

CHAPTER 5

Recruitment and selection

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter you will:

- understand why it is important to adopt sound recruitment and selection practices
- be able to identify the constraints and opportunities presented by legislation in this area and be prepared to keep up to date with forthcoming changes
- appreciate the need for rigorous HR planning and job analysis as a starting point for the whole recruitment and selection process
- be able to choose appropriate sources of recruitment and methods of selection, depending on the nature of a vacancy, and be willing to evaluate the outcome of your decisions
- be able to identify the factors needed to ensure an effective induction process that meets organisational and individual needs.
- be more able to anticipate and plan for the demand for new employees
- be better placed to find suitable sources of employees in the labour market.

INTRODUCTION

Many human resources practitioners spend a great deal of their time engaged in activities associated with the recruitment and selection of staff. This can range from one-off recruitment episodes to major recruitment campaigns carried out to recruit and select replacement staff, staff with specialist skills, trainees, graduates, etc. HR practitioners often thus gain a great deal of experience in the range of administrative, interviewing and other selection activities associated with staffing the organisation. In larger organisations specialist recruitment officers may be appointed within the HR team or recruitment services may be delivered from a recruitment service centre, whose main role is to ensure that (to borrow a time-honoured expression) 'the right people with the right skills are employed at the right time' by the organisation. Other HR practitioners have little involvement in recruitment and selection, however, because these activities have been devolved to line managers or outsourced to specialist agencies and the in-house practitioners may only get involved in limited activities or in overseeing the process.

Although recruitment and selection are core activities for many HR practitioners, they are activities that are affected by the organisation's policy and the external

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environment – such things as business expansion or contraction, developments in employment legislation, the general economic climate and skills shortages. Whatever the economic climate, the workforce planning process is by no means simple. Organisations need to predict their workforce requirements (eg numbers, skills and levels of responsibility) in accordance with future corporate objectives. In times of business contraction, even if it is obvious that fewer staff will be required in the future than currently, it is highly unlikely that a recruitment freeze would deliver the changes in workforce make-up where they are required or could be effective for an extended period of time if the organisation is to remain viable. There are many factors to be taken into consideration (eg existing skills, training and development provision, retention, career progression and labour turnover), and it would be an unusual – and fortunate – employer that did not need to look to the external labour market to ‘buy in’ new skills and abilities for key posts.

The employment situation over the years shifts from a seller’s to a buyer’s market and back again and the approach of HR practitioners and the amount of time spent on recruitment and selection activities must reflect and anticipate this. However, this effect is not always evenly balanced across different employment sectors. In some sectors, downsizing of operations or removing hierarchical tiers leads to losses of jobs through redundancy exercises. In others, relocation of manufacturing and/or service facilities to areas, often outside the UK, where labour costs are cheaper (and employment legislation may be less restrictive) leads to more radical approaches to recruitment and selection. While in certain sectors, growth and the development of new business, new technology or changing markets can mean real skills shortages in the face of which recruitment and selection become of prime importance.

In this section we will consider the context within which recruitment happens and the factors impacting upon recruitment, the place and impact of employment legislation and the importance of equality and diversity in recruitment and selection practice. We will also provide an overview and detailed information on the recruitment and selection processes, considering both activities and skills, and will look at the transition to becoming an employee.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE WORKFORCE

Two significant factors can be seen to be having a continuing impact on the nature of the workforce in the UK, both with implications for recruitment and selection activities: demographic change, and the use of more flexible less traditional working patterns, including the growth in outsourcing.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Over coming years the workforce is set to become more diverse in terms of gender, age and ethnic balance, building on changes that have already happened:

- In relation to gender, there is a continuing trend for more women to enter the workforce, raising issues such as equal pay and the provision of childcare.
- In relation to age, falling birth rates and greater longevity mean that by 2030 46% of the UK population will be over 50 – compared with 33% in 2002. Pension changes will also impact in this area, leading to many people working for longer.
- In relation to ethnicity, government predictions indicate that by 2020 net migration will account for more than 40% of the growth in the working age population.

All of these matters are important and complex and will take serious consideration by organisations during recruitment as well as other employment activities. Employers will need to do more to both attract and retain a more diverse workforce. The complexity of these issues can be seen by considering further just one of these elements – age – in more detail.

To maximise the participation of different age groups within an organisation's workforce and encourage age/generational diversity, the particular needs and expectations of each age group will have to be taken into account in designing jobs, in recruitment activities and in induction into the workplace. Although not homogenous in their expectations, there are some common themes that are apparent in the different generations at work.

Generation Y

The younger age group (up to 30), often referred to as Generation Y, have been the subject of much recent research because they are perceived by many to be very different from previous generations in their approach to work. Research has shown that even within Generation Y, what people are looking for from work is not homogenous, but that there is some common ground. The dominant expectation of this group about work is for fulfilling roles and career development. Other things found to be of importance are work–life balance, opportunities for longer periods of time off, the working environment and organisational values, a need for challenge, stretch and change, the organisation's approach to social responsibility, having motivating and inspirational managers, and having opportunities to work from home. Pay and location of work, although important, were not high on the list. Research has also shown that boundaries (of place and time) between work and life outside work for many in this generation are breaking down. Also, many have high expectations (and skill) around the use of technology at work, particularly the 'participatory' web – forums, blogs, networking, webcasting, etc. For this generation, being able to be yourself, feeling highly valued and being in a supportive and inspiring workplace drive satisfaction and happiness at work. They are excited by career development, particularly the opportunity to gain transferable skills and knowledge through professional and academic qualifications.

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Generation X

Workers within the middle age group (Generation X) are the most likely to have the dual responsibilities of dependant children and dependant parents. Characteristics of this group include not wanting to work long hours, being keen to learn new skills and stay employable, a lack of trust in institutions, feeling increasingly uncomfortable in corporate or large organisation life, a desire to see fairness in approaches to promotion based on performance not tenure, and a preference for an entrepreneurial or independent style of working. Perceived difficulties at work include not being as comfortable with technology as the younger generation (but being less willing to admit to it than the older generation) and having to manage the younger generation with their different approach.

Baby boomers

The older, 50+, generation (baby boomers) are approaching retirement much more flexibly than previous generations. They are most likely to have the dual pressures of very elderly parents and supporting children through early adulthood. There is no longer an absolute cut-off retirement age, and many work – and want to work – into retirement: so-called ‘retirement jobs’. The reasons for this include financial security, enjoying work, an ongoing need for the friendship and companionship found at work and a fear of full retirement as an unknown experience. At work they value personal growth, want to be involved, believe in team orientation and value organisation commitment and loyalty. They are motivated by teamwork and responsibility and seek reward for long hours and their work ethic.

Generation Z

When Generation Z (those currently still in education) are added in, the complexity all of this adds to the activities of recruitment is clear to see. Organisations will need to find new and improved ways of widening the groups from which they recruit. Even in organisations that are anticipating reductions in the workforce, it will still be critical to future success to be able to attract and retain staff with the right skills and experience. Indeed, with a workforce reduced in size, it will be even more important to ensure that recruitment processes are selecting staff with the right skills and competences and that retention is focused on keeping talented staff and managing out those whose performance is not at the required level. To ensure the necessary level of creativity within a smaller workforce, diversity will become ever more important.

Now see Activity 5.1 and consider the age diversity in your organisation.



ACTIVITY 5.1

Consider the age/generational diversity in your own team/department/organisation. Do the issues outlined above seem familiar to you? Have you interviewed people of different ages recently? Did any of these differences come

across during the recruitment process? Talk to some people of different ages. What things are most important to them in relation to their job and work situation? What things are most important to you?

FLEXIBILITY

The trend away from a reliance on 'permanent' full-time contracts of employment to the increasing use of more flexible and atypical working arrangements – eg homeworking, compressed hours working, term-time contracts and part-time arrangements, as well as outsourced services and contracts for services – can be seen to be a continuing one. The reasons for this include:

- legislation – ie the unfair dismissal rights of employees, agency workers' rights
- employee expectations about work–life balance
- changes in career paths as knowledge workers move to self-employment
- organisations' utilising a range of options to resource their non-core functions
- organisations' requiring increased flexibility in terms of hours of work, location, skills development and the duration of the employment relationship in order to respond quickly to market demands
- government policy on outsourcing and efficiency in the public sector
- business gurus' – notably Tom Peters' – encouraging companies to concentrate on what they are good at and to outsource the remainder.

We have thus seen many organisations move towards the 'flexible firm' model proposed by Atkinson (1984). Essentially, this means that employers retain a core group of primary workers who are likely to be permanent employees (although increasingly this group includes key part-time and other flexible working posts as well as full-time posts). Numerical and functional flexibility is then provided by employing a range of temporary, casual, fixed-term and agency workers as well as outsourcing activities to other companies and self-employed individuals.

Please note that whatever the make-up of your workforce, the same level of care and attention has to be paid to the recruitment and selection process (of employees and other 'workers') in order to ensure that the organisation's workforce requirements are satisfied in as cost-effective a manner as possible. See Case study 5.1 for further verification of this point.

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CASE STUDY 5.1

A company director in a FTSE-100 company learned his lesson the hard way about the dangers of compromising good practice with regard to recruitment and selection. After the resignation of his PA/secretary, he used a secretary supplied by a local recruitment agency as a temporary measure while seeking to recruit a permanent replacement. It was a particularly busy time of year and the 'temp' coped well in the circumstances. She put in a lot of effort and worked long hours because she was keen to impress. As the weeks passed, the director decided not to bother with a proper recruitment and selection process but to offer the permanent position to the temp. She gratefully accepted – and that was when the situation took a turn for the worse. As the workload of the department settled back to normal, it became apparent to the director that the secretary did not possess the full range of skills that were expected of a PA. A capability procedure was adopted as a late measure but the situation was irredeemable. Eventually, they reached a mutual decision to part company – but in the meantime there had been months of disruption and soured relationships. The secretary felt that she had been misled and badly treated, and was conscious that this experience would be viewed as a black mark on her previously good employment record.

As can be seen from the sections above, it is important for organisations to know what type of posts they need in their business and to know something about the labour market they are operating in. We shall now look at human resource planning as a means of obtaining this knowledge.

HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING

There are two components to the process of human resource planning (HRP): managing the demand for human resources, and managing the supply. An effective plan keeps the two in balance.

DEMAND

One source of demand arises from the organisation's activities requiring more resources. As a general rule managers like to increase their staff. The fact of having more subordinates signifies an increase in power and influence, boosts self-esteem and, quite possibly, leads to a higher salary level or increased prospects. 'Empire-building' is a mark of success in both public and private sectors, although a reputation for the activity can be damaging. However, an increase in employment costs invariably leads to an increase in overhead costs. There is a downward effect on overhead costs from shareholders (who expect the organisation to make a profit) in the private sector, and from the Treasury, and ultimately the electors, in the public sector. From time to time there can be pressure to reduce overheads, and this is particularly likely to arise if there is a reduction in demand for the organisation's products or services. When it comes to cutting overhead costs, the number of options can be limited and a reduction in staff (usually the greater part of these costs) is the inevitable outcome. HR practitioners should keep the long term in mind and seek to curb unwise or

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unnecessary increases (or decreases) in employment. You might reflect on whether, in your organisation, it would be easier to gain approval to employ another member of staff at £25,000 per year or easier to get an increase of £25,000 in the training budget. The potential benefits of each should be considered in your deliberations.

Another source of demand arises from the organisation's strategy. If it is expanding, opening more branches or services, opening new hospitals, serving new markets, for example, then it will require more people to staff those activities. There is of course a converse to this – namely, downsizing, where it may be closing branches, or services, or relinquishing markets. The longer the time horizon on which these actions are planned, the better the HR practitioner will be placed to respond effectively. This applies just as much whether it is a recruitment drive or a redundancy programme. The key for HR practitioners is gaining the confidence of the decision-makers so that the HR function can be involved at an early stage in the decision-making. Often it is necessary to prove your mettle in other areas of HR activity before you can gain the trust of the strategists.

An easier source of demand to manage is that resulting from the routine turnover of employees, or the 'attrition rate'. If this is steady, it provides a guide as to how much recruiting is likely to be required in a year. You need to keep an eye on changes in the rate that might be anticipated, such as the activities of competitors in your labour markets (see the discussion on *Supply*, below) or a glut of retirements.

The labour turnover rate is a useful figure to calculate for this purpose. This is calculated thus:

$$\text{Labour turnover} = \frac{\text{Number of employees leaving in a year}}{\text{Average number of employees in a year}} \times 100$$

Labour turnover rates are also a good measure of the 'health' of an organisation. The best way to make a judgement is by benchmarking organisations in the same sector, industry and locality. You may be able to find the information you require from networking or from industry sources, or from publications such as those from Incomes Data Services.

Very low turnover rates (especially if they reflect the recruitment rate) may be a cause for concern. It is important for organisations to get 'new blood' from time to time as part of a process of keeping up to date with skills and experience available in the labour marketplace.

High turnover rates are invariably bad news. Recruitment costs vary but are, typically, 10–20% of the first year's salary for each person recruited. On top of this, the leaver may have left a position vacant while the new employee is recruited. The new employee is likely to need training and time to establish relationships. He or she will not be performing at maximum capacity during this period.

If your organisation is experiencing high turnover rates, it is important to establish whether this arises from new recruits leaving the organisation in the

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first few weeks of employment (the induction crisis) or whether employees with longer service are leaving. The most valuable statistic in deciding this will be the labour stability rate:

$$\text{Labour stability} = \frac{\text{Number of those employees still in employment today}}{\text{Number of employees in employment a year ago}} \times 100$$

A high labour stability rate (combined with a high turnover rate) means that most employees stay for many years but that in some job roles or functions there must be, nonetheless, a high turnover rate. This may suggest an induction crisis, and attention should therefore be paid to recruitment and induction. (See later in this chapter for further information on both of these subjects.) Another possible explanation is that in some job roles or functions employees simply do not stay because of poor management practices. If the turnover is several times a year, the effect will not show up fully in the stability rate. Apparent inconsistencies are always worth investigating.

However, the figures must be viewed in the context of the industry. In the hotel and catering industry, high turnover and low stability is not unusual. In a specialist research unit, on the other hand, it could mean that valuable skills and knowledge – the lifeblood of the organisation – are draining away.

Both these figures are difficult to calculate because finding and interpreting the raw data on which they are compiled requires persistence, judgement and significant resources on the part of the HR department. Consequently, they are often not calculated. But the critical point is that they enable the HR practitioner to assign costs to certain organisational shortcomings. By doing this, the practitioner can raise the perceived value of an effective HR function.

SUPPLY

Although the level of control over demand may be problematic at times, it is more difficult to exert much control over the supply of employees. The external environment has a major influence here, and anticipating changes can be valuable.

What practitioners can do is to increase their knowledge and understanding of their labour markets. Most organisations operate in a variety of labour markets and you should identify and research the ones that are relevant to you. These can be defined using the following factors, which must be considered in conjunction with each other.

Skills shortages

Skills shortages arise because the demand for particular skills exceeds the numbers of people trained in those skills. Periodically, national shortages are reported in the press and this raises the profile politically. Consequently, the government has sought to address these problems over the years through a variety of initiatives. Current at the time of writing this chapter is the ‘train to gain’ initiative, which helps to finance approved relevant training in

organisations. An HR practitioner can make a significant contribution by keeping in touch with such initiatives. But not everyone believes that skills shortages are serious. Indeed, there is an ongoing debate about the importance of such shortages.

Nonetheless, in particular sectors, at particular times, skills shortages do arise. Training existing staff can do much to avert skills shortages, but it takes time. For example, it takes years to train an engineering apprentice and unexpected shortages can therefore not be rectified quickly. So HR planning needs, in part, to consider, and where possible to address, shortages that can be anticipated arising from retirement, changes in technology or from the social perception of certain types of work, for example.

Be aware, though, that shortages can be very specific and relatively transient. Searching for skills shortages on the Internet can produce current information about skills and occupational types in which there may be shortages.

Geography

Here you need to clarify where your employees travel from in order to work for you. Manual workers and junior staff may be very locally based, and this is where you would seek them. Some of the skills you seek may also be local, and this can be an issue if your organisation is considering relocating its activities. Managers and directors may travel from much further, especially if you are in a metropolitan area. In addition, when you come to seek senior or well-qualified people, the market can be national or international. Your strategy for finding employees will depend in part on where you believe they are living now.

Economic situations

You should keep in touch with the unemployment rate within the markets in which you are interested. This is particularly necessary if you envisage a recruitment drive in which you are seeking a significant number of employees.

Occupational types

The UK labour market is very diverse when it comes to occupational types. By thinking widely you may be able to identify sources of employees that others miss. When solving supply problems remember to include possibilities such as part-timers, job-shares, shift-workers, students, new graduates, outsourcing, homeworkers, teleworkers, self-employed workers, agency workers and workers from abroad. As mentioned above, an Internet search can provide information of occupational types and their current availability.

Competitive positions of organisations

You compete with other organisations not just for sales but also for employees. Some organisations take this so seriously as to create employer brands, just as there are product brands. Your organisation may have a monopoly in its product marketplace or its labour marketplace. Its main product may be new and rising in

success, or you may be in a 'sunset' industry. These factors influence your ability to find and attract employees and emphasise the importance of understanding your organisation in relation to its potential or actual labour markets. If you don't keep in touch, you could find your employees leaving, even for marginally higher rates, very rapidly. Valuable information on labour market competitors can come from local sources, such as Chambers of Commerce, HR discussion groups and networking. Desk research from sources such as Incomes Data Services can also be very helpful for the wider market. Your local library may be well worth a visit; discuss your research needs with the librarian.

Having considered HR planning, we shall now explain why the interlinked activities of recruitment and selection are so important, before outlining the relevant legislation and the practical issues involved in the recruitment and selection of staff. We shall be covering the key recruitment stages of job analysis and advertising, selection (candidate data collection, interviewing and other selection methods), assessment and comparison. Finally, the induction and evaluation processes and the various roles played by HR practitioners will be considered.

WHY ARE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION IMPORTANT?

As we saw above, it is crucial that selection choices result from a thorough and systematic process. As HR practitioners you will need to be knowledgeable about the wider issues involving recruitment and selection decisions, such as legislation and good practice, and the range of recruitment sources and selection methods, as well as being skilled in interviewing and assessing potential employees.

Examples of poor practice in recruitment and selection decisions and their possible outcomes are listed below:

- When a job becomes vacant, failure to question whether it ought to be redesigned by making changes to, say, the level of responsibility, remuneration package, hours of work, working methods and reporting lines – or even whether it should be filled at all (ie where the work could be absorbed by existing members of staff) – will have cost implications, because the job has not been designed to suit current needs and the possibility of potential savings has been ignored.
- A hurried attempt to meet an advertising deadline in the local paper may result in inaccurate copy which, at the very least, misleads potential applicants and, at worst, discourages them from applying.
- Failure to carry out effective research into advertising media for a specialist post may well result in a lower standard of applicants than envisaged, and the necessity then to re-advertise in, say, a specialist journal will lead to additional expense.
- Untrained interviewers projecting a poor public relations image of the organisation to prospective employees and the use of inadvisable lines

of questioning (eg family circumstances) may lead to claims of sex discrimination.

- Untrained and inexperienced observers used to assess too many candidates against too many criteria in a lengthy group exercise during an assessment centre may lead to invalid results.
- A decision to offer posts to candidates who performed best on the day even though they fell short of the requirements defined as essential for performing the job satisfactorily (see the person specification section on page 125) may result in their leaving or being dismissed in the short term or requiring more training than was envisaged in the long term.

We could go on! The important factor to note is that all of the above examples of poor practice result in unnecessary costs to the organisation. Advertising alone is expensive, but once you move beyond a wasted advertising opportunity to the salary costs of an unsuitable employee or the potential cost of a lost employment tribunal case, then you may be facing the loss of thousands of pounds (and the wrath of higher management).

THE LEGISLATION

Before moving on to look at the mechanisms of recruitment and selection, we are going to outline the relevant legislation before considering the important issue of good practice. The legislation is referred to and commented on throughout this chapter as well as being specifically referred to in Chapter 3. You should be aware of the impact of the following main pieces of legislation:

- the Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986
- the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amended 2000)
- the Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- the Equality Act 2006
- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) (Religion or Belief) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
- the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006
- the Data Protection Act 1998
- the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Other relevant legislation concerns amendments to the above legislation, fixed-term contract workers and flexible working arrangements. The legislation listed also includes specific public sector equality duties, which those of you

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working in the public sector should be aware of. Much of this legislation will be amended by the Equality Bill currently going through Parliament and due to be enacted in 2010. The intention is to harmonise and simplify much of what currently exists. In simple terms, the equality legislation makes it unlawful for organisations to take into account a person's gender, marriage, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, hours of work, sexual orientation, religion or belief in making employment decisions. Here we are specifically concerned with decisions at the point of access to the organisation. Thus you should ensure that you take account of equality and diversity at all stages of the recruitment and selection process, from job analysis and advertising, the choice of selection methods and the making of selection decisions through to induction into the organisation. You should note that this protection from discrimination applies before, during and after employment, so training, promotion and termination decisions are also covered.

The advisory and enforcement agency associated with the promotion of equality and diversity in the workplace is the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The role of the Commission is to promote equality and human rights, which it does through providing advice and guidance, working to implement an effective legislative framework and raising awareness of rights and responsibilities. Codes of practice giving guidance to employers on how to comply with the legislation are available from the Commission. For instance, it is recommended that employers have written equal opportunities policies, procedures for making complaints and monitoring arrangements, and that they take positive action to redress any imbalances in the make-up (eg gender or race profile) of their employees by, for example, wider advertising, flexible working hours arrangements and help with child care.

The immigration, asylum and nationality legislation creates a legal requirement for employers to check the entitlement to work in the UK of all prospective employees in advance of their start date. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.

Finally, in Chapter 3 we covered the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 which provides protection from discrimination for ex-offenders with spent convictions. However, certain sectors where employees work with children and vulnerable adults are exempt, notably the health and care sectors and education. The Criminal Records Bureau helps employers to obtain information on job applicants in order to screen out unsuitable candidates. See the website references at the end of the chapter for further information.

And for more information on both freedom of information and data protection, see Chapter 10.

Now consider Activity 5.2.

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ACTIVITY 5.2

- Have a look at your organisation's equality and diversity policy. Is it readily available? What impact does it have on recruitment activities in your organisation? How are new employees made aware of it and their responsibilities under it? How are the responsibilities within the policy monitored in relation to recruitment activity?
- Find out more about the new Equalities Bill. Consider how your equality and diversity policy and recruitment practices might have to change to reflect the new legislation. Discuss with colleagues whether the new legislation will simplify and harmonise the previous legislation.

EQUALITY VERSUS DIVERSITY

So far we have considered only those groups of employees who are covered by legislative provisions. Many leading organisations in the equal opportunities field have policies that include reference to groups not specifically protected by legislation. Recruitment and selection decisions are thus based on objective criteria only. For instance, factors such as background, appearance, social class and regional accents are not taken into consideration unless they impact on the ability to do the job. Here we are moving towards a distinction between an 'equal opportunities' employer and an organisation which embraces diversity.

You are strongly advised to read the CIPD Infosource documents referred to at the end of this chapter under *References and further reading* for more guidance on best practice in the fields of recruitment and selection, equal opportunities and managing diversity.

We will now take a few minutes to examine a case study on this subject and an associated Activity.



CASE STUDY 5.2

- An organisation in the environmental field publicises itself as an equal opportunities employer on all of its job vacancy notices. Last year the equal opportunities policy was replaced with a Diversity Statement, which reads as follows:

To fulfil our vision of a better environment for present and future generations, we will develop an organisation where all employees are actively supported in giving their best contribution to corporate aims and objectives. This means attracting
- people from all parts of the community, valuing the differing skills and abilities of all our employees and responding flexibly to the needs of individuals in achieving organisational goals.

The organisation recently lost an employment tribunal claim in which the applicant claimed race discrimination. The tribunal chair commented that there was little evidence that the organisation was an equal opportunities employer or embraced diversity in its workforce.

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ACTIVITY 5.3

What are the differences between equal opportunities and managing diversity? If you are not sure, discuss this question with one of your learning sources or look it up on the CIPD website.

List at least four things the tribunal chair

would have looked at in considering whether the organisation employed good equal opportunities or diversity management practices.

Compare your responses with the feedback provided at the end of this chapter.

OVERVIEW

Continuing on the theme of good practice, we are now at the stage of considering the practical issues relevant to recruitment and selection. We shall, for simplicity's sake, be considering these processes separately – the recruitment process, selection, making the appointment, and induction – but it is obvious they are closely interlinked, as demonstrated by the simple flowchart in Figure 5.1.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

There are two major stages involved here: job analysis and attracting applicants. We have already looked at examples of the potential pitfalls of inactivity, hurry or sheer carelessness at these and other stages in the section above on why recruitment and selection are important. With regard to job analysis, it is generally preferable that line managers retain responsibility and ownership for this activity for their own staff, and do not view this purely as an HR function, although HR will often be involved in an advisory capacity. Regarding advertising, the design and placing of advertisements is often handled centrally – ie by HR practitioners – to maximise control (to ensure consistency and management of organisation image) and minimise costs.

Job analysis is looked at in detail in Chapter 4. In this chapter we provide just an overview/reminder of job analysis and look at attracting applicants in detail.

JOB ANALYSIS

We will be concentrating here on the role of job analysis in recruitment and selection, but – as seen in Chapter 4 – it is also relevant to work design, organisation structures, job evaluation, the identification of training needs and performance management issues, especially the setting of objectives.

There are three elements in job analysis important in the recruitment process:

- research
- job descriptions
- person specifications.

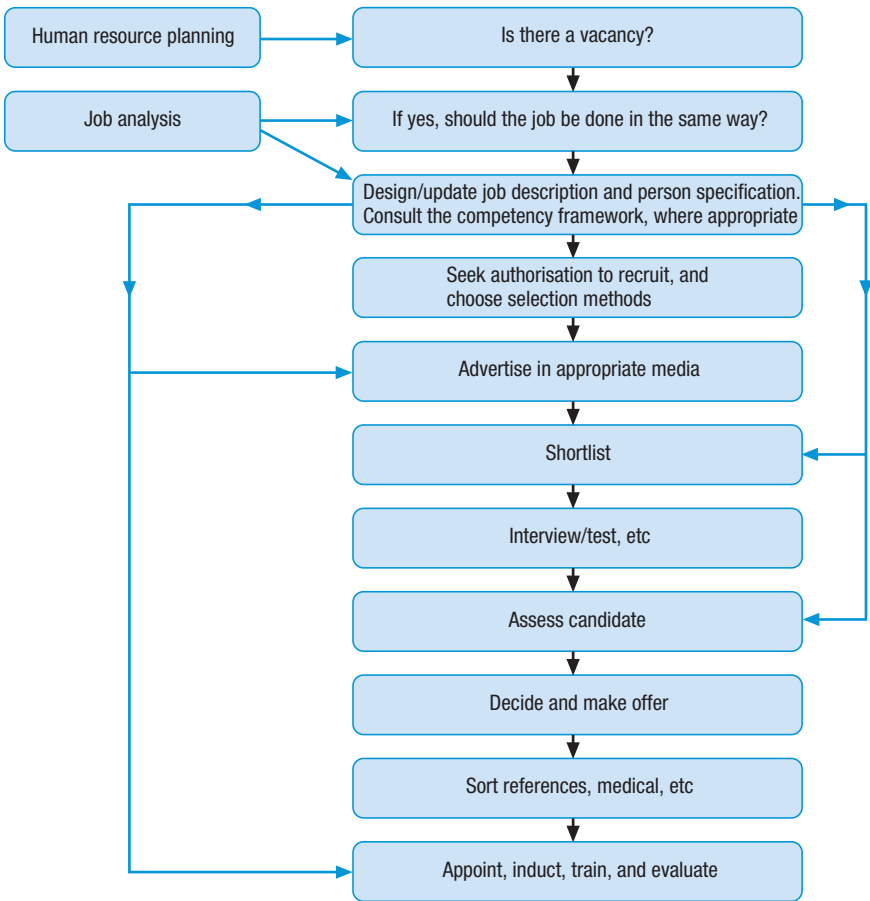
We shall take each in turn.

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Figure 5.1 Recruitment and selection flowchart



The black arrows indicate the sequence of events, and the grey arrows indicate where information from one stage is fed into another. For instance, the scrutinising of the job application for shortlisting purposes should not be carried out as a separate event but should be based on the information provided by the person specification on the characteristics and qualities that are being sought. In fact, application forms, if well designed, can help you make a judgement as to whether applicants possess the characteristics or qualities that are deemed to be essential.

NB: It is important to examine at each stage areas where discrimination could occur, and take preventative action.

Research

The first stage is to determine whether the post you want to recruit to is a genuine vacancy – because a new post has been created or an existing post-holder is leaving/has left. You need to define accurately and clearly the nature and purpose of the job and whether you need to fill it. Thinking about the job and asking yourself some questions allows you to weigh up the alternatives – such as redesigning the job, subcontracting it or using technology to do parts of the job. This stage also allows you to challenge some of the assumptions you may have about the job – for example, about the way the job should be done or about the kind of person who should do it.

Having decided that there is a genuine job to be filled, in order to acquire information about the job and the skills and qualities required of a person suited to that job, we need first to carry out a thorough analysis of the job and its organisational environment. There are various techniques for so doing, and these include observation, interviews, group discussions, reviewing critical incidents (where interviewees are asked to focus on aspects of their behaviour which make the difference between success and failure), questionnaires and work diaries. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, as demonstrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Job analysis techniques

Technique	Main advantages	Main disadvantages
Observation	Comprehensive information can be gathered about observable activities.	Very time-consuming. Those observed may act differently from the norm.
Interview	Skilled interviewers can probe areas that require clarification.	Interviewees may seek to impress the interviewer by 'talking up' the job.
Group discussion	Provides more balanced information than an individual interview because exaggeration by job-holders will be discouraged.	Time-consuming and logistically complicated to arrange.
Critical incidents	Forces an interviewee to focus on specific occurrences rather than to generalise. Helps to identify the types of behaviour that lead to success.	A complex and time-consuming process.
Questionnaire	Objective, efficient and straightforward way to gather a wealth of information. Less opportunity for interviewer bias.	If questions are not carefully designed, the information gathered may be difficult to analyse.
Work diary	A systematic way of gathering comprehensive information. Most suitable for higher-level jobs.	Very time-consuming for the individual, and if not structured, may be difficult to analyse.

Please note that although the techniques listed above can be used on their own, the outcome of the job analysis will be more reliable if a combination of techniques is used.

The aim of job analysis is to answer the following questions:

- What is the job-holder expected to do?
- How is the job performed?
- What skills are required, and what is the level of those skills?
- Should the job be reorganised (eg change hours or level of responsibility, incorporate duties into other posts)?

The research stage should provide information that can then be formulated into ‘user-friendly’ documents – ie the job description and the person specification.

Job description

In simple terms, this describes the job. Organisations usually have their own standardised formats for job descriptions and although they vary enormously, they generally include the following sections:

- identification data: job title, department, pay grade, main location
- organisational data: responsible to and for, other working relationships (this could be visually presented as an extract from the organisation chart)
- job summary: a brief statement of why the job exists
- job content: an explanation of the principal duties or key result areas with brief summarised descriptions
- miscellaneous: unusual arrangements such as shift-working, a need to be mobile, casual car-user allowance plus a reference to any other documents – eg collective agreements – which provide further details.

Recent years have seen a move away from this traditional approach to job descriptions in some organisations. Some have questioned whether they are necessary at all in that increased flexibility and empowerment mean it is difficult to summarise many jobs. Further, some organisations now use generic job descriptions for job groupings rather than drafting job descriptions for each job type. There is, however, a strong argument that detailed job descriptions are still necessary for effective recruitment, job evaluation, training and performance management purposes (to name but a few). It is essential that the unique features of the job – particularly shift patterns and the need for mobility – are spelled out to job-holders and potential recruits in written particulars, if not in a job description.

We are also seeing the use of terms such as ‘key accountabilities’ and ‘role profiles’ in place of job descriptions. Both documents cover the information listed above, but the former also emphasises performance measures for each job (admittedly, performance standards have been included by some organisations for their more senior posts for many years). The latter tends to combine the information required for job descriptions and person specifications, and often makes use of competencies (see below).

Person specification

Alternative commonly used terms are the ‘personnel specification’ or ‘job specification’. All three are used to describe ‘the ideal person for the job’. (We would recommend that you use the term ‘person specification’ or ‘personnel specification’ but avoid the term ‘job specification’ because this has different meanings across organisations.)

Once again, person specifications vary in content and format depending on the ‘house style’. We see, in examples of person specifications, the terms ‘skills’

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‘experience’, ‘qualifications’, ‘knowledge’, ‘personal qualities’ and, increasingly, ‘competencies’ used, but basically their purpose is the same: to set down the minimum requirements that an applicant must possess before being considered for a vacancy.

Further, most person specifications go beyond stating the minimum (essential) requirements and also state other (desirable) requirements, as demonstrated in Table 5.2. (In this example, you will see that the methods of assessment are also suggested. Please note that these are not the only choices, and – as a note of caution – the application form would have to be very well designed to ensure that sufficient information was available for assessment against all these criteria. References too have their limitations.)

Table 5.2 Example person specification form

Company name			
Job title:	HR Manager		
Department:	HR		
	Essential requirement	Desirable requirement	Method of assessment
Qualifications	Graduate calibre (ie at least two good A-levels). CIPD-qualified.	Graduate in relevant subject. MCIPD.	Application form and certificate check.
Experience	Minimum of three years' experience in generalist HR work at HR officer level.	Significant relevant experience in a unionised environment.	Application form, interview, and references.
Knowledge and skills	Up-to-date knowledge of employment legislation. Organisational skills. Financial awareness. Computer-literate.	Knowledge and skills in employee relations and negotiating. Experience of working with XYZ HR information system.	Application form, interview and role-play, plus references.
Personal qualities	Good communicator – written and oral skills, good judgement, confident, persuasive, approachable, dependable, uses initiative, average numeracy.		Application form, interview, group exercises, tests, and references.
Motivation and expectations	Desire to develop HR function. High expectations of self and others.		Application form, interview, and references.

Thus a successful candidate will be expected already to possess all the essential requirements and to be capable of, or have the potential to be trained to, an acceptable standard in the desirable ones. You should take note that all the requirements must be realistic, justifiable and non-discriminatory. An example where this would not be so is as follows:

- A stipulation that candidates for a supervisory position be fluent in Urdu, Bengali, Welsh and English and be physically strong enough to handle sheets of lead for sustained periods of time would be unrealistic: there are simply not enough people meeting those requirements out there in the labour market (particularly for the salary on offer!).
- The above requirements would also be unjustifiable if in reality the job did not involve communications in all the specified languages or did not entail the need to lift heavy items for sustained periods. (It would also undoubtedly be safer to provide special lifting equipment.)

In any event, care must be taken to ensure that person specification requirements do not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds outlined in the *Legislation* section above.



ACTIVITY 5.4

Taking into account best practice, study your own job description and person specification (if they exist) and draft out accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive versions after carrying out a systematic analysis. Discuss their contents with one or more of your learning sources. You will be surprised at how much you do!

We shall now consider the role of competencies in this area.

COMPETENCIES

Competencies are used in many organisations and provide an outline of the skills and abilities an employee must have (or acquire) to do a job and achieve the required standard of performance. They provide an individual with an indication of the skills and abilities that are expected and that will be valued and recognised within an organisation. Competencies are often expressed in competency frameworks, which may contain both the behavioural and technical competencies required. Such frameworks are common in most organisations but less so in small private sector organisations. Competency frameworks provide a common set of criteria (which must be measurable) across a range of HR activities. They are multi-purpose and can assist managers in:

- recruitment and selection decisions
- performance appraisal discussions
- career development planning
- the distribution of rewards.

The deficiencies of person specifications, such as the example provided in Table 5.2, have resulted in a growth in the number of organisations using competency frameworks for recruitment and selection (including job analysis) purposes. So what are the deficiencies of traditional person specifications? It's quite simple – we tend to use expressions such as ‘good communicator’ and ‘effective leader’ and

expect everyone to know exactly what is meant. It is obvious that this is not the case, and these terms must be precisely defined so that interviewers and assessors, in particular, have a common understanding and will be able to assess candidates accordingly. Thus competencies are used to describe the typical behaviours that we would expect to see when we observe a good performer – eg a good communicator or an effective leader. This area is a complicated one and you will

Table 5.3 Typical content of a competency framework

Competency cluster: SHOWS THE WAY COMPETENCIES with levels ● DIRECTION Level 1: develops strategies that account for the short-, medium- and long-term needs of the business Level 2: keeps others informed of business goals and inspires buy-in to them Level 3: supports business goals by addressing issues likely to affect achieving them. ● LEADERSHIP Level 1: is consistent in expectations of others and provides clear leadership Level 2: operates openly, is accessible and approachable to others. ● PLANNING Level 1: ensures that business plans are achievable and integrated with business goals Level 2: ensures that plans meet local needs and that they account for the needs of other teams Level 3: uses appropriate planning to succeed in own role. BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS (for Direction)		
Level 1: Develops strategies that account for the short-, medium- and long-term needs of the business	Level 2: Keeps others informed of business goals and inspires buy-in to them	Level 3: Supports business goals by addressing issues likely to affect achieving them
• Produces and regularly communicates three- to five-year plans to ensure that strategies remain relevant • Balances long-term goals with short-term deliverables to achieve business goals • Ensures that business goals are communicated and understood across the business.	• Develops local goals to support wider business goals • Inspires buy-in to business goals by showing how individual efforts contribute to them • Provides timely and appropriate information to support achievement of business goals.	• Focuses and encourages others to focus on delivering the business goals • Regularly reviews and communicates progress on business goals • Uses the business goals to prioritise work.

Source: Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003) *A Practical Guide to Competencies*. London: CIPD. Reproduced by permission.

find some excellent reading in Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003). They provide the example in Table 5.3 of a competency framework, showing the various levels of competency applicable to different jobs.

In summary, assuming that we have decided there is a vacancy to be filled and we have permission to do so, we must ensure that:

- we carry out a thorough job analysis and design working documents (job descriptions and person specifications)
- we consult the competency framework, where this is available, to determine exactly what sort of behaviour signifies good performance in the job.

Armed with this information, we must choose appropriate methods to attract candidates before we are ready to advertise the vacancy.

ATTRACTING APPLICANTS

Attracting applicants can be a very expensive activity – especially if we get it wrong. It can be tempting to sit back and congratulate ourselves on a thorough job analysis that has resulted in workable and user-friendly documents – ie the job description and the person specification. We need, however, to be just as systematic and methodical in our approach to attracting applicants to the vacancy and in managing their contact with the organisation for the duration of the process. The key is to aim at attracting a suitable pool of candidates, promoting the job in a way that attracts a small number of suitable candidates rather than a large number of less suitable ones – particularly in an economic climate where unemployment levels are high. The prime method of attracting applicants is through advertising – although this can include a wide range of activities, not just the traditional (and often high-cost) advert in a newspaper/journal.

Being systematic and methodical in advertising means considering the content and design of the advert, the timing of the advert and our choice of media/advert location.

In commencing the advertising process you need first to be aware of the sources of possible recruits:

- existing employees – ie internal recruitment
- job centres
- employment agencies or recruitment consultants
- advertising
 - shop windows or factory gates
 - local and national newspapers
 - the ethnic press, publications and meeting venues
 - professional, specialist or technical journals
 - local radio
 - television
 - the Internet
 - social networking sites

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- the graduate 'milk round'
- outplacement agencies
- armed forces (and police/fire service) resettlement programmes
- word of mouth (personal recommendations)
- networking
- headhunters
- 'waiting lists' or speculative queries
- open days
- liaison with schools and colleges.

Different sources are appropriate depending on the group of potential applicants that you wish to target. For instance, you may decide to use the free facilities of the job centre for semi-skilled positions, especially when you expect to find a wealth of unemployed talent in the immediate locality. However, if you wish to attract managerial, specialist or technical personnel, you will probably need to spread the net further and make use of national newspapers, appropriate journals and/or the Internet. This will obviously be more expensive, but there is also a cost attached to not filling a key post – eg in overtime payments and missed opportunities. We do assert that an advertisement is cost-effective only when it is concisely worded, well designed and attracts a sufficient number of suitably qualified candidates.

You should note that in order to comply with equal opportunities legislation vacancies should be advertised as widely as possible. Relying entirely on internal recruitment, 'on file' applications or personal recommendations may leave the organisation open to criticism, and is highly unlikely to redress gender, race or other imbalances in its workforce profile. Adverts themselves should not contain any discriminatory language or requirements. It should also be noted that where imbalances exist in the current workforce, advertising can be targeted towards under-represented groups.

The timing of the advertisement is also of crucial importance, especially when advertising in newspapers and journals. You must ensure that:

- for the local press, you choose the day job-seekers know that jobs will appear
- you avoid advertising just before a holiday or shutdown period, because you may miss potential applicants who are on holiday or disillusion others who cannot contact the organisation for further information
- you check the dates for final copy and meet them in order to avoid unnecessary delays in recruitment (this can be protracted if using monthly publications).

Another important tip is that you must be very specific regarding the section of the publication in which you wish to place your advertisement. Odd-numbered pages are generally more widely read than even-numbered ones, but also you do not want your advertisement for a new chief executive to be lost among the double-glazing sales pitches or the lonely hearts column!

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CASE STUDY 5.3

An organisation in the NHS was experiencing difficulties attracting candidates for housekeeping assistant vacancies. It had tried advertising the vacant posts in a variety of ways and was spending increasing amounts of money on adverts in the local paper without any success.

An HR adviser decided to try a slightly different approach. All adverts placed by the hospital in the local paper (including the housekeeping assistant vacancies) went into the 'display' section of the jobs pages – where adverts are larger, include

artwork, contain organisation logos, etc. The HR adviser noticed that many smaller organisations advertising for similar posts put very small adverts in the 'lineage' section of the jobs pages – no artwork/logos, just a couple of sentences about the job. The hospital decided to give this a try with their housekeeping vacancies.

When the adverts appeared in the lineage section of the jobs pages, the hospital received a 20% increase in applicants to these posts and managed to fill nearly all the vacancies.

Now we shall concentrate on the design and content of the advertisements themselves. One of the most popular mnemonics used by HR practitioners is AIDA. This provides a guide to successful advertising by highlighting the four steps:

- **A**ttention
- **I**nterest
- **D**esire
- **A**ction.

To work, an advertisement must catch the attention of the target audience and spark the reader's interest by establishing the relevance of the job to the individual so that the whole message is read. Further, it should arouse a desire to pursue the opportunity offered and should stimulate action in the form of applications from the target audience.

This may be easier said than done, but studying examples of advertisements is very useful for highlighting good and bad practices. An example of an advertisement that fails to comply with AIDA is provided in Case study 5.4. It was found in the General Appointments section of the *Daily Telegraph* on a Monday, and is reproduced without reference to the real organisation in order to avoid embarrassment.

So what should we do to avoid making mistakes in advertising? There are no golden rules, but generally an advertisement, drawing on and summarising the job description and the person specification, should be composed as follows:

- job title/location/salary (these are of key interest to job-seekers)
- brief description of the job
- brief description of the nature of the organisation (unless very well known)
- brief description of the 'ideal person' (highlighting, as a minimum, the essential requirements)
- organisational benefits and facilities (if attractive)

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CASE STUDY 5.4

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

This is an exciting opportunity to join one of England's top football clubs. The successful candidate will be a qualified, experienced accountant used to working in a commercial environment who understands the importance of 'bottom line' and has a flair for evaluating systems and ideas for their business potential and cost-effectiveness.

Reporting to the Company Secretary, you will be responsible for the financial control of all Club operations.

Age is not important – a dynamic, enthusiastic attitude is. A competitive salary will be offered together with a full executive benefits package. Please send your CV to:

G. Taylor
Neversaydie Football Club
Green Lane
Nevertown

As you can see, the advertisement is poorly located (how many potential financial controllers will be reading this section of the *Daily Telegraph* on a Monday?), is not designed to grab your attention or hold your interest (the fact that the job would entail working for a football club is not capitalised upon at all), gives vague and limited information about the job and the person sought, and so fails to arouse desire (further, there is no indication of the salary banding), and it is unclear about the application procedure – ie the action that should follow – because there is no contact number for further information and no closing date.

- unique features (such as hours of work, need for mobility, accommodation provision)
- application procedure and closing date
- reference number (if used)
- equal opportunities statement
- reference to the organisation's web pages, where applicable.

In essence, you must give enough information about the job (to target the right people) and the person required (to attract only suitable candidates to apply). The image portrayed should be inviting but also reflective of the style and culture of the organisation. For instance, an eye-catching headline seeking an 'Action Man or Wonder Woman' would probably not be appropriate for a filing clerk's post in a local authority, but has been successfully used for a security officer's role in a large toy store.

INTERNET RECRUITMENT

We mentioned Internet recruitment (or online or e-recruitment) above. This can be advertising on your own company website, on sector-wide websites such as 'NHS jobs', using specialist online recruitment websites, or, increasingly, using

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social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter as part of a recruitment campaign. The former can be very useful in that the company retains total control over the process, but will be less successful if your organisation is not well known or if insufficient attention is paid to maintaining the website. It is still important to consider the factors outlined above about advertising wherever your organisation opts to advertise vacancies, and it is likely that an approach to advertising that appropriately uses different routes and different media will bring best results. There are both advantages and disadvantages to using online advertising, although it can look very attractive because of the relatively lower cost. We will be concentrating on the use of the wider Internet rather than company websites in the Activity that follows.



ACTIVITY 5.5

What factors would you take into account when deciding whether to advertise a technical post:

a) in a specialist journal?

b) via an established online recruitment

website such as www.netjobs.co.uk or www.monster.co.uk?

Compare your responses with the feedback provided at the end of this chapter.

Assuming that your advertisement has attracted a manageable number of suitably qualified and experienced candidates, we shall now move on to the important stage of selecting the right candidate. Please note that as we indicated earlier, the processes of recruitment and selection are not discrete, so you should by now have made the decision on which selection methods you wish to use (see Figure 5.1, page 123).

THE SELECTION PROCESS

You should make your decision on the successful candidate as a result of:

- candidate data collection
- candidate assessment
- comparison.

You should always avoid making a simple comparison of candidates with each other, because this is likely to be highly subjective and will lead to an offer of the position to the candidate who was deemed to be ‘the best on the day’. Instead, you should use the person specification and, at each stage, compare the candidates with the essential and desirable requirements listed. Bad selection decisions can be very costly, and it is always better to make no appointment than the wrong appointment.

CANDIDATE DATA COLLECTION

Information can be gathered about candidates through:

- application forms
- curricula vitae (CVs)
- interview performances
- tests (ranging from physical, intelligence and aptitude tests through to personality profiles)
- appraisals (for internal candidates)
- references
- online questionnaires
- assessment centre performances.

In order for this process to be directed at achieving your aim – ie to recruit the person who most closely fits your person specification profile – you should ensure that you collect only relevant information about the candidates. For example, an applicant's bizarre taste in music or socks is unlikely to be relevant and can lead, like discussions of which football team he or she supports, to unfounded prejudices.

The first stage of the selection process – shortlisting (or deciding who to invite for interview/further assessment) – generally takes place using information provided on the application form or CV. Assessment of the information provided by candidates in this way should be done in line with the requirements of the post as outlined on the job description and person specification, and should be as objective and consistent as possible. Shortlisting should take place as soon as possible after the closing date, many larger organisations specifying that at least two people should be involved in the shortlisting process. Some organisations use a two-stage shortlisting process, particularly where large numbers of applicants are involved or the post is a very senior one. These two stages are often referred to as longlisting and shortlisting. The first stage is where a larger number of applicants are invited to take part in an initial selection process (for example, a first interview or an online assessment). Longlisting is often a tool used to 'screen out' or disqualify applicants from involvement in later stages of selection. Many organisations find it helpful to aim for between four and six candidates on the final shortlist. Shortlisting also gives the first real indication of the success (or not) of the recruitment and advertising stages of the process.

Later stages of the selection process involve gathering data about candidates using some of the other methods outlined above.

We are now going to consider three of the above methods in more detail. We will start with interviews and then move on to provide summaries of the latest thinking about tests and assessment centres. These latter two methods have increased in popularity and are designed to provide more information about the candidate than can be obtained by exclusive use of the much-maligned

interview. Tests and assessment centres have also usually been validated to see whether the tests and exercises used adequately measure relevant characteristics and abilities in order to predict job success. There is a wealth of reading and commentary on this area for your further enlightenment. Articles in the CIPD's *People Management* magazine would be a useful starting-place; see also the CIPD publications listed under *References and further reading* at the end of this chapter.

The interview

Unlike tests and assessment centres, the interview, as a selection tool, has been much criticised for its lack of validity. (The results of unstructured interviewing have been found to be only slightly higher than random selection at predicting future success in the job!) Nevertheless, any coverage of recruitment and selection would be incomplete without reference to 'the interview'. Although we can see the pitfalls of its use, few appointments are made without the interview playing some role. You should note that the effectiveness of interviews can be improved by thorough preparation and by ensuring that all the questions asked are relevant (and seen to be relevant) to the job. The majority of employing organisations still use interviews as a crucial stage before deciding on new appointments because they see that interviews can be useful for:

- verifying information
- exploring omissions
- checking assumptions
- providing the candidate with information.

In fact, candidates themselves seem equally loath to dispense entirely with interviews. Many feel that the interview provides the only opportunity for them to reveal their personalities and to 'sell' themselves to the employer.

So how do we get the best out of an interview? The structure of the interview should, in simple terms, follow the mnemonic WASP:

- **W**elcome
- **A**cquire – What information do you have?
 - What else do you need?
 - What should you check?
- **S**upply – What information should you impart?
 - What will happen next?
- **P**art.

Thus you should bear WASP in mind when drawing up your list of questions for interviewees. If you are involved in a panel interview, each member of the panel can lead a different section of questions while still maintaining a logical structure overall. A checklist for successful interviewing practice and an examination of the types of questions to be used and avoided are reproduced in Tables 5.4 and 5.5. Note, however, that the checklist in Table 5.4 is likely, with some adaptation, to be applicable to a large number of interviewing situations, not just those designed for staff selection purposes.

Table 5.4 Interviewing checklist

BEFORE

- Familiarise yourself with the job description and person specification.
- Read the application form and/or CV.
- Meet the rest of the interview panel to agree the division of question areas and roles to be played – eg chair, scribe, timekeeper.
- Arrange the interview at an appropriate time and place.
- Book the venue.
- Inform the applicant well in advance, providing details of location, time, expected duration, need for preparation, travel expense provisions, number of stages in the selection process, etc.
- Ask if particular arrangements need to be made – eg a personal loop system for a candidate who is hard of hearing.
- Confirm the arrangements with the panel members.
- Notify security and reception of the arrangements.
- Ensure that the venue is private and that interruptions will not occur.
- Allow enough time between interviews for breaks, discussions, and completion of assessment forms and, at the end of all the interviews, for a full review.

DURING

- Start on time.
- Start with a welcome.
- Seek to establish rapport.
- Explain the purpose of the interview, the stage in the selection process and that notes will be taken to provide a record of the interview.
- Ask relevant questions (see Table 5.5).
- Allow the applicant to do the majority of the talking.
- Listen actively.
- Do not seek to fill silences (or you may discourage the candidate from providing more information).
- Observe non-verbal behaviour (and check anomalies between this and the verbal messages).
- Check gaps, omissions, or contradictions.
- Check claims re level and type of experience.
- Use a logical sequence of questions and provide links between sections.
- Provide brief information on the job and organisation.
- Allow sufficient time for the applicant's questions.
- Ensure that the candidate's responses are noted by relevant panel members.
- Keep control of the content and timing.
- Summarise.
- Close on a positive note – thank the candidate and reiterate the next stage of the process.

AFTERWARDS

- Compare the information gained about the applicant with the person specification requirements.
- Complete the assessment form after reaching agreement with the panel members.
- Follow up the interview with the appropriate documentation – eg an invitation to the next stage, a rejection letter.

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Table 5.5 Types of interview questions

Generally questions should be:	
<i>open</i>	to encourage full responses eg ‘Tell me about. . .’
<i>probing</i>	to check information provided in the application or interview eg What?, Why?, How?, Explain . . .
Probing questions include situational or behaviour-based questions to elicit practical experience or judgement; and ‘contrary evidence’ questions to check an assumption made about the candidate by seeking evidence to the contrary.	
Closed questions – ie those demanding a yes or no response – should be used only for clarification or control – eg bringing a line of questioning to its conclusion.	
The funnel approach Open Probing Closed	
We recommend a <i>funnelling</i> approach, as indicated above. You should start with an open question – eg ‘Tell me about your current responsibilities’ – followed by progressively narrower probing questions – eg ‘What experience have you had of formal negotiating situations?’ At the end of this section of questioning you should use a closed question such as ‘So would it be accurate to say that you have had limited experience in formal negotiating situations, and if you are successful in being offered this vacancy, you would welcome specialist training in this area?’ The candidate is very likely to say yes, effectively bringing about a ‘full-stop’ to this section. You should then provide a link to the next section of questioning – eg ‘Thank you for your responses to those questions; we will now move on to discuss . . .’	
The following types of questions should generally be avoided:	
<i>leading</i>	eg ‘You are fully trained in the use of an XYZ HR Information System, aren’t you?’ (The candidate knows exactly what answer you are looking for here!)
<i>multiple</i>	eg ‘Tell us about your educational background, your career history to date, and your strengths and development needs.’ (By the time the candidate has finished telling you about his or her educational qualifications, you will probably both have forgotten what else you asked. Further, a clever candidate will undoubtedly tell you about his or her strengths but ignore the issue of development needs!)
If you do fall into either of the above traps, it is relatively easy to rectify your mistake by asking additional probing questions. Keeping brief notes, both of the candidate’s responses and the further questions that you feel it necessary to ask, will help you here.	

The above guidelines apply to a range of approaches to interviews – eg behaviour-based, situational and telephone interviews.

Competence or behaviour-based interviewing

Competence or behaviour-based interviewing has developed in line with the use of competency frameworks (see Table 5.3 on page 128 for an example). It is grounded on the premise that the best way to predict future job performance is to understand a candidate's past performance and behaviour in job-related situations. It allows candidates with limited job experience to compete on equal terms with more experienced candidates. (See *References and further reading* at the end of the chapter for more information on this subject.)

Let us take the example of a vacancy for a bar attendant in a hotel. There are three steps to follow:

- developing a competency profile based on the behaviour necessary to be a successful bar attendant – eg adherence to health and safety, hygiene and quality standards, customer service, knowledge of the hotel's products and services, selling ability and cash-handling
- developing appropriate 'benchmark' behaviour-based interview questions against which the interviewers measure each candidate's response to a specific situation: these are open-ended questions which focus on the candidates' describing critical incidents in their current and previous jobs as well as in their life experiences
- scoring the responses by measuring each candidate's answer against each of the respective profile statements.

Advocates of this approach say that their organisations have achieved financial benefits due to reductions in recruitment and training costs, improvements in productivity of newly appointed workers and reductions in staff turnover.



ACTIVITY 5.6

Draft competency/behaviour-based questions which seek to determine whether a candidate possesses the following competencies:

- effective leadership skills
- the ability to handle conflict

- problem-solving ability
- project management skills.

Compare your responses with the feedback provided at the end of this chapter.

Situational interviewing

Situational interviewing is similar to behaviour-based interviewing in that it centres on critical incidents, but instead of focusing on past behaviour, it is future-oriented. Thus questions tend to be hypothetical and are related to dilemmas that job-holders might encounter. It is based on the assumption that

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intentions predict behaviour. Candidates are presented with ‘What if . . .?’ job-related scenarios and asked ‘What would you do in this situation?’ The responses are then assessed against a pre-prepared scoring guide covering the possible range of responses, indicative of poor, average or good performance.

Proponents of this approach point to its high predictive validity, reliability and freedom from bias, and there is research evidence that backs up this contention. There are, however, many dissenters who have concerns that candidates may not actually behave in the real world in the same way that they say they will in the interview. We would conclude that this approach can be useful, especially when applicants do not have experience in your industry or sector, but would suggest that it is used alongside a variety of other questioning approaches, some of which look at past performance and behaviour as indicated above.

Telephone interviewing

Telephone interviews are increasingly being used by recruiting organisations for two main reasons:

- As an initial short-listing device it is more cost-effective than a face-to-face interview, especially if candidates live outside the locality.
- Many employees now spend a large proportion of their time communicating with customers by telephone – eg call centre staff – and the telephone interview provides an opportunity to start to assess skill and approach in this area.

There are drawbacks to telephone interviews, especially when candidates have not been notified that they may receive a call and that it is a crucial part of the selection process. It is possible, however, to capitalise on their use by following the rules of thumb below:

- Thoroughly prepare your questions beforehand and have at hand an easy-to-complete interview assessment form.
- Telephone the candidate at the agreed time and explain the nature, purpose and structure of the telephone interview.
- First ask screening questions such that candidates must answer these satisfactorily before progressing on to the remainder of the interview.
- Next ask a range of probing questions, such as behavioural or hypothetical questions, so that you are able to assess as many skills or competencies as possible.
- ‘Sell’ the job opportunity and provide information on the company, as required.
- Check the candidate’s understanding and continuing interest in the post.
- Provide details of the next steps in the selection process and tell the candidate when he or she will be notified about progression (or not) to the next stage.
- Make a preliminary decision on the candidate’s suitability and complete the paperwork while the interview is fresh in your mind.

Those in favour of this approach point to the advantages to both parties in that

neither has to travel. More importantly, they say that people are less inhibited than in face-to-face interviews and so the quality of information provided can be higher.

We now move on to consider the use of tests in selection decisions.

Tests

The use of psychometric tests is certainly on the increase, although they tend to be used more extensively by larger organisations with established HR departments. The main applications of such tests in the recruitment and selection field are that they can be used to measure individual differences in personality and ability, and make predictions about future behaviour.

The CIPD's factsheet on psychological testing broadly supports the concept of testing but recognises the many concerns about their use. It answers these by setting out six key criteria for their use:

- 1 Everyone responsible for the application of tests including administration, evaluation, interpretation and feedback should be trained to at least the level of competence recommended by the British Psychological Society.
- 2 Potential test users should satisfy themselves that it is appropriate to use tests at all before incorporating tests into their decision-making processes.
- 3 Users should satisfy themselves that any tests they decide to use actually measure factors that are directly relevant to the employment situation.
- 4 Users must satisfy themselves that all tests they use have been rigorously developed and that claims about their reliability, validity and effectiveness are supported by statistical evidence. (The Data Protection Act 1998 is relevant here. If candidates are selected by an automated process, they have the right to know the logic used in the selection decision.)
- 5 Care must be taken to ensure equality of opportunity among all those individuals required to take tests.
- 6 The results of single tests should not be used as the sole basis of decision-making; this is particularly relevant with regard to personality tests.

We next consider assessment centres (ACs).

Assessment centres (ACs)

Nowadays ACs are used not only for large-scale recruitment, graduates and senior positions but across a large number of appointments to specialist, technical, customer service and other positions within organisations. The use of assessment centres – and development centres – is undoubtedly on the increase but many organisations fail to adopt good practices.

What are ACs? There is no typical AC but a good AC should include the following:

- a variety of selection methods or assessment techniques – ie a combination

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of any of the following: interviews, psychometric tests, in-tray exercises, job sampling or simulations, questionnaires, team-building activities, structured discussions, presentations, report-writing, role-playing exercises

- assessment of several candidates together
- assessment by several trained and experienced assessors/observers
- assessments against a number of clearly defined job-relevant competencies.

ACs thus answer some of the criticisms of the use of sole techniques such as interviews and tests. This is because they enable assessors to observe and assess candidates’ behaviour in a number of different situations that provide a more comprehensive and rounded picture of the individuals concerned, as demonstrated by the example AC matrix in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Example matrix – project manager

Competency	Selection technique				
	Interview	Group exercises	In-tray exercise	Presentation	Written report
Leadership	×	×			
Problem-solving	×	×			×
Verbal communication	×			×	
Written communication			×		×
Time management			×	×	×
Decision-making		×	×		×
Negotiating and influencing skills	×	×		×	
Analytical ability		×	×		×

We have seen that we need to gather a range of data about our candidates via various methods such as the application form, the interview and the use of tests and assessment centres. We now consider the second key stage of the selection process: candidate assessment.

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

In assessing our candidates, we need to evaluate each candidate against the job-relevant criteria detailed in the person specification and reach a considered and objective judgement in every case. Here your skills in defining those criteria in very specific and measurable terms should stand you in good stead. Referring

to the example person specification form shown in Table 5.2 (see page 126), as we have already stated, the requirements should really be defined further. In the absence of a competency framework, it is necessary to define what you mean by terms such as 'good verbal communicator'. For instance, should our successful candidate be an articulate, experienced and polished presenter or simply have a reasonably good vocabulary?

At the shortlisting stage you are likely to have only the information contained on the application form. If this has been well designed, it should be relatively easy to filter out those candidates who do not meet the minimum (essential) requirements. Curricula vitae (CVs) are often used at this initial shortlisting stage, but because they are not standardised and often contain incomplete information, they may be much less useful here. Actually, you can help this process by giving clear instructions to candidates regarding the type of information that you want them to provide in submitting their application forms and CVs.

If you still have a large number of potentially suitable candidates after considering the essential requirements, you may shortlist further by producing a list of candidates who appear to possess a number of the desirable requirements also. Interviews, tests and exercises can then be used to gain more information on your shortlisted candidates. Depending on the number of suitable applicants and the seniority of the post, the selection process may consist of one, two, or even three stages (with a different combination of selection methods and HR involvement at each stage).

COMPARISON

Here you are comparing the candidate assessment with the person specification and looking for the closest 'fit'. The candidate who most closely matches the 'ideal person' described in your person specification should be offered the vacancy. You should not select the person who performs 'best' overall, because this is likely to result in the recruitment of an overqualified person (ie in excess of your requirements) or an underqualified person (ie all the candidates fell short of your requirements). If you are confident that you have carried out a systematic job analysis, you should realise that those candidates who appear to be overqualified for your needs may be equally as 'unsuitable' as those who clearly fall short of your requirements. Thus you are aiming to achieve:

the right person for the job

and

the right job for the person.

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ACTIVITY 5.7

- Look back at a recent vacancy within your organisation and analyse the process of recruiting and selecting the successful candidate by answering the following questions:
- Was an appropriate choice of advertising media made?
 - Was good documentation (job description, person specification) available?
 - Was an appropriate choice of selection methods made?
 - What lessons have been learned, and what suggestions do you have for improvements in the event of similar vacancies arising in the future?
- Discuss your recommendations with an appropriate learning source.

MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

Once you have decided on your preferred candidate, you are in a position to make an appointment. In many organisations this involves two stages – undertaking any necessary employment checks, and making a job offer.

EMPLOYMENT CHECKS

Although some employment checks may be made at earlier stages of the recruitment and selection process, it is likely that most will be made as the process nears its conclusion – either for all shortlisted candidates or just for the successful candidate. There is a range of different checks that may be undertaken. These may include health checks, references, qualifications and professional registration, identity and right to work in the UK and criminal records. In larger organisations there may well be established procedures for undertaking such checks, and the associated tasks often sit with the HR department. It is likely that most organisations large or small will want to take up references from previous employers to monitor a candidate’s employment history and to undertake some form of health check to ensure that there are no factors that would prevent the candidate from doing the job effectively. Please note, though, that the requirements of disability legislation to make reasonable adjustments in the case of a candidate with a disability still apply. Where particular qualifications (for example, GCSEs or an HGV licence) or professional registration (for example, as a teacher or nurse) are required, the organisation will want to check that the candidate possesses these by inspecting certificates or contacting the relevant registration body. There is a legal requirement for employers to check an individual’s right to work in the UK. This is contained within the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, which sets out the requirements and possible penalties for non-compliance. Criminal record checks are currently undertaken through the Criminal Records Bureau and apply to posts that are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. Many such posts are found in the health, care or education sectors, although not exclusively. Full details of the types of checks required and workers for which they are necessary can be found in the

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Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults legislation. Further details can be found on the Independent Safeguarding Authority website, the address of which is in the *References and further reading* list at the end of the chapter.

JOB OFFERS

It is likely that you will initially make a verbal offer, if you are authorised to do so, but you must be careful to emphasise any 'subject to' conditions. Conditional offers most commonly refer to some of the checks outlined above.

A probationary period may also be stipulated.

All these areas are fraught with difficulties and it is not our intention to cover them all here, but you should note the following:

- It is advisable to make job offers conditional on receipt of references which are 'satisfactory to the company'. If the references you subsequently obtain are unsatisfactory, the offer of employment can then be withdrawn without the employer being in breach of contract.
- Evidence of health problems should not be used for withdrawing an offer unless it can be justified on material and substantial grounds. For example, a food factory may be justified in not employing someone with a serious nut allergy if they could not make reasonable adjustments for the applicant to avoid contact with nuts. Medical information can help the employer to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (see Chapter 3 for more information).
- Despite requests by line managers to bring new recruits on board as soon as possible, you would be advised to await references and medical information before confirming start dates. (See Case study 5.5.)



CASE STUDY 5.5

You have probably read over the years a number of stories in the press about employees – particularly in the medical, educational and caring professions – who have lied about their backgrounds and qualifications in order to obtain work. Some of these stories have had alarming outcomes; hence the press coverage. It would appear that due to the competitive nature of today's job market, there is more temptation for some applicants to embellish the contents of their CVs.

One medium-sized organisation found themselves in difficulties recently when they appointed a finance director. His CV indicated that he had an impressive array of qualifications and was experienced in the industry sector. It quickly became apparent, however, that he was not up to the job. The HR manager was notified

and was concerned to learn, four weeks after he commenced employment, that a reference request to his former employer had been returned as 'not known at this address'. Further investigations showed that the finance director did not have the qualifications that he claimed, and that he had been dismissed by one of his previous employers for alleged fraud, although he had not been prosecuted. The finance director remained unaware of the HR manager's investigation until it had been completed and the decision was taken to dismiss him. This 'damage limitation' strategy was successful in that the company was not financially exposed, but the experience did cost the company time and money, and they then had to start the recruitment and selection process all over again.

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Turning back momentarily to employment contracts – fuller detail of which is provided in Chapter 3 – do contracts have to be written to be enforceable? The technical differences (and overlaps) between contracts of employment and written particulars of employment were covered in Chapter 3. In essence, a contract comes into being once a verbal offer has been made and accepted. Good practice suggests that you should ensure that the following occurs:

- Once a successful candidate has been chosen, you make a verbal offer promptly, if your company policy allows this, and state any conditions.
- You follow this up with a written conditional offer accompanied by a written statement of particulars or, as a minimum, the main terms and conditions of employment – eg salary, hours, location, benefits.
- You keep in touch with the chosen candidate during the time he or she takes to make the decision, providing additional information as necessary.
- If he or she does accept, you continue to keep in touch with the successful candidate, notifying him or her when the conditions of the offer have been satisfied, when they can start their new job with you, and the arrangements for induction and any necessary job training.
- Unsuccessful candidates are treated with respect and notified promptly of your decision.
- If not sent with the offer, a written statement of particulars is provided for the successful candidate as early as possible in the process (but no later than two months after the commencement of employment).

We now move on to consider the induction and evaluation processes for our new employee before summing up the role of the HR practitioner.

INDUCTION

Successful organisations will ensure that this process is treated as an important activity and has sufficient resources devoted to it. The main reason is that new employees who have undergone an effective induction programme are likely to be competent performers at their jobs more quickly than those whose induction was scanty or non-existent. Also, the former group are less likely to leave the organisation at an early stage than the latter group (in respect of whom this phenomenon is commonly known as the ‘induction crisis’ and signifies a dissatisfaction with the job or the organisation or both).

Different employees have different requirements, but they are all likely to need:

- to learn new tasks and procedures
- initial direction
- to make contacts and begin to develop relationships
- to understand the organisational culture
- to feel accepted.

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There are, however, certain groups of employees who may need particular consideration, such as:

- school- and college-leavers
- people returning to work after a break in employment
- employees with disabilities
- management/professional trainees
- people from minority groups
- employees who have undergone internal transfer or promotion.

The Acas Advisory Booklet *Recruitment and Induction* provides guidance on these needs and how they can be accommodated.

The commencement of the induction process is difficult to pinpoint because for employees new to the organisation, the imparting of information begins with the job advertisement. We could therefore argue that the process starts at this early stage and plan accordingly. Usually, however, when designing an induction programme, we start with the first day of employment and then timetable activities to be included over the first few weeks and months.

Induction programmes vary between two extremes – from the simple ‘tick box’ approach (covering the essential organisational information that an employee must be told) to comprehensive induction packages (which include, for example, video messages from the chief executive, guest speakers, ‘getting to know you’ exercises, and group activities). Some induction processes, particularly in larger organisations, may combine the two approaches with a simple induction carried out in the relevant department and a more comprehensive induction carried out on an organisation-wide basis.

The former approach is likely to be brief, take place at the workstation, and involve the new employee and his or her line manager only. The latter, more sophisticated (and more costly) approach is likely to take place away from the workplace and involve more people at a senior level in the organisation. Also, in accordance with economies of scale, organisations are inclined to provide this programme only periodically (usually monthly or quarterly) – ie when there are sufficient numbers of new employees who can attend.

Neither of these approaches is preferable to the other: their worth is gauged by how successful they are in helping the new employee to settle down quickly and become effective in the job. Often employers combine these approaches with other methods of delivery in providing a comprehensive induction programme for new appointees. See Table 5.7.

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Table 5.7 Example methods of delivery and their key applications in the induction process

Method	Key applications
Welcome pack containing information on the organisation, main terms and conditions, joining instructions, etc	Generally provided pre-employment to aid the gathering of essential employment information and promote good first impressions of the organisation
Face-to-face meetings between the new appointee and people who are key to the role in question, both from within and external to the organisation	Usually arranged in the first few days of employment to facilitate good working relationships and impart formal information about the job and informal information on the organisational culture
Formal sessions aimed at groups of new appointees	Held periodically, as a cost-effective means of instilling organisational values, providing consistent core information and allowing for networking opportunities across functions
Information provided on the organisation's intranet	A useful backup to the information provided elsewhere. Should be an up-to-date and detailed source of reference
Interactive e-learning activities	Enable individuals to learn at their own pace, place and time, and provide an evaluation mechanism to ensure that the learning cycle has been completed

Finally, let's consider the information that should be provided. As a minimum, employees should be informed about:

- the organisation's background and structure
- the organisation's products, services, markets and values
- the terms and conditions of employment – eg pay, the hours of work, holidays, sick pay, the pension scheme
- the organisation's rules and procedures – eg how to report in sick, disciplinary rules
- the physical layout of the organisation
- health and safety issues (NB it is crucial that these are covered in the very early stages of employment)
- first aid arrangements
- data protection policies and practices
- equal opportunities policies and practices
- employee involvement and communication arrangements
- trade union and/or employee representative arrangements
- welfare and employee benefits and facilities
- access to the organisation's computer facilities and its security processes.

Please note that we have concentrated on general induction above – ie core induction programmes applicable to all new recruits. We must not forget that this should be combined with induction that meets the individual's needs as well. During the recruitment and selection process you will have gathered a lot of information about the candidate's skills, abilities and development needs. Instead of filing this information, use it to agree a personal development plan with the individual, which will involve planning on-the-job and specialist skills training as well as other development activities. Finally, activities aimed at integrating the new appointee into the team should also not be forgotten.



ACTIVITY 5.8

Look back at a recent appointment made within your organisation and analyse the induction programme carried out when the successful candidate took up his or her post. (This exercise can still be applicable

if the successful candidate was an internal one.) What suggestions do you have for improvements in the induction process for the future? Discuss your recommendations with an appropriate learning source.

EVALUATION

As with the majority of activities that HR practitioners become involved with, there is a strong argument for evaluating the success of your recruitment and selection procedures. This is, however, not just a simple matter of concluding that, for instance, an advertisement for a clerical officer's post was successful because 250 applications were received. In fact, it is likely that the reverse is true, because sifting through 250 application forms will have been a time-consuming and costly exercise. Every stage of the recruitment and selection process should be reviewed to see whether mistakes were made, whether a repetition of them can be avoided in the future, and what can be learned.

It would be good practice to consider the following questions – but note that some may be more appropriately addressed or re-addressed in three, six or 12 months' time:

- Did you get the job analysis stage right? That is:
 - Did you carry out a thorough field study?
 - Is the job description an accurate reflection of the range and type of activities and the level of responsibility involved?
 - Are the person specification requirements defined in specific and measurable terms?
 - Are there any important omissions or unnecessary inclusions in the person specification?
 - Was a new recruit justified or should the work have been organised differently?
 - Are the selection criteria too restrictive or potentially discriminatory – eg are age limits stated or is an unnecessarily high level of qualifications called for?

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- Have you considered flexible working arrangements to encourage applications from people who are unable to work conventional office hours?
- Is the total employment package sufficiently competitive?
- Did you get the recruitment stage right? That is:
 - Is recruitment being targeted too narrowly – eg have you concentrated only on those sources that you have used in the past?
 - Did the advert give sufficient information about the job and the person required to encourage suitable applicants only?
 - Was the advert eye-catching?
 - Did you choose the most appropriate media?
 - Did you get the timing right?
 - Have you carried out an analysis to see which media produced the most cost-effective results?
- Did you get the selection stage right? That is:
 - Did you choose the most appropriate methods for selection?
 - Did you ensure that the information generated by each method was cross-checked for validity?
 - Did you ensure that only relevant information was considered in decision-making?
 - Have you carried out an analysis to see which of the methods used were the most fruitful and cost-effective?
- Did you get the induction stage right? That is:
 - Did the induction programme run smoothly?
 - Was the employee properly assisted to settle in and quickly learn the job?
 - How much did the induction process cost?
- Did you select the right person? That is:
 - Did the employee become effective as quickly as expected?
 - Did the employee require more assistance, training or support than expected?
 - Is the employee still in the post and performing at a satisfactory level?
 - Has the employee made satisfactory progress regarding salary reviews or career progression?
- Did you ensure compliance at all stages with equal opportunities legislation?
- What would you do differently next time?

Let's return to our example at the beginning of this section, of the advertisement for a clerical officer's post. It may be tempting to blame a high level of unemployment in the locality for the overwhelming response, but it is quite likely that the job advertisement was too vague in stipulating the essential requirements. Potential candidates were thus not encouraged to deselect themselves from the process and it was necessary to plough through all 250 application forms to see which candidates were really suitable for shortlisting. So the person responsible for the poor drafting of the advertisement has not only wasted the time of all those involved in the recruitment and selection process (and organisational money) but has also falsely raised the hopes of a large number of unsuitable candidates.



ACTIVITY 5.9

After studying the section above on evaluation, consider which methods are currently employed by your organisation to evaluate the success or otherwise of the recruitment and selection process. Suggest two or three major

improvements. Put these down in the form of an action plan with, if possible, time-scales and the names of persons responsible. Discuss your recommendations with one of your learning sources.

Having considered this important but often forgotten issue of evaluation, we now summarise the many roles played by HR practitioners in carrying out the activities associated with the recruitment and selection of staff.

THE ROLE OF HR PRACTITIONERS

In considering the activities above we have touched on a number of the roles performed by HR practitioners at various stages of the recruitment and selection process.

AN ADVISORY ROLE TO LINE MANAGERS

It is rare – and, indeed, would be inappropriate – for all of the above activities to be performed solely by HR practitioners. In any event, it is generally wise for line managers to lead the job analysis stage because of their specialist knowledge, and be very involved at the selection stage so that they play an integral part in selecting their own member of staff and are therefore more likely to be committed to the new employee's success. Following on from this, it is worth noting that interview panels commonly consist of the line manager and an HR practitioner. This may involve you in an influencing role when, say, the line manager is tempted to offer the post to a candidate for subjective reasons (eg the manager and the candidate attended the same school) rather than objective reasons (ie ones linked to the person specification).

AN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE

This is to ensure that information is sought, chased and checked; that appropriate records are kept; and that all interested parties remain in touch with the timetable of events.

A TRAINING ROLE

This may cover the design, organisation and delivery of skills training for interviewers/assessors or coaching for inexperienced managers during the recruitment and selection process. There will also be an educational or possibly a compliance role to ensure that equal opportunities principles and policies are adhered to at all stages of the process.

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by **Malcolm Martin, Fiona Whiting and Tricia Jackson**
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A PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE

This arises owing to the need to attract suitable candidates, and involves conveying information about the job, the person required and the organisation itself. Also, the way in which candidates are dealt with in making enquiries, pursuing applications and attending interviews may confirm or contradict their first impressions of the organisation.

AN ASSESSMENT ROLE

HR practitioners play a role in assessing candidates by interviewing, observing, testing and evaluating them using a range of selection methods.

AN EVALUATION ROLE

Finally, HR practitioners are likely to be responsible for ensuring that the process of recruitment and selection is periodically evaluated against its objectives – ie did you employ the ‘right people in the right jobs at the right time’? (See the section above.)

SUMMARY

- You should by now be familiar with the key issues involved in the recruitment and selection of staff. We have looked at why recruitment and selection are important (regardless of the economic climate), the relevant legislation, the various stages involved and the importance of a thorough job analysis. We pointed out the importance of a robust and systematic process for all appointments – ie not just those concerning your core group of employees. We also considered the keys to effective induction and evaluation processes and the various roles played by HR practitioners.
- You should note that even if your experience of recruitment and selection is limited, it is likely that you will have applied for at least one position for which you were granted an interview or were invited to attend an AC. Thus, if you are unfamiliar with the whole process from the viewpoint of the interviewer or assessor, you will be familiar with it from the candidate’s perspective. Nothing can replace the experience of actually conducting your first interview, administering a test or being involved in running an AC, but you are likely to have an opinion on the good and bad practices that you observed. Reflect on such experiences to ensure that you do not make the same mistakes that others may have made. Continue this learning process by, if you have not already done so, attempting some of the activities provided above before moving on to the next chapter.

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- WOODRUFFE, C. (2000) *Development and Assessment Centres*, 3rd edition. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- Also available from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 151 The Broadway, London SW19 1JQ; tel. 020 8612 6201, are:
- CIPD *Policies and Procedures for People Managers* manual
- Annual CIPD Recruitment surveys.

WEBSITES

- ACAS: www.acas.org.uk
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development: www.cipd.co.uk
- Criminal Records Bureau: www.crb.gov.uk
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com
- Independent Safeguarding Authority: www.isa-gov.org.uk
- Legislation: www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk
- See also on the website of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), www.cipd.co.uk/Infosource:
- Assessment Centres for Recruitment and Selection*
- Discriminatory Questions at Selection Interviews*
- Psychological Testing*
- Recruitment*
- Recruitment on the Internet*
- References*
- Telephone Interviewing*

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ACTIVITIES FEEDBACK

Activity 5.3

The differences between equal opportunities and managing diversity are summed up in Table 5.8:

Table 5.8 Equal opportunities v managing diversity

Equal opportunities	Managing diversity
- entails removing discrimination against specific groups - is primarily an issue for HR specialists - relies on positive action - has a moral/legislative focus - is driven by domestic and EU discrimination legislation - can be adapted to the existing organisation	- entails maximising employee potential through an appreciation and utilisation of people's differences - involves all managers - is unlikely to rely on positive action because this will not be inclusive - has a business focus - has a global application in that it supports a variety of cultures - challenges the nature, values and structure of the existing organisation

The tribunal would have looked at areas such as:

- the demographic make-up of the workforce in terms of gender, race, disability, age, etc, across the various functions and levels, and whether this reflected the outside population
- signs of support from top management – eg diversity champions, value statements which incorporate diversity principles, publicity for policies and practices
- attitudes within the workplace as evidenced by witnesses' responses to questions at the tribunal hearing
- recruitment sources, to see whether positive steps were taken to encourage applications from under-represented groups – eg advertising in ethnic minority publications
- selection methods, to ensure that they were not tainted with discrimination and that selection decisions were based on fair and objective criteria
- working arrangements – ie are part-time, term-time, homeworking and other flexible working arrangements available?
- training provision – ie have managers received appropriate skills training and has awareness training been provided for all employees?
- the handling of complaints about discriminatory matters – ie are grievances dealt with appropriately, and are offenders disciplined?
- the provision of equal access to training and promotion opportunities for all

employees – eg are adjustments made to the timing of training events in order to include part-timers?

- an integration of relevant policies with each other, backed up by company practices – eg employee involvement in establishing a dress code that respects differing cultures and needs, a policy on religious observance that is actively promoted rather than tolerated by line managers.

Activity 5.5

In Table 5.9, there are a number of factors listed, and a tick indicates, in general terms, where one avenue has the advantage over the other.

Table 5.9 Factors to take into account when advertising a technical post

Factors	a)	b)
Speed in placing an advertisement		✓
Speed in receiving and processing applications		✓
Size of target population		✓
Access to international labour market		✓
Ease of access to additional company information		✓
Security of information, eg CVs	✓	
Less likely to attract poor-quality applicants/time-wasters	✓	
Ability to correct and update information in the advert		✓
Less costly		✓
Facility to use an online selection questionnaire		✓
Established source for this type of vacancy	✓	
Increasing trend to use this medium		✓

Activity 5.6

Your questions should be on similar lines to those listed below. Please note that supplementary questions can then be asked, depending on the responses received.

Table 5.10 Behaviour-based questions

Competencies	Questions
Effective leadership skills	Give me an example of a situation in which you were responsible for helping others to complete a task or project . . . What steps did you take to motivate the team members?
The ability to handle conflict	Describe a situation where you were faced with views that differed from your own . . . How did you deal with this conflict?
Problem-solving ability	Give me an example of a problem you had to solve recently . . . What was the outcome, and what steps did you take in solving the problem?
Customer focus	Tell me about a difficult situation which involved you in dealing with an internal or external customer . . . How did you ensure that you understood the customer's needs and that they were met?