

VAN Briefing

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

Taking on paid staff - How do we do it?

I. Good practice in Recruitment

People are the most valuable resource of your organisation and your success will depend on having the right number of staff with the right skills and abilities. How well these people are recruited, employed and trained is of utmost importance. This Briefing is the first of two aimed at helping organisations take on paid members of staff. It gives guidelines on recruitment procedures. (Briefing 48 covers Selection and Induction)

The purpose of the recruitment and selection process is to obtain, cost effectively, the number and quality of staff required to meet the needs of your organisation. There are three main activities involved in the process: defining staff requirements, finding suitable candidates and selecting the best person for the job.

Why do we need a good recruitment procedure?

Recruiting people who turn out to be wrong for your organisation may have negative consequences for both the organisation and the employee. Ill-suited employees are likely to become discontent, lack commitment, be absent once too often and end up leaving. Money and time will be lost covering for absence, on further recruitment procedures and on training. The morale amongst the existing workforce may also be affected by the employees attitude, the extra workload and unforeseen changes.

At recruitment stage it will be impossible to know exactly how the job will develop. Nevertheless, it is essential that you define your expectations at this stage as clearly as possible, including that the job may change. If jobs are ill defined (so employees do not know what they are supposed to do) or expectations and standards are unclear (so they do not know how well they are supposed to do the work) employees are more likely to fail.

As a recruiter you will also need to keep abreast of changes in the labour market to ensure that your recruitment efforts are not wasted or mis-directed, and to allow you to compete more effectively for staff. Labour market information will give you an idea

of anticipated trends from which you can plan for future recruitment or development e.g. should you attract older workers or adopt more family-friendly policies? Thus, recruitment and training processes need to be kept flexible.

If recruitment appears to be difficult in certain skills, you may wish to re-design the job i.e. to offer a greater variety of tasks or self management, or flexible working arrangements. The offer of training/development opportunities is also often appealing to potential recruits. Presenting these options will open up the job to people who might otherwise be unable to consider it.

Fairness and Equal Opportunities

Employers should adopt fair, non-discriminatory recruitment and selection policies and be aware of the legal aspects of the recruitment process. Get advice if in doubt. (see further information)

Also consider whether the post might be suitable for flexible working arrangements and whether it would it be appropriate to take action to assist recruitment of women, people from minority ethnic communities, or a worker with a disability. What adjustments could reasonably be made to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged?

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

Your recruitment procedure should be simple, incorporating stages that can be followed clearly whenever there is a vacancy to be filled and which can be adapted in the light of experience. Procedures should be: *efficient* (cost effective), *effective* (producing enough suitable candidates and ensuring the identification of the best fit for the job and organisation, and *fair* (ensuring that decisions throughout the process are made on merit alone)

What are the main activities involved in the procedure?

- A. Defining staff requirements
- B. Finding suitable candidates
- C. Selecting the best person for the job (Briefing II)
- D. Induction (Briefing II)



How long will the process take?

From advertisement to starting date *could* take at least ten weeks:

Week 1- advertisement appears; **Week 4-** closing date; **Week 4/5-** shortlisting; **Week 6-** interviews, offer of appointment made verbally (and accepted?), offer made in writing, candidate hands in notice to current employer; **Week 10-** employee starts.

You will need to set aside time to:

- Decide beforehand who will be responsible for the employment process. (everything should be done by a representative group who understand the organisation, the job and equal opportunities legislation)
- Define all the tasks within the job then create a job description and a person specification
- Write and place an advertisement
- Design an application form and an ethnic/gender/disability monitoring form. Put together a pack of background information on the organisation
- Decide whether candidates will be given the opportunity to come for an informal chat/look round. If so draw up a procedure to ensure consistency for all applicants
- Decide on the shortlisting panel and a shortlisting procedure
- Shortlist and send out letters to candidates
- Draw up the interview panel; prepare for the interview
- Interview, select and make job offer
- Draw up induction procedure

What costs might be involved?

Meetings of panel, advertisement, stationery, room hire, food for the panel, expenses to interview (candidates and panel), and time out from normal duties.

A. Defining staff requirements

Job description

This is essential for all jobs as it should give a clear indication as to the purpose, tasks and responsibilities of the job. It can help with induction and training and it enables prospective applicants to assess themselves for the job. It can also provide a marker for assessing achievements in the future. Be aware that an overly complex or over simplified job description may attract the wrong people. If someone previously held the post you will need to review the job description in the light of what the organisation needs now.

It should include:

- Job title
- Main purpose of the job - try to describe this in one sentence
- To whom the new worker is responsible (and who they in turn will manage)
- Main tasks of the job. Avoid vague terms like 'dealing with' and 'in charge of' and instead choose active verbs like 'answering, assisting, writing, researching, filing'
- Scope of the job, expanding on the main tasks and their value. Job importance can be indicated by level of responsibility, degree of precision required in the job, and the value of materials used/created.
- Starting date (if this is fixed) and finishing date (if the job is for a fixed period)
- Summary of the main conditions of employment i.e. starting salary, increments, pension, maternity and sickness arrangements, hours of work, holidays, probationary periods
- Closing dates for applications, shortlisting and interviews.

Person specification

Some managers are concerned that a person specification might be open to subjective opinion and lead to discrimination. However, when used correctly it can ensure the organisation selects employees on the basis of their relevant abilities, rather than on subjective or irrelevant criteria. It is essential that the skills, knowledge and aptitude indicated in the specification are related precisely to the needs of the job – if they are inflated beyond those necessary for effective job performance there is the risk of frustration and disappointment for all concerned.

The person specification should depend on having a clear, accurate job description based on task analysis. Knowing what the job involves makes it easier to assess the qualities needed to do it.

These requirements can be divided into:

- Experience - previous jobs, unpaid work experience, life experience
- Skills, knowledge and abilities related to the job - e.g. languages, driving, specialist knowledge, computer literacy
- Competencies necessary - an indication of the level of competence required and whether the person must have the skills or knowledge beforehand or can/is willing to learn them
- Education and training – but only so far as is necessary for satisfactory job performance
- Personal attributes, but only criteria essential and directly related to the job e.g. willingness to work on ones own and/or in a team
- Other e.g. applicant must have/get a car



Each listed requirement must be justifiable in terms of being essential and directly related to the job (judged by the job description and task analysis) and not potentially discriminatory. Be clear how each requirement will be assessed e.g. asking appropriate questions on the application form, asking for information to be given in a supporting letter, at interview, giving candidates a task or test. A requirement that cannot be assessed should not be included as a part of the person specification.

Salary

After setting the job and person specification consider the pay rate. Scales, grades and negotiated agreements, as well as market rates and skills shortages will affect the salary. Employers should be aware of legal requirements related to pay. (see further information)

B. Finding Suitable Candidates

Advertising

Your aim will be to ensure the best response to your advertising at the least cost.

- Advertisements should be designed/presented effectively. Include your logo and make the advert consistent with your organisations image. Look through job advertisements in newspapers/ magazines to see what catches your eye
- Base the advertisement on the job description and the person specification, setting out the main aspects of the job, pay, career prospects, location, type of contract
- Tailor it to your target audience, in short, clear and easily understood language. A positive manner will promote your organisation to potential candidates and other readers
- Avoid generalisations such as 'attractive salary' or 'appropriate qualifications'
- Be non-discriminatory and avoid gender or culturally specific language. Include a statement on your commitment to equal opportunities. This shows that your organisation is one that welcomes applications from all sections of the community. Ensure that you can provide job details and accept applications in other formats e.g. tape, braille
- Make the closing date and the way the applicant needs to reply clear. (You could add your phone number for further information and enquiries. Alternatively, you could ask potential applicants to write in enclosing a SAE for your information/ application form)
- Where to advertise? Consider where the sort of person you want is likely to be looking. Possibilities include: job centres, recruitment agencies,

national/local newspapers and radio, specialist journals, the Internet, local schools, colleges, the Careers Service, word of mouth. It is also good practice to advertise the position internally

Information for applicants

Since there will be limited information about the organisation in the advert you will need to put together an information pack. Include the job description and person specification, equal opportunities policy and any other literature that may be of interest e.g. newsletter, information sheets, yearly report, website address. This will help applicants assess whether or not they fit into and are interested in your organisation and will give them specific questions to ask at the interview.

Application Form

This should provide the necessary and relevant information about the applicant and their skills. The design needs to be straightforward and appropriate to the level of the job.

Advantages of application forms might be:

- CVs can be time consuming, difficult to read and not provide all the necessary information. Comparing like with like is easier
- They assist with both the sifting and then the interview process
- The standard of completion can sometimes be a guide to the candidates suitability, but be aware of the possibility of disability discrimination

Disadvantages might be:

- Be aware of your personal motivations/biases and do not be tempted to extract too much information e.g. the applicants motives, values, personality characteristics. (Concentrate on the experience, knowledge and competencies needed for the job)
- Some people dislike forms and so may be put off applying; very experienced people may find the form inadequate; less experienced or qualified people may be intimidated by large, blank spaces
- Applications may inadvertently be discriminatory e.g. requiring a form to be filled out in the applicants own handwriting where written English is not relevant to the job

What else?

- Design a Monitoring Form. This should cover information required for monitoring purposes only (i.e. for compliance with legal requirements and codes of practice on race, sex, disability, age discrimination) e.g. title, ethnic origin, date of birth should be clearly marked for this purpose and should be on a separate or detachable sheet. Shortlisters should in no way be influenced by the information



- Medical information should also be obtained separately and kept separate from the application form
- The Data Protection Act 1998 requires that the applicant be informed of any recruitment records that are to be kept on him/her, for what purposes and duration
- Employing staff in general is complicated. Once you've started you may find you need to consider some of the following in detail: terms and conditions (contract) of employment; rights and benefits of workers; creating an equal opportunities and recruitment policy; remuneration; health and safety; police checks and child protection; disciplinary and grievance procedures; termination of employment; training and development
- The following *minimum* legal requirements must be complied with:
The Sex Discrimination Act 1975; the Equal Pay Act 1970; the Wages Act 1986; the Race Relations Act 1976; the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996; the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988; the Children Act 1989; the Data Protection Act 1998; the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; the Employment Rights Act 1996; the Employment Protection (Part-time Employees) Regulations 1995; the Working Time Regulations 1998; the Minimum Wage Act 1998; the Employment Relations Act 1999

References

ACAS - *Recruitment and Induction* September 1999
 Adirondack, S – *Just about Managing*, 3rd Edition, 1998, LVSC, London
 Hudson, Peter – *Managing Your Community Building* 1996, Community Matters
 NCVO - *The Good Employment Guide for the Voluntary Sector* 1999, NCVO

Note

Whilst we have taken reasonable precautions to ensure the information offered here is accurate, this Briefing simply provides a reference for good practice. It is in no way a definitive statement and nor is it legally comprehensive. We recommend therefore that you do further reading and take legal advice before taking action on any of the matters covered herein.

Further Information

The following organisations offer a wide range of publications, advice, and/or workshops. Many have information available online (sometimes hard to locate. Keep looking for 'publications', or similar)

- ACAS - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
T: 01455 852225 www.acas.org.uk
- Commission for Racial Equality T: 020 7828 7022
www.cre.gov.uk
- Community Matters T: 020 7226 0189
www.communitymatters.org.uk
- Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)
T: 0845 602 2260 www.dfee.gov.uk
- Department of Trade and Industry T: 020 7215 6024
www.dti.gov.uk/pip/
- The Equal Opportunities Commission T: 0161 833 9244
www.eoc.org.uk
- Health and Safety Executive T: 0541 545 500
www.open.gov.uk/hsehome.htm
- The Institute of Personal Development (IPD) www.ipd.co.uk
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO),
T: 020 7713 6161 www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA),
T: 01232 321224 www.nicva.org
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO),
T: 0131 556 3882 www.scvo.org.uk
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA),
T: 029 2043 1700 www.wcva.org.uk
- The Stationery Office T: 0870 600 5522 (option 4)
www.tso-online.co.uk
(also free leaflets on various aspects of the Acts)

(also see References on left)

Faith and Hope don't run charities (Trustees, 2000)

Managing Recruitment and Selection Gill Taylor, Directory of Social Change, 1996

Recruitment and Selection: a competency approach Gareth Roberts, IPD, 1997

Recruitment: Mind the Gap-a guide for small firms (DfEE)

Voluntary but not Amateur-a guide to the law for voluntary organisations and community groups, 5th Edition Forbes, Hayes and Reason, LVSC, 1998

The Voluntary Sector Legal Handbook Adirondack and Taylor, Directory of Social Change, 1996

Working with us – Good Employment Practice for Voluntary Organisations in Scotland NCVO, 1999

(books for arts managers from SAMs Books, 01883 345011 www.sam-arts.demon.co.uk)

VAN Briefings:

- 44 Disability Discrimination Act Part III
- 45 How do I create an Equal Opportunities Policy?
- 46 Data Protection Act 1998
- 48 Taking on Paid Staff – how do we do it?
II. Good practice in Selection and Induction



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