

A Two-Minute Guide to Staff Recruitment

By John Vamos

I've called this the two-minute guide because 'two minutes' is about how long most of us in business spend drafting positions vacant ads, two minutes to prepare for the interview, two minutes to check the references and then a couple of years to live with poor selection decisions! If you want to get it right it takes time, and some discipline of your own.

If you think this short guide is useful to have handy when next you have to interview, print it out and file it under "Recruitment Interview Agenda".

If you are going to get this process right then the single most important tool you will need is the Job Description (JD). Hopefully by now you have read the *BCS How-to Guide on Preparing a Job Description*. You simply cannot get staff selection right if you don't have JDs that can form the basis of the selection interview. If you don't have JDs, buy a lottery ticket!

It starts with the Ad. Use it to describe the workplace you promote and type of individual you are looking for. In most (not all) cases the skills / qualifications are going to be reasonably clear by the position description and salary range, should you choose to stipulate it. You need a person that matches your culture and has the skills. If they don't match the skills and have the right attitude, they can be coached. The reverse is not always true.

Next, be prepared for the interview. Look for characteristics that you feel suggest a good match. I like to ask work-related questions and then when the conversation is deep into the business of the business, throw in some questions about their special interests. If someone cannot talk enthusiastically about their hobby, they are unlikely to be enthusiastic about anything! Don't forget to study the application; it's always good for a few questions. Try to find out what is real and what is just padding. If they put their Origami Certificate in their list of qualifications you either have padding or a truly fascinating past time to talk about to break the ice!

Use the JD as an Agenda. Talk about your expectations. Get them to describe what they view as a quality outcome. Ask situational questions, at least TWO questions that put the applicant in a difficult situation and have them describe in detail how they would resolve it. Do they think like you, do their answers match their stated skill level and experience?

Watch body language carefully and study their behaviour (nerves aside, this is as good as it gets!). Tell them about your business and its history, and then ask them to explain why they want the position with the company you have just described. Ask them to find something in the JD they disagree with or are not happy about. If they say they can't, ask them which would it be if there were one?

I find this a great question: *If it comes down to a choice between a couple of equally good candidates, what do you hope I pay most attention to in the selection process?*

Check references. Always. Use the JD as the agenda even for the call to the referee. What would so and so be like at the following tasks? This gets you past the automatic endorsement and gets you quickly into the type and style of relationship the candidate has with the referee. Gauge this against the description the candidate gave you in the interview and the perspective of the referee.

Let candidates take the JD away if you intend to conduct second interviews. If they get through, see if they studied the it in the intervening period. Ask them what thoughts they have about it now that they have had time to digest its contents.

Finally: always book time out before the interview and immediately after to record your thoughts. When it comes to selection time, here is the science behind resolving close calls: go with your instinct!!!

