

Resourcing and talent planning at Southville University

Southville University has a problem in recruiting academics in certain areas of the Business School, principally because they need staff who have a Doctoral qualification for (external) accreditation purposes. After a number of discussions between senior managers they decide to design a 'grow your own' scheme; a type of Apprenticeship for academics. This will help the university to develop a new wave of academics who will be able to (a) meet the qualifications criteria and (b) address some of the shortage areas in relation to teaching and research. These Apprentices would teach for approximately eight hours per week and undertake a PhD at the same time – which would need to be completed within a three-year period.

As the project would involve a significant investment in terms of time taken to establish, deliver and evaluate the project as well as in the salaries of the new 'Apprentices' it was important that everyone bought into the rationale for this change from previous practices. The Department Manager (who was in a Senior HR role prior to becoming an academic) is able to build a strong business case for the development and delivery of the project and highlights the following points:

- Reduces recruitment and selection costs
- Lower risk of employee turnover
- A way to address a critical business issue after failing to make appointments at Lecturer level due mainly to the qualifications requirement
- Ability to train people in specialist areas, eg employee reward
- Will help the Department to meet some of the University key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Brings some fresh ideas into the organisation – particularly from those who have experience of working in HR
- Widens the talent pool and is likely to attract people who have a lot of professional HR experience – something which is currently lacking

Although staff turnover isn't particularly high in the Department at the moment (and is on a par with other universities) the Department Manager is conscious of the age profile of the current staff and that a large number of them are likely to retire over a fairly short time period.

As this will be a brand new project, a number of decisions have to be made before the jobs can be advertised. Considerations include:

- What level of qualifications will candidates need to have? Is an undergraduate degree sufficient or must they have completed a postgraduate qualification?
- What percentage of their time will be taken up by teaching?
- Will their area for Doctoral research be decided for them or will they be invited to propose their own project?

- Will candidates need to have practical experience of working in HR? Ideally would this be in a specific type of industry or organisation?
- Where will they work? Will they be in an office with other academics with similar research interests or should all of the new recruits work in proximity to each other?

On a practical level the Department Manager recognises that they will need to handle the process carefully so that the 'Apprentices' are able to engage with their colleagues in the Department and, importantly, that there are appropriate people who can provide leadership and support in both research and teaching.

Some brief external research suggests that none of the organisation's competitors have set up such a programme and therefore they can't evaluate what may and may not have worked to date, so they recognise that setting up a project of this size will need someone with project management skills to lead it. This person will play a critical role in the selection and induction processes so that new staff are given opportunities to shine, and then receive on-going support as part of their continuous professional development.

Activities:

1. How will the organisation know how many Apprentices to take on?
2. Identify five key areas that you would include in the person specification.
3. What recruitment and selection options would you recommend?
4. Who will you involve in the selection process?

How will you evaluate the success of the programme?

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