

# Effective Recruitment

A growing skills shortage is changing the way that businesses approach the recruitment process to ensure that they can attract talented people in an increasingly competitive market. In this article, we take a look at the current recruitment environment, its challenges, solutions to these challenges and ways that you can develop your recruitment processes to become more successful in attracting quality candidates.

## The Recruitment Environment

Many businesses are facing significant challenges in recruiting appropriately qualified staff. Unemployment is declining, employers are looking for more skilled workers and the pool of available talent is becoming smaller. The balance of power has shifted from employers to employees, who realise that they are a valuable commodity and are focussed on selecting the right opportunities for them. This is particularly true of younger people in the workforce (Generation Y), who are increasingly mobile and more attached to their own professional development than to any one employer. Employers need to work harder to market their business as a great place to work and to retain talented staff.

Another feature of recruitment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the dominance of the Internet. A 2006 survey of Gen Y job seekers identified that their preferred ways of looking for job opportunities are:

- recruitment agencies
- on-line job boards
- company websites

Effective use of the Internet should be a key part of your recruitment strategy.

## Solutions

To address the above challenges, its important to think about the recruitment process from the candidate's perspective and promote your company as an environment that offers the benefits your target market is looking for. This means taking a strategic approach to developing an employment brand for your business that will make you an employer of choice. Employment branding is all about creating an identity as an employer. Its about communicating what your company stands for, what you offer that employees value and what its like to work there. The brand you create must reflect the actual experience of your employees, otherwise you will struggle to retain people if the environment is not what they expected.

So what do employees value in a workplace? A 2006 survey by Hays Recruitment identified that the key factors in choosing an employer are:

- the company's reputation as an employer
- culture, vision and values
- training and development programmes
- career development opportunities

In addition to creating a strong employment brand so that people want to come and work for you, you may need to broaden your views on who might be suitable. Traditionally, the focus of a recruitment process has been to select a candidate who has all the skills and experience required for a role. This is no longer always possible. In the absence of candidates who are

a perfect match to your person specification, you need to focus on people who display the right attitude and competencies and be prepared to invest in training to develop their skills. Recruiting in a skills shortage means sometimes looking beyond the obvious candidates.

The following groups, for example, are often overlooked in the recruitment process, but may provide excellent candidates:

- recent graduates with limited work experience
- parents returning to the workforce who need flexible hours
- mature workers who may need re-skilling
- recent immigrants with limited New Zealand experience

You need to develop your recruitment processes to identify potential in candidates who may not have exactly the right mix of skills and experience.

### **Effective Recruitment Processes**

In the past, recruitment has often been a reactive process, focussed on finding a good candidate when a vacancy arises. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, businesses need to plan ahead and have an ongoing focus on attracting talented people. As mentioned above, your company website can be a key tool in promoting your employment brand and establishing relationships with prospective employees. Think about developing a dedicated career section within your website, promoting current vacancies and profiling some of your current staff and what they enjoy about their work. Prospective employees will be attracted to a company that:

- looks like a fun place to work
- offers interesting and challenging work opportunities
- makes it easy for them to submit an application

Once a candidate has made contact with your company, its vital that their experience of dealing with you is a positive one. Your recruitment process must provide a personalised experience that keeps people informed about their application. Remember that even unsuccessful candidates can impact on your employment brand if they don't enjoy the recruitment process.

If your current employees enjoy their work, they will be great advocates for your business. Building a successful employment brand may mean reviewing some of your company's policies and procedures to ensure that your staff are happy and become champions of the organisation. Build on this enthusiasm by offering employee referral schemes that provide a financial reward when a staff member introduces a new employee to the company. It also makes sense to maintain contact with former employees through an Alumni association. This may give you the opportunity to re-employ talented people at a later stage in their careers.

### **Action Plan**

#### **Employment Branding**

Develop a strong employment brand for your business to enhance its reputation as a great place to work.

**Flexible Selection**

Keep an open mind about what a suitable candidate would look like and be prepared to invest in training and development.

**Ongoing Recruitment**

Plan ahead for the people resources your business will need in the future and maintain ongoing relationships with talented people who may fill these positions.