



Iwan Thomas Associates
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Finding the Right People

It's only when the tide goes out that you learn who's been swimming naked. In boom times mistakes stay hidden, but in a recession our inadequacies are exposed. This applies particularly to selecting job candidates.

The wrong appointment can simply lead to the process being repeated in a few months, with attendant costs. Worse still the wrong recruits may in the meantime alienate clients or other staff. Now that there is a choice of candidates, the selection process needs to be as effective as possible.

The Advertisement

Whatever the medium, it helps to have an arresting advert.



However, the aim is not to generate a large response, which just increases the work of sifting CV's, but rather the right response. According to the book Parkinson's Law, the perfect job advert produces only one single response, ***but that is the right person for the job***. That may seem extreme, but one classic advert appeared in the Times in 1900:

MEN WANTED for Hazardous Journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success – Ernest Shackleton.

This has the effect of spelling out the job description in a few words, and of ensuring that unsuitable applicants did not apply. It is therefore worth giving some thought to deciding what the job really is.

Picking the Right Person

Many law firms still rely on a traditional unstructured interview, unless of



course they are appointing a secretary when there may be a typing test. However, there are inherent dangers ranging from unskilled interviewers to allegations of bias, and sometimes such interviews appear only to establish that the candidate is personable. Comparing one interview with another is difficult since there is no objective standard used.

The alternative is to use more than one method of assessment. After initial screening (perhaps including a telephone interview), this might include

- ✓ One or more structured interviews, using standardized questions tailored to the requirements of the post. This will mean that different interviews can be compared and scored objectively.
- ✓ A personality test, such as a Prevue, which is tailored to the requirements of the post. Once again this provides objectivity, as well as greater knowledge of the candidate. The results of the test can also be explored in an interview.
- ✓ A skills assessment test. A typing test may be required for a secretary, yet more senior staff have traditionally not needed to demonstrate their expertise. Suitable skills assessment tests for qualified staff do not have to include a full assessment centre. They may instead just be a case study to explore knowledge of law and procedure, and say an in-tray test (although someone in the firm should know the answers). Again the results of the tests can form the basis of an interview.



Conclusion

It is a cliché that Law is a people business, yet many firms can improve their selection procedures to ensure that they have the right people in the right jobs. Taking a blended approach will not lead to perfect recruitment, but should improve the chances of success.

And then the recruits have to be properly managed.

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