

Determine your recruitment goals

A recruitment plan should be based on your business goals. For example, are you planning to expand or change your business? What skills are required to accomplish this objective? From there, you should establish specific recruitment goals. One goal will be attracting the best people to work in your business. The best people will make a direct difference to your bottom line, helping to raise your service and quality level. People who are less than dedicated to your business can compromise customer experiences.

Some other recruitment goals may be:

- Attracting a higher standard of candidate
- Attracting a candidate who has skills you currently do not have in your organization
- Promoting your company as a dynamic place where people want to work

Determine your overall recruitment needs through having well established business goals.

Review job descriptions

Take time to review the job description, which may need to be changed since the last person was hired. Or, if it is a new position, you may need to create a new job description. You may want to talk to the previous person in the position and get their input on how the job description could be improved, and what the highlights of the job were. Make sure the description includes all of the critical job related components.

Consider people-finding strategies

How you find staff for your business can be divided into short-term and long-term recruiting techniques. Short-term techniques are designed to generate an immediate selection of candidates. Long-term techniques involve developing relationships with key people and the community, and promoting your company as a rewarding place to work. The focus is on keeping long-term relationships with people who have the potential to work for your organization.

It may be a good idea to plan to use both short and long-term recruiting strategies. Developing long-term relationships can include strategies like offering scholarships to university students, donations and sponsorships to community organizations, or opening up your business for high school practicums.

As well, there are always two pools of candidates available: employees already working for you, and external candidates. Promoting from within can help create a culture that shows that hard work is rewarded, and you may find that the most qualified person for your job posting is already working for you. Friends and acquaintances of employees are always a good place to start. You may want to think about offering a recruitment incentive to encourage employees to spread the word (for example, a cash incentive or gift certificate if the person they recommend is hired).

When posting your advertisements, ask yourself if you've selected newspapers, journals, websites and mailing lists that reach a diverse pool of applicants. Be sure to allow sufficient time for both internal and external recruitment.

Use alternative labour pools

Have you considered hiring co-op students, immigrants, aboriginals, people on social assistance or EI, persons with disabilities, or baby boomers? Sometimes the right person for the job may not be from the most obvious pool of applicants.

Appreciate the perception of your workplace from the outside

How your workplace is perceived or positioned will affect how candidates respond to job postings. To stand out in the job market, employers must offer something different from competitors. For example, many tourism employers provide seasonal hiring; an inability to offer permanent, full-time positions can set limits on the selection of candidates. Yet this can be turned into something more appealing by offering ongoing summer employment from year to year.

If you've had trouble in the past generating suitable responses from job postings, ask yourself how you are perceived as someone to work for and how your employees feel about the business. An anonymous employee survey might prove helpful to find out how you compare to competitors in terms of salary, work environment, vacation, and job duties. And remember that money is not always what people are looking for—frequently, it's the intangible benefits that keep potential employees interested.

Keep a short list

Once your job ads are posted, be sure that you are clear about your selection criteria. What skills do you need to add to your business? How will you choose one candidate over another?

Short-listing is the first step in identifying the candidates who display the skills and selection criteria you are looking for. Shortlisting—when done well—can cut down on interviewing time later on. You may want to draw a simple grid with your selection criteria on one side and the names of candidates on another. Your selection criteria can then be listed in order of importance, with marks assigned to each candidate according to whether or not to interview when you review resumes and cover letters.

Be sure to notify short-listed candidates of the interview date and time as soon as possible. It's also often a good idea to keep a small number of applicants on a reserve list in case some of the short-listed candidates are unavailable.

Hone your interviewing technique

Before interviewing, develop job-related questions so there are no awkward pauses, and so you remain in charge of the interview. Be sure to ask open-ended questions that allow the candidate

to tell you about themselves, such as "What are some things you would like to avoid in a job? Why?" and "In your previous job what kind of pressures did you face?"

Check thoroughly before making a job offer

Have you obtained a signed application, conducted reference checks and scheduled background checks? Have you determined a salary offer based upon market, qualifications and internal comparisons?

Follow through after a candidate has accepted

Have you confirmed the offer in writing and advised other employees within the company? Be sure to make arrangements for the candidate's start date well ahead of time. You'll also want to advise the other candidates that the position has been filled.

With the right recruitment plan in place, you'll be in a better position to hire the best people for your company.