by using, say, job sharers or temporary staff
- use internal transfers, secondments, development spells, internal promotion.

Only when it is clear that there is no alternative but to recruit should you go to the next stage.

4.3 The Job Analysis

The Job Analysis is the first step in compiling or re-compiling a Job Description. A Job Analysis can be put together by the job-holder, by a trained specialist or by job-holder and expert together. It involves analysis of the duties in a job, their frequency and importance. The job analysis can be put together by a combination of observation, recording and questioning of the job-holder and manager.

4.4 The Job Description

A job description is a list of duties which a person performs in a job. These duties can be observed at first hand as part of a Job Analysis exercise or they may be the duties agreed on paper with individuals and groups. They can also include further valuable information such as reporting relationships and the purpose of the job. Duties should also be weighted to show the importance and frequency of the duty. If you can also give reasons for a job being carried out, you put the task into context. Not: "Carries out induction" but: "Carries out induction so that new employees are fully integrated into the organisation in the shortest possible time."

When complete, the job description is an essential aid in writing the person specification.

4.5 The Person Specification

The person specification should not be confused with the job description. The job description describes the job; the person specification describes the person you want to fill it. The specification should not describe a particular person, the last postholder, similar postholders or the perfect person but someone who can do the job to the required standard.

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4.5.1 The 3 Steps in Writing a Person Specification

There are 3 steps to writing a Person Specification

1. decide on the attributes needed in the job, eg experience, skills, and qualifications.
2. use a structured plan, such as, Education; Skills; Experience; Disqualifiers, covering all the areas that are important for a candidate to have.
3. write out your job requirements in specific and measurable terms, eg 5 “O” grades; some experience of working on high-level projects; ability to work weekends. With specific and measurable criteria, you can then focus your selection process on looking for candidates who meet the criteria.

4.5.2 Core Skills

Booksellers and stationers W H Smith use nine core skills as the basis of their person specification for recruiting graduate trainees. These are:

1. clear, precise and structured written communication
2. spoken communication that is logical, clear and well-expressed
3. natural authoritative leadership
4. good team member sharing ideas with others and willing to seek help from others
5. thoughtful organizer and planner
6. flexible thinker, firm decision-taker
7. personally motivated, enthusiastic, ambitious
8. self-confident, handles pressure well, willing to learn

quick to understand verbal and numerical arguments; able to analyse information.

4.5.3 Criteria

The person specification you use to recruit must contain fair, relevant, justifiable and minimum criteria. Be fair by only asking for qualifications that are necessary. Don't equate a qualification with a skill. Don't equate a skill only with work. Don't talk in terms of minimum periods of experience; people learn at different rates. Don't ask for a lot more than you need just to get better than you need. Always ask yourself, “Is this fair, relevant, and necessary for the job?” If it's not, don't make it a job requirement.

4.5.4 Specific & Measurable

The value of a person specification is that it allows recruiters to compare evidence from each candidate against the requirements of the job. It is important therefore for information to be specific and measurable. Verbs like “to know how to...”, “to grasp...”, “to understand...”, “to appreciate...” are not specific and should be avoided. It is much better to describe specific requirements such as “the ability to bring conflict to positive outcomes”, “at least one year's experience of leading teams”. These can be measured. Criteria such as “sense of humour” or “must fit in” are equally unspecific and should be replaced with actual job requirements, such as “an ability to meet deadlines”; “a detailed knowledge of programming”. In these cases, applicants' abilities can be measured.

4.5.5 Fighter Pilots

In the Second World War, psychologist John Flanagan was commissioned to increase the number of suitable fighter pilots joining the Royal Air Force. When he asked what qualities were needed in fighter pilots he was told they had to be “daring”, “courageous” and “quick-thinking”. Flanagan realised this didn’t help in the process of selection; we can all be daring and quick thinking if we want to be. Instead Flanagan carried out a detailed job analysis of the duties of fighter pilots which led to effective performance. These included a detailed knowledge of Spitfires, map-reading ability and the ability to follow instructions to the letter. Flanagan was, in fact, devising a person specification and thus able to make better selections.

4.5.6 Fair, Relevant...

The person specification you use to recruit must contain fair, relevant, and justifiable criteria. Don’t ask for qualifications unless they are essential as an entry requirement for the job (eg a doctor, an architect) or desirable to do the job well. Don’t equate a qualification with a skill. Don’t confine yourself to looking only at work experience if you want a skill: it could have been acquired outside work. Don’t talk in terms of minimum time periods for experience since we all learn skills at different rates. “Around three years’ experience” is better than “a minimum of three years’ experience”. Avoid unnecessary qualifications just because “we’ve always asked for two “A” grades for that job”. Add the phrase “or equivalent” when specifying qualifications, just in case similar qualifications were obtained abroad or by a different method.

4.6 Disqualifiers

It is useful to have a section in the Person Specification on disqualifiers or “contra-indicators”. Just as the other sections of the specification outline the experiences, skills and characteristics an applicant needs, so the disqualifiers indicate the things they don’t need. Like all other criteria, disqualifiers should be fair, reasonable and justifiable.

Disqualifiers include:

- a legal requirement, for example, a clean driving licence
- hours of work, anyone unable to work a rota, for example, being disqualified
- fitness, for example, someone who is a carrier of a food poisoning organism would be disqualified from working in food production.

In these cases, the disqualifier would rule a person out, even if they met all the other job requirements.

4.7 Prioritise Your Criteria

Not all the criteria you list in a person specification will have equal weight with each other. You should therefore prioritise them. There are 2 ways to do this:

a. you can give each job requirement a weighting, eg 20 points for communication skills, 5 points for report writing, 30 points for customer handling skills, and so on. Then you can score candidates accordingly.

b. define each job requirement as “essential” or “desirable”. If a requirement is “essential”, the job cannot be properly performed without someone having it. If the requirement is “desirable”, it is not absolutely critical but the performance of the job is enhanced if it is possessed.

4.8 Key Points

1. An exit interview can update you on how a job has changed since the last person was recruited.
2. In times of change, a job description should list outcomes as well as duties.
3. The person specification is the principal selection tool because it lists the requirements that you believe a successful applicant needs .
4. A person specification should be built around a set of experiences, skills and knowledge.
5. The requirements of a person specification should be written in such a way that each applicant can be measured against them.
6. Each requirement in a person specification should be prioritised for example, as essential or desirable.



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5 The Vacancy

Advertising a job vacancy requires a balance between truthfully presenting the requirements of the job and catching the attention of those who might be interested. It means devising advertisements that are accurate as well as attractive. To do this, you need to acquire and employ the very best of marketing and promotional techniques.

5.1 Marketing Your Vacancy

There are 3 questions to consider before you decide where and how you will advertise a job vacancy:

1. Where are the people with the skills I need?
2. How do I get to them?
3. How much will it cost?

You can use both internal and external marketing strategies to advertise your job. Internal strategies include personal recommendations, such as “bounty” schemes where employees are paid for recommending friends; notice boards, newsletters, memos, and e: mail. External strategies include word of mouth and posting your advert in job centres, agencies and the press.

5.2 Internal or External?

The advantage of seeking only internal candidates is that the process is likely to be quicker, cheaper and more reliable. You know your own people better than you know outsiders. Vacancies can also be tied in with staff development schemes. Sourcing recruits from outside the organisation means you can introduce new blood. Although it is more costly and lengthy, you have a wider choice of applicants and can avoid “clubbability”.

5.3 Attractive and Accurate

The best adverts are attractive to the people you want to recruit and accurate in telling them what the job involves.

Here is an accurate advert:

“Manager required for our new distribution centre...”

Here are examples of adverts that attract:

- “Body Builders” and “Body Piercers” (The Army’s recruiting campaign, highlighting food distribution to refugees and inoculation programmes)
- “What language can you smile in?” (British Airways’ advert for cabin crew)
- “Pilot wanted - previous experience required” (RAF advert focusing on young people’s dreams)
- “Rare type required” (Blood transfusion service staff)

5.4 The Outer Shape

The classical shape for the outer shell of an advertisement is in 2 parts.

- 1) The Heading at the beginning should contain your organisation name and logo; the vacancy title, salary and benefits; and who the organisation is and what it does.
- 2) The Action at the end should state how to apply with the deadline and address; a contact name and phone number; and a statement of equal opportunities and/or Mission Statement.

5.5 The Inner Shape

The inner core of an advert forms the main body of the advert between the Heading section at the beginning and the Action section at the end. It consists of 5 parts:

1. why the vacancy exists
2. a summary of all the essential criteria in the person specification
3. a summary of all the desirable criteria in the person specification
4. a summary of the disqualifiers in the person specification
5. terms and conditions of the job.

5.5.1 Store Detective Wanted

The following is the classic shape of a job advertisement:

SuperStores are part of one of the largest grocery chains in the UK. We have recently opened a new 60,000 sq.ft. store in Newtown and are set on an expansion programme of 50 new stores. To complete our new team at Newtown, we are seeking a Store Detective.

Candidates must have around a minimum of two years' experience of similar work, and must be able to work under their own initiative. The need to handle difficult situations well and report incidents efficiently is essential. A knowledge of shop legislation and the ability to handle customers correctly is desirable.

Candidate must be fit and have no criminal record.

We offer good working conditions and an annual bonus on top of weekly earnings.

Applications in writing should be made by May 10th to...

5.5.2 Flight Crew Wanted

The following is an advertisement for flight crew on Virgin Atlantic using a witty and attractive style:

Work over Christmas. Travel Around the World. Spread Joy and Happiness. Wear a Red Suit.

St Nicholas isn't the only one who's built a long-term career on an uncanny ability to suss out just what people need. Our cabin crew have done it too. Cheery and full of personality, they're a big reason why the atmosphere on our flights is always so festive.

You'll need good GCSE's as well as a generous nature. You should be aged 19-28 and at least 5'2" without boots.

Give and you'll receive. We offer a good basic salary plus one of the best concessionary travel schemes in the country.

Set our planes jingling! Call us now on... And make next Christmas even merrier. (Barkers agency)

5.5.3 In Today's Army

The following advertisement is an award-winning advertisement for officers in the British Army. It is an example of how to write a witty and attractive job advertisement.

In today's Army, blacks and Asians get called all sorts of things.

Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Colonel.

We now have more ethnic minorities in positions of real power than ever before. So, nowadays, there's only one group of people who are being held back.

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5.5.4 Straight Talking

The following are extracts from an advertisement by the London Fire Service:

“A career as a London Firefighter certainly has plenty going for it. Every day, you prove your mental and physical abilities. You become someone who can make a difference within your own community. But the closer you get, the more a nasty little thought gets in the way. Will you risk discrimination if you make your sexuality public, or give yourself the pain and indignity of living in the closet? We've made giant strides in re-educating ourselves at every level to be sensitive to the needs of minorities but without giving anyone any favours. And we're tackling head-on the task of changing a culture that we recognise has been dominated by straight macho males for too long.

We hold open sessions for women only who want to find out more about a career as a firefighter. Ring us on...” (TMP Worldwide)

5.6 Applications

Your application form should be designed so that you can get all the evidence you need to make a shortlisting decision. So, if your person specification has requirements for education, qualifications, experience, and skills, you need to be able to go straight to these areas to find what you're looking for. If it is clear that even one essential requirement is not met, you cannot continue with that application. Don't use the application form as a test of handwriting, literacy, or creativity.

5.7 Shortlisting

1. Shortlisting is the process of turning applicants into candidates. There are 5 steps in shortlisting from paper applications.
2. eliminate those with disqualifiers.
3. reject those who clearly do not meet all the essential criteria.
4. rank applicants according to whether they meet the desirable criteria.
5. give priority to applicants who meet all the essential criteria and are members of under-represented groups
6. record your reasons.

5.8 Key Points

1. The marketing of a vacancy means getting your advertisement to where the best candidates are.
2. The outer shape of an advertisement tells people about the organisation; the inner shape tells them about the job.
3. How you respond to applications tells people about the efficiency and culture of your business.
4. Shortlisting is a systematic process based on matching what you learn about an applicant with the requirements of the person specification.
5. If you have a large number of suitable candidates, you should give priority to those from groups who are currently under-represented.
6. Dealing with applications shows the public side of your business.

6 The Selection Interview



Although many organisations are prepared to consider new ways to recruit staff, such as the use of the Internet, or video-conferencing links in pre-screening, it is still rare to find organisations who do not use the interview at some stage in their recruitment processes. The interview remains central to selection decisions: upon it, we believe we can find out what a person is really like, whether they have the attitude we are looking for, whether they will fit in to the team and, crucially, whether we like them or not.

6.1 Relying on Interviews

When asked how high they rate the interview as a selection method, most organisations say it comes second best to picking candidates blindfolded with a pin. Yet, despite this, the interview is universally popular as a selection method. A Marplan survey of 1000 organisations found that 100% of organisations used an interview against 67% just using tests.

6.1.1 The Best Storekeeper: A Cautionary Tale

Writer Alan Fowler tells the story of his first job as a junior personnel officer when he was given the task of single-handedly taking on a storekeeper.

So concerned was he to impress, that Fowler conducted all the interviews himself, a task that was really too much for one person. Nonetheless, Fowler selected the best candidate, sent off an offer and was delighted to receive an acceptance by return of post. Imagine his horror when on the new recruit's first day, he discovered that the person waiting to start was not the person he'd selected!

Discretion being the best course, Fowler decided to say nothing to either his own manager or the recruit's manager. But a year later, in the Store Manager's report, Fowler was glowingly commended for recruiting the best storekeeper the firm had ever had.

6.2 What an Interview Is

There are 3 purposes to a recruitment interview:

- a) to create a climate in which the applicant can relax, speak freely and give of their best
- b) to gather evidence about whether a candidate meets the criteria on the job specification
- c) to give a realistic, accurate but positive picture of the job and the organisation.

The interview should not be conducted to find out how the candidate reacts to stress, to decide whether you personally like the person or not or to catch the candidate out.

6.3 Context, Content, Contact

A recruitment interview consists of context, content and contact.

- the context of a recruitment interview is your need to discover whether a person can do a job well or not.
- the content of a recruitment interview consists of a logical structure, an order of questions and answers in which you and the interviewee learn about each other.
- the contact of a recruitment interview is the extent to which there is a matching of needs between the interviewee and the organisation.

Set the context; plan the content; make the contact.

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What if you could build your future and create the future?

One generation's transformation is the next's status quo. In the near future, people may soon think it's strange that devices ever had to be "plugged in." To obtain that status, there needs to be "The Shift".



6.3.1 The Interview Setting

The best environment for a recruitment interview is a pleasant room where you can focus on getting to know each applicant. You should use a waiting room and an interview room. The best room conditions are those you don't notice: not too hot or cold, light or dark, humid or dry. There should be no distractions from outside or interruptions from inside. You should plan each interview appointment to have enough time to conduct the interview and then assess the candidate. If you are interviewing in your own offices, check the surroundings give the impression you want.

6.4 The Classic Interview

The classic shape of a recruitment interview has a beginning, middle and end.

Stage one: welcome, introductions, outline of the interview, brief explanation of the job and business

Stage two: questions to the candidate

Stage three: questions from the candidate

Stage four: information on terms and conditions

Stage five: rounding up, next steps, close, goodbye.

The use of a plan gives the impression of professionalism and lets you and your candidate know how you are progressing.

6.5 Pre-Interview Checklist

A pre-recruitment interview checklist is an aide-memoire that ensures you haven't forgotten important tasks in your preparation. These include the following:

- list appointments and times for a succession of interviews.
- book rooms. Put up "Don't Disturb" signs.
- give Security and Reception the names of those who are expected
- ensure there is assistance to help with applicants on arrival. Put the coffee on.
- check that everyone on the panel has application forms and has prepared
- check that candidates have confirmed their appointments
- put together photocopies of the job description, job specification, advertisement, terms and conditions and list of starter questions for everyone on the panel.

6.6 Interview Checklist

An interview checklist is like a crib sheet that helps you to make sure you have covered every detail in the interview. Here's one example:

welcome the candidate

- introduce yourself and the panel
- outline aims and structure of the interview
- explain how the job has arisen

- ask starter questions based on the person specification
- take notes that record evidence
- invite candidate to ask any questions of you
- ask to see any evidence of job requirements such as exam certificates
- explain what happens next
- give details of the likely time period before the next contact
- say thanks and goodbye.

6.7 Post-Interview Checklist

A post-interview checklist is valuable to ensure that there is no unnecessary delays in letting candidates know what happens next. Here is a short but important action checklist.

- as soon as possible after each interview, record evidence of competence and suitability on the person specification.
- decide whether a further round of interviewing will serve any purpose
- take up references if it is your policy to do so
- make your selection from all those who meet the criteria
- inform all candidates as quickly as possible of the outcome.

6.8 Special Needs

If you are interviewing someone who is disabled, your commitment to equal opportunities will be put to the test. You should aim to get as much prior information as possible about the nature of the person's disability and plan accordingly.

Some of the special needs you may come across in interviewing people with disabilities are:

- the need for wheelchair access to the interview location
- the translation into Braille of information for blind or partially-sighted people
- a sign language interpreter for those with hearing difficulties
- help to the interview location for those with mobility problems
- a friend or relative to accompany people with learning difficulties.

6.9 Key Points

1. The purpose of a recruitment interview is to gather evidence about a person's suitability to do a job.
2. The best interviews are those that are formal enough to follow a structure and informal enough to establish meaningful contact.
3. The best setting for an interview is one that is relaxed, undisturbed and business-like.
4. Checklists before, during and after the interview are valuable aide-memoires.
5. The classic shape of a recruitment interview spends most time listening to candidates talk.
6. Assess your own venue and set-up to decide what special needs you might have to address for candidates who are not able-bodied.

7 Selection Interview Skills

The interview is the most crucial procedure in the selection process. When it works well, the interview has its own momentum. It flows effortlessly, questions arise spontaneously, and the exchange is pleasant. But when it doesn't work, a potentially fruitful relationship fails to get off the ground. That's why good interview skills are vital for those who want to do well at recruitment.

7.1 Interview Formats

There are 4 main types of interview format:

- 1) a standalone, one-to-one interview.
- 2) a series of interviews back-to-back. This could be first with a specialist, then a line manager.
- 3) a series of standalone interviews on different days.
- 4) panel interviews which can consist of representatives of management, other interested bodies, members of the team, even representatives of important customers.

7.2 Thorough Preparation

There is nothing that damages the reputation of an organisation's recruitment drives more than lack of interview preparation. It sends the message that "new staff aren't important". Give yourself time to read all the information about candidates before you meet them. Make notes on what issues you want to ask about. Clear your diary and turn up in good time. Inadequate preparation is not only inefficient, it is bad manners to candidates who have made more preparation in attending than you have.



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7.3 The ABC of Panelwork

The secret of successful panelwork in recruitment interviews is to practise teamwork skills using the following ABC of panelwork:

Acknowledge your colleagues by name and deed. Work as a team in asking different sets of questions but listening to each other.

Build on what your colleagues ask and say, so that the interview flows.

Commentate positively on what others say. "I'm interested in what you said to John just now. Can I ask...?"

7.4 The Right Impression

The impression you give at interview should be managed so that you appear relaxed and focused, courteous and assertive, friendly and businesslike. Show interest in every interviewee whether you like them or not. Dress as smartly as you would expect the interviewee to dress. Don't wear anything which reveals causes and interests close to your heart. Keep your behaviour neutral: don't smoke, eat, make any phone calls, indulge in any bad habits in front of the interviewee. Avoid anything in your manner which is strange, unusual, unfamiliar and likely to unsettle an interviewee.

7.5 Listening with Interest

For much of the interview, you should be in active listening mode. You can do this in 5 ways:

1. Discipline yourself to talk as briefly as possible.
2. Use minimal encouragers such as "mms" and "uh-uhs" to keep them talking.
3. Use the three body language indicators meaning "go on": eye contact, the nod and the gentle smile.
4. Take notes at appropriate moments, preferably using a quick form of shorthand that doesn't hold things up.
5. Look up when you are listening, look down when you need to check your notes for the next question.

7.6 Common Failings

According to research, the 5 most common failings of recruitment interviewers are:

1. excessive reliance on intuition
2. looking for different things from others on the panel
3. inconsistent interpretations
4. inflated ratings
5. early decision-makings.

Nearly all of these failings can be overcome by using a person specification as the basis of job requirements and candidate suitability.

7.6.1 Beware of Rush-to-Judgment

Perhaps the most embarrassing incident in a recruitment interview concerns the interviewer who, five minutes into the interview, absent-mindedly doodles “No” on the applicant’s form in full view of the applicant. Not only is this unbelievably embarrassing, it is also poor interviewing. No matter how unsuitable an interviewee may appear in the first minutes of the interview, we should guard against making judgments until after the interview is over. It is always possible that, as candidates relax and provide more information about themselves, what was just an initial negative impression changes on the basis of positive factual information.

7.7 Collecting Evidence

Since the primary purpose of the recruitment interview is to gather evidence about a person’s suitability for a job, you need to collect information in a systematic way.

- before the interview, write down starter questions for each job requirement
- before each interview, re-familiarise yourself with each candidate’s details. Highlight areas you want more information on.
- as you listen to the candidate, make notes; go back over areas you’re not sure about.
- probe for information that the interviewee seems unwilling to give. Don’t move on if you’re unclear about what the interviewee said or meant.
- stop after each interview to discuss each candidate with the panel or, if you are alone, to record your evidence on the job specification assessment form.

7.8 Key Points

1. Good interview preparation means studying application forms and rehearsing with the panel.
2. An interview panel works best when everyone knows their role and functions as a whole.
3. Keep your behaviour neutral during an interview so that you don’t disclose personal preferences.
4. Show interest in each interviewee whatever your personal feelings about them.
5. During an interview, control the amount you talk, increase the amount you listen.
6. Avoid making hasty decisions in an interview by working through the person specification.

8 Interviewer Types

Have you ever wondered how you come across to the candidates you interview? Here are 9 interviewer types. Work out which is most like you and you'll know just what your candidates experience at your interviews.

8.1 The Stickler

The Stickler is someone who likes to plan the interview down to the last detail. He or she believes there is a right way to interview. Once they work it out, they'll stick to that format every time. Interviews with Sticklers tend to be highly structured, formal, polite, and business-like.

8.2 The Helper

The Helper is a people-person. The tone of their interviews is invariably friendly, warm and sociable. They will offer coffee and biscuits, hang up people's coats for them, work out their best route home, and accompany them all the way from the interview room back out of the building. Because of this, interviews feel more like a nice chat than serious business.

8.3 The Performer

The Performer sees an interview as a major promotional opportunity. They will talk up the job, the organization, and themselves. They come over as attractive, charming, and seductive. They want you to like them. Performers like their candidates to be as attractive as themselves. They must look in fashion and be able to quote all the latest ideas and buzz-words about the job.



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8.4 The Prober

The Prober sees the interview as a chance to get to know a person at a deep meaningful level. Because of this, they may ignore a structured approach and take longer than they need to. They have a knack of spotting stars and uncovering the real qualities that a person has. They may get bored with dull candidates and are likely to be attracted to individualists who, like themselves, have a touch of something special.

8.5 The Observer

The Observer sees the interview as essentially a one-way process in which they can gather information on the candidate while giving little away about themselves. Nothing escapes their attention. They can pick up on a little detail and also see the big picture. To encourage people to talk, the Observer comes over as interested, curious and charming.

8.6 The Questioner

The Questioner approaches every interview in two minds: will this person be a safe bet or not? The way they find out is with lots of questions, checks, tests, and references. Only when they feel safe with a candidate will they support them. Then they will become the greatest advocate for giving them the job.

8.7 The Enthusiast

The Enthusiast is someone who likes to get switched on by a candidate, especially if they share their own enthusiasms. They are often impatient people who may be so busy that they turn up half-way through the interview or leave before the end. Enthusiasts may do more talking than the candidates as they love nothing better than an audience.

8.8 The Boss

The Boss likes to let candidates know that they're in charge. They think that the best way to find out about others is to put them on the spot, test them, or confront them. They are the most likely interviewers to use stress tactics. Boss interviewers warm to candidates who are strong and brash like them, or who are willing to be loyal followers in their team.

8.9 The Avoider

The Avoider likes to melt into the background at interviews. In a panel, they will defer to others. Alone, they will defer to the candidate. Their philosophy is not to control the process but to simply sit back and let things happen. Curiously, this hands-off approach often allows the best candidate to come through naturally.

Next time you interview, instead of focusing all your attention on your candidates, have a look at your own style. You may learn a lot more about you than you do about them.

8.10 Key Points

1. The impression you give at a selection interview is the impression people get of your organization.
2. The kind of interviewer you are is determined by your personality type, your assumptions about people, and how you are in relating to others.
3. There is no one perfect interviewer type.

4. The reason why some interviews “go well” and others don’t is due to how well our interview style matches the requirements of the vacancy.
5. The nine interviewer types are based on the personality typology known as the Enneagram. If you familiarize yourself with this typology, you can improve your own understanding of your own type and that of others.
6. Knowing your interviewer type can help you see yourself through the eyes of your candidates and improve your performance.



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9 Go and No Go Questions



With the interview at the heart of the selection process, it is the questions you ask at interview that determine how successful the interview is likely to be. Poor questions, asked carelessly - the no-go questions - are likely to lead to poor answers and hence poor information about the candidate. However, when questions are fair, carefully thought out and sensibly put - the go questions - they can provide you with all the information you need to make well-judged decisions.

9.1 Interview Questions

There are 7 reasons for asking a question in a recruitment interview. They are:

- a) to show courtesy to the candidate, eg a question about their journey to the interview
- b) to build rapport with the candidate and gain their confidence
- c) to gather information
- d) to find out what the candidate means
- e) to display simple interest in what the candidate is saying
- f) to keep the interview going, eg "...and then what happened?"
- g) to stay in control by observing the candidate.

At one and the same time, questions build the relationship, give you information, and keep you in control.

9.2 Go and No Go Questions

Experienced recruitment interviewers need to know which questions are "go" and which are "no-go".

- Go questions include: starter questions; closed and open questions; rapport-builders; linking questions; behavioural questions; summarising, paraphrasing and concluding questions.
- No-go questions include: personal questions; multiple choice questions; patronising questions; assumptive questions (ie drawing incorrect conclusions); double-headed questions; leading questions; put-down questions.
- No-go questions may be unfair, rude and discriminatory. Go questions are always fair, genuine and non-discriminatory.

9.3 Killer Questions

In a survey of 500 businesses, the recruitment consultants, Office Angels, found that 75% of interviewers used a range of "killer" questions to find out how people react under extreme pressure. They include:

- the "throw them" question which interrupts the interview with an unexpected request: eg "Tell me a joke"
- the test question, eg "Name five members of the present Cabinet"
- the deflating question, which punctures any tendency towards arrogance: eg "What was the one question you didn't want me to ask?"

Killer questions are no-go questions if they are unjustified by the job's person specification.

9.4 Discriminatory Questions

Many people who ask discriminatory questions are often unaware of the effect the questions have on those on the receiving end. This may be because they are locked into a view of seeing certain types of people, such as the young and old or people from minority groups, in certain ways.

Questions with such undertones suggest that...

- the candidate is in some way unusual because of their age, race, sex, disability, or type

- they are not acceptable to the people with whom they might work and so won't fit in
- they are disadvantaged
- they are stereotypes of their type, rather than individuals in their own right.

Discriminatory questions are, of course, unlawful, blatantly unfair and likely to offend those on the receiving end.

9.5 Starter Questions

Starter questions are questions you use to start off discussion about each requirement of the person specification. For example, if a job needs someone who can write good reports, a starter question might be:

“How would you go about writing a report on a case of shoplifting?” Starter questions mean that you treat everyone equally, since everyone should get the same questions on each of the job criteria.

9.6 Probers

A standard sequence of questions in recruitment interviews is the probing sequence, consisting of a closed or open question, followed by a probing question and ending with a summarising question.

- “You were in the Navy until last year?” (closed)
- “What did you think of your apprenticeship there?” (open)
- “Exactly how was it harder than a civilian apprenticeship?” (probing)
- “So, on the whole you think you were better trained in the Navy?” (summarising)

9.7 Linkers

Linkers are linking questions aimed at keeping the flow of the recruitment interview going and avoiding too many interrogative questions.

Three examples of “linkers” are:

- reflective questions, which echo what someone has just said:
“I decided to join the Navy.”
“The Navy?”
- explainers in which you explain the reason for your question:
“I'm really interested in what you thought about college. What was maths like?”
- job linkers which link your question to the job:
“The job has a lot of nights away. How much do you like working on the move?”

9.8 Behavioural Questions

Behavioural questions are based on the premise that the best indicator of future performance is past performance. Behavioural questions make 3 types of enquiry:

- a) key incidents from the past, eg “What was your most successful project?”
- b) examples of behaviour from the past, eg “Tell me about a time when you had a really tight deadline. What did you do?”
- c) hypothetical situations, eg “What would you do if you had a tight deadline that you knew you couldn’t meet?”

9.9 A Rounded Picture

Counter-evidence questions are used in behavioural-type interviewing. They aim to balance what may be a one-sided picture of the candidate’s abilities by asking the interviewee to talk about a bad experience after they have described a good one.

“What was the most satisfying arrest you made as Security Officer?”

Then, after the interviewee has replied in glowing terms...

“Could you tell us about a time when things didn’t go so well?”

9.10 Fact and Feeling

Factual and emotive questions used in sequence are not only a good combination of contrasts; they also double the amount of information you get from an interviewee.

“What did you do at XYZ company?” (Factual question). “How do you feel about the time you spent there?” (Emotive question).

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Factual questions are limiting in the amount of information you get since you only get facts. Emotive questions, on the other hand, produce more revealing insights into a person's motivations and attitudes:

"I was deputy manager for two years and manager for three." It was a very valuable experience but I didn't feel their culture was right for me. It was very bureaucratic and backward-looking. I like to get things done."

9.10.1 Work Supplementaries

The "Work Supplementary Repertoire" are those questions about a candidate's present job which in a recruitment interview are used to keep the interview going and find out more about the candidate.

"Tell me about your present job."

"What are the most demanding aspects?"

"How has the job changed in the time you've been there?"

"Who do you work most closely with?"

"What results have you achieved in this job?"

"What feedback have you had from others on your performance in this job?"

"What do you think others would say was your major strengths in this job?"

"What made you choose it?"

9.10.2 Other Supplementaries

The following are other Supplementary questions which are useful in keeping a recruitment interview going.

Education supplementaries including:

- "Tell me about your time at college."
- "Why did you choose this college?"
- "How did you adapt to college life?"
- "What was the teaching like?"

Future plans supplementaries including:

- "What plans do you have for the future?"
- "What do other people think you should do?"
- "What difficulties do you envisage?"

General supplementaries including:

- "How have things worked out in your career to date?"
- "What have you learnt in the last year?"
- "What activities help you wind down from work?"

9.11 Key Points

1. Questions keep an interview flowing and keep you in control.
2. A No-go question is any question which puts the interviewee down.
3. Discriminatory questions are unlawful and likely to be offensive.
4. You should have a starter question for every requirement in the person specification.
5. Behavioural questions aim to find out how an interviewee behaved in the past and how he or she is likely to behave in the future.
6. Fact and feeling questions work well in tandem as do closed and open questions.



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10 Selection and Appointment

The selection and appointment phase is the last phase in the recruitment cycle. It is the culmination of all the planning and activity that has gone before. It is the phase when we make our decision and the process comes full circle. Here are 7 key aspects of the Selection and Appointment phase.

10.1 Things that Loom Large

When weighing up your evidence about candidates, you need to be aware of the things that loom larger than they really are. These include:

- evidence of dishonesty and irresponsibility
- arrogance and aggression
- failure to follow instructions
- sloppy appearance
- late arrival at interview
- smoking
- bad writing or spelling
- complaints about present employers.

While these features must be taken into account, they should not over-shadow more relevant evidence.

10.2 Assessing

To make a fair assessment of a job candidate's competence, you need to follow a structured process, even if unconsciously. These are the steps:

1. know the criteria of the person specification
2. set standards of performance for each criteria
3. gather evidence of knowledge by questioning, of skill by testing, and of attitude by observation
4. compare the evidence against the criteria
5. decide whether each candidate meets the criteria now or could meet them with training.

10.3 Evidence not Judgment

Assessing candidates is one of the most difficult tasks a recruiter has to face. It is hard not to react subjectively when we have just been invited into another person's world. With a good person specification, and probing interview skills, you should be able to put evidence against each requirement in the job. Fair assessment should be based on factual evidence, not critical judgment; on suitability, not personality; and on comparison to the job specification not on comparison with others.

10.4 Selecting

If shortlisting is the process of turning applicants into candidates, selection is the process of turning candidates into recruits.

- a) after seeing each candidate, fill in the assessment part of the Person Specification. Give the reasons for your assessments; for example, not just "good at communicating", but "good at communicating - trained 30 people in complex procedures."
- b) reject any candidate who does not meet all of the essential criteria. Rank the remaining candidates according to how well they meet the desirable criteria.
- c) if you still have more suitable candidates than you need, you could appoint candidates from under-represented groups. If you have none of these and are still overloaded, the only fair method of choosing is random selection.

10.5 References

Your recruitment policy will determine whether you must have a reference on a new employee or not. In some jobs, they may be definite requirements, for example, working in care positions with the young or old. References have a limited value. Some employers will give glowing references for staff they want to lose and poor references for those they want to keep. If a reference raises doubts about your selection, then you can re-think, re-check or go ahead with your eyes open.

10.6 Tidying Up

At the close of the selection phase, you need to tidy up the whole recruitment process, informing the successful candidates and letting others know they have not been successful. Don't leave people waiting. It's unfair and unprofessional. If your policy allows you, make an offer in person before they leave. If you contact people by phone to let them know they have not been successful, avoid giving detailed reasons unless you are required to by your policy.

10.7 Settling In

To make the most of the time and money you've invested in your new employee, ensure there is a well-planned induction programme tailored to their needs.

The following steps will help:

- an induction programme tailored to the needs of each person
- a period of structured on-the-job training using skilled instructors
- a plan of work which gradually exposes the employee to more and more responsibility
- an initial daily check to see how things are going
- a review after, say, a month and again after three months
- attention to the process of fitting in to the new team.

10.8 Key Points

1. Don't let relatively minor matters, such as poor spelling on an application form, loom too large.
2. Be aware that some candidates are skilled at making just the right impression at interview.
3. Only compare candidates against the person specification, not against each other.
4. Reject any candidate who does not meet all the essential criteria of the person specification.
5. Rank candidates who meet all the essential criteria according to how well they meet the desirable ones.
6. Use references to check facts, not opinions.

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