



Free, expert advice for small businesses

This information is intended to be a brief introduction to the subject. Legal information is provided for guidance only and should not be regarded as an authoritative statement of the law.

Leaflet 3

February 2016

Recruiting people

Hiring employees, if done badly, can be costly. It can lead to:

- poor performance
- unnecessary training
- increased supervision
- wasted management time
- higher absence and employee turnover
- lower morale.

How to avoid bad recruitment

A few simple steps can help avoid these problems. First ask whether the firm really needs new employees - can existing employees do the job or be trained for it? If new employees are needed, would part-time workers be more suitable? Find out what are the job's tasks; then draw up a job description to help get a clear idea of the job. This will contain the major parts of the job and its main purpose. Appendix 1 to this leaflet contains two examples of job descriptions - one for a 'white collar' worker and one for a manual worker.

Getting the right person

Once the job has been clearly defined, the search for the right person can begin. By law an employer may not discriminate on grounds of age, race, sex,

marriage, disability, sexual orientation or religion or belief or political opinion. All stages in the recruitment process must treat all races and both sexes equally. The following can help.

- **A person specification.** This is a 'pen picture' of the ideal person for the job. It identifies the skills and personal qualities to look for. It is important that there is a direct and precise connection between the person specification and the job description. In this way the person's ability to do the job is considered, not unrelated personal characteristics. Employers need to be careful not to specify unnecessary or marginal requirements that might exclude people with disabilities. Employers can stipulate essential health requirements but may need to justify doing so and that it would not be reasonable to waive them. A simple person specification is contained in Appendix 2 to this leaflet.
- **Internal transfer or promotion:** Can the right person come from the existing workforce? If so this is probably the cheapest and most reliable method.
- **JobCentres** provide a free nationwide recruitment and advisory service.
- **Employment agencies** can also assist in the recruitment process and provide other services.
- **Local careers services** can give employers information on suitable school leavers and other young people who are less than 18 years old, based on regular contacts with local schools.
- **Advertisements** in local newspapers or specialist journals often attract good applicants at relatively low cost. Their advertising departments will usually give advice on layout but employers will need to think about the content of their advertisements, for example, brief job description, pay and conditions, qualifications required, career prospects, how to apply, closing date. The aim is to attract suitable applicants and reduce unsuitable applications.
- **Internet:** Employers and jobseekers are increasingly using the internet. Applications may also be made direct via email. This may be particularly useful for graduate or management training opportunities, as many students will have access via their college service.

The recruitment process can sometimes be improved by using an **application form** rather than a CV. By getting information relevant to the job it can help weed out unsuitable applications and provide a sound basis for an interview. It can provide a useful 'pen picture' of the applicant, especially for those who

have little training or interviewing experience. However, application forms should not require a higher standard of English than is required to do the job. A simple application form is contained in the Appendix 3 to this leaflet.

An **interview** is one of the best ways to judge whether someone is the best person for the job and to secure his or her agreement to take it. The employer wants to find out if the applicant can do the job; the applicant wants to find out about the company, the job, how much it pays and other employment terms. But it is not just the applicant who is being judged - a badly prepared interviewer can create an unfavourable impression of the company.

Interviews need to be planned. They will run more smoothly if:

- the interviewer scans the completed application form again just before the interview
- there are no interruptions (including the telephone) - they can disrupt the interview and may make the applicant uneasy
- preparations are made to put disabled applicants completely at ease. Think about matters such as ease of access, the need to speak clearly to the hard of hearing so that they may lip-read if necessary, and so on. At the interview concentrate on the applicant's abilities, to see if they meet your needs, not on disability
- the applicant can be made to feel at ease - so don't begin the interview with a difficult question
- the interviewer's questions call for explanations rather than 'yes' or 'no' replies, eg 'Why do you want to leave your present job and join us?' and 'What relevant experience have you had so far?'
- applicants are given the chance to ask further questions at the end of their interviews. They should also be told when they should know the outcome - ideally as soon as possible.

A short note made immediately after the interview helps with the final decision. [The Data Protection Act 1998 provides that candidates may request interview notes in certain circumstances. The Information Commissioner has produced the [Employment Practices Data Protection Code](#) Part 1 which explains how organisations can follow the Data Protection Act 1998 in the context of recruitment and selection].

This decision can be assisted by asking for references. But contact with the applicant's current employer should not be made without permission.

Some of the information which can be obtained from references is straightforward - previous job, length of service and previous pay but information on suitability should always be weighed against the assessment made during the interview - don't be tempted to rely solely on someone else's judgement.

It is also worth noting whether there were candidates who might be suitable if the first choice is unavailable. Remember to notify all unsuccessful applicants at each stage of the recruitment process. It is a simple courtesy and can also help enhance your reputation in the community as an employer who cares about people.

The Labour Relations Agency's advisory Guide [Recruitment, selection and induction](#) gives more detail on good practice in these areas.

Where can I get more information?

The Agency Helpline 028 9032 1442 gives free advice on employment matters.

Two example job descriptions

1. Office Assistant/Typist

Main purpose of job: To do clerical and typing duties for sales manager.

Main duties:

1. Typing: correspondence, orders received, invoices etc.
2. Office administration: filing of correspondence etc; recording and despatching all outgoing mail; recording all incoming mail; answering telephone and passing on messages, maintaining (including ordering) of stationery.

2. Warehouse Assistant. Warehouse Assistant

Main purpose of job: To assist warehouse manager with warehouse duties.

Main duties:

1. Receiving and checking all goods inwards.
2. Despatching all goods outwards.
3. Keeping warehouse clean and tidy
4. Checking for damaged stock and reporting any damage to warehouse manager.
5. Doing any errands that warehouse manager may require.
6. During slack periods, assisting with any office duties that the office manager may require.

Person specification

Company name

Job title

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications		
Attainments/competencies (list as required)		
Previous experience		
Special aptitudes (eg oral or written skills, manual dexterity, etc)		
Physical abilities, circumstances, but only if justifiable requirement for the job		

Application form

Application for employment as:

Surname (Block letters):

Other names:

Address;

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Telephone:

Education and training

Details and results of any examinations taken:

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Further education (eg technical college, evening classes):

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Any craft or other training:

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Employment history

1. Present employer:

Address:

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Job title:

Duties:

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Rate of pay:

Date employed: from:..... to:

Reason for leaving:

2. Previous employer:

Address:

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Job title:

Duties:

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Rate of pay:

Date employed: from:

Reason for leaving:

No approach will be made to your present employer before an offer of employment is made to you.

I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge the above information is correct.

I accept that providing deliberately false information could result in my dismissal.

Signature: Date: