

**“How To Recruit A First Rate Employee  
In Seven Easy Steps”**

by

**Kyle Watkins**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The modern day workplace is affected by complex sets of employment legislation no matter which country you operate from. This means that companies of the future can no longer adopt the historically accepted “hire them and fire them” policy of years gone by.

Employers need to be aware of the relevant employment legislation environment in which they operate and ensure that they analyse and re-engineer their own internal recruitment processes to remain within the confines of this legislation.

It is in an organisation’s best interest to attract and secure the long-term services of good calibre employees. These are the likely costs you’ll incur when replacing a staff member ...

- ⊗ advertising fees
- ⊗ recruitment fees
- ⊗ cost of training a new staff member
- ⊗ lost productivity while the role is vacant
- ⊗ the inefficient productivity levels during the training period

Any business manual will tell you that a successful business must focus on its core competencies. Therefore, if a company is constantly having to focus on replacing its employees due to a high staff turnover, it cannot be focussing on its core business and is consequently not operating as efficiently as it should be.

It is therefore of vital importance that employers are aware of how to attract, recruit and manage their human resources to ensure they maintain the productivity they require to achieve their profit objectives.

This eBook separates the recruitment process into seven clearly defined steps which will take the guesswork out of the recruitment process and ensure that all employment methodologies are standardised, professional and efficient.

However, due to the human element involved in the recruitment process, it's impossible to completely eliminate the hiring of a "dud employee". But if these steps are followed closely, the chances of recruiting such an unfortunate person are greatly minimised. Further, by using these tried and tested techniques, you will attract and keep the best possible jobseeker in your organisation.

If I was to identify the one over-riding factor which differentiates a robust recruitment process versus a poor one, it would be that **top employers recognise that their staff are their most important commodity.**

It may be an over-used cliché but I cannot overstate the importance of an employer building this fact into its recruitment strategy. It's vital that all companies that wish to grow from "good" to "great" need to devise a formal recruitment / HR strategy document with this way of thinking forming the foundation of its central ideology.

So ... let's go ahead and expand upon the seven basic steps to achieving a recruitment process that is both forward thinking, as well as comparable with multi-national, global corporations who all follow these steps or variations of them when investing in human capital.

## STEP 1: HOW TO GATHER CV's

- a) **Formalise the Job Spec, which should be reviewed at least annually to ensure that it is up-to-date and accurate.**

The first stage in filling a vacancy within your organisation is to write up a detailed job specification (job spec) and ensure that it details both the role requirements and candidate requirements. This job spec should be both an information document **as well as a sales tool.**

In the current competitive global job market where skills shortages almost always outstrip candidate supply, the company must focus on attracting the best possible talent out of the pool of current jobseekers. Therefore, it needs to sell the benefits and advantages of working for them to a prospective employee. Of course the information must remain factual; and have a balanced viewpoint presented at all times, with the marketing aspect of a job spec not forgotten.

The following are essential components of a formal job spec ...

- Job title
- Job type eg permanent / contract / temporary
- Grade / level of role
- Location of vacancy (Will you consider applicants who can relocate?)
- Role reporting structure
- Salary band and fringe benefits offered - if available
- Minimum number of years experience required
- Transportation and Drivers Licence requirements - if any
- Any legislative conditions eg employment equity requirements
- Description of core duties, working hours, required outputs etc
- Description of how the job fits into the company
- Description of the ideal candidate, the possible relevant background that lends itself to this role, the personality traits, the grooming requirements etc
- Defined closing date for applications and contact details to send them to

In the modern, regulated workplace it's the small details that matter, therefore a company should include as much detail as possible to ensure full clarity on the role requirements.

b) **Where to advertise the Job Spec ...**

It is advisable to always advertise the vacancy internally, even if you are certain there are no relevant applicants in your company. This will safe-guard you against disgruntled employees making a claim for unfair discrimination based on the fact that they were never considered for a vacancy. This advertising should include, but not be limited to, staff bulletin boards, intranet and other web based tools.

It is also advisable that part of the company's HR strategy should allow for internal applicants to apply for posts in a confidential manner. It is possible that appropriate internal applicants may feel intimidated by their current line managers, therefore choose not to apply.

It also makes good corporate sense to have a proper succession planning strategy in place, as it's far more efficient to recruit internal staff who are already familiar with the culture and environment of a company. This succession plan should be made clear to all employees from commencement of employment. It should also serve as a target for them to achieve certain pre-defined goals in order to be considered for promotion or rotation to different departments in order to multi-skill themselves.

Once you have completed the internal process and could not find any suitable applicant, you will need to decide which media to use to advertise the vacancy externally. Focus on the skills and abilities that are required for the particular vacancy.

If the role is highly specialised then you will need to select an appropriate specialised medium eg If you are recruiting a Real Estate Sales Manager then consider a specialist property publication, the property section of the classifieds section in the newspaper or advertise on a property specific recruitment website.

It is also advisable to spread your advertising as far as your budget will allow in order to expose yourself to the largest pool of jobseekers available.

For generic, administrative positions it would be advisable to use a general employment website and the classifieds for your advertising. The use of a web based medium is important because the modern administrator needs to have strong PC skills and the fact that they have registered with an online medium indicates they have at the very minimum, rudimentary PC skills.

The message you are wanting to convey is also important, as again it should be factual and sales orientated. Certain terms which are commonly used in advertisements such as “No Chancers” and “Good Calibre” are redundant, as you need to ask yourself what jobseeker will read those requirements and think to themselves “Oh no, I am a ‘chancer’ so I had better not apply!”.

You will more than likely be faced with a budget limit, so only focus on highlighting the essential pre-requisites for the role.

Branding will also add to the attractiveness of the advertisement and make you look more professional and corporate as an organisation and potential employer.

The contact details should ideally be to a generic email address and/or fax number as jobseekers may pester you in the future if you request responses to be sent to your personal email address.

It is also a good idea to put a deadline for applications into the job advert and state that if applicants have not heard from you within a certain time period they can consider themselves to have been unsuccessful, as this saves you the time of having to provide all applicants with feedback.

Generally most jobseekers tend to search for new employment on the weekend but check with the publication you are using to advertise the vacancy as they will be able to tell you which of their job classifieds have the highest readership.

c) **Using Recruitment Agencies, Online Job Portals or Word of Mouth**

Of course if you choose to advertise directly, then you must expect to get a large volume of responses which will be completely unscreened.

It is human nature to think that you have the ability to work as a brain surgeon even though you are currently employed at Burger King!

Many companies therefore choose to employ the services of either a full service recruitment agency or a web based job portal. Alternately, they merely ask their current staff or friends for referrals of potential jobseekers.

Using ....

**A Recruitment Agency**

Traditional recruitment agencies are very often a good source for screened applicants and certainly take the first 2 steps of this process off your hands, but obviously they are quite expensive so you will need to weigh up the benefits they provide with the cost involved.

Certainly for senior management or executive level recruitment, a specialised recruitment agency that knows or understands the industry they operate in, will be of great benefit in sourcing a key player for your organisation.

The risk associated with a recruitment agency is they tend to be extremely commission driven, therefore may not always have the client's best interest at heart.

Using ...

**An Online Job Portal**

Online recruitment portals are the next generation method of recruitment, as they are significantly cheaper than using a recruitment agency. Also, they put the control of the screening process back into the hands of the end user.

As a rule of thumb these types of sites will be a good source of computer literate, modern thinking staff but do have the risk of being too easy for people to apply for every vacancy listed!

It is therefore important to choose this medium wisely and decide if you need a specialist site or a large scale generalist.

It is also recommended to use a site that requires some sort of payment, as free sites tend to operate very crudely and are rarely updated with current jobseekers and other relevant information.

Such sites will also offer important value added services such as background checks and psychometric profiling for an additional cost. But when you consider how much cheaper an online job site is versus a full service recruitment agency, you will be more than happy to pay for these value added services.

The old rule of “Pay peanuts get a monkey” still applies to this business model so search for a good quality online job portal and you will be amazed by the results.

Using ...

### **Word of Mouth**

Conversely “Word of Mouth” is the cheapest method of sourcing staff but the person referring someone to you may have an ulterior motive, therefore you are not always assured of sourcing the best possible jobseeker from the widest pool of applicants using this method.

The positive aspect of this method is that you are employing someone based on a recommendation of someone you presumably trust, but ... you are short-selling your recruitment goals by not at least seeing who is available in the wider job market.

This method could also lead to damaged relationships with the referee if the incumbent doesn't work out.

The most efficient method of gathering CV's for a vacancy would be to use a blend of all of the above methods, to ensure your message is reaching the widest audience possible.

This may result in a large volume of applicants but then, this is actually a very positive result. Bear in mind that if you follow the process described here in full, you will more than likely be attracting and retaining the best applicant in the market. Therefore, you should not have to go through the recruitment process as frequently as if you do a brief search and then find yourself replacing that person in six months.

## STEP 2: HOW TO SCREEN CV's

You have now placed your job spec with several online and offline mediums or have possibly employed the services of a recruitment agent to source further CV's for you.

If your job spec and choice of medium has been successful, you should now start receiving responses from interested applicants via whatever method you specified eg email / fax / website etc.

As a rule of thumb, it is likely that 80% of the respondents will not have all the required skills or experience and will be taking a chance in applying.

Firstly, you need to look at ...

- ☺ The Technical skills
- ☺ The Level of decision-making required
- ☺ The Energy levels required
- ☺ The Communication and interpersonal skills
- ☺ The Management skills

Then you need to consider the following when screening the applications received to be able to compile a shortlist ...

1. Divide your requirements into “Essential skills or experience” and “Nice to have but not essential” attributes. Then briefly run through the CV's and remove those that do not fulfil “essential” requirements.
2. Next decide what are the priority attributes and again run through the CV's, placing those with these priority attributes at the top of the pile.
3. Next take the top 5 CV's and read through them thoroughly to try and get a full picture of the applicant. Note things like grammar, CV format, ability to sell themselves in the cover letter. Be aware that a cover letter can be very deceptive and the claims made should be taken very lightly!
4. Complete this process until you are happy with your shortlist of potential candidates, keeping the shortlist to a maximum of 5 jobseekers.

If you have sourced your CV's via a recruitment agency, discuss the applicant with the relevant consultant and ask them why they sent each particular CV. Ask the consultant to give a summary of each applicant in his/her opinion as this will elicit a surprising amount of information.

You should also make sure that each applicant sent by the agency has been met in person by at least one of their current consultants, as there is no point in them sending the CV of someone who registered with their agency 20 years ago and has never been back since!

Also ask the agency what kind of background checks and references they have on file for each applicant and get copies of this information. Recruitment agencies are a valuable source of qualitative information, if asked the right questions and can give you a broad idea of what their candidates are like outside of just the basic facts listed on a CV.

If the vacancy you are recruiting for is a specialist or senior position you must insist on the agency sending you the 2 most recent references, full background checks and ideally some sort of psychometric profile on each applicant.

If you have used a good quality web based job portal, then you must decide whether you want to purchase their value added services - such as background checks and psychometric profiles now; or if you would prefer to purchase these after you have interviewed the applicants and created a second short list. It is probably advisable to wait until after the interviews and only to pay for the testing and checks required on the best two or three potential employees.

## **Reference Checking**

*Very seldom does a jobseeker give a negative reference to an interviewer; and very seldom does an employer actually put a negative reference in writing.*

Here's a few tips for reference checking ...

- ☺ Do not phone friends and relatives of the jobseeker
- ☺ Look for references not mentioned by the jobseeker
- ☺ Get two or more references
- ☺ Don't ask discriminatory questions
- ☺ Ignore written references handed directly to you by the jobseeker

Here's an example of the type of check list used by reputable recruitment agencies to ensure they have covered all the bases when speaking to referees ...

- ☺ Start by confirming the person's job title, dates of employment and core duties as listed
- ☺ Then ask the referee if the employee in question performed these duties to a satisfactory level
- ☺ Enquire about their ability to work both independently and as part of a team
- ☺ Check what their strengths and weaknesses are in the workplace
- ☺ Find out if the employee got on well with both colleagues and clients
- ☺ Ask if there were any problems outside of the workplace that affected their performance
- ☺ Give the referee the opportunity to tell you about anything else that is relevant to the employee's ability and personality
- ☺ Finally ask if the referee would recommend the applicant and then just before you hang-up, ask this leading question ... "Would you re-employ him/her again if possible?" If yes – "Why don't you re-employ him/her now?" If no – "Off the record – Why not?"

The next phase of the process is to arrange interviews for the short-listed applicants either directly with them or via the recruitment agency if that is how they were sourced.

It is advisable to have an element of flexibility as far as the time slots given to candidates, as most applicants will have current work commitments which need to be accommodated.

You also need to decide if you want to meet with them at your offices for them to get a feel of your corporate culture or off site somewhere, in order for them to feel more comfortable in the familiar surrounds of a coffee shop, for example. If you choose the latter, remember it is vital that the person you eventually choose gets to see your offices before they start as they must be aware of the environment before commencing employment.

## STEP 3: HOW TO ARRANGE & CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

This is by far the most important phase of the process and the one where most employers tend to fail in following the correct procedure.

The interview is about **gathering** information from the jobseeker and **giving** information.

Always plan the interview and formulate questions in advance. Be prepared to answer questions from the jobseeker, like ...

- ☹ “What are the opportunities for advancement?”
- ☹ “How stable is the company?”

Study the jobseeker’s CV before the interview so that you don’t waste time asking irrelevant questions during the interview.

Set aside enough time for the interview and ensure that you are not disturbed.

There are two main interview types, namely ...

- The verbal interview conducted by telephone; and
- The face to face interview done in person

Both are vital for the screening process to work. If you are recruiting directly you should always pre-screen an applicant telephonically first. This is because you cannot be prejudiced by their appearance or mannerisms and you will be able to form an image of the applicant from the same perspective that your client would!

It is advisable to create some sort of interview agenda for yourself, as you would for any other meeting, but try not to be too formal or rigid in sticking to this agenda as you will get the most out of the interview by letting the jobseeker talk freely and openly as much as possible.

Encourage the jobseeker to speak and listen carefully to his/her responses. You, the interviewer, should not talk more than 40% of the time.

You should also try to conduct the face to face interviews with another colleague or manager present, as this stage of the process is highly subjective and it's always better to have two opinions to analyse.

For specialist or senior positions most companies tend to conduct at least two interviews prior to making an offer. This is vital as both you and the applicant will have time between interviews to consider the initial meeting, then make a judgement to pursue the process if it was a positive encounter.

The subsequent meetings should involve more senior management eg CEO or MD as they must be brought into the process at some stage in order to assume some responsibility for the decisions made!

It is also a good idea to get different stakeholder involved such as Human Resources, Direct Line Managers and Board Members if appropriate.

a) **Verbal Telephonic Interview .....**

When calling the applicant you have short-listed to arrange an interview, take some time to converse with them and take note of the following:

- General telephone manner
- Tone and clarity of speech
- Confidence and eagerness
- Are they accommodating towards your interview request or time slots?
- Did they repeat the address or directions to ensure accuracy

It is also advisable to ask a few pre-screening questions such as ...

- Why are you looking for another job?
- Have you heard about our organisation?
- Why did you apply for this particular position?

Once the interviews have been arranged, you will find you already have started to rank the short-listed applicants based solely on the telephonic interview. It's important to write your

initial thoughts down as they can be useful when comparing your face to face interview notes later on in the process. You're trying to create an overall picture of the person and every piece of information adds to this ... so make sure you keep a record of your experience with each applicant.

b) **Face to Face Interview** .....

This could be the most important 45 minutes of your entire recruitment drive, therefore it's always worth meeting with all applicants you feel are remotely relevant. I have seen too many employers miss out on a very strong candidate just because they did not look like a perfect fit on paper but were far stronger in person.

It is also advisable to take at least 45 minutes to get to know the applicant. Applicants may be able to hold up a facade in the short term but their true selves will become apparent if given enough time and conversation.

It's important to be punctual for the interview to ensure that the applicant is comfortable and made to feel at ease.

In the current global job market there are many skills shortages and it is vital to attract top talent and make them want to work for you.

Interviews should be conducted in Board or Meeting Rooms wherever possible and the layout of such facilities should reflect a professional yet comfortable environment.

All face to face interviews vary greatly in structure but here's a suggested format which can be used as a rough guideline of how to allocate time towards each phase of the interview.

The key focus should be on the **FUNNELING TECHNIQUE** whereby you start your questions in a general manner and then drill down to the specifics of each point you want to examine. It is important to take notes in order to refer back to them at a later stage.

### **INTRODUCTION or GENERAL CHAT (5 MINS)**

The aim is to make the applicant feel at ease and for you to get a feel for their general personality in a non-work specific way. Topics covered here can include anything from the weekend's sport results to where they live. Take this time to assess how they have presented themselves, their mannerisms and confidence, as well as how they talk about things that interest them.

During this initial phase you should be taking mental notes of their body language, confidence levels, mannerisms and articulation. If the vacancy in question has a 'client facing' element to it, be it verbal or face to face, then the initial impression the applicant creates is vital.

Having said that, it is equally important for the person conducting the interview to put aside any prejudices s/he may have and actively listen to what the applicant has to say.

It's very easy to start forming your own opinion on the person too early in the process based on your pre-formed ideas of what you are looking for.

### **YOUR CORPORATE BACKGROUND (5 MINS)**

Now you should direct the conversation towards your company, what you do and how this particular role fits into the bigger picture.

Question the applicant on what they know about your company, how much research they have done on your website and general awareness of issues that may affect your company and the industry in which you operate.

You need to describe the culture of the company and the company's expectations. You also need to describe the tasks and criteria for success so that the applicant can decide whether the job suits him/her or not.

Use this time to highlight the benefits of working for your company but also mention any challenges your firm is facing, as it's important to give a fair and balanced picture of what they can expect.

You will find that during this phase you will be doing most of the talking, but you should still be taking note of how the applicant listens and how much they appear to be taking in.

Also be aware of any changes in body language since they first sat down ... are they getting more comfortable? There is no need to rush things by rattling off facts and figures, it's worthwhile to speak slowly and clearly and give them plenty of opportunity to ask questions if they want.

### **APPLICANT'S BACKGROUND or RELEVANT EXPERIENCE (10 MINS)**

Here you steer the focus towards the candidate's CV and relevant experience.

Question them on their current role and why they feel it has qualified them to apply for your vacancy.

Remember to start in a fairly general manner and then decide which topics you want to explore in more depth. Cover such topics as their reasons for wanting to leave their current position, potential conflict areas with colleagues, technical competencies and general work ethic.

The format of your questioning should be open-ended in manner, so that the applicant is forced to respond with a full answer, as opposed to a simple yes or no reply.

Use simple questions like "Can you elaborate a bit more?" or "...and what was the result of that?" to get them to expand upon their replies.

Typically any question that starts with "What..." , "How..." and "Why..." will require a comprehensive response.

You should be taking note of not only WHAT they are saying but HOW they are saying it. This is a very important part of the interview, as you will be able to pick up on many non verbal elements which will allude to their overall calibre as an individual.

## **DETAILED QUESTIONING (15 MINS)**

Spend a decent amount of time exploring any areas of concern or particular interest to you as a potential employer.

Use the above-mentioned open-ended questioning technique again to really drill down into their motivations, areas of strength or weakness and technical ability.

The aim here is to get the applicant to talk as much as possible in a focused manner in order to fully understand how they think and react to different situations.

As this will probably be the most pressurised stage of the interview for the applicant, you should try to take note of how they are responding to the pressure and if they are able to think on their feet.

This is also the stage where most people will try to make up an answer if they don't know it directly ... so be aware of what is fact and what is fantasy!

It's a good idea to jot down brief thoughts you are having as the interview progresses, so that you can refer back to them later.

Here's some questions you can ask during the interview ...

☺ "What are your goals and what are you doing to achieve them?"

This question reflects on whether the jobseeker knows where s/he is going and whether s/he can describe his/her goals in concrete terms.

☺ "What motivates you?"

This gives an indication of what is important to the jobseeker, such as money, status and recognition. You will get a good idea of whether the jobseeker's values fit in with the values and culture of the company.

☺ "What does success mean to you?"

This is another indication of the jobseeker's values.

☺ “What would your ideal job be?”

Is the jobseeker’s ideal job similar to the one that the jobseeker is applying for?

☺ “What do you like most about your past or present job?”

The answer will indicate the jobseeker’s values. If the jobseeker indicates that s/he loved the past job, you must find out what the jobseeker’s reasons for leaving were.

☺ “What was the single most important achievement in your previous job?”

Is the jobseeker ambitious? Did s/he achieve anything remarkable?

☺ “What were some of the major decisions you made in your last job without consulting your boss?”

This indicates the level of responsibility the jobseeker had in his/her last position; and it gives an indication of the jobseeker’s decision-making ability.

☺ “What do you want from this job, that is lacking in your present or past job?”

This indicates the jobseeker’s motivations ... BEWARE of jobseekers who criticize ex-employers.

☺ “What do you believe qualifies you for this job?”

A well-thought out answer shows maturity and confidence. This gives a good indication of whether the jobseeker has an accurate idea of what is required of the incumbent.

## **TAKING IT FORWARD AND CLOSING (10 MINS)**

Once you feel you have enough information to be able to assess the applicant, start winding the interview down by asking them ...

- ☺ If they have any other potential job offers on the table?
- ☺ What is their feeling towards a second interview?
- ☺ Would they be happy to have their backgrounds and psychometrics tested?

The aim here is to assess how eager they are to continue with the process now that they have met with you and have a feel for the company and job. Make it clear that you will not be entering into any form of salary negotiation as yet, as you aim to find the best candidate and not the cheapest.

You can again move the focus of the conversation towards more generic topics, as this allows the applicant to relax again and they may show more of themselves in the final minutes than they did in the earlier part of the interview.

It's important to find a balance between building up a good rapport with them while still maintaining control of the situation, as you are not looking to make friends here but to present a comfortable yet professional image of your company.

Make sure they are aware of when they expect to hear feedback from you and stick to the timescales given.

Take note of their body language as they leave and compare this with when they first arrived.

## **WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS DOWN ASAP**

As soon as the applicant has left, write down all your thoughts and opinions while they are still fresh in your mind.

Compare them with your thoughts after the telephone interview. It might even be a good idea to allocate a weighting system whereby you breakdown each part of the person into categories and rate them out of ten to get an overall score.

Here is an example:

Appearance	7/10
Introduction and greeting	8/10
Confidence and Mannerisms	7/10
Awareness of your company/research	4/10
Market Awareness	6/10
Relevant Experience	6/10
Technical Knowledge	9/10
Ability to respond to pressure questions	6/10
Eagerness for the role	8/10
Overall Calibre	7/10
	-----
TOTAL SCORE	68/100

## **STEP 4: HOW TO CONDUCT BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Once you have completed all the first round interviews, you will more than likely have at least two or three potential applicants who you feel could do the job and would fit in well within your organisation.

It's perfectly natural to want to delve even further into these candidates' backgrounds to make sure everything is what it seems. Of course this is dependent on the time you have at your disposal to fill this vacancy. Also for a relatively junior position, you may not want to expend any further effort. In which case, you may want to proceed directly to the offer stage.

But assuming the vacancy warrants further time and investment, there are several options available to you to ensure peace of mind with your "purchase" as such.

Most countries have well established and highly reputable applicant verification firms which are able to validate an applicant's credit, criminal and qualification credentials to ensure that the information presented to you by the jobseeker is 100% accurate.

These tests are all done on a "cost per test" basis, so you can choose which type of checks you need completed. You will need to get the applicant to sign a consent form and s/he will need to supply you with student numbers, copies of certificates etc. These tests usually take between 24 – 48 hours to return results and are very important. CV fraud is rife in all industries and a company cannot be too careful when it comes to making sure the candidate is being 100% truthful on his/her CV.

Furthermore, there are several online and offline establishments that offer psychometric testing on candidates ranging from 15 minute online assessments to full day, intensive testing, if the client requires this level of testing. It is important to note that while such tests can place a person into a broad category, the human element makes it virtually impossible for any test to completely, accurately assess an individual but they can tell what type of person the applicant is **LIKELY** to be.

They should therefore be used only as part of the overall process and not be the final decision maker. These tests also tend to only describe an individual using words that have positive connotations. They'll never use descriptions that describe the person in a negative manner. An example would be if Charles Manson took such a test he may be described as "extremely dominant" and "has the ability to influence others" but no test would use the terms "psychopath" and "probable serial killer" which are more accurate!

In order to arrange such testing, you will always need the applicant's express permission beforehand and full disclosure of the results to the candidate is required.

Another important issue to keep in mind is that such psychometric tests are subject to manipulation by respondents. If a respondent is able to predict what sort of outcome any given test is trying to elicit, they may be able to portray themselves in a more positive manner and therefore add their own bias to the test results. This is why we suggest that they only form a part of the entire candidate selection process.

Finally, for your protection, it is important to ensure that your selected vendor of psychometric assessments is registered with the relevant health professions authority in the country in which you operate. A non-successful jobseeker may have a case for unfair recruitment practice, if you have used a non-recognised testing mechanism.

## STEP 5: HOW TO NEGOTIATE THE PACKAGE

Once you have decided that a particular candidate has ...

- ☺ All the relevant experience
- ☺ Interviewed well
- ☺ A clear background track record
- ☺ Tested well in the psychometrics

.... It's time to make him/her an offer of employment!

In most cases this step will be relatively simple, as you will make the applicant an offer, they will accept it in writing and the deal is done. But there are occasions when you'll need to negotiate with the candidate or his/her representative agent because they feel they are possibly worth more than you were originally willing to pay.

A common mistake amongst employers is the idea that they want the BEST applicant out there but want to pay the LEAST amount of money for them.

Economic principles tell us that this is impossible, however, this seems to be everyone's aim!

It's my experience that companies with the least staff turnover are those which pay slightly ABOVE the market rate. If you have a stable work force, then you have a staff complement with retained knowledge of your business. Allowing you to focus on your core profit making centres, instead of spending time on recruiting to replace. Therefore, it makes sense to pay a reasonable package at the very least, in order to attract the best staff.

Furthermore if you pay your staff slightly more than the market average, it makes it very difficult for them to resign for a higher package offered elsewhere!

The process of negotiating a package can be an informal, verbal one whereby you state what you would like to pay and the candidate responds with either an acceptance or a refusal with a statement of what they would like to earn in order to consider the offer. This can be more formalised by making the initial and counter-offer in writing in the form of a 'Letter of Intent' but the concept is much the same.

It is also important to bear in mind that not all rejections of the initial offer are due to candidate greed. The best candidates in the marketplace will be acutely aware of their value and will not be keen to under-sell themselves. Bear in mind that if a person has a strong sense of self worth, they are likely to carry this self belief over into their daily commercial activities and reflect a confident image of your business to your clients. It might be an idea to set some sort of short term incentives for them to reach, with the agreed package increasing by a pre-determined percentage if they reach this target.

Certain employers prefer to use fringe benefits as a method of negotiation and bargaining, like offering an extra few days of annual leave as part of the total employment package, rather than increasing the cash component of the offer.

However, when you structure the offer, make sure that the terms are clearly defined and that all the finer details are communicated to the candidate in writing via a 'Final Letter of Intent'.

In all cases, the negotiation process should be handled professionally and without emotion. The key to a result which is acceptable to all parties is constant and open communication. Keep on asking yourself what the cost to your company would be if you did not have that resource in place, as in most cases it is far more than what the incumbent is asking.

Once both parties have agreed to a package, make sure this agreement is signed by everyone and the package details all aspects of the Conditions of Employment. Now you are ready to seal the deal and handle those dreaded counter-offers.

## **STEP 6: HOW TO SEAL THE DEAL AND AVOID A COUNTER OFFER**

### **COUNTER OFFERS:**

This is a topic of much contention. What most employers don't seem to realise is that a current employer making a counter-offer is actually a vote of confidence for both the applicant, as well as your own recruitment process. What they are effectively saying is that the applicant you want to employ is so valuable to them that they are willing to increase their current salary in order to keep them.

It's far more of a concern when the applicant resigns and their current employer celebrates the fact that they are leaving!

Another fact any employer needs to accept is that human nature is such that we are all driven primarily by money. Therefore, if a person is offered more money to stay in their current job, the likelihood is that s/he will accept this offer, regardless of whether that was his/her goal from the outset.

I have repeatedly asked jobseekers whom I have represented if there is any possibility of them accepting a counter offer and 99% of the time, they will say there is no chance. Yet most of the time, if a good counter offer is presented, they have taken it. The best way to handle this situation is to remain non-emotional and professional as it serves no purpose to scream and shout in this situation!

However, it is not all doom and gloom when a counter offer is presented. There are a few things you can point out to a prospective employee to minimise the chances of them accepting the counter offer ...

- Ask them to really think about why they chose to start job hunting in the first place. Was it just a money issue or were they unhappy with their current role and responsibility? If the latter, point out that earning more money is not going to remove this frustration.

- They should also ask themselves that if they are worth the new salary level being offered, why were they not being paid that in the first place? How much respect does an employer have for his staff member if s/he is willing to pay a higher salary yet has chosen to under pay them previously?
- Similarly, why did it come down to the employer having to “hold a gun to his/her head” to elicit a higher pay-package? Does that mean that each time they feel they need a salary increase they are going to have to go out into the job market?
- The applicant should also be made aware that they have now lost the trust of their current employer forever. Although they will get an increase in salary, the fact that they went out into the job market means they are not 100% loyal to the company. They are therefore unlikely to be considered for future promotions.

By highlighting the above issues you should be able to convince an applicant that accepting the counter offer would not be a good step for them in the long term. Of course it also depends on how they approached you with this information. Each case needs to be assessed independently to make sure they are not just playing the two employers off against each other!

It's usually not a good idea to get into a “horse trading” scenario. If you and the applicant have agreed to a certain package then it's best to stick to this offer and make sure they are aware of the longer term benefits of choosing your company.

At this stage a good calibre individual will have to make the choice between his/her current employer and your company. Whereas, a ‘chancer’ will want to try and prolong this process to keep on raising the stakes.

## Step 7 – How to Assess the Incumbent Post-Employment Offer

The final stage of this process is to make sure you close the loop by analysing all your recruitment decisions and employees.

Make sure the quality of your human resources are in line with your corporate HR strategies. This review process should be done at the very least once a year but probably more frequently in the first year of employment.

Common practice is for the first performance review to take place after 3 months of employment. The employee will have had ample time to settle in, learn about your company culture and procedures; and get used to his/her role responsibilities.

This meeting will also provide a forum for him/her to air any grievances and for the employer to highlight areas of weakness that need to be resolved.

As a minimum, the following issues should be addressed at the first review ...

- ☺ The employee's overall assessment of the first 3 months of employment at your company
- ☺ The employer's overall performance review of the employee
- ☺ Areas of strength to be commended
- ☺ Areas of concern to be discussed from both parties' perspective
- ☺ Feedback from the employee of his/her views on the companies overall recruitment process
- ☺ Training requirements?
- ☺ Any interpersonal issues?
- ☺ Targets or performance benchmarks to be set until the next review.
- ☺ Any other issues to be discussed in an open and confidential manner?

If the outcome of this review meeting is predominantly positive, then you can be fairly confident you have designed a robust recruitment process which has sourced and selected the best long-term candidate for the role. But unfortunately, even in the best companies, this will not always be the case and certain problem areas will inevitably come up as a result of this meeting.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that any problem areas be resolved in the first 6 months, as the first year is the most critical in terms of retaining and developing strong and loyal employees.

The areas of concern will need to be analysed and you will need to make every effort to get them working at the required level by offering extra training and assistance to resolve these issues.

Every country has differing legislation with regards to this requirement but in general, once the employee commences work, the employer has an obligation to take every possible step to make sure they have the tools and facilities available to them to do the required job. Dismissal procedures are usually long-winded and therefore should be used as a last resort.

It would also be a good idea to constantly refer back to the recruitment process and try to ascertain why you selected a person that was not right for the role or the company. Then, hopefully avoid such selection mistakes in future appointments. It is only by a constant process of self-analysis that a truly robust, world class recruitment process can be engineered.

After the first year of employment, it will probably only be necessary to conduct annual performance reviews but make sure that an open door policy is maintained should any short-term issue arise. It is also vital to implement a strong succession planning policy to motivate employees to strive to better themselves to have a very real opportunity for upward promotion in the company.

## **In Closing....**

Companies need to be aware that the recruitment process above will form an integral part of their overall corporate HR process. Therefore they must seek to achieve the goals of the company's HR strategy.

The first step in devising this strategy would be to accept that a company's most valuable asset is its human capital and therefore give the sourcing and selection process the required priority when it comes to budget allocation.

The best possible example of this strategy working to grow a company exponentially is that of Google Inc, as Larry Page and Sergey Brin realised that their selection of employees would determine the future of the corporation. It's no co-incidence that one of the world's fastest growing and profitable companies also has one of the happiest staff complements in the world. They have implemented dynamic HR policies ... such as free restaurant quality food and drink for all staff, a comfortable and homely working environment, hundred of forums for employees to air their views and the most unique working hours versus private time structure ever devised!

It is a global fact that the best international companies have attracted the best staff and are constantly innovating new methods of sourcing top talent.

After all, it's not the desks, chairs, PC's or products that make a company what it is but it's the people who you buy from or sell to that will take your company from good to great.

Use this 7 steps guideline to ensure your company creates a world class recruitment process which will stand the test of time and will help springboard your profits significantly in the long term.

## ABOUT KYLE WATKINS



For the last 5 years, my background has been in several forms of specialised recruitment from both a temporary outsourcing and a permanent employment perspective.

My exposure has been to such varied industry sectors as investment banking, freight logistics and property recruitment within a global environment.

My client lists have included such well known names as Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch, Maersk-Safmarine, MSC and Lew Geffen International Properties.

Having experienced, first hand, the best and worst of corporate recruitment practices, I am well placed to comment on best practice with regards to devising a world class recruitment process and strategy.