



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

How to... Successfully recruit to your organisation

Introduction

Whether you are recruiting your first paid employee, adding a new member to your team, or simply recruiting to a vacant position, recruitment is a vital part of any growing organisation. Although the idea may be a simple one, the investment in terms of time and money can be vast. Getting it right first time can be a vital way to save resources, and this guide should serve as a good basis to start your next recruitment campaign.

Note that this guide is intended as a brief document to cover some of the general aspects of recruitment. If you require more detailed information, please see NCVO's [*Good Guide to Employment*](#) - the latest edition was published in January 2010.

This guide will cover the following areas:

- *Where to begin*
- *Job Description*
- *Person Specification*
- *Going to advert*
- *Applications*
- *Shortlisting and inviting to interviews*
- *The interview*
- *Selecting a candidate – what to do next*
- *Other considerations*
- *Further information*

Where to begin

As a first step, it is always worth spending some time to determine what your organisation needs out of this recruitment drive. As already mentioned, recruitment can end up being a costly process, so it's important to have a clear idea of the exact requirements before going along the pathway to prevent unnecessary waste of resources. Some things to take in to consideration are:

- Is the need long or short term?
- Have you considered using a fixed term contract?
- Will the role be full or part time?
- What hours will you require them for?
- Who will manage the new employee?
- How much will they be paid?

For more information on types of contract, please refer to our guide entitled "Contracts, Pay, Pension and Other Benefits".

Job Description

Once you have decided the basics of your new employee, you will need to review or create the job description (JD). The purpose of a JD is to outline all of the roles and responsibilities of a post. This is something that a new employee will be expected to work to, but is also something a prospective employee will look at when deciding whether to apply for this particular position. It is therefore important to take care when creating this document, and to provide enough detail for an employee to be able to follow.

If a JD already exists for the role you are recruiting to, now is a good time to review it. Jobs are quite a fluid entity, and they do change over time. Ask yourself whether everything on the JD is still relevant, and whether anything new has been added to this role.

The following is adapted from the Good Guide to Employment and is a good template to use for a JD:

Job Title: Personal Assistant
Responsible To: Director
Responsible For: Office Administration

Purpose of role

To be responsible for providing administrative support to the Director and for ensuring smooth running of the office.

Key Responsibilities

1. To manage the Director's diary, including booking meetings and making travel arrangements
2. To arrange Trustee meetings and take minutes
3. To manage the information services (reference library, filing system, database and address list).
4. To ensure input to (organisation's) database is consistent and accurate
5. To manage the stationary supplies, ensuring there is always adequate stationary and that the costs are controlled
6. To manage the photocopier contracts
7. To provide general administrative support to the director
8. To undertake all duties in a way that values others, does not discriminate and promotes diversity
9. To undertake any other duties as may be required from time to time.

The key points to note here is that the JD is specific but leaves flexibility within the role. It is always good practice to include the above point 9 as this leaves the role open to change. You should also include the date at which the JD was written or updated.

Person Specification

The person specification is an additional document to the JD. Note that the JD cannot be used as a person specification, nor can a person specification be used

as a JD. You will need to create both for each role you need to recruit to. Similarly, if advertising an existing role, make sure that both documents exist and are up to date.

A person specification is a document that outlines the required skills and experience for a role. It is this document that will be used to help you shortlist your applicants.

It is important that everything you put in this document meets the following criteria:

- 1) Each item must be required for the job; failing to do this can result in applicants being rejected or not applying when they may be a suitable candidate. For example, if you require someone to have a degree, make sure you have a justification for why you are asking for this.
- 2) Each item must be measurable. As you use this document in the shortlisting process, you need to be able to find evidence of your entry in their CV or application form. If it is experienced based, make sure their work history would be able to demonstrate it.
- 3) Don't be subjective – avoid terms such as “good word processing skills” and stick to objective facts like “able to type xx words per minute”.

An example person specification:

PERSON SPECIFICATION		
Job title:	Personal Assistant	
CRITERIA	E or D*	S or I**
KNOWLEDGE Knowledge of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, databases and electronic diary management A knowledge of office procedures	E E	S/I I
SKILLS Able to prioritise and carry out administrative tasks independently. Shows initiative and takes personal responsibility for completing tasks. Able to communicate with others courteously on routine matters. Adopts a positive attitude - willing to assist others even when busy. Able to write clearly, with correct grammar and punctuation. Able to work under pressure on occasions, to achieve administrative deadlines. Able to type quickly (60wpm) and accurately Able to pay attention to detail, ensuring that nothing is forgotten.	E E E E E E E	I I I I S/I I I I
EXPERIENCE Previous experience of administration (in paid or unpaid work), including: drafting correspondence independently; diary management; and dealing with a variety of administrative matters simultaneously. Experience of taking minutes.	E D	S/I S/I

Experience of supervising others.	D	S/I
QUALIFICATIONS No specific qualifications required.		
CIRCUMSTANCES This post is based at our Head Office in xxxx. The post is a full time job, but we will positively consider applications from part time workers and job sharers. Flexible working hours are available for this post. There is a very occasional requirement for evening/ weekend work in this job.		
*E = essential criteria D = desirable criteria **S = shortlisting criteria I = interview criteria		

Going to advert

Having followed the above steps, you will have all the necessary documents to move on to the advertising stage. As with all HR processes, it is best to keep a record of everything you do from this point as if you are perceived to be unfair at any stage, you can be taken to an Employment Tribunal.

Your advert needs to be tailored to where it is being placed, but should usually include who you are, what you do, what the job is and what the salary is. Don't forget to include contact details – the more methods of contact the better.

When going to advert, you may wish to look at the following:

Internal: Make sure you advertise all your posts internally as well as externally. This method can help support career development. Sometimes, you may want to advertise internally prior to going external.

Jobcentre Plus: This is a good place to start as they offer a free of charge service. Your vacancy is put online as well as on computers in the job centres themselves. They also offer services such as use of interview rooms.

Websites: Many recruitment websites exist. These can sometimes be more costly. Examples that cater for the third sector include www.ncvo-jobshop.org.uk, www.charitypeople.com, www.jobsincharity.co.uk, www.jobsincharities.co.uk and www.charityjob.com.

Newspapers and magazines: These will generally be more expensive than websites. Try to use publications linked to your role, for example, an HR journal for an HR post – or a voluntary sector magazine for work in the voluntary sector. The larger your advert, the more it will cost.

Agencies: There are many recruitment agencies available. For further information, see www.workingforacharity.org.uk. Note that agencies are very costly, but can be good at finding sector specific people, such as IT specialists.

More comprehensive information on where to advertise can be found in NCVO's [The Good Guide to Employment](#).

Advertising in a variety of places will help to promote diversity in your workforce, for example, by placing advertisements in community specific publications. For information on targeting candidates with disabilities, JobCentre Plus can help you. You can also find a range of practical suggestions for promoting diversity in recruitment through Business Link (www.businesslink.gov.uk) and also the Equality and Human Rights Commission website (www.equalityhumanrights.com).

In certain circumstances, you may wish to only accept applicants from certain backgrounds. Whilst not advised, there are some situations where this is deemed necessary, for example, for reasons of decency and privacy (eg in recruiting a female carer to wash and dress female clients). This is termed a Genuine Occupational Requirement and is acceptable when it can be justified beyond doubt. The terms "Genuine Occupational Requirement" must be stated in the advert if using this. For more information about Genuine Occupational Requirements, visit the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills website:

www.dius.gov.uk/higher_education/widening_participation/professional_recruitment_guide/legal_issues

Applications

You will need to decide the format in which you will receive your applications and make this clear in your advert. Taking CV's can help you save time by not having to write an application and are fine when you don't receive many applicants. However, as CV's do not follow a set format, it can be better to create an application form, as this will make the shortlisting process easier when checking applications against criteria from your person specification.

Application forms are also deemed to be better tools to use as firstly, their constant format helps to reduce any potential bias. Secondly, they can be used to collect monitoring information on things like sex, race and religion. If using monitoring information, try and keep this on a separate page so that it can be removed before shortlisting to remove any potential bias.

Try to avoid asking for education dates as these will be irrelevant and can lead to accidental age discrimination. An example of an age-neutral application form is available from the Employers' Forum on Age:

www.efa.org.uk/policy/recruitment.asp

You will want to ask permission to contact references after interview should they be successful.

For examples of application forms, you can go to www.acas.org.uk and search for "hiring new staff".

In addition to the application form, you may wish to create an application pack, containing a covering letter (including closing dates, who to contact etc), job description, person specification, equality and diversity policy, summary of terms and conditions of employment and an already separated out equal opportunities monitoring form.

You could also include a statement of your organisation's positive attitude towards ex-offenders and that criminal records will only be taken into account if relevant to the job.

Shortlisting and inviting to interviews

As previously mentioned, after the closing date, make sure you remove all monitoring information from your applications. This will not apply if you are using CVs.

If possible, get a few people together to do the shortlisting. Again, if possible, try to keep these people different from the ones who received the applications to help reduce bias.

Shortlisting as a process then requires you to compare applicant information against the desirable and essential criteria. You should take the essential in to consideration when deciding who to invite to interview first. If you have too many applicants, use the desirable column too. You should aim to get no more than eight people to interview.

You may also wish to have a policy in line with the "Two Ticks" system use by JobCentre Plus, where by you shortlist any person with a disability who meets all the essential criteria.

Once you have selected your candidates for interview, ensure you have a room or venue on a date where a panel is available. A panel should include people of relevant seniority or people who know the job role well. Whatever happens, make sure there are at least two people on the panel. It is also common now to include service users on the panel. This is good practice, and if you go ahead with this suggestion, make sure you help them prepare by giving them some questions to ask.

You will then need to write to candidates telling them where the interview will be, how long it will last, provide a map of the location, detail documents they may need (for example proof of work permit), who they should ask for on arrival, details of any tests you wish to give them and a statement expressing your willingness to cater for those with a disability or religious belief.

Before the interview, prepare some questions and decide who is asking what. You should create questions from the person specification. There is also a tendency to lean towards competency based questioning. For example, if one of the requirements is to organise one's own workload, you could prepare a question about how applicants have gone about organising their workload in previous employment or voluntary work.

Be prepared to answer questions about your organisation.

Tips:

- Don't hold your interviews on dates of major religious festivals
- Make sure you have made adjustments for candidates with special requirements
- Keep the timings flexible to help support people with outside commitments
- Switch off all mobile phones
- Let other staff members know to expect candidates arriving or arrange for someone to 'meet and greet' candidates
- Allow enough time for each interview – and this includes short breaks for the panel
- Hold the interview in a room that is quiet. If you have internal candidates, you may want hold the interviews eg away from the main staff area

The interview

When candidates arrive, make sure to greet them and offer them a drink. This can help alleviate any nerves and make you more approachable. It's also a good idea to use an ice-breaker such as asking them about their journey.

Once seated, introduce the panel and explain the format of the interview. Explain you and the panel will be taking notes and that this is not something to worry about. When interviewing, stick to the prepared questions but probe where necessary. Try to avoid closed questions with "yes" and "no" answers as you won't get any useful information. You may also need to be prepared to rephrase questions if needed.

Remember to keep notes from the interview and thank them when you are done!

There are a variety of other selection methods that are available including assessment centres, role plays, presentations, practical tests and psychometric tests. For further information, see *NCVO's Good Guide to Employment*.

Selecting a candidate – what to do next

Once the interviews are over, it is a good idea to discuss the candidates with the panel straight away as the information will be fresh in your mind. You may want to assign a scoring system, for example, 1 to 3 for each of the criteria on your person specification. You can compare what was said in the interview to the criteria.

Be wary of just going on scoring alone though as someone may have been perfect in all areas except one and that area may not be of as equal importance as the others.

If you get a lot of good candidates, you will need to be able to justify why you chose the person you did and be prepared to give feedback to unsuccessful applicants if they ask for it.

Once you have made your choice, you will need to offer them the position. Do this in the form of a letter, and explain that the offer is provisional pending reference checks, enhanced CRB check (if needed) and any immigration checks. Also explain in the letter that you will be approaching references. Once this offer is accepted, send decline letters to the other candidates.

You will now need to contact references. You may wish to design a form for this and it could include:

- The applicant name
- Post applied for
- Who you are
- Where the form should be returned to and when
- A request of duties undertaken in their previous role
- Their reasons for leaving
- Any current disciplinary information on their file
- A statement about reliability, attendance, performance and trustworthiness
- Sickness Absence Information over the past 24 months and number of occasions
- Any other information they feel may be useful

Only approach references when an offer has been accepted and do not use them to decide between candidates. You may however use them to decline a candidate if the reference is not satisfactory.

People do not have to supply a reference, but if they do, then by law, the content must be true. Be wary of any situations where you may think a referee may be prejudiced.

Once you have completed all of the necessary checks, you are ready to formally appoint your new employee. You will need to send them their contract to sign and complete any necessary plans for induction on their start date, which you will confirm with them in writing alongside their contract after the checks are complete.

Other considerations

There are several considerations to take which are explained in more detail in the new *Good Guide to Employment* by NCVO. These include:

- When to use a CRB and how to do it
- The Independent Safeguarding Authority
- Checks under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006

Further information

For further information on criminal record checks, visit:

[Criminal Records Bureau](#)

[Independent Safeguarding Authority](#)

[Department for Children Schools and Families](#)

For information on employing migrant workers:

[UK borders Agency](#)