

Human resources: recruitment and selection



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Introduction

In this free course, *Human resources: recruitment and selection*, we look at the first stage of managing people – attracting and selecting staff. Recruitment and selection are usually considered as one process. However, we will make the distinction here between the initial actions and considerations when planning staff recruitment and the process of selecting an individual from a pool of applicants. Recruitment needs to be carefully planned in order to attract the right type of applicant. Ultimately, this increases the chances of making a suitable selection and appointment. Your involvement may be limited to a discussion of the need for a particular job within your team or work area, or you may be required to interview job applicants. Whatever your involvement, this session makes it clear that it is important for you to understand the whole process to make an effective contribution to the staffing of your organisation.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [B615 *The professional certificate in management*](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- list the skills and knowledge needed to conduct full and fair recruitment and selection
- undertake full and fair recruitment and selection systematically.

1 Overview

The course begins by looking at how it can be difficult for a manager in the process of recruitment and selection to maintain objectivity. Drawing up clear criteria to use throughout recruitment and selection can help the process. It then addresses the difference between the person–job and person–organisation approaches to recruitment. Subsequent sections review the different tasks to be completed and the different methods which can be used by the manager in this important process.

2 Effective recruitment and selection

The key to successful recruitment is to ensure that the criteria of suitability are overt and relevant to the job itself. Once these criteria are agreed and shared it is possible to make more rational decisions about someone's suitability for a job, based on evidence rather than 'gut feeling' or instinct. Effective recruitment and selection should not be about the luck of the draw. Systematic planning and preparation will increase the likelihood of taking on the right person. The key to effective recruitment is preparation: knowing the job and what is required of someone to perform it well. The costs of recruiting the wrong person can be significant. The cost of employing someone may be at least twice their salary when factors such as training, expenses and employer's contributions to their pension are added.

Incorrect assumptions about class, gender, ethnic group or physical ability, or any other type of discrimination, can cloud your objectivity in recruitment and selection. At worst this may contravene legislation that exists to protect individuals from discrimination. Other prejudices may be generated by particular organisational traditions regarding the 'type of person' considered suitable. However, it is important to ensure that the qualities of the successful applicant match what the organisation requires, perhaps in terms of being forward looking, customer focused or market orientated. It is easy to discriminate in the recruitment and selection process through personal responses and reactions to certain types of people. The recruiter's perception is often influenced by striking characteristics or similarities to themselves. This is called the 'halo' effect and can work in either a positive or negative direction (the latter is sometimes called the 'horns' effect). The halo effect acts as a filter to any information that contradicts first impressions. For example, someone who attended the same college or university as the recruiter would be at an advantage, while a person not wearing a suit would not be management material. It is often the case that people judge more favourably those individuals with whom they have something in common. Ultimately, you are seeking the best person for the job and any discrimination, intentional or not, may prevent you from achieving that.

Before we look more closely at the recruitment process, spend about ten minutes on the following activity.

Activity 1

0 10

Basing your ideas on your own initial reactions to the characters outlined below, complete the table to describe what would typically be the characteristics associated with them. Do not take too much time to think – just jot down ideas as they come to you. To demonstrate, we have suggested how some people might see the first example; you may not agree with the stereotyping evident in the suggested characteristics!

Job	Age range	Gender	Politics	Hobbies	Car
Social worker	27–43	Either	Liberal or Green, left-wing	Camping cycling rambling	Old Volvo or Saab
Supermarket checkout operative					
Building labourer					
Accountant					
Senior civil servant/ government official					
Personal secretary to managing director					
Police inspector					
Salesperson					
Fundraiser for a charity					

We all harbour stereotypes of what types of people are suitable or unsuitable for particular jobs, and everyone will complete the table differently. However, let us look at a couple of examples. Did you think that the supermarket checkout person would be male or female? The majority of people completing this exercise would have an expectation that a checkout person would be either a very young single female or an older woman who works part-time. They would be unlikely to associate working on a supermarket checkout with a middle-aged man. What cars did you suggest the building labourer and accountant might drive? Which one was more likely to own an executive car? What would you expect the senior civil servant's hobbies to be – gardening or sky diving? The point of this simple exercise is to make you aware of the stereotypes and expectations that may exist about people associated with particular jobs. When recruiting for any job, take care that you are not simply looking for a certain type of person because they are normally associated with the work of the vacant post.

When recruiting people, be alert to any personal prejudices or preferences you have which are not linked to the ability to do the job. Try to set these aside in favour of objective criteria of suitability related to the skills, experience and ability needed to perform the job. But should these criteria relate solely to the job or task requirements? We consider the issue of fit with the wider organisation in the next section.

3 Person–job fit or person–organisation fit?

3.1 A two-way process

It is important for both the job applicant and the organisation to ensure that the right job goes to the right person. Taking the wrong job may be just as disastrous for the employee as for the organisation. Recruitment and selection, therefore, involves the organisation (represented by the manager) and the applicant trying to discover the extent to which their separate interests are likely to be served by the appointment. In other words, it is a two-way process. Applicants should have a realistic picture of the job so that they can decide if they really want it and whether they could do it well. They should also be given the opportunity to consider what type of organisation they may be joining and whether it would suit them. There are two different approaches to assessing suitability for a particular job: person–job fit and person–organisation fit. They are based on different assumptions about people and what determines their behaviour at work.

3.2 Person–job fit

The traditional approach to recruitment and selection is based on the view that organisations should specify the requirements of the job as closely as possible and then look for individuals whose personal attributes fit those requirements. It is based on the assumption that human behaviour is determined by factors particular to the individual, and the clear implication is that selection techniques should be concerned with accessing and measuring these personal factors, which can then be compared with those required for the job.

The person–job fit approach has been criticised for a variety of reasons. In particular, the amount and pace of change in organisations mean that the jobs for which people are recruited often change. Consequently, organisations may be interested in potential beyond the immediate job, and people have the capacity to influence the organisation's performance beyond the boundaries of their own jobs. Increasingly, it is seen as important to ensure that there is also a fit between the applicant and the organisation.

3.3 Person–organisation fit

This approach stresses that people's behaviour and performance are strongly influenced by the environment in which they find themselves. So being successful in a job in one organisation does not necessarily imply success in a similar job in another. In assessing the suitability of a job applicant a manager should explore the reasons why a person has performed well in their existing job and consider whether similar conditions apply in the new job. Advocates of the person–organisation fit approach stress that an important consideration in recruitment is how suited the applicant is to the organisation – its style, approach, pace of change and informal ways of working. In other words, you need to think

beyond whether someone simply has the technical skills to perform in the job and assess their fit with the culture of the organisation. However, this carries the danger of excluding suitably qualified candidates because their 'face does not fit'. This approach suggests a greater need to describe the context of the job to applicants, including the difficulties and pressures associated with it. In general, 'overselling' a job can result in individuals leaving after a short time and hence the costs of a repeat recruitment and selection process and further managerial time.

4 Specifying job and person requirements

4.1 Initial assessment

To find the right person for the job, you need to have an accurate idea of the job itself and of the particular skills and attributes it demands. This can be carried out in a series of stages, as shown in Figure 1 .

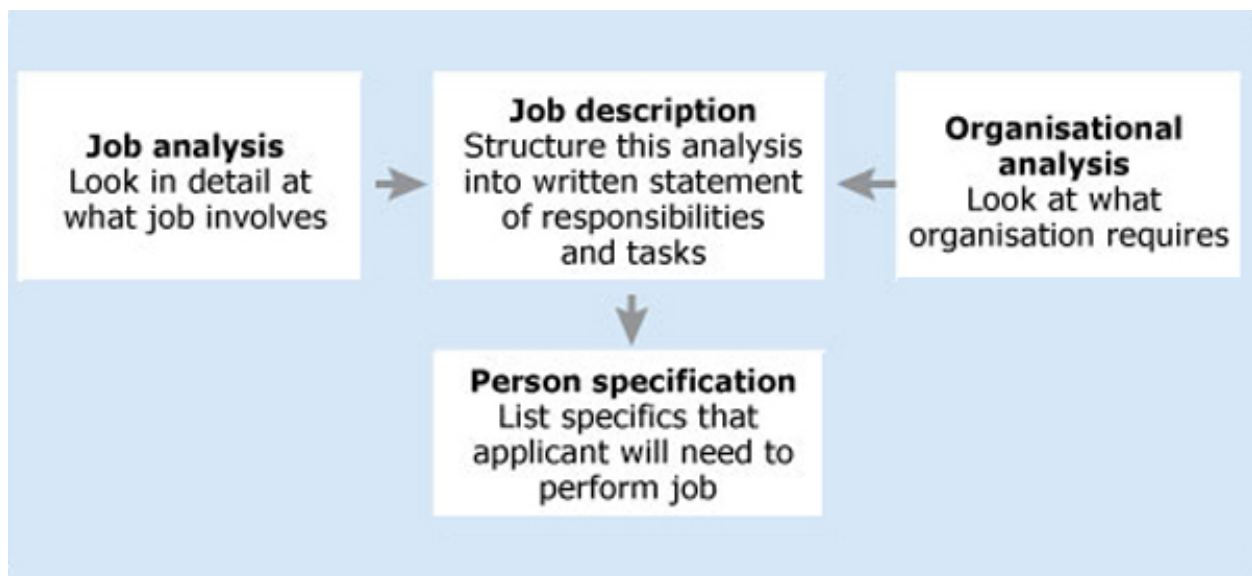


Figure 1 Stages of job and person analysis

However, before – or indeed after – the job analysis you might consider whether the vacant job needs to be filled at all. Reallocation of work, internal promotion or temporary transfer could be used to cover the tasks associated with the vacancy. Ask yourself whether the job needs to be changed, updated or filled at all before going any further. An apparent vacancy provides a real opportunity to consider the way work is organised and the skills the organisation needs to secure its future success; you might wish to consider aspects of person-organisation fit to help develop the job.

Assuming you decide to go ahead and recruit to the existing or changed post, you now need to analyse exactly what the job entails.

4.2 Job analysis

Job analysis involves examining a job systematically and in detail. There is no single way of doing this. Direct observation may be helpful if you are analysing repetitive manual jobs, for example. Discussion with the current job holder and supervisor or line manager is also a useful source of information. Another method of job analysis is to use the checklist approach illustrated in Box 1, ticking off the various aspects of the job as you consider them.

Box 1: Checklist – undertaking a job analysis

Check 1 – The key words approach

- What is done?
- When is it done?
- Where is it done?
- How is it done?

Check 2 – What is the job holder responsible for?

- Responsibility for the work of others
- Responsibility for physical resources
- Responsibility for budgets/money

Check 3 – What sorts of working relationships are involved?

- Relationships with superiors (if any)
- Relationships with colleagues
- Relationships with other departments or agencies
- Relationships with customers/clients/users
- Relationships with individuals supervised

Check 4 – What are the job requirements?

- Required standard of performance and results
- Required skills and experience
- Required analytical skills
- Required education and training
- Required physique and health (if appropriate)
- Required motivation and social skills
- Required attitude or general approach to the work involved

Check 5 – What are the working conditions?

- The physical environment
- The social conditions and work group context
- The economic conditions including funding and pay

Check 6 – Who should be consulted about the analysis?

- Check back with the job holder

- Check back with his or her line manager
(Source: based on Cowling and Mailer, 1981, p. 9)

4.3 Organisational analysis

The broader organisational requirements can be as important as the specific ones for the job itself. The organisation needs creativity, flexibility, the ability to work in a small team, and so on, from the job holder. In line with the person-organisation fit described earlier, it is important to think beyond the technical aspects of the job to the cultural aspects of the organisation.

4.4 Job description

From your analysis of the job you can write a job description which will state what the job holder is responsible for and what they are required to do (see Example 1).

Example 1: Job description for a Buying Manager

Job title: Buying Department Manager

Job grade: 10

Responsible to: Contracts Manager

A: Summary of main responsibilities and activities

- Has overall responsibility for procurement of contracts for both direct orders and subcontracts, including negotiating terms and conditions with suppliers, initiating enquiries, analysing quotations, with detailed involvement in very large or complex orders.
- Liaises with Estimating and Engineering departments for technical and cost information; makes recommendations on selection of suppliers.
- Responsible for preparation of contracts.
- Arranges storage of material for delayed contracts.
- Responsible for inspection and expedition of orders to ensure that material, plant and equipment meet the specifications for the job and are available when required. Issues inspection and test reports to the client.
- Authorises payment to suppliers and subcontractors.
- Negotiates increased costs with suppliers in association with Contracts Manager.

B: Specific responsibilities

1. Staff

- *Direct:* Responsible for Senior Buyer, Buyer, Assistant Buyer, Senior Expediter.
- *Indirect:* Responsible for selection, training, development and appraisal of all buying and inspection staff in liaison with Contracts Manager.

2. Assets

- Recommends selection of suppliers and equipment.

3. *Planning*

- Plans allocation and organisation of work in Contract Buying and Expedition Department.
- Provides advice to Contracts Manager during contract planning.

4. *Technical decisions*

- Recommends selection of suppliers and subcontractors on the basis of commercial considerations.

5. *Financial*

- Responsible for negotiating terms and conditions with suppliers and subcontractors, up to £150,000.
- Ensures that all orders are executed within Estimators' budget.
- Recommends authorisation of final payments to suppliers and subcontractors.

6. *Confidential information*

- Prices, discounts, profit margins and similar commercial information.

7. *Degree of supervision*

- Works within the broad directives of Contracts Manager. Reports monthly on deviations in terms of cost, time, quality, etc.

8. *Contacts*

- Liaises with Head Office staff, for example Contracts Manager, Project Engineer, Design Engineers.
- Suppliers and subcontractors.
- Clients (occasional).
- Site staff.

9. *Working conditions*

- Head Office based, in city centre; fortnightly visits to suppliers.
- Pace of work is often demanding, working with strict time pressures; involves overall responsibility for a large number of contracts simultaneously.

10. *Organisational requirements*

- Must be flexible and able to work on own initiative. Must be able to work as part of a team and to interact effectively with external contacts.

(Source: Cowling and Mailer, 1981, pp. 12–13)

Example 1 is a comprehensive description, setting out a full range of responsibilities. There is no one right way of setting out job descriptions and you may find that the ones used in your organisation look different and may be less detailed in comparison. An accurate job description has various uses outside the recruitment process: for example, it

can be used to review staff performance in appraisals or to assess training needs when someone new starts with the organisation. Within the recruitment process, the job description leads on to the next stage of specifying the type of person you are looking for to fill your vacancy.

4.5 Person specification

Once the job and organisational analyses and the job description have been completed (see Figure 1), the next stage is to write a specification of the kind of person needed to fill the job you have just described. It is important to be as precise as possible about the skills, knowledge, qualifications and attributes that are required for the job and about the experience and personal characteristics that are needed. It is good practice to specify what is essential or the minimum required to perform the job, as well as what is desirable. To decide on the qualities required for the person specification you need to pick out key features from the job description. Think also about the context of the job and the wider organisational requirements to specify any elements of person-organisation fit that are important.

Table 1 is an example of a completed person specification; we have added some imaginary aspects of person-organisation fit under 'Personality'.

When constructing a person specification you need not follow the format described in the table; your organisation may have a standard approach. The exact format of the person specification is less important than making sure you capture what the suitable applicant requires in order to perform the job and fit with the organisation's way of working and culture. You will have noted the 'How ascertained?' column in the table. This signals the need to think through how you will measure or assess the specification you are looking for.

Table 1 : Person specification for the position of Buying Department Manager

Characteristics	Essential/minimum	Desirable	How ascertained?
Physical attributes	Good health record	Excellent health record	Medical report
	Few absences from work		Previous employers' sickness records
	Tidy appearance	Smart appearance	
		Creates good impression on others	Interview
		Capable of working for long hours under pressure	Give examples at interview
Mental attributes	Top 50 per cent for general intelligence, verbal ability and numerical ability	Top 30 per cent for general intelligence, verbal ability and numerical ability	Possible use of selection tests
Education and qualifications	Good general school results with particular aptitude for English	Two A-levels (post-16 higher examination) or equivalent Certificate or Diploma in Management	Qualification certificates

	Membership of professional body	Membership of professional institute	Documentation
Experience, training and skills	Five years' experience in purchasing	Ten years' experience in purchasing	Curriculum vitae (CV)
	Two years' experience of supervising small office or section	Successful record of supervising qualified staff	CV/interview: examples
		Successful completion of reputable management training course	Attendance/qualification certificates
		Good social skills	
		Fluent in two European languages, including English	
	Ability to write good reports and understand basic financial information	Ability to plan, organise, coordinate and control work under pressure	CV/interview: examples
Personality	Career record shows ability to adjust to normal social circumstances	Mature and socially well adjusted	Interview
	Thrives on challenge and change and has an ability to develop new approaches to the work	Able to communicate at all levels	Interview
		Evidence of experience of dealing with external clients	CV
Special circumstances	Able to work overtime and at weekends	Willing to work long hours when required, and to transfer to other locations in Europe	Person's experience
	Able to travel to suppliers	Fully mobile with valid driving licence	Interview

(Source: based on Cowling and Mailer, 1981, p. 19)

Activity 2

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If you have a job description for your current post, construct a person specification for the job based on a format similar to that in Table 1. Decide what you think should be in the person specification, even if this differs from any actual person specification there may be for your job. Alternatively, or in addition, you could do this for a person who works with or for you. If you do not have a description for your current job, try to work from the main duties and responsibilities you have. (This may convince you that it is easier to work from a fairly thorough job description.) Also, in constructing this person specification, try to indicate some person-organisation fit requirements which may be relevant to your own situation.

Physical attributes

Mental attributes
Education and qualifications
Experience, training and skills
Personality
Special circumstances

When you have completed this task, check what you have written, bearing the following points in mind.

- Have you thought about the qualities needed to cope with the difficult parts of the job?
- Have you considered any particular qualities that would be required to fit the culture of the organisation?
- How carefully have you thought through the education/training needed for the work? Remember that qualifications are only one way of knowing what people have to offer. Skills and experience gained in a whole variety of contexts – for example parenting, voluntary work, leisure interests – can sometimes be just as relevant.
- Have you included any rigid requirements based on age, physical ability or length of paid work experience which may be questionable on equal opportunities grounds and constitute 'indirect discrimination' (specifying a criterion that would effectively debar someone because of their ethnic group, gender, age, disability, etc.)?
- Have you said which qualities and attributes would be essential and which desirable? Remember, if something is 'essential' you should be able to justify it.
- Is the specification credible? Do such people exist? Are they likely to apply for the salary offered? What are the options if the answers to these questions are probably 'no'?

4.6 Recruiting and selecting internal candidates

Where an existing member of staff is applying for a post, you will already have knowledge of their personality, skills, fit with the organisation and so on. However, whether the job they are applying for is very similar to or different from the one they are doing currently, you need to ensure that they receive the same treatment as other candidates. Being an internal candidate is not easy. It can be both an advantage and a disadvantage to be known! Maintaining our theme of objectivity, the recruitment and selection process needs to be seen by all to be fair and equitable.

4.7 Attracting applicants

You have now established the criteria for recruiting the kind of person you are looking for; the next step is to find someone who meets these criteria. Obviously, you must make it known to people that a vacancy exists. Before placing an expensive advertisement in a newspaper or professional journal you should consider alternatives. There are a variety of

methods of publicising recruitment in addition to the traditional media advertisement (see Box 2).

Box 2: Sources of recruits

- Internal advertisements
- Advertising in a range of newspapers and professional and specialist publications
- Employment agencies and job centres
- Selection consultants who advertise on your behalf and may screen applicants
- Executive search consultants (headhunters) who will try to track down suitable candidates for your post
- Introductions by existing staff, word of mouth. To prevent discrimination this should be accompanied by more formal mechanisms
- Previous applicants
- Unsolicited applications
- The Internet
- School or university contacts
- Planned promotions from formal assessment schemes

4.8 Advertising

If you are managing the recruitment process by a traditional route you will now need to consider advertising the vacancy. Your organisation may have a specific policy or rules governing advertising. The cost of advertising can constitute a significant proportion of any recruitment expenditure and you need to ensure you get an effective response at the least possible cost. The important factors are:

- the content of the advertisement (key elements of the job, location, salary, etc.)
- the medium used to carry the advertisement (national paper, professional journal, local magazine, etc.)
- the timing of the advertisement.

Where you advertise the job is important. If you are looking for specialist skills, then targeting professional journals may be more effective than using a national newspaper. If you are attempting to encourage applicants from specific groups such as people with disabilities, then the websites or magazines of particular societies may be an option.

Just as the content of the advertisement should encourage suitable people to apply for the job, it should also discourage unsuitable candidates from applying. Much individual and organisational time can be wasted in sifting through unsuitable applications, and it is unfair to applicants to raise false expectations. The information contained in the advertisement should be taken largely from the job analysis and the job description (see Box 3).

Box 3: Contents of a job advertisement

The advertisement should be factual, truthful and relevant. Ludlow and Panton (1991) suggest that it should contain the following:

- the job title, in terms likely to be familiar to the reader; avoid jargon
- the name of the organisation, the nature of its activity and the location of the job
- the aims and responsibilities of the job
- the qualifications required and the experience needed – this will be a summary of the person specification
- the salary and fringe benefits; where possible, state the salary range
- genuine promotion prospects
- the manner in which applications should be made; for example asking the applicant to send a CV, or to write or telephone for an application form and further information
- the closing date, if there is one, for applications.

Remember that the advertisement is a public relations opportunity for the organisation. It needs to present the best face of the organisation in order to attract the best applicants. Antidiscrimination employment legislation in many countries applies to most stages of the recruitment process, including advertising. Legislation may make it illegal to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of ethnicity, disability, colour, gender or marital status.

4.9 Further particulars, application forms and dealing with paperwork

One way of offering more information than can be put into an advertisement is to send further particulars to people who respond. These could explain, for example, current and future developments within the organisation. If your organisation already has a standard application form, you will almost certainly use that. Otherwise, you could ask applicants to write a letter of application, possibly accompanied by a CV. It is also useful to ask for details of referees at this stage, but bear in mind that candidates might have objections to them being contacted before the job is offered.

Handling the administration of the recruitment process is largely a clerical activity – but that does not mean you can ignore it. Here are a few points you should bear in mind:

- Candidates will be particularly anxious to know what is happening, so you will probably need to brief the switchboard and your colleagues or secretary to handle expected calls.
- Application forms and further particulars should be ready to go out immediately after a candidate contacts the organisation. Keep records of the people to whom they are sent.
- Keep a record of returned application forms, and acknowledge these by return of post, preferably with some indication of what the next step will be. If costs prevent this, invite applicants to include a stamped addressed envelope if they require acknowledgement of receipt.

- Give as much notice as possible to those whom you intend to interview, giving them some choice of date and time if that is feasible, and ask them if they have any special needs. They should also be given a name and telephone number to contact if they have any queries. Make sure they know where and when to attend for the interview.
- Send a courteous letter to those who are not shortlisted as soon as you are certain they will not be required.
- If you intend to take up references, you should send out letters as soon as possible, allowing plenty of time for the references to arrive before the date of the interviews. But make sure candidates are happy for you to ask for references from their current employer before you send out the letters.
- Keep detailed records of all correspondence at every stage.

4.10 Shortlisting

It is common to shortlist up to six applicants per position, but the exact number may reflect the time you have available for interviewing and the strength of the applicants. The important point is to ensure that as far as possible you finish up with the best possible candidates on the shortlist. This can best be achieved by approaching the task systematically. In other words, the systematic use of criteria as detailed in the job specification should be preferred to reliance on intuition. It is sensible to reject those applications that do not match these key criteria closely. If feasible, keeping a set of notes as you shortlist is a good idea. This helps you to remember or explain the grounds on which you decided to interview or reject each candidate.

Activity 3

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The following details have been taken from application forms submitted by candidates for the post of Buying Department Manager. The job description can be found in Example 1 and the person specification in Table 1 . Imagine that you have already shortlisted three good candidates and need to add only one more to complete your shortlist.

	Terry Churchill	Anne Olsen	Colin Compton	Renate Schmidt
Address	Suburbs	Village 50 miles away	City centre	200 miles away-willing to relocate
Age	58	34	45	43
Driving licence	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Nationality	British	British	British	German
Current employer	ABC Computers pic	Cheapshops	Compact Manufacturing Ltd	Deutsch Chemicals
Size of organisation	£400m turnover p.a.	£35m turnover p.a.	£60m turnover p.a.	£600m turnover p.a.

Position held	Purchasing Manager	Senior Buyer	Buyer	Senior Buyer
Number of previous employers	None	Five	Four	None
Professional qualifications	Member of professional institute	Member of professional institute	Member of professional institute	None
Education	3 A-levels, 8 GCSEs/O-levels	5 GCSEs/O-levels	2 A-levels, 8 GCSEs/O-levels	Arbitur
Further education	Degree in Chemistry; MBA	Certificate in Management	Degree in Operations Management; Certificate in Management	Degree in Economics from Wuppertal University; Diploma in Management
Court convictions	None	None	Yes: driving offence	None
Other information	Member of the local Chamber of Commerce	Studying for Professional Diploma in Management; fluent English and Danish	Studying for Professional Diploma in Management	Fluent English, German and French; studying for MBA

Who would you shortlist? Why did you make this choice?

The following table might help you to make a decision. It records whether each candidate reaches the 'minimum' or the 'desirable' level.

	Terry Churchill	Anne Olsen	Colin Compton	Renate Schmidt
Education	Desirable	Minimum	Desirable	Desirable
Further education	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable
Professional qualifications	Desirable	Minimum	Desirable	None
Experience of purchasing	Desirable (too much?)	Possibly	Desirable	Desirable
Management of people	Desirable	Minimum	Minimum	Desirable
Languages	None	Some	None	Desirable
Travel	Desirable	Desirable	Possibly	Desirable

Several of the characteristics on the job specification are impossible to determine from a candidate's application form. And several of the observable characteristics require some guesswork. You must, therefore, be careful not to put too much weight on subjective judgements. However, the following factors may affect your decision.

Anne Olsen seems the least qualified candidate, mainly because the buying skills required for a retail shop are likely to be very different from the buying skills that you are looking for.

Colin Compton seems excellent, apart from his lack of a driving licence and his conviction. But he lives locally and could easily get to work. How essential is a driving licence for the fortnightly visits to suppliers? As for the conviction, he has paid the penalty – should he be further disadvantaged?

Terry Churchill seems an excellent candidate, but two factors might have influenced you against him: his age and his experience. He is 58 years old and he seems very senior. Is he too senior? But is that a fair question to ask? His motivation for applying is important, not his age. It is important to ask questions in order to reveal whether the candidate is able to do the job, and not for other reasons.

Two factors appear to weaken Renate Schmidt's application: she is not a member of a professional body and she needs to relocate. However, in Germany it is not common for people to join professional bodies and she has applied for the job in the knowledge that she must relocate.

4.11 References

References can be useful, but they do have some limitations: no one would supply the name of a referee who was likely to give a bad reference. However, it is always a good idea to request them of the candidates who have been shortlisted (but, as we have already said, bear in mind that some candidates may not want their employers approached until they have actually been offered a job). It is helpful for referees if you enclose all the information sent out to the prospective candidate and point out clearly any essential requirements of the job. You may want to ask specific questions relating to the candidate's suitability in certain areas.

4.12 Candidates make decisions too

In the past people have tended to see selection primarily as organisations choosing between individuals. However, we must not forget that candidates are also making choices: about whether to write in for an application form, whether to apply, whether to attend an interview, whether to accept an offered job. This makes it important for organisations to treat candidates in a sensitive and responsive manner. They will need to pay attention to their recruitment materials, to provide realistic job descriptions and to be aware of how candidates are treated.

Recruitment processes vary between sectors and between organisations. They are also constantly changing (Box 4).

Box 4: Internet recruitment

There has been a significant increase in the use of the Internet for recruitment purposes. One way of using the Internet is to post vacancy advertisements on some of the specially created 'job boards' – electronic versions of a newspaper's situations pages. Another method is to incorporate a recruitment section in a company website. Although there are capital costs to this, they may represent a modest investment considering the price of national newspaper advertisements and the potential long-term use of a website.

Organisations need to encourage potential recruits to visit the site by placing small advertisements on job boards and in the press indicating the organisation's web address.

The audience for recruitment websites has been concentrated in younger age groups and professional occupations, although this is likely to broaden out. Recruitment costs may be reduced – some US firms claim a 45 per cent saving by using the Internet.

Criteria for success are that visitors to a company website should find it convenient to use, up to date and offering online application facilities. The advantage to the organisation is the technical simplicity of adding applicant details to its database and in conducting online dialogue with applicants about job and career requirements so that they can be advised when a suitable vacancy arises.

Thus the Internet offers several attractions to both recruiters and job hunters.

Conclusion

This free course provided an introduction to studying business management. It took you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance and helped to improve your confidence as an independent learner.

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