

GUIDE TO RECRUITMENT

Do you need to recruit?

Before spending time and money on employing someone new, you should weigh up whether you really need to recruit new staff. To do this, look at your staffing needs in relation to the wider objectives of the business. You may need extra help immediately or you may simply be thinking about your future staffing requirements. But in both cases it's valuable to plan as far ahead as you can.

You should consider why you're looking for extra help and how long you will need it for. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you considering taking on your first employee to help you grow your business?
- Are you replacing an employee who has left? If so, why did the previous employee leave and what skills and experience have you lost?
- Do you need to bring in a new skill to your business that none of your existing employees has?
- Has your workload increased? Is the workload likely to continue or is it a temporary increase?
- What will be the impact of taking on a new staff member? Do you have space, and equipment?
- Do you need cover for yourself in the long term?

Since recruitment can be expensive and time-consuming, other options you could consider include:

- re-organising the company structure
- sharing work among existing employees
- promoting existing staff
- asking part-time employees if they would consider full-time work
- improving the efficiency of the business, perhaps by rearranging tasks
- offering overtime
- adopting flexible working arrangements, eg shifts, to provide cover for a longer part of the day
- hiring temporary workers from an employment agency

The best ways to take on extra people

You have to consider the type of worker you wish to employ, depending on factors such as how constant the work is, how long the work will last, and the number of hours of work each week.

You have a number of options:

- Permanent employees can be full-time or part-time. They have an open-ended employment contract with you. You have obligations to them but they will be an investment in your business.
- Fixed-term contract employees have an employment contract with you but it is for a predetermined time or until a specific task has been completed. See our guide on employment status. You'll still have employer obligations but only for the duration of the contract. See our guide on the employment contract or use our interactive tool to create a written statement of employment.

- Employment agency - temporary staff are engaged by the agency and supplied to you. Your contract is with an employment agency to supply you with staff, but you still have certain legal responsibilities towards the agency worker.
- Using self-employed freelancers, consultants and contractors gives you the minimum of employer obligations. But you need to be sure that the people are legally defined as self-employed
- Zero-hours contracts allow you to have people on-call to work whenever necessary and mutually convenient. Generally, you are not obliged to offer work, nor is there a responsibility for the worker to accept any work. Look at the terms of any zero-hours contract carefully as it may affect the employment status of the worker and your responsibility towards them.

You will also have to make tax arrangements for permanent and fixed-term employees.

Writing a person specification and job description

Vacancies can't be filled successfully unless the job has been accurately defined in the first place. This is as helpful for you, the employer, as it is for potential candidates. Think about what skills, knowledge and experience you are looking for.

Preparing a job description is not a legal requirement but it can be useful for deciding the scope of the work, advertising the job, and clarifying what applicants will have to do in the job. It can also help to assess a new recruit's performance and determine training needs. A job description should include:

- the job title
- the position in the company, including the job title of the person to whom the employee will report and of those who will report to them, if any
- the location of the job
- a summary of the general nature and objectives of the job
- a list of the main duties or tasks of the employee

A person specification is not a legal requirement but will be useful when writing a job advertisement and defining the qualities you are looking for in a candidate. Include the knowledge, experience and skills you would like them to have, separating those which are essential from those which are desirable.

Drawing up a shortlist and inviting candidates to interview

When you have the replies to your advertisement:

- compare applications against a job description and person specification outlining the skills and experience you need
- eliminate applicants who do not have the basic requirements for the job
- draw up a short list of candidates based on the applicants who most closely match your needs
- consider notifying candidates who you will not be inviting for interview

How do I make a shortlist?

- Include only the number of applicants you will have time to interview - usually no more than four people a day. Allow time for preparation and discussion before and after the interview.

- Draw up a table listing each candidate against the essential requirements of the job. Those that meet all the essential personal criteria could form your shortlist.
- If there are too many possible candidates, then you could weigh them up against the desirable qualities you are also looking for.
- Don't discriminate against applicants on the grounds of sex, race, age or disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.
- Ensure you are consistent in the way you use personal data to draw up the shortlist.
- Get more than one person to compile the shortlist to avoid possible bias.

Carrying out the interview

Prepare your questions in advance of the interview. Your aim is to get quality information from the candidate so you can assess them fairly and fully against your needs.

- Welcome the candidate - try to put them at ease.
- Introduce yourself and other people present.
- Explain the structure of the interview.
- Outline the company background and role, and where the job fits.
- Encourage the candidate to talk about how their skills and experience apply to the vacancy.
- Ask open-ended questions - ones that cannot be answered with a yes or no.
- Allow the candidate time to think and speak.
- Keep control of the interview. If you feel the candidate is going off-track, turn the conversation back to the information you need.
- At the end of the interview, ask the candidate if they have any questions.
- Inform them of the next stage in the recruitment process, eg appointment, second interviews, tests and the estimated timescales.
- Thank the candidate for their time.

Keeping records of the process

- Back up interviews with a detailed record, written as soon as possible after the interview.
- Only record what has been said in the interview and how the selection decision was made, not your beliefs or thoughts about the candidate.
- Be aware that candidates who later make a complaint to an employment tribunal have the right to ask for copies of any notes made during the interview, and that you may need them for defending any possible discrimination case relating to the process.