

A suitable candidate

Attracting and selecting the right person for a job vacancy can be daunting. **Lucy Theaker** explains the process and highlights techniques you can follow to achieve success



LUCY THEAKER
Managing partner,
Snowdon Tate
recruitment
consultants

Recruitment during a recession may seem a simpler proposition because of the surfeit of candidates on the market. But it still presents challenges, especially if you have never been involved in the hiring process before.

Getting the marketing right can be very effective in helping candidates to self-select. A carefully worded advert that reflects the values of your company lets a candidate know whether the culture will suit them. Using powerful words like “creative, entrepreneurial, fast-paced” or “structured, heritage, traditional” will appeal to different people.

It’s important to make sure you’re being realistic and you aren’t just saying what the CEO wants to hear. Cultural change programmes can be confusing from the outside, so be clear on what you’re looking for.

When you’re drowning under a deluge of CVs it helps to be clear on the basics to get the initial sift right. Take time to write a clear, unambiguous brief with the hiring manager.

What’s essential?
What’s nice to have?

And what can be covered by training? Is a degree or a professional qualification a must-have? What practical experience do they need? Do you need someone used to big businesses or are you looking for an all-rounder willing to get their hands dirty?

What will motivate a candidate to join your business? There must be something the right candidate will get out of the move, and it usually isn’t salary. Training, development, location, stability and promotion are all good

reasons. Salary gives you a good guideline, although there can be large variations depending on their employer and length of service.

Identifying lies on a CV is difficult and there’s no substitute for knowing the market. If you receive two or more very similar CVs, all claiming the same achievements, either it was a team effort or someone is exaggerating. It’s hard to know unless you have definite information to the contrary. It is more straightforward in interviews, because you have more control and body language can be very revealing.

Trust your instincts – if something doesn’t seem right, ask for examples and precise details. Has anyone you’ve worked with spent time in

those organisations? Do their achievements seem unusual for the stage the candidate has reached in their career? Has every position resulted in unparalleled success?

People who have moved a lot tend to have been found out or won’t have seen the results of what they’ve put in place.

Further differentiation depends on the level you’re appointing. Assessment centres can be really useful for large corporations looking at graduate intake, but a senior-level candidate would probably find it a bit insulting.

Psychometric testing is common and is most useful when you

have carried out the same test on others in the team they’d be joining. Presentations are very helpful at the final stages when deciding between the last few candidates, but, again, be clear on what you want to achieve.

Sometimes the best results come from giving candidates a lot of scope, such as “what is your strategy in your current role?”.

Lastly, try not to rely too much on technology. The human element is essential in reading between the lines.

Sometimes the best results come from giving candidates a lot of scope, such as “what is your strategy in your current role?”

KEY POINTS

- Use words in your advert that reflect your company’s culture
- Identify a list of the qualities that are most important
- If a CV seems suspicious, ask for examples and precise details