

SPECIAL ACTION REPORT



How To Deal With "nightmare" Customers And "
High Maintenance" Customers

How To Avoid Hiring Nuts, Lemons And Layabouts

An estimated 30% of “blue collar” employees, and 10% of others, leave within the first four weeks of employment. And, guess what? They’re not the nuts, lemons and layabouts. Yet, both the early leavers and the nuts, lemons and layabouts are major components of the same problem - poor staff selection.

Estimated Costs Of Recruiting An Executive - \$15,000 to \$80,000

Note this well: The costs of staff replacement are enormous and not readily understood by managers . Recent studies indicate that it costs between \$15,000 - \$80,000 to recruit somebody for an executive position.

The tangible costs include:

- Advertising
- Time involved in interviewing
- Credit and reference checks
- Agency fees
- Psychological tests and various other means of determining the ability of the candidates
- Telephone calls and paper work
- Relocation costs, etc.

There are also some significant intangible costs to be borne in mind, including:

- Internal disruption to the usual work routine
- Reduced efficiency and productivity while the gap exists
- Possibility of a decline in product and service standards.
- Possibility of a loss of sales and customer goodwill

And then there are the potential “dirty costs” of hiring nuts, lemons and layabouts:

- Industrial disputation
- Legal costs
- Claims for unfair dismissal

Plus stress, worry, emotional trauma, and misdirected focus. etc., etc.

These costs can be substantially reduced by better recruitment/selection techniques at the job interview.

The Key Aspects Of Staff Recruitment – In A Nut Shell

Much has been written on this subject, and just about all of it says the same thing – nothing new ever arises. But, my goodness... how we flaunt the basics. Please, please, please, note this:

- Define the job in writing by giving specific details of the functions to be performed, the approximate time each function takes, the qualifications and experience required, etc. A sample of a typical Job Specification Form is included later in this section.
- Analyse the various advertising media to determine the most likely to attract the ideal applicant.
- Check and re-check your advertisement to ensure it is crystal clear about the person you are seeking. Remember anti-discrimination legislation when wording the advertisement.
- Use standard application forms to ensure that all detail obtained from applicants are comparable.
- Preplan the interview by framing relevant questions to ask the applicant.
- Always check references to determine the personality, experience and ability of the applicant. Credit checks and criminal checks may also be useful.
- Insist on submitting the applicant to a practical test. If they say they can type a standard business letter at 100wpm, or drive a bobcat in a confined space, make them prove it.
- Upon completion of the interview, attempt to analyse the applicants' suitability by using standard review forms (so that a uniform approach can be adopted when reviewing all of the job applicants).

Once all applicants have been reviewed and the decision made, it is good business practice to advise the successful applicant in writing, setting out clearly the terms and conditions of the employment offer. At the same time, letters should be sent to the unsuccessful applicants thanking them for their time and effort. This does the goodwill of the business no harm.

ESTABLISHING THE NEED

First up, let's ask the most important question:

Do you really need to create that new job or fill the vacancy?

Don't make the mistake of creating new jobs as a "knee jerk" reaction to a temporary overload problem. Think the matter through carefully and ask your fellow workers for their thoughts.

The following questions will help you make up your mind:

- What is the purpose of the new job?
- What tasks will the new job encompass?
- Is anybody currently performing these tasks?
- How long have the employees who presently perform these tasks been overloaded?
- Is the additional workflow the result of permanent extra work or is it the result of a "hiccup" in the usual business cycle?

- Is there enough work for a full-time employee?
- Can the extra work be handled by any of these means:
 - Hiring temporary assistance
 - Getting current staff to work extra periods
 - Sub-contracting the work to others
 - Streamlining the work procedures
 - Re-allocating other job requirements
- What is the worst scenario if the work remains undone, or is late in completion?
- Will the need for this new position exist in 12 months' time... in two years' time?
- How much will the new job position cost? (Consider all on-costs, like superannuation, training, administrative expenses, etc., as well.)
- Can the new position be filled from within the ranks of present employees?
- How do the employees feel about the need for the new position?
- Does the labour market have sufficient candidates from which to choose?

Question: Once the need for the job has been decided, what should be done?

Answer: A job description form should be completed indicating the various functions of the job. A job specification form should also be prepared, outlining the attributes and skills of the ideal candidate. The more planning you put into these profiles, the better will be your recruiting prospects.

As the saying goes:

"If you don't know what you're looking for, you won't know what you've got".

CONDUCTING JOB INTERVIEWS

Here's what usually happens, and it costs \$\$\$\$\$\$\$:

Untrained employers talking generalities about jobs they have not analysed to would-be employees about whom they know little...and then deciding whether or not to offer them a job!

Of course, this approach almost guarantees a disastrous outcome!

Poor interviewing can produce adverse results. It looks easy, and we are all inclined to think we are good at it. Those guilty of poor interviewing techniques are either unaware of, or have lost sight of, the three main objectives in any interviewing process.

- The first and most obvious objective is to establish whether the candidate is suitable for employment and, naturally, whether their talents meet the requirements of the position.
- The second objective is to ensure that the applicant has an accurate picture of the job for which they are being considered.

- The third objective (possibly not recognised by many) is to conduct the interview in such a manner that the candidate feels he or she has had a fair hearing, whether engaged or not. Disgruntled candidates venting their displeasure to any and all who would listen have cost many businesses a lot.

Stages of the interview:

There are three distinct stages to any interview:

- ***The “opening”...*** Put the applicant at ease. Explain the objectives of the interview and how it will proceed.
- ***The “exchange of information”...*** This is the “meaty” part of the interview where you gather the information you require from the candidate. Obviously, the way you conduct this phase of the interview is critical because you will be gathering information in three distinct areas:
 - Work history
 - Educational background
 - Professional goals

Work History:

In the area of work history, there are several things you will want to explore:

- Specific duties and responsibilities in prior positions
- Accomplishments at previous jobs
- Progress in terms of promotions, pay increases, or added responsibilities
- Failures, and how they were handled
- What the applicant liked and disliked about each of the previous jobs held
- The reasons for leaving each previous position.

Educational Background:

When exploring educational background you want to know:

- What education beyond high school the applicant has
- When and where post-secondary degrees or diplomas (if any) were obtained
- How successful the applicant was
- What the applicant’s best and worst subjects were
- In which extracurricular activities was the applicant involved
- How the applicant’s education was financed
- If education was an enjoyable experience, or did the applicant feel forced into it.

Professional Goals:

An important aspect of any interview is determining what the applicant’s personal and professional goals are. You want to know:

- What the applicant considers to be his or her outstanding achievements
- What are applicant’s long-range career goals

Tips to make your interview effective:

1. Plan for the interview before you begin.
2. Follow a logical sequence in your questioning
3. Create a comfortable interview environment
4. Put the applicant at ease immediately, and keep up the rapport throughout the interview
5. Keep your reactions to yourself (including non-verbal responses)
6. Take notes to help you remember all the details about each applicant
7. Don't oversell the position
8. Learn to listen more than you talk. As a general rule, you should dominate the "airwaves" for less than 30% of the time.

Other suggestions to bear in mind include:

- Conduct the interview in quiet surroundings. Noise and distractions make concentration difficult both for you and the candidate.
- Try to avoid interruptions, phones ringing, staff coming and going. Interruptions will make the applicant feel that the interview is not that important, and that you are not listening
- Observe "body language". This can give another insight into interest, enthusiasm, communication, and keenness.
- Don't ask "close-ended" questions which elicit monosyllabic answers
- Ask for further explanation on incomplete answers to make sure that the candidate has really understood the question
- Keep an open mind. First impressions are often lasting. But often nerves, and a feeling of being ill at ease, can cause unusual behaviour in a job applicant. It is also important to interview all candidates before making a decision on the successful applicant.

Mistakes people make when interviewing candidates:

- Not taking notes at each interview
- Overlooking either ability or willingness to do the job
- Giving interviewees answers to key questions
- Losing control of the interview
- Not testing the candidate's communications skills
- Hiring a person who is not interested in some parts of his/her current job, or company
- Prehiring
- Having departing employees conduct the interviews for their replacements
- Failing to check references
- Inadequate application forms
- Not listening and talking too much
- Failure to prepare for the interview.

After the interview

Believe it or not, the most important moments of the interview process occur the minute the applicant leaves the room...because it's time for the interviewer to record his/her thoughts.

The attached Interview Review Form will help you to accurately record information while it's still fresh in your mind.

THE CHECKING PROCESS

Reviewing resumes

The presentation of resumes by job applicants is now commonplace. But, beware! Studies show that as many as 30% of all applicants exaggerate or misrepresent themselves in their resumes.

Follow these simple guidelines when reviewing a resume:

Overall appearance and organisation:

- Does the resume provide the information you need?
- Has the information been presented in a logical sequence?
- Is the resume free of grammatical and spelling errors?
- Is there evidence that the applicant put a lot of effort into its appearance?

Education and experience:

- In the past, many resumes have misrepresented both educational qualifications, work experience, and job titles. These should be checked out thoroughly.
- Study carefully the chronological order of past jobs, and particularly the length of time spent at each job. Ensure that the resume clearly spells out the duties of the applicant as well as the responsibilities... in other words, what did they actually do?

Other matters:

- Has the candidate listed off duty activities? This will give insight into the character of the person.

Reviewing applications:

- For consistency and ease of comparison, it is preferable that all applicants complete the same application form.

When reviewing the application, consider these issues:

- How clear are the explanations and answers to the questions?
- Did the applicant rush through the form or take time to do it correctly?
- Were instructions followed?

- Were questions understood and answered with relevant information?
- Was care taken to keep the application form clean and neat?
- Can the handwriting be read?
- Are there cross outs and erasures?
- Does the experience offered match the experience required for the job?

Can you get a good idea of the applicant's past duties from the description given?

Checking references:

- Reference checking by telephone is the most common means of obtaining information about job applicants. It's quick and effective, providing you reach the right person with the right questions.
- By using a Telephone Reference Check Form you are able to conduct an efficient and continuous conversation with each reference you contact. You'll have the key questions at your fingertips and will be more likely to get accurate, objective information.
- However, be mindful of the fact that in seeking references by phone you will strike resistance.

Here are some tips to help you break through the resistance barrier:

- Be confident in your approach
- Assure the person that everything covered in the conversation will be strictly confidential
- Stress the need for the information in order to give the applicant a fair consideration.

Also, don't overlook conducting checks into the financial stability of the applicant. Dun and Bradstreet and the Credit Reference Association of Australia provide these services. Finally,

The 10 most common mistakes made in employee selection:

1. Inadequate screening
2. Dominating the interview
3. Inadequate preparation for the interview
4. Stereotyping the candidate
5. Lack of knowledge of position to be filled
6. Failure to probe for depth
7. Unintentionally "coaching" the candidate as to the answer expected
8. Evaluating solely in relation to other candidates
9. Ineffective use of questions
10. Premature evaluation and selection

INTERVIEW REVIEW FORM

The following 2 pages contain a Interview Review Form, if you would like to access a 'word' copy of the form for your use, just click [CLICK HERE](#) and follow the instructions to download the document.

INTERVIEW REVIEW FORM

Name of Applicant: _____ Tel No.: _____

Position Sought: _____

Date Interviewed: _____ Interviewed By: _____

☐ 1st Interview

☐ 2nd Interview

☐ 3rd Interview

PLEASE REPORT YOUR INTERVIEW IMPRESSIONS BY TICKING THE MOST APPROPRIATE BOX

APPEARANCE

Very untidy, poor taste in clothes ☐
 Uncaring about personal appearance ☐
 Satisfactory ☐
 Good taste in clothes, better than average appearance ☐
 Unusually well groomed, neat, excellent dress sense ☐

ALERTNESS

Slow to catch on ☐
 Somewhat slow and needs explanations to be repeated ☐
 Grasps ideas with average ability ☐
 Comprehends well and quickly ☐
 Exceptionally keen and alert ☐

FRIENDLINESS

Appears distant and aloof ☐
 Approachable, quite friendly ☐
 Warm, friendly, sociable ☐
 Outgoing and very sociable ☐
 Extrovert ☐

GENERAL JOB KNOWLEDGE

Poor ☐
 Fair ☐
 Average knowledge ☐
 Well informed ☐
 Excellent knowledge of field ☐

POISE

Ill-at-ease, appears nervous and jumpy ☐
 Somewhat tense and easily irritated ☐
 Poised and comfortable ☐
 Confident, enjoys crises more than the average person ☐
 Very well composed & enjoys working under pressure ☐

EXPERIENCE

No experience matching this position ☐
 Some experience suitable for position ☐
 Average qualifications for this position ☐
 Good background with considerable experience ☐
 Excellent background and experience ☐

PERSONALITY

Not suitable for this position ☐
 Could be a problem for this job ☐
 Satisfactory for this job ☐
 Totally acceptable for this job ☐
 Excellent for this job ☐

DRIVE AND ENTHUSIASM

Has no particular direction or purpose ☐
 Sets low goals and makes little effort to achieve them ☐
 Average goals and average effort ☐
 Appears earnest with great will to attain goals, enthusiastic ☐
 High goals with constant wish to achieve them, very keen ☐

CONVERSATIONAL ABILITY

Talks little with poor expression ☐
 Attempts expression but doesn't do a very good job ☐
 Articulate ☐
 Talks well and is concise ☐
 Fluent, forceful and expressive ☐

OVERALL RATING

Definitely unsatisfactory ☐
 Below standard ☐
 Average ☐
 Definitely above average ☐
 Excellent ☐

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

	Yes	No
Does the applicant have the all round experience for the job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the applicant fit into the current staff environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the applicant have potential for further advancement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Should this applicant be hired if all reference checks are satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: _____

If no, should the applicant be considered for this or another position at a later date?

Additional comments

FURTHER ACTION:

If applicant not to be considered any further:

1. Send letter of appreciation and return any personal papers
2. Pass application onto another possible employer
3. File name in "Future Employees" file for further reference
4. Archive all papers

If applicant to be considered further:

1. Check out references, employment history, educational standards
2. Perform routine financial checks
3. Schedule for further interview to demonstrate skills

Responsible	Date