



BEMORE

OFFICE ANGELS EMPLOYERS GUIDE

EMPLOYERS

From attracting the best talent, to getting the most out of your people, we know that being an employer isn't always easy. But as experts in recruitment and retention, we've compiled some of our most tried and tested methods into one handy guide for your convenience.

MAKING INTERVIEWS WORK FOR YOU

Job interviews are the most powerful tool in any hiring manager's arsenal, so you need to get them right. A good interview can help you to suss out which candidate has not only the right skills and experience for the job in question, but also the right personality fit for your company culture. A bad interview could lead to the wrong candidate being recruited, which can have significant repercussions for your organisation; including increased staff turnover, additional recruitment costs, and even the risk of employment tribunals.

So if you want to avoid a bad interview, beware the common pitfalls:

Confirming your reservations - Some interviewers simply 'go through the motions' and ask questions that are designed to confirm pre-interview reservations about a candidate. Try to avoid doing this, as you may miss out on someone with real potential.

Stereotypes - Employers may have a preconception about who their ideal candidate is going to be, but decisions made on the basis of sex, race, criminal record, age, disability or marital status are illegal, so always keep an open mind.

Instant dismissal - It's impossible to determine a candidate's suitability for any role on the basis of just one question, so if the person that you're interviewing gives a less than perfect answer, make sure you wait until the end of the interview to form your final judgment.

Continuity - To avoid giving any one candidate an unfair advantage, it's important that all interviews for the same position are conducted in the same way; so be careful not to let any of your early interview experiences influence the way that the rest of them are carried out.

Affinity - It can be tempting to give preferential treatment to applicants with similar qualities to yourself. This can even be done on a subconscious level. To avoid any bias, make sure you judge each candidate against a clear set of pre-determined criteria.

COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

Competency Based Interviewing (CBI) is an evidence-based interviewing technique that really gets to the heart of which behaviours and skills an applicant has demonstrated in the workplace. It also provides candidates with an indication of what will be valued, recognised and rewarded by your organisation. These interviews usually include no more than six competencies on average, and should combine behavioural and technical elements, such as:

- Effective communication
- Relationship building
- Planning and organising
- Initiative

An internal project team at Office Angels constructed our competency framework using Job Analysis and Competency Design (JACD) - speaking directly with job holders to examine their behaviour and in turn, how their peers behaved in response. Common themes were then grouped into 'competencies'.

Because of this experience, your Office Angels consultant will be able to assist you in determining the competencies needed for the role(s) in questions, when they visit you to take details of the vacancy.

Competency based system

Strengths:

- Targets the behaviour, knowledge and motivations that lead to job success
- Introduces objectives for employees
- Combines organisational and personal objectives
- Provides consistent benchmarking standard for decision making
- Enables the interviewer to probe effectively
- Positively impacts on staff retention, quality and return on investment
- Prevents personal impressions and eliminates misunderstandings

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- Allows the applicant to demonstrate capabilities, irrespective of experience

Weaknesses:

- Captures the past, so can be out of date
- Not user friendly
- Produces clones

GETTING MORE FROM YOUR RECRUITMENT CONSULTANCY

With so many recruitment agencies in the UK, it can be hard to know where to start. If you want a two-way relationship that can add value to your organisation, it's best to avoid the 'CV factories' and opt for a real recruitment partner. Office Angels prides itself on getting to know the ins and outs of your business; and because of it, you'll rarely see us miss the mark.

The benefits of working with a recruitment consultant

Working with a recruitment agency can be a truly rewarding experience, so long as your consultant takes the time to understand your business, the market in which you operate, and what will work for your company culture. Get this right and it can be a trusting and mutually supportive partnership that leaves you with the time and space to get on with your role.

Getting off to the right start

It might seem like an obvious place to start, but before making that all-important call, it's a good idea to write down the details of your requirement. This will allow you to assess the skills and experience that each position requires, enable you to better understand how the role fits into the larger organisation, and give you a basis from which to brief your recruitment consultant.

A good brief will include:

- Technical specification: what technical skills are required to carry out the role?
- Person profile: what sort of temperament or attributes will the successful candidate need, e.g. a calm demeanour with people management skills?
- Background: will the new recruit need experience within a particular sector or type of organisation?

Finding the right recruitment agency

Finding the recruitment agency to suit your company is crucial to a successful partnership. When trying to decide who to turn to, consider the following:

- Do they specialise in your market?
- Do they recruit for your discipline?
- How long have they been operating for?
- Have they recruited for your competitors or similar organisations?
- Do they take a consultative approach?
- What value can they add?
- What evidence can they provide to demonstrate their previous experience?
- Can they commit to working to an agreed deadline?
- Are they willing to come to meet you in person?

The job specification

Poor job specifications seriously hamper effective recruitment - tending to be either too brief, or full of irrelevant information. The more relevant detail you provide in your job spec, the more accurate the consultant can make their search and brief the candidates about the role.

You can use your briefing document as a basis for your job spec, but make sure you cover:

- The organisation
- The team
- The role itself
- How the role will develop
- Personal qualities required
- The remuneration
- Process & timescales

The organisation - Candidates will want to know about the size, history and key markets of the company. Strong candidates will want to know what the organisation is aiming for so they can assess whether it is a goal that excites them, and one they can help you to reach.

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The team - How many people are in the team? How is it structured? How does the function fit into the organisation as a whole? Is there a specific culture associated with the team? This is where more detail around cultural fit will naturally sit.

The role itself - It's important to detail the main duties and purpose of the role, which skills are needed, what sort of background is advantageous, and whether previous achievements are necessary. It's also worth noting any training that will be provided and the reason for the vacancy in the first place.

How the role will develop - How will the role look in the future? Where might it lead? What opportunities for progression are there? Strong candidates will be looking for a job spec that illustrates a consideration of the future.

Personal qualities required - There is always a danger that employers will specify the qualities of someone they either like, or someone who's like them, rather than who is necessarily best for the role. Most teams benefit from a breadth of personalities, so be sure to shape the person specification to the role and not just to the team culture.

The remuneration - Sometimes, the smallest detail can tip a candidate in favour of a particular job; so if you want to attract the best talent to your business, be sure to point out everything that's on offer - from bonuses and healthcare, to car parking and staff canteens.

Process & timescales - When will the interviews be happening? Who will be involved? How many stages are there?

This list is not exhaustive, but following the points detailed above should make for a solid and professional job specification.

Follow up

In our experience, one of the main reasons the recruitment process takes longer than necessary is due to a lack of sign-off procedures or clearly defined budget, so be sure to have these things in place whether you are engaging a recruitment agency or handling the recruitment process yourself. It's also

important to set realistic timescales for reviewing CVs and for carrying out the interviews, as it can often take longer than you expect. A delay in this process may result in you losing talent.

Top tips for managing your recruitment consultancy

Developing a successful relationship with your recruitment consultancy - The relationship between HR departments and recruitment consultancies can be difficult if the agency isn't experienced in building effective business relationships. By hiring an agency with a track record of success, you help to ensure the process is as smooth as possible.

Keeping in touch with your agency - Consultants need to keep their candidates interested - particularly the best ones, who may be looking at several other positions simultaneously. A good consultancy will work with you to keep abreast of developments; feeding back to candidates in a timely manner. If they don't know what's happening at your end, this becomes difficult to do; so always remain open with your agency.

Use their advice - A good recruitment agency can advise you on how they think the candidates compare to one another, whether their salary expectations are realistic, how likely you are to find what you are looking for, and whether you're in any danger of losing the best candidate to another position.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR PEOPLE

It's common sense that committed employees are much more productive and act as great ambassadors for your brand. They're also less likely to take sick leave and far more likely to remain loyal. As one of the Sunday Times' 100 best companies to work for, we'd like to share our tips on achieving a truly engaged workforce.

Career progression

One of the most effective ways of making employees feel valued is through the promise and delivery of career progression: they are far more likely to feel engaged if they have a career goal to work towards.

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Organisations with high retention rates tend to offer clear career paths, with training and development opportunities along the way. Not only does this allow employers to feel valued, but they also feel like they are continually progressing and learning, which gives them less reason to leave.

Show that you have a plan

It's hard for employees to feel engaged if they don't understand the direction that the business is moving in; so, whether in good times or bad, maintain transparency around your plans and communicate your company's long-term strategy. For employees to understand the vision of a company and the importance of their role in achieving it, communication is also essential; so always recognise success, and keep your workers aware of what's happening in the company. The result will be a committed and confident workforce, who sees themselves as an integral part of your plans and vision.

What to communicate

It's reasonable for employees to want information on the company they work for: the unattractive alternative is a rumour mill. Show respect for your employees by not covering up bad news or giving it a positive spin, as most people will be able to see straight through it. Workers will want to know what's expected of them, so communicate as much as possible about as much as possible.

Create a sense of purpose

Employees need to feel a sense of purpose for being at work. The public sector is often hailed as a flag-bearer for getting this right, as it naturally attracts employees who want to make a difference to the wider community. But the private sector can achieve the same level of commitment from its employees, as long as the company's values and purpose are clearly communicated. By understanding and believing in what the company stands for, and seeing the value in its goods or services, employees will develop a real sense of purpose; making them want to contribute and make a difference.

Values and culture

If your employees share your company values, they will be more likely to believe in the organisation. Recruiting people

that identify with your values is a good start, but your culture must live and breathe them. For instance, a business that prides itself on teamwork must encourage collaborative working.

Know what success looks like

It's human nature to aspire, so communicate the vision of where your organisation wants to be, and how every member of staff can help you to get there. Painting a picture of what success looks like - at an individual, team, divisional and corporate level - will help to keep it real, and ultimately achievable. Set key milestones for employees and showcase successes along the way.

Offer recognition

Reward and recognition doesn't have to be expensive: the personal touch often makes the greatest impact. Encourage employees of all levels to openly recognise their colleagues' achievements, and celebrate that success for a real culture of appreciation.

Performance management

Your employees want to know how they are doing in any role, so provide regular feedback on both an informal and formal basis. Good performance management should be supportive and bring out the best in people; so if you have any criticism, make sure it's constructive.

Empowerment

People flourish in environments that build independence, self-belief and personal achievement. Giving your employees the leeway to succeed is an essential building block of engagement, so learn to strike the balance between allowing your people enough space to use their abilities to the best effect, whilst still supporting them through the job.

Employer branding essentials

The perception of your company - how both employees and the outside world see you - can have an enormous impact on your recruitment and retention levels. In today's competitive market, the recruitment process is as much about selling the positives of your organisation to potential employees, as it is about you finding the right person for the job. With that in mind, there are a number of things that you can do to help ensure your business is seen as a great place to work.

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Play to your strengths

It's true to say that employers with a strong, positive and easily recognisable brand presence rely on it heavily to attract new talent to their doors. It goes without saying that brand reputation works harder for major employers, and that less high profile employers can find the recruitment process more difficult; but an enviable brand reputation can be built if you know how to appeal to candidates. Smaller companies may not be able to compete with large organisations when it comes to salaries, but they may be able to offer a promise of career progression, access to more interesting work, or additional responsibilities - which can be just as attractive to talented jobseekers.

Know your audience

Successful businesses know how to adapt their employer brand to appeal to different target audiences; taking into account different values, ambitions and cultural backgrounds. What makes a graduate tick is unlikely to excite an experienced worker, so speaking the right language is key. Think about the sort of person that you're trying to attract, what they will be looking for in terms of their career, and how your company's vision can help them to realise their ambitions.

Every impression counts

A jobseeker's first impression of your company will undoubtedly determine their immediate interest in you, but this judgement is continually changing. Each brush with your brand influences a person's perception of you, so it's important to think about every encounter that an individual might have with your company - from calling your helpline as a customer and following your Tweets, to receiving interview feedback as a jobseeker. Try to think about where your brand could be making a less than perfect impression, and work with your recruitment partner, HR department and marketing team to create a favourable experience at every stage.

Align your employer and customer brands

If you're going to project a consistent message and attract the right people to your company, your 'employer brand' and 'external customer brand' must share the same values and adopt the same strategy. The bigger the organisation, the more people will have already formed an opinion of it, so it's essential that the two are not working against each other.

The more aligned your values are, the more credible and believable they become.

Your recruitment process should reflect your brand

Every step of the recruitment process will play a big part in shaping the impression that a potential employee has of your company; and that impression will go a long way towards influencing whether or not they want to be a part of it. With that in mind, you need to make sure that the whole experience reflects your brand in a positive light; allowing you to attract and engage the right people.

You should consider:

- Where you advertise a role and by which methods
- How easy it is for people to apply
- How you intend to respond to applicants
- The number of interview stages involved
- Who will conduct each interview stage
- Where your interviews will be conducted
- How you will deal with rejections and the final offer
- How you plan to stay in contact with the new recruit until their start date

Employees are your best ambassadors

If your people believe in your brand, they can act as your strongest and most convincing advocates. Employees should understand what your brand stands for and what you are trying to achieve; so make sure your vision is fully communicated, understood and embedded internally before taking your brand to market. And be sure to focus just as much on internal buy-in as you would on your external marketing. There's no point spending millions on marketing campaigns if existing employees fail to represent - or understand and believe in - the brand.

Be consistent

For a truly effective employer brand strategy, you need to focus on long-term goals that are built upon a clear understanding of who you want to attract and retain. The consistency and delivery of this message shouldn't be affected by a weak economic climate. A strong employer brand is even more essential during tough times in making

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employees feel more secure. The confidence and support of your employees will play a major factor in the future of your business.

When a customer, supplier or potential employee comes into contact with your company, they should see a consistent brand - from marketing and sales through to delivery and finance. When attracting candidates, the visual identity and tone used throughout your campaigns needs to be 'on brand'. To achieve this level of consistency, everybody that's involved in the attraction and recruitment process needs to understand the message that you're trying to portray; so explain why it's important, and what it means to the business.

Monitor progress

Finally - but perhaps most importantly - it's vital to monitor your company's progress on a regular basis. Find out what both employees and ex-employees think, as their feedback is crucial in making sure you're on the right track. And don't ignore negative feedback: you need to act on this if you want to build a successful brand identity. It's a good idea to carry out anonymous research to achieve absolute honesty. Consider conducting exit interviews and ask current employees what they would change; then act on that invaluable feedback.

If you'd like to discuss any of the points that we've raised in this guide - or if you'd like some advice that's tailored to the unique needs of your business - please don't hesitate to contact your local branch of Office Angels.