



APPLICANT HANDLING A GUIDE TO SUCCESS

CV SCREENING & SHORTLISTING



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INTRODUCTION



Having written a great job description, remuneration package and posted your well crafted job advert, all you now need to do is wait for the CV's to role in.

Unfortunately it is not quite that easy, especially if you are tied up with other matters and recruiting may not be your prime role.

Each application CV will need referencing, reviewing and matching to the role., filtering out the wheat from the chaff!

How you go about doing this will determine whether you manage to filter the right applicants in the right manner to ensure no golden nugget slips the net. There is no point in getting the job advert perfect only to allow good applicants to become victim to an ineffective applicant management process. Unfortunately this is all too often the case and produces a waste of advert response, let alone time and expensive advertising costs and it goes without saying that reputational damage to your employer brand could result if applicants feel they have been treated unfairly.

APPLICANT TRACKING

Once the CV's do start rolling in it is then a question of how do you manage them, who manages them, and how do you keep this process consistent?

An applicant workflow will need to be adopted that ensures you know what you have done with a CV, where it is and at what stage of the process you have reached with each one.

Imagine if your advert response is off the wall and has produced hundreds of applicants that need trawling through! Great, especially if your job advert is good, but very time and labour intensive.

Those responsible for this part of the hiring process need a toolbox of techniques early on to allow them to sort the wheat from the chaff.

These tools can either be in the form of an on-line tracking process or a manually intensive option. In either case the process should be capable of receiving applications, screening out unsuitable applicants, compiling a shortlist based against pre-set criteria and tracking the progress of each candidate through the recruitment process.

Such a tool is of great use to both applicant and hirer alike as it is easy to quickly determine where the application is in the process. Think of it as a DHL parcel tracking system for CV's.

There are many many on-line applicant tracking systems available on the market and it really depends on whether your organisation has the resource to implement and run such a system or whether you may be better off engaging with a recruitment organisation who already operates one and can very quickly apply this tool to your business.



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CV SCREENING



Today's hirers face the virtual equivalent of a bulging postbag of applications for every vacancy advertised.

But relax, there are tools and techniques to help you manage your way through this and help you find that golden nugget candidate and fill your job vacancy.

There are a variety of CV sifting techniques all with pro's and cons.

CV sifting (or screening) enables you to reduce the size of the applicant pool for a vacancy by applying qualifying criteria for the role at an early stage of the application process.

Typically this is done via an on-line process as part of an electronic applicant tracking system that receives the on-line applications and filters via on-line tests using pre-determined criteria that is taken from the role description and performance profile.

The main advantage of using such a system is that, once the automated process is developed, it can very quickly and efficiently reduce applications to a manageable shortlist, send out automated rejection emails, and issue invitations for the next stage of the recruitment process saving the hirer significant time thus reducing the time to hire cycle.

One has to be careful when developing the process as savvy applicants can attempt to cheat the system by using key words in their CV or application that are not necessarily correct but satisfy the systems requirements to flow through to the next phase. Or the key word may be picked up in a negative context but the system still processes the CV as being suitable. For example; if you wanted an applicant to hold an "HND Electronics qualification" but the applicant had said they do not currently hold a "HND Electronics qualification", then the system would still progress this CV to the next stage.

In theory at least, because all candidates are subjected to the same process, without human judgment, on-line screening is an objective and fair way of developing a shortlist.

To purchase a bespoke suite of online sifting tools for a specialist role could cost £1000-£1500 which may be prohibitive, particularly if you will not use it again. However, engaging with a recruitment firm who already has a system can greatly reduce these costs and the time of implementation.

TELEPHONE SCREEN



It is good practice to conduct a brief telephone screening interview before the shortlisting process.

It would be too time consuming to telephone screen all applicants but it forms a good second screening function for applicants that have succeeded following the initial CV screening.

At this stage the telephone interview is not intended to form an in depth assessment of the applicants suitability but is intended to determine if they meet the shortlist criteria and should last no more than 20-30 minutes unless the role is of a senior nature.

Ideally the telephone screening interview should consist of a script setting out the questions the interviewer should ask to each applicant. Depending on the applicants response, the interviewer may wish to ask further questions but these should only be to delve deeper into the responses as they relate to the original question. The script and focused approach to this stage ensures a consistent process across all candidates.

Telephone interviews at this stage of the process are usually intended to allow the interviewer to assess if the applicant has the skills and attributes to meet the shortlist criteria and should contain questions that can easily filter out those applicants that do not. For example; if you're job advert contained a specific acronym or standard that a qualified applicant would know the meaning of, then this could be an excellent filter question.

Applicants should be contacted prior to arrange a convenient time for the telephone interview and to explain it's purpose. The actual interview should script should include;

1. Interview purpose
2. The questions (ideally no more than 5)
3. An opportunity for the applicant to ask questions
4. Next steps and by when



SHORTLISTING

Shortlisting is only the first stage in the selection process to choose the best candidate for the job and involves the hirer reviewing those applicants that have progressed through the screening phases, to identify a final list of candidates (note the change from applicants at this stage) for the second stage, when typically assessment by interviews and/or tests take place.

It is a more in-depth process than screening whereby the hirer assesses applicants against a shortlist criteria to help reduce the applicant pool to a more manageable field of candidates for final selection.



The shortlisting criteria should refer to the job description and performance profile for the role. (see our guide ; Killer job descriptions). These documents indicate the essential and desirable criteria that shortlisted candidates need to reach.

A shortlisting criteria also ensures the organisation can fully justify its shortlist decisions and demonstrate an objective and consistent selection process which protects against any legal implications such as an unfair or discriminatory selection process which, in turn ensures the employer brand equity is maintained.

Selecting the shortlisting criteria can often be organisation specific however there are 4 key areas that ought to be included;

1. Education or qualification level
2. Skills required
3. Type of experience
4. Behavioural competencies

The "essential criteria" are requirements the candidate must satisfy to do the job whereas the "desirable criteria" can be set as a way of distinguishing between candidates that satisfy the essential criteria but also offer additional qualities or attributes. You may only choose to use the desirable criteria where you need to reduce the shortlisted candidates further still.

A shortlisting assessment form is a good way of ensuring a systematic and consistent approach is followed and can be recorded as evidence to support the selection decisions.

Alongside the assessment form you should also develop a scoring system against the shortlisting criteria that carries a ranking and weighting calculation for each criteria. The score achieved can be used to apply a minimum score selection criteria.



CONCLUSION

We could not hope to cover off every single facet of the applicant screening process in this guide but hopefully it has given you quite a bit to think about and some practical hints to conducting the process.

At **RecQuest** we recognise that the idea of performing a full recruitment process or even the applicant assessment component can be overwhelming and a daunting prospect. After all, getting it wrong isn't really an option in today's competitive business landscape and the war for talent that is ever more brutal.

If you feel you would prefer to outsource the running of your job applicant assessment process (or any other part of the recruitment process), but hate the thought of a traditional recruitment agency fee, why not get in touch with **RecQuest**?

We can provide you with the flexible resource and support to fulfill your requirements in an efficient, stress free and cost effective manner typically saving 60% over traditional recruitment agency fees.

It is recruitment redefined.

We hope you enjoyed this guide and happy recruiting!

ABOUT RecQuest



We're passionate about recruitment innovation and genuinely believe in our "recruitment redefined" tag line.

Who says recruitment fees have to be based on a % of the salary? One idea is that this methodology came from America in the 1930's and was an arbitrary sum applied to illegal racketeering that somehow found its way into legitimate early recruitment business practice.

The author of this white paper, Mark Cooksey has over 25 years experience in the recruitment industry having cut his teeth working for an independent recruitment pioneer, becoming its Managing Director. Then followed a senior management position with an AIM listed recruitment company before Mark established his own way in the recruitment world.

Starting his own business from scratch and growing it to become one of the fastest growing recruitment business in the UK earned him a place in the Virgin

FastTrack 100 league and he was a semi finalist in the prestigious Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year programme. Mark was also elected by his peers to be the Chairman of the recruitment industry trade body, The REC Technical Division.

Mark was an early adopter of managed service and shared risk recruitment practices as they emerged in the UK and has always had this ethos as his driver in providing businesses with an innovative recruitment solution.

Now as founder of Burford Jones, he has launched **RecQuest** with the explicit aim of disrupting the traditional recruitment agency model, to provide game changing recruitment solutions and pricing models to shake up the sector.

Mark looks forward to this exciting challenge and welcomes any enquiries and can be contacted via the website or at mark@burfordjones.com

