

Recruiting and Inducting People



Recruitment Process

The statement "business is all about people" is one of those truisms that is often said but often not well understood. People are one of the most important assets because of the skills they have. The right attitude is also very important. However, without the right skills, attitude is not enough. So look for these when assessing the people you have and the people you want to recruit; and in that order, skills first, attitude second.

When recruiting a new employee, you need to think through what the job is. Bureaucratic though it may sound, there is no substitute for writing a job description. This should cover the purpose of the job, the main tasks and then the skills, experience, qualifications, personal attributes and attitudes needed. From that can be derived the specification for them to be able to do the job - the person specification.

It is also important to decide the pay and benefits you want to offer which will attract the right calibre of person. To avoid wasting time, get the "terms and conditions" of the job on the table at the outset.

Many companies have had bad experiences of selecting people.

Recruiting good people is not easy, but you can do a lot to reduce the risk. Focus on the skills and experience you require. Test candidates in the things that are important to their speed, efficiency and know-how. Ask them detailed questions about what they have done personally in pursuit of their job with past employers. Do they know what they are talking about, does it ring true, can they produce real evidence of their contribution, as opposed to what the company and others did?

Always see your short list of candidates twice. You will be surprised how differently people come across at the second interview.



Induction Process

Once you have got a new person on board, make sure you do not just leave them to get on with it themselves. This is your opportunity to impart the culture and attitudes you want from them. This is not about being interfering.

But, if you want clean and tidy workshops or offices, this is the time to make that clear - it is a company culture you want to impart.

You have hired them for their skills. So ask them how they propose to tackle things.



By asking, you are showing them respect for their knowledge. If you have some strong views about how something should be done, discuss it. Get them to meet all the people they need to know and interact with. That does not mean that you have to organise all this yourself. Give them a list of the people and parts of the organisation you want them to meet and get to know. Ask them to organise it for themselves over the next month.

Doing it this way shows you want people who are self-starters. Get them to tell you what their first impressions are. How would they approach things? What are their thoughts on what needs to be done to get their tasks done and fulfil their job's goals? At the same time, you are getting a feel for their capabilities and attitudes from which you can start to make a judgement about how well they will contribute and fit in. Remember, you have two years in which to decide if a person is right for your business without having to go through the disciplinary process demanded by law after that. If it is not working out, that should not come as a surprise to the person involved at the end of the year.

And, do not leave things to the last day. You should abide by their notice period, so, if that is a calendar month, you only have 11 months in which to do this. Hopefully this will not be necessary, but it is as well to be aware.

Retaining and Removing People

Retaining Staff

One of the keystones of good staff retention is hiring people with the right skills and cultural fit. Non-performers and misfits will soon leave and high staff turnover is costly on output and team morale.

Make your staff feel valued, a part of the organisation. Make them feel that what they do is important and that you as the boss appreciate it.

Your pay and benefits package needs to be competitive. Scrimping on salaries unnecessarily will cause itchy feet. These days, applicants look at the whole package on offer. If you can offer benefits such as a bonus scheme, private health insurance, a pension and a good holiday allowance, these will make you attractive as an employer.

Do your staff have clarity about their role, what is expected and the targets to be achieved? This will motivate them to work hard and to take pride in their achievements. Give them authority to make decisions in their area, so that each "owns" his or her particular role. This increases self-worth and makes them feel valued - the strongest motivators, far above the salary cheque. But delegate, don't abdicate.

Be supportive. No company should be tolerant of repeated failure, but people like to feel that if they make a mistake when giving it their all, they will be supported. A blame culture is a killer.



Words of praise are worth much more than a salary increase.

Build a team, a force far greater than the sum of its parts. It will utilise its members' strengths, support them in difficult times and cover temporary gaps without loss of performance.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Talk to your team regularly. Tell them how the company is doing, both good and bad. Not only will they feel part of the organisation, they are far more likely to be right behind you if the going gets tough.

Consider regular staff performance reviews. These should bring together all the informal chats over coffee, meetings and similar events over the review period. They mustn't contain any surprises, such as problems long gone and never before mentioned.

Refer to the past but focus on the future. Such reviews may not suit every organisation, so think hard before introducing them.

Have a formal training programme. This benefits the company in ensuring it has the skills to move forward and it benefits staff because they feel the company cares and values them and they gain new skills. Don't tolerate poor performance; you can't afford it.

If you do nothing, the cancer will spread to other staff and their respect for you will diminish.

Removing Staff

Essentially, there are only three ways to remove staff:

- Dismissal on the grounds of performance, conduct or capability
- Redundancy

Retirement

Dismissal

Dismissal is a serious step, but if an employee's performance does not improve after counselling, help or warnings, you have no choice. Any dismissal must be fair, and you must have written disciplinary and grievance procedures in place. For new staff, it is wise to have a probationary period, during which either side can terminate the contract at short notice.

Always start with an informal and advisory chat. Try to get to the bottom of the problem, which may lie in personal circumstances. Be supportive, offer help and stress you want to see the person back to their old self. If the situation doesn't improve, you may need to move to a verbal warning. If that fails, it will be a written warning. The last resort is a final written warning, then dismissal if there is no improvement.

Redundancy

Making staff redundant is now more complex and the law more demanding. Before identifying staff at risk of redundancy, you need to devise a fair method of selection, including criteria for selection. It's mandatory to consult with staff, inform them of the situation and of the criteria to be used. Once the at risk staff have been identified, they must be advised in writing, then consulted individually about ideas and proposals they may have to avoid or reduce redundancies. It is wise to consult an HR specialist if contemplating redundancies.

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