

CHAPTER 8

RECRUITMENT

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS CHAPTER ARE TO:

- 1 Discuss how job and competency analysis support the determination of a vacancy's requirements
- 2 Explain the role played by job descriptions and person specifications in the recruitment process
- 3 Analyse rational and processual approaches to recruitment and discuss the role of employer branding
- 4 Compare and contrast the major alternative recruitment methods



While the terms ‘recruitment’ and ‘selection’ are often used interchangeably, they are in fact quite distinct activities. In this chapter, we consider recruitment, which ‘includes those practices and activities carried out by the organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees’ (Breaugh and Starke 2000: 45). Selection refers to the methods used to decide which applicant to appoint to a vacancy and we discuss this later (see Chapter 9). Formal, structured recruitment methods are part of a best practice set of HR practices that is argued to be strategic and improve organisational performance. They build upon job or competency analysis which determines the requirements of the vacant role and employ person specifications and job descriptions to identify suitable candidates. Historically this ‘rational’ approach has dominated discussions of recruitment but now the benefits of a more processual approach to recruitment are recognised, one which recognises the applicant’s role, and interest in the concept of employer branding has grown accordingly. We discuss all these aspects of recruitment in this chapter, together with recruitment advertising, which is central to communicating the employer brand. Finally, we consider the evaluation of recruitment activity. In the Theory into Practice section, we consider how many of these issues are increasingly applied in an international context.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE



Over 3 million people are recruited by employers in the UK each year. It can be a costly and difficult process, with estimates of average recruitment costs of £6,000 for senior managers and £2,000 for other staff (CIPD 2017). As the UK approaches Brexit and faces reductions in key pools of migrant labour, competition for workers, both skilled and unskilled, is expected to intensify. In such circumstances the employer needs to ‘sell’ its jobs to potential employees so as to ensure that it can generate an adequate pool of applicants, but even then for some groups of staff it can be difficult to find people who are both willing and able to fill the vacancies that are available. That said, it is also important to avoid overselling a job in a bid to secure the services of talented applicants. Making out that the experience of working in a role is more interesting or exciting than it really is may be ultimately counter-productive because it raises unrealistic expectations which can damage the psychological contract established with the organisation. This can lead to demotivation and, perhaps, an early resignation.

Determining requirements

There are four questions to answer in determining the requirements of a vacancy:

- 1 What does the job consist of?
- 2 In what way is it to be different from the job done by the previous incumbent?
- 3 What are the aspects of the job that specify the type of candidate?
- 4 What are the key aspects of the job that the ideal candidate wants to know before deciding to apply?

Job analysis is used to answer these questions. Job analysis comprises a series of techniques for collecting and analysing information about jobs. These include, among others, questionnaires, observations, interviews and critical incident techniques (Siddique 2004).

WINDOW ON PRACTICE



Searle (2003) outlines ten possible job analysis techniques:

- 1 Questionnaires and checklists: a structured questionnaire gathers information on a series of tasks.
- 2 Observation: information on tasks can be gathered by watching job holders undertake them.
- 3 Self-report by diaries and logs: role holders collect and log information about the tasks they undertake.
- 4 Participation: the analyst carries out the tasks him- or herself.
- 5 Hierarchical task analysis: a job is deconstructed into a series of tasks, sub-tasks and plans.
- 6 Interviews: job holders are questioned about the tasks they undertake.
- 7 Critical incident technique: job holders are asked to specify the most important tasks they undertake.
- 8 Repertory grid technique: an interview is used to elicit information on key aspects of the role using a grid construction technique.
- 9 Position analysis questionnaire: a verbal checklist of tasks is used to structure an interview.
- 10 Work-profiling system: an expert IT system is used to conduct structured job analysis.

The emphasis is on the work performed, not the person performing it. Job analysis is central to many HR activities and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to consider it beyond its influence on recruitment. Morgeson *et al.* (2019) provide a comprehensive coverage of job analysis techniques for those who require more detail.

In relation to recruitment, job analysis has traditionally sought to identify the key tasks and responsibilities that constitute a particular role and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to conduct those tasks and responsibilities. In more recent years, however, there has been a growth of interest in using job analysis to identify the competencies required to undertake a particular role. We discuss competencies in detail later (see Chapter 19). In brief, they describe the behaviours required to undertake the role successfully, for example the ability to communicate well or work effectively as a member of a team.

Sanchez and Levine (2009) present an interesting comparison of traditional job analysis and competency-based approaches. They argue that these differ against six key dimensions. Their review of existing research finds that competency-based approaches seek to influence employee behaviour in the role undertaken, rather than simply describe it, and have a future orientation that encourages the maximisation of organisational performance. This contrasts with job analysis, which is backwards looking and reflects typical, rather than maximum, levels of performance. Siddique's (2004) study of competency-based analysis in the United Arab Emirates supports the argument that it serves to improve organisational performance.

In practice, the distinction between traditional job analysis and competency-based analysis is often blurred. Indeed Sanchez and Levine (2009) argue for the merging of the two approaches for maximum benefit, drawing on traditional job analysis to describe and measure tasks and responsibilities and competency-based approaches to strategically influence employee behaviour. Increasingly, organisations are also placing emphasis on values in their recruitment and selection processes. We discuss this later in this chapter when considering employer branding and in Chapter 9 in relation to selection processes. It is worth noting here, however, that values are increasingly incorporated into an understanding of job requirements (see, for example, Platts 2018). Whichever approach to analysis is adopted, it forms the basis of the next stage in the recruitment process, the drawing up of job descriptions and person specifications. Job descriptions involve recording the component parts and principal accountabilities of a role. An example is provided in Figure 8.1. Methods of doing this are well established and good accounts are provided by Martin (2010) and Morgeson *et al.* (2019).

A person specification listing the key attributes and/or competencies required of the person to undertake the role is then derived from the job description and used in recruiting the new person. You can see an example of how to compile an effective person specification at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/> and then search for hr procedures and best practices. This combines attributes derived from job analysis, such as qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience, with competencies such as time management and planning and organisation. Some attributes will be essential and others desirable and careful thought is needed when specifying these. Too many essential criteria can both overly restrict applicant numbers and skew the applicant pool. While use of competencies is common, it has been criticised on the grounds that it tends to produce employees who are very similar to one another and who address problems with the same basic mindset. This has also led to the suggestion that competency-based approaches can present a barrier to achieving an organisation's equality and diversity objectives (Kirton and Healy 2009).

Job title: SENIOR SALES ASSISTANT

Context

The job is in one of the 13 high-technology shops owned by 'Computext'

Location: Leeds

Supervised by, and reports directly to, the Shop Manager

Responsible for one direct subordinate: Sales Assistant

Job summary

To assist and advise customers in the selection of computer hardware and software, and to arrange delivery and finance where appropriate.

Objective is to sell as much as possible, and to ensure that customers and potential customers see 'Computext' staff as helpful and efficient.

Job content

Most frequent duties in order of importance

- 1 Advise customers about hardware and software.
- 2 Demonstrate the equipment and software.
- 3 Organise delivery of equipment by liaising with distribution department.
- 4 Answer all after-sales queries from customers.
- 5 Contact customers two weeks after delivery to see if they need help.
- 6 Advise customers about the variety of payment methods.
- 7 Develop and keep up to date a computerised stock control system.

Occasional duties in order of importance

- 1 Arrange for faulty equipment to be replaced.
- 2 Monitor performance of junior sales assistant as defined in job description.
- 3 Advise and guide, train and assess junior sales assistant where necessary.

Working conditions

Pleasant, 'business-like' environment in new purpose-built shop premises in the city centre. There are two other members of staff and regular contact is also required with the Delivery Department and Head Office. Salary is £18,000 p.a. plus a twice yearly bonus, depending on sales. Five weeks' holiday per year plus statutory holidays. A six-day week is worked.

Other information

There is the eventual possibility of promotion to shop manager in another location depending on performance and opportunities.

Performance standards

There are two critically important areas:

- 1 Sales volume. Minimum sales to the value of £700,000 over each six-month accounting period.
- 2 Relations with customers:
 - Customers' queries answered immediately.
 - Customers always given a demonstration when they request one.
 - Delivery times arranged to meet both customer's and delivery department's needs.
 - Complaints investigated immediately.
 - Customers assured that problem will be resolved as soon as possible.
 - Customers never blamed.
 - Problems that cannot be dealt with referred immediately to Manager.

Figure 8.1 Job description for a senior sales assistant

Where innovation and creativity are required, it is helpful to recruit people with more diverse characteristics, and the use of competencies may constrain this.

Job descriptions and person specifications underpin recruitment advertising, that is, the communication of employer requirements to potential applicants. They also form the basis of selection activity, which we consider in Chapter 9.



ACTIVITY 8.1

How useful are competencies in determining requirements for a vacancy? To what extent do you think they should be combined with traditional job analysis in drawing up job descriptions and person specifications? What can values add to understanding a vacancy's requirements?

Rational versus processual approaches to recruitment

The recruitment process as we have described it so far is known as the 'rational approach' to recruitment. That is, it is a one-way process in which the employer determines the vacancy's requirements and communicates these to potential candidates in order to generate a pool of applications to support the selection process. Job analysis, job descriptions and person specifications are central to this as the job is fixed and the emphasis is upon finding the applicant who best fits this job. A dominant role for management is presumed and candidates are seen to hold relatively little power. Criticisms of this rational approach can be made on various grounds. First, there is no recognition of the power and politics that run through organisational life and subvert these supposedly rational processes. Van den Brink *et al.* (2013) present a fascinating account of recruitment processes which demonstrates how line managers resist what they perceive to be HR's bureaucratic procedures so that the 'best' person is often not appointed to the vacancy. Second, those involved in the recruitment process often do not act rationally. CIPD's (2015) report into behavioural science, which draws on organisational behaviour, psychology and economics, and recruitment evidences how we actually behave in the recruitment process and argues that recruitment may be more of an art than a science.

A further criticism is that the rational approach ignores the role of the candidate. Increasingly recruitment is seen as a social process and there is recognition of the need to influence candidates to attract them to apply, that is, a need to sell the organisation to potential employees. This is becoming increasingly important in an era of social media which facilitates employer/employee interaction (we explore the role of social media in recruitment later in this chapter). A processual approach often relies heavily upon competencies as the emphasis is upon identifying a candidate who fits well into the organisation, rather than a preoccupation with a restrictively defined role. Increasingly, values and ensuring a good values match is also a vital part of the employer/candidate matching process.

Recruitment advertising is used to begin establishing the psychological contract, that is, the expectations that the employer and employee have of each other. It communicates to potential employees what the experience of working for the organisation will be like. The recruitment process thus becomes two-way, with candidates making decisions about prospective employers as well as vice versa, it being important to create a

positive impression with potential employees. Person/organisation and person/job fit, that is, how well an employee's requirements match those of both the organisation and job, are well-established predictors of performance. A two-way recruitment process increases the prospect of achieving good fit and can thus enhance organisational effectiveness. For this reason, we are seeing an uptake in job crafting, that is, designing jobs to suit individual needs (Bipp and Demerouti 2015). This benefits organisations in widening a potential pool of applicants and has also been shown to increase employee engagement (Bakker *et al.* 2016). While at an early stage of development, job crafting is likely to become an important part of the recruitment and selection process in the years ahead.

The processual approach to recruitment has created considerable interest in employer branding, which advocates competing for staff by borrowing techniques long used in marketing goods and services to potential customers. In particular, many organisations have sought to position themselves as 'employers of choice' in their labour markets with a view to attracting stronger applications from potential employees. CIPD (2017) note an increased emphasis on developing the employer brand and organisational values are, again, argued to be most important in this, followed by career development opportunities, pay and benefits, and flexible working. Effective use of the corporate website, improved candidate experience and attending fairs or networking events all support in strengthening the brand. Those who succeed have often found that their recruitment costs fall as a result because they get so many more unsolicited applications.

A positive 'brand image' of the organisation as an employer means that potential employees come to regard working there as highly desirable. As we noted above, the organisation's values are important in establishing a credible employer brand, and increasingly authenticity is seen as an important part of an employer brand, particularly for well-known organisations (Reis *et al.* 2017). For example, Baum *et al.* (2016) and Casper *et al.* (2013) evidence that recruitment advertisements that are consistent with organisational image attract more candidates and (Casper *et al.* 2013) demonstrate similar where advertisements target attitudes rather than surface level characteristics. In a similar vein, use of green or environmental issues can also attract more applicants (Guerci *et al.* 2016). Firfiray and Mayo (2017) evidence that a match between organisational and employee values is more important to the so-called Millennial workforce than earlier generations, meaning values will become increasingly important in the branding process.

Branding has been used to positive effect by a number of public sector employers in the UK offering jobs that are presented as intrinsically rewarding rather than highly remunerated when recruiting, for example, teachers, social workers and police officers. It is also used in the voluntary sector to appeal to potential employees whose values match those of the organisation (Nickson and Warhurst 2008). Developing a good brand image is an easier task for larger companies with household names than for those that are smaller or highly specialised, but the possibility of developing and sustaining a reputation as a good employer is something from which all organisations stand to benefit. As we discuss below, social media is increasingly providing a platform through which firms of all size can establish an employer brand. The two-way nature of this process does, however, reduce organisational control and requires careful thought. We consider below the potential for Glassdoor, a relatively recent social media platform, to help develop a positive employer brand.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE



Why you shouldn't ignore Glassdoor

Glassdoor is an online site that allows current and former employees to rate organisations as employers and share details such as salary – a bit like TripAdvisor for job seekers. It is developing quickly, being among the top 600 websites in the USA and growing in the UK. It is highly trusted and users report relying on its information more than they rely on companies' brochures and websites. HR professionals need to understand the significance of this for building their employer brand. Glassdoor is used most at the early stages of recruitment and HR practitioners should engage with it to provide information that helps to create a realistic job preview and reduces candidate uncertainty. It is important to engage in a constructive way to influence the brand. Integrity is important and organisations should not fake positive reviews, as users argue they are easy to spot. Equally, an occasional poor review is not of especial concern, rather it is the overall picture that matters.

Source: Lakin (2015).

The key, as when branding consumer products, is to build on any aspect of the working experience that is different from that offered by other organisations competing in the same field, for example, flexible working, or a friendly and informal atmosphere, strong career development potential or job security. This is then developed as a 'unique selling proposition' and forms the basis of the employer branding exercise. The best way of finding out what is distinctive and positive about working in an organisation is to carry out some form of staff attitude survey or again engage with social media. Yammer, for example, is a fast-growing social media platform that many organisations use as an internal form of communication and can provide rich insights into the positives and negatives of working for an organisation. Employer branding exercises simply amount to a waste of time and money when they are not rooted in the actual lived experience of employees because people are attracted to the organisation on false premises. The employees attracted are not subsequently retained and resources are wasted recruiting people who resign quickly after starting. Liu *et al.* (2018) suggest that it is important to be honest and credible, using current employees to present professional and personal information online, to build an effective brand. Presenting negative information helps to reinforce credibility.

Once a unique selling proposition has been identified, it can be used to inform all forms of communication that the organisation engages in with potential and actual applicants. The aim must be to repeat the message again and again in advertisements, in recruitment literature, on internet sites and at careers fairs. It is also important that existing employees are made aware of their employer's brand proposition, both as it forms the basis of their own psychological contract with the organisation and because so much recruitment is carried out informally through word of mouth. Provided the message is accurate and provided it is communicated effectively over time, the result will be a 'leveraging of the

brand’ as more and more people in the labour market begin to associate the message with the employer.

In the Window on Practice that follows, we outline how small and medium-sized enterprises in India use social media to develop their employer brand.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE



Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form a huge proportion of the Indian economy and contribute substantially to employment generation. Attracting and retaining talented employees is essential to their success and they have been quick to recognise the opportunities offered by social media in creating an effective employer brand. Using a wide range of social media, SMEs were able to build brands based around both economic and social values that were highly attractive to both current and potential employees.

Source: Kaur et al. (2015).

Internal recruitment

Another important decision when filling a vacancy is whether to recruit internally or externally. Vacancies are often filled internally, creating what are referred to as ‘internal labour markets’. Sometimes organisations advertise all vacancies publicly as a matter of course and consider internal candidates along with any external applicants. This approach is generally considered to constitute good practice, especially in respect of equality of opportunity and diversity, and is widely used in the UK public sector. However, many organisations prefer to invite applications from internal candidates *before* they look to external labour markets for new staff. There are considerable advantages for the employer: it is much less expensive with no need for job advertisements or recruitment agencies. Instead, a message can simply be placed in a company newsletter or posted on its intranet or staff noticeboards. Further cost savings and efficiency gains can be made because internal recruits are typically able to take up new posts much more quickly than people being brought in. Even if they have to work some notice in their current positions, they are often able to take on some of their new responsibilities or undergo relevant training at the same time. The other advantage stems from the fact that internal candidates, as a rule, are more knowledgeable than new starters coming in from other organisations about what exactly the job involves. They are also more familiar with the organisation’s culture, rules and geography, and so take less time to settle into their new jobs and to begin working at full capacity.

Giving preference to internal recruits, particularly for promotions, has the great advantage of providing existing employees with an incentive to work hard, demonstrate their commitment and stay with the organisation when they might otherwise consider looking for alternative employment. The practice sends a strong signal from management that existing employees are valued and that attractive career development opportunities are

available to them. Failing to recruit internally may thus serve to put off good candidates with potential from applying for the more junior positions in an organisation. Bayo-Mariones and Ortin-Angel (2006) present an interesting study of the benefits of internal labour markets in Spain.

The main disadvantage of only advertising posts internally is that a limited field of candidates is considered. While it may mean that someone who ‘fits in well’ is recruited, it may also mean that the best available candidate is not even considered. Over the long term, the organisation can thus end up being less well served than it would have been had internal candidates been required to compete with outside people for their posts. For this reason, internal recruitment sits uneasily with a commitment to equal opportunities and to the creation of a diverse workforce. Talented candidates from under-represented groups are not appointed because they never get to know about vacancies in the organisation.

It is also important to note that the management of internal recruitment practices is difficult to carry out effectively. Problems often occur when internal candidates fail to be selected because they tend to enter the selection process with higher expectations of being offered the position than external candidates. Bitterness, antipathy and low morale may thus follow. Moreover, failed internal candidates are considerably more likely to pursue claims of unfair discrimination following a selection process than external candidates. For these reasons, it is essential that great care is taken when managing internal recruitment to ensure that the approach taken is both fair and seen to be fair. Giving honest, full, accurate and constructive feedback to non-appointed candidates is an essential part of the process.

External recruitment

Once an employer has decided that external recruitment is necessary, a cost-effective and appropriate method of recruitment must be selected. There are a number of distinct approaches to choose from, each of which is more or less appropriate in different circumstances. As a result, most employers use a wide variety of different recruitment methods at different times. In many situations, there is also a good case for using different methods in combination when looking to fill the same vacancy. Table 8.1 sets out the methods reported to be most effective by employers in a recent survey (CIPD 2017) and compares these methods with those reported to be most effective by employers only two years previously. Overall, the rapid pace of change shifting to technology-based recruitment is very obvious.

A recruitment method must be chosen that will attract as many people as possible with the required skills and qualifications and reach people who are either actively looking for a new job or thinking about doing so. The key is therefore to place an advertisement where job seekers who are qualified to take on the role are most likely to look. All the various methods of recruitment have benefits and drawbacks and the choice of a method has to be made in relation to the particular vacancy and the type of labour market in which the job falls. As Table 8.1 shows, recruitment methods using technology in some form or other now dominate. This reflects the growth of online recruitment, one of the most striking recent developments in the field over the past twenty years, although most companies use traditional and electronic methods in combination, rather than one having replaced the other. Despite this, online recruitment is the second most-widely practised

Table 8.1 Most effective recruitment methods

Method	2017	2015
Corporate website	74%	50%
Professional networking (e.g. LinkedIn)	60%	19%
Commercial job boards	58%	25%
Recruitment consultants	52%	40%
Social networking (e.g. Facebook)	40%	6%
Apprenticeships	29%	4%
Specialist journals and trade press	28%	11%
Links with schools, colleges and universities	28%	4%
Speculative application	27%	13%
Secondments	14%	4%
Alumni (former employees)	10%	3%
Links with local organisations making redundancies	8%	-
Local Enterprise Partnership	3%	-

Source: Table compiled from data in CIPD (2017) and CIPD (2015c) *Resourcing and Talent Planning: Annual Survey Reports 2017 and 2015*. London: CIPD.

form of e-business (Simone and Esteves 2016). Indeed, Baska (2018) argues that a credible online reputation is now essential to effective recruitment, with the majority saying that they would only apply for a role having researched a company’s online presence, and not then if this was not trustworthy. Care is, however, needed. Intindolaa *et al.* (2017) advise against overloading candidates. For example, using multiple sources like a corporate website and Facebook will be effective until a saturation point is reached. However, it is difficult to determine what this point is, so organisations should consider carefully the number of methods used and the amount of information posted on each. More is not always better.

Organisations are relying increasingly heavily on corporate and commercial websites, the former being by far the more popular (74% and 58%, respectively). Corporate websites refer to the employer’s own website and advertise jobs alongside information about the products and services offered by the organisation. Larger organisations typically have part of their website dedicated to careers, or indeed even set up a website specifically for this purpose. Examples of this include the BBC, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, Google and Microsoft. This method is more suitable to large organisations with many visitors to their websites than smaller organisations that typically generate much less website traffic. Commercial websites, provided by cyber-agencies, combine the roles traditionally played by both newspapers and recruitment agents. They advertise the job and undertake shortlisting before they send on a selection of suitable CVs to the employer. The principal attraction of corporate and commercial websites is that they allow jobs to be advertised relatively inexpensively to a potential audience of millions. Simone and Esteves (2016) suggest that around three quarters of potential applicants view companies’ corporate websites and that these are their most important source of information. Holm (2014) suggests that cost reductions of up to 90% can be made over traditional methods. Savings can also be made by dispensing with the need to print glossy recruitment brochures and other documents to send to potential candidates and online material can be amended quickly which offers flexibility. It is also a method that

is easy for both candidates and employers to use. The other big advantage is speed. People can respond within seconds of reading about an opportunity by emailing their CV to the employer.

Corporate and commercial websites also have a number of disadvantages. A key drawback is that employers advertising jobs can be bombarded with hundreds of applications, many of which are unsuitable for the position advertised. This occurs because of the large number of people who read the advertisement and because it takes so little effort to email a copy of a CV to the employer. A further concern is the high number of applications received from candidates who do not have the necessary work permits. Additionally, these methods may not target passive job seekers or reach a diverse population of job seekers and thus may fail to generate applications from potentially suitable candidates. Goldberg and Allen (2008) outline the difference in responses to recruitment websites between black and white applicants and similar differences have been observed in groups such as older workers or women returners. While it is commonly used for graduates, knowledge workers and middle management jobs, it is often felt to be less appropriate for blue-collar and senior management jobs and for targeting groups such as older workers or women returners. Other problems concern fears about security and confidentiality and there have also been criticisms of poor ethical standards on the part of cyber-agencies. As with conventional employment agents, there are a number who employ poor practice such as posting fictional vacancies and falsely inflating advertised pay rates in order to build up a bank of CVs which can be circulated to employers on an unsolicited basis. Some cyber-agencies also copy CVs from competitors' sites and send them on to employers without authorisation. The pace of technological change can also be problematic: most job seekers now want to access corporate websites via mobile devices but many corporate websites are not yet sufficiently sophisticated to support this (Simone and Esteves 2016).

Recruitment consultants have fallen to fourth place in the list of effective methods, although they are still used by half of organisations. This is a well-established recruitment method in which an organisation provides job descriptions and person specifications to an agent who both advertises the vacancy and trawls its own applicant databases to identify suitable candidates. In theory, this creates access to a large potential applicant pool that is suitably qualified and reduces the administrative burden on the employer. In practice, candidates are often a poor match for organisational requirements and, even where this is not the case, the service is provided at a high cost which can average around 30% of the appointed candidate's salary.

Social media is now firmly established as an effective recruitment method and the pace at which this has happened is astonishing. As shown in Table 8.1, LinkedIn is now the second most effective method, used by 60% of organisations and up from 19% only two years previously. It is widely used for identifying and approaching potential candidates, particularly in respect of professional-level jobs. Indeed, features have been developed on the site specifically for this purpose. Facebook was the fifth most popular method, its usage having grown from around 6% to 40% in the same period. Facebook is also especially popular with younger age groups.

A report by Broughton *et al.* (2013: on behalf of Acas) provides a detailed discussion of social media in recruitment and is recommended reading, particularly as job seekers are now thought to use up to three forms of social media in their job searches (Brown 2018).



WINDOW ON PRACTICE

Social media sites, such as LinkedIn, present a platform for users (often potential job applicants), to present their CVs in new and interesting ways. This has led some to assert that the traditional CV will soon become a thing of the past. Recruiters accessing LinkedIn profiles have access to a vast amount of information on potential applicants, making the platform one of the most used for recruitment in both America and the UK. In one study, Zide *et al.* (2014) investigated what aspects of a LinkedIn profile recruiters were most focused on and whether users completed this information. They found that key fields were often not completed, suggesting that traditional CVs will continue to be used for some time yet. They also found different usage patterns by sector, with sales and marketing professionals most likely to have complete profiles, and gender, with men more likely than women to provide personal details on their profiles. The research demonstrates the vast potential and substantial uptake of LinkedIn as a recruitment method, but also that it has some way to go before it is likely to fully replace more traditional methods.

Source: (Zide *et al.* 2014).

As with other forms of recruitment, social media has both benefits and disadvantages. It offers speed, efficiency and the capacity to identify and target particular applicants or application groups (Broughton *et al.* 2013). It is also a method that is easily available to SMEs and Faragher (2015) reports on how they use less popular sites, such as Snapchat, to create a more 'edgy' image. Social media allows for the provision of company information via videos, blogs and the chance to engage with existing employees and this can be more attractive to applicants than standard PDF brochures. Facebook, for example, has designed a recruitment campaign that runs on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/> and then search with keyword recruitment campaign. Realistic job preview and self-selection are all improved via this type of information which can lead to more suitable applications. Longer term, organisations can use social media to develop permanent talent pools, rather than simply advertise vacancies in the short term. Monash University, in Australia, for example, runs ongoing branding campaigns on LinkedIn to establish itself as a leading university and employer, irrespective of any specific vacancies that it is advertising.

Social media is not, however, without its drawbacks as a recruitment method. Holm (2014) evidences that it is not as cost-effective a form of recruitment as corporate and commercial websites. This results from the need to have HR practitioners engaging on a frequent basis on social media sites, which can be a time-consuming process. Speed of communication also means that inappropriate messages can be inadvertently posted. Broughton *et al.* (2013) report on a number of case study organisations and their approaches to managing this difficulty: many acknowledge that mistakes will be made and take a relaxed approach to this. Most, however, do not have a social media recruitment policy and this is advisable so that all parties are clear on what is acceptable. The method's effectiveness is also limited to applicants who can access social media and those who are likely to, again demographic differences existing across both age groups and ethnic categories. It may also be more appropriate for particular types of roles, e.g. managerial and professional, than for administrative roles (Gërzhani and Koster 2015). Issues around privacy and

the extent to which it is appropriate to use information gathered from social networking sites in recruitment are particularly important (Broughton *et al.* 2013). Information can be used in ways unintended by the applicant particularly on social networks such as Facebook. Again it is important to have a policy which specifies whether and how this information can be used (we discuss this further in Chapter 9, Selection). Curran *et al.* (2014) report that most students did not feel they provided information on their website pages that would be relevant to employers in making selection decisions. Employers in contrast believed that they could learn a great deal about the students in this way. This gap in perception demonstrates the care needed in using social media in recruitment processes.

Apprenticeships have appeared as a new recruitment method, with 29% of participants in the CIPD (2017) survey expecting to use them. This relates to the UK's Apprenticeship Levy, introduced in 2017 and expected to substantially increase the number of apprenticeship starts. However, 2018 figures evidence a huge drop in these starts and the effectiveness of apprenticeships as a recruitment method remains an open question. Other once common recruitment methods, such as the specialist and trade press, have seen substantial falls in popularity (if not usage) and national and local newspapers have disappeared altogether from the most effective methods list. A factor is the substantial cost of such advertising, which can run to several thousand pounds and is increasingly unattractive given the more modest cost of online methods.

Another noteworthy point is the effectiveness of informal methods of recruitment. For example, use of speculative applications has increased in over a quarter of organisations. Employee referral schemes, in which current employees recommend their contacts for employment in the organisation, are a substantial part of this. This is a low-cost method, as advertising costs are avoided, and those recommended are often suitable (as a current employee would not wish to recommend someone unsuitable) and a good organisational fit, as they know what to expect from their organisational contact. It does, however, limit the pool of candidates to those known by current employees and the best candidate for the job may never know that the vacancy exists. It can also create difficulties in relation to equality of opportunity and diversity in that recommendations are likely to perpetuate the make-up of the current workforce.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE



Employee referral schemes encourage employees to recommend their friends, family and acquaintances for vacancies in their organisation. They are increasingly popular and have been the focus of recent academic research. One study suggests that employees recruited via referral schemes had more positive attitudes (commitment, job satisfaction, etc.) than those recruited by other means (González and Rivarés 2018). A second study also had positive outcomes of recruitment from referrals, especially where the characteristics of a good hire were well communicated, as the schemes created realistic expectations and a sense of responsibility/obligation. The effectiveness of referral bonuses, where employees receive a sum of money for a successful referral, were also explored. The study found that offering a referral bonus was effective and increasing this to a certain point, around 1,500 dollars, was beneficial. Bonuses bigger than this were not effective, however, as they increased the perceived risk of making a poor referral and discouraged employees (Pieper *et al.* 2018).

Sources: Adapted González and Rivarés (2018) and Pieper *et al.* (2018).

Responding to speculative applications is also often an effective recruitment method. This supports reports of how people actually find their jobs in practice. Studies repeatedly show that informal methods (such as word of mouth and making unsolicited applications) are as, if not more, common than formal methods such as recruitment advertising, especially in sectors such as retail and hospitality. This is important to note and a point often overlooked in academic discussions of effective recruitment methods.

CIPD (2017) suggest that the change in effective recruitment methods may be driven by both an increased focus on recruitment on skilled staff and by increased competition for staff, leading to more methods being used in combination. Methods are also likely to vary by group, search consultants being used, for example, for senior and professional roles and commercial job boards for technical and administrative roles. Increasingly tight labour markets and skills shortages will make the choice of an effective method more important than ever before.



ACTIVITY 8.2

We have seen the significance of informal methods of recruitment whereby new employees come as a result of hearing about a vacancy from friends, or putting their names down for consideration when a vacancy occurs. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this type of arrangement? Why does it so often replace more sophisticated forms of recruitment?

Recruitment advertising

Effective recruitment advertisements are essential to a successful recruitment campaign. In order to assist in drafting advertisements and placing them in suitable media, many employers deal with a recruitment advertising agency. Such agencies provide expert advice on where to place advertisements and how they should be worded and will design them attractively to achieve maximum impact. This is important whether dealing with print copy or online advertisements. Large organisations often subcontract all their advertising work to an agency operating on the basis of a service-level agreement.

Recruitment advertising companies (as opposed to recruitment agencies) are often inexpensive because the agency derives much of its income from the commission paid by the journals on the value of the advertising space sold, the bigger agencies being able to negotiate substantial discounts because of the amount of business they place. A portion of this saving is then passed on to the employer so that it can easily be cheaper *and* a great deal more effective to work with an agent providing this kind of service. The important questions relate to the experience of the agency in dealing with recruitment, as compared with other types of advertising, the quality of the advice they can offer about media choice and the quality of response that their advertisements produce. Cyber-agencies now also play an important role in designing and placing website advertisements and we discuss this further below.

The decision on what to include in a recruitment advertisement is important because of the high cost of space, where using hard copy publications, and the need to attract attention, whether hard or e-copy. Where agencies are used, they will be able to advise on this, as they will on the way the advertisement should be worded, but the following is a short checklist of items that must be included:

- Name and brief details of employing organisation.
- Job role and duties.
- Training to be provided.
- Key points of the personnel specification or competency profile.
- Salary and benefits.
- Employment status (e.g. permanent or fixed-term contract).
- Instructions about how to apply.

CIPD (2017) also recommends including information on the organisation's activities and values, again reinforcing the growing importance of values. Uggersley *et al.*'s (2012) study demonstrates the importance of communicating the characteristics of the job, organisation and recruitment process in recruitment advertising. Use of particular words attracts some applicants over others, again underlining the importance of advertisement design.

There are a number of other considerations when designing and placing a recruitment advertisement. For example, is the aim to deliver a high volume of applicants (graduate or call centre recruitment) or a smaller, highly selective group of applicants (senior manager recruitment, for example)? A balance also needs to be drawn between promoting the company and the job: one may be more attractive than the other, and this may reflect on whether the advertisement adopts a positive, selling approach or a more measured approach to what working in the organisation will be like. A final decision is how precise the information provided should be. A good example of this is in relation to salary. Many employers are reluctant to declare the salary that will accompany the advertised post. Sometimes this is reasonable as the salary scales are well known and inflexible. Elsewhere the reluctance is due either to the fact that the employer does not want to publicise the salary of a position to be filled for fear of dissatisfying holders of other posts, or to the fact that the employer does not know what to offer and is waiting to see 'what the mail brings'. All research evidence, however, suggests that a good indication of the salary is essential if the employer is to attract a useful number of appropriate replies. Recent research has also found that the use of photographs in recruitment advertising can increase the number of applications received.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE



Burt *et al.* (2010) report on three studies which investigated the use of photographs in recruitment advertisements in New Zealand. The first study demonstrated that around half of organisations used photographs of current employees as these were more positive in attracting applications than those not using photographs. The second study considered potential applicants' responses to the use of photographs in recruitment advertising. Applicants had more positive responses to photographs which showed teams of employees. The third study demonstrated that positive responses were higher when real teams of current employees, rather than models, were used in recruitment advertisements. The authors argue that more applicants are likely to be attracted by recruitment advertisements that use photographs and that the type of photograph used is important.

Source: Burt *et al.* (2010).



ACTIVITY 8.3

Table 8.2 contains phrases about the value in pay terms of twelve different jobs. Try putting them in rank order of actual cash value to the recipient. Then ask a friend to do the same thing and compare your lists.

Table 8.2 Phrases from a quality newspaper about salary

1	c.£60,000 + bonus + car + benefits
2	from c.£35k
3	£30,000 –£40,000 + substantial bonus + car
4	You will already be on a basic annual salary of not less than £40,000
5	Six-figure remuneration + profit share + benefits
6	c.£60,000 package
7	Attractive package
8	Substantial package
9	£50,000 OTE, plus car and substantial benefits
10	£ excellent + benefits
11	£ Neg.
12	c.£60k package + banking benefits

Evaluation of recruitment activity

It is important to monitor the effectiveness of recruitment methods, first, to ensure value for money and, second, to ensure that the pool of applicants produced by the various methods is suitable. As with many other HR activities, the evaluation of recruitment is typically poorly done by organisations. Breaugh and Starke (2000) outline a number of possible recruitment criteria against which recruitment activity can be measured and these include:

- the number, quality and diversity of applicants;
- cost per vacancy;
- speed of recruitment;
- number of vacancies filled;
- the ratio of offers to acceptances.

These are relatively short-term measures that are easy to quantify. For a deeper understanding of recruitment effectiveness, Breaugh and Starke (2000) go on to argue that there should also be medium- to long-term measures of effectiveness such as job performance and retention rate and even softer measures such as staff attitudes. A recent CIPD (2017) report evidences that fewer than 20% of organisations measure return on investment, rather the most popular method is cost per hire followed by turnover rate of new hires; some measure performance of new hires but very few consider candidate satisfaction. It seems that an increasing number of organisations monitor short-term outcomes, but attempts to link these to longer-term measures of success are much less common.

This may result from a lack of robust processes for collecting relevant data. There is also a good case for monitoring effectiveness to ensure equality of opportunity is apparent across the recruitment process, in terms, for example, of gender, ethnic origin, reviewing those who are successful at each stage of the process and taking remedial action where an imbalance becomes apparent.

There also needs to be information to get to the more intangible questions, such as ‘Did the best candidate not even apply?’ The most important source of information about the quality of the recruitment process is the people involved in it. Do telephonists and receptionists know how to handle the tentative employment enquiry? What did they hear from applicants in the original enquiries that showed the nature of their reaction to the advertisement? Is it made simple for enquirers to check key points on websites or by telephone? Is there an unnecessary emphasis on written applications before anything at all can be done? Useful information can also be obtained from both successful and unsuccessful applicants. Social media is particularly effective for seeking this kind of feedback.



SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS

- 8.1.** Job and competency analysis determine the requirements of a vacancy and support the drawing up of job descriptions and person specifications. Values are an increasingly important part of these requirements.
- 8.2.** Rational approaches to recruitment have been increasingly criticised and a processual approach recognises a greater role for candidates and leads to an emphasis on employer branding. This involves actively selling the experience of working for an organisation by focusing on what makes the experience both positive and distinctive.
- 8.3.** Effective recruitment methods are changing over time and online methods now dominate over traditional ones. Informal recruitment methods are also often highly effective.
- 8.4.** Recruitment advertising draws on a range of methods to target suitable applicants. Well-designed advertisements are essential.
- 8.5.** Evaluation of recruitment effectiveness is essential but often poorly done.



GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 1.** What are the advantages and disadvantages of online recruitment methods from an employer's point of view?
- 2.** How can organisations use social media to develop their employer brand?
- 3.** What benefits are there to viewing recruitment as a social process as opposed to a rational process? How important are values in this?



THEORY INTO PRACTICE

In this chapter, we have focused on formal, so-called best practice recruitment methods, while recognising that informal methods are often used. These best practice methods result from research in a largely Western context and are typically presumed to translate unproblematically to other contexts. A growing body of research, however, demonstrates that local context is influential on the operation of HR practices. Horak (2017) has recently examined recruitment in Korea and the extent to which formal practice is adopted. He finds that, in Korea, Yongo, informal social networks, are widely used in recruitment particularly in the private sector. Here, Yongo is widely used in recruitment at senior- and mid-levels in large firms and at all levels in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to attract applicants to roles. Large firms focus on skills, experience and qualifications for entry-level and also for mid-level, but in the latter, referral systems (hence Yongo) become very influential. Yongo is also of substantial importance in senior-level recruitment. Further, Yongo influences all levels of recruitment in SMEs, which are seen as less attractive employment propositions than large firms and thus reliant on social networks to attract applicants. While large firms aspire to best practice, following international models, this is often mixed with local contextual influences such as Yongo. These are dominant in SMEs, which are less influenced by international approaches. The author concludes that Yongo is likely to have a lasting influence on recruitment methods in Korea. These findings reflect research in other cultural contexts, for example, the use of Wasta in many Arab nations and Guanxi in China (Xian *et al.* 2017). Best practice approaches, while potentially influential, are likely to be adapted and reflect cultural context in many countries across the world.

Questions

- 1 Why do large firms in Korea aspire to use formal, best practice recruitment methods? What are the barriers to success in doing this?
- 2 To what extent are formal, best practice recruitment methods ever likely to be effective for SMEs? How could SMEs develop use of these and reduce reliance on Yongo?
- 3 To what extent do formal practices dominate in the UK? How influential are informal, social networks in recruitment here?

Source: Horak, S. (2017) 'The informal dimension of human resource management in Korea: Yongo, recruiting practices and career progression', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 28, pp. 1409–1432.

FURTHER READING

Broughton, A., Foley, B., Leidermaier, S. and Cox, A. (2013) *The Use of Social Media in the Recruitment Process*. London: Acas.

Bakker, A., Rodriguez-Munoz, A. and Vergel, A. (2016) Modelling job crafting behaviours: implications for work engagement, *Human Relations*, Vol. 69, pp. 169–89.

Reis, G., Braga, B. and Trullen, J. (2017) Workplace authenticity as an attribute of employer attractiveness. *Personnel Review*, Vol. 46, pp. 1962–76.

Broughton *et al.* (2013) explore in detail the use of social media as a recruitment method, outlining the benefits and highlighting potential pitfalls. Bakker *et al.*'s (2016) paper considers how to craft jobs, that is, design them around particular applicant needs, and the benefits of this for increased employee engagement. Given predicted skills shortages, this processual approach to recruitment that reflects applicant needs is likely to grow in importance in coming years. Finally, Reis *et al.* (2017) demonstrate the importance of authenticity as a means to attract applicants. In combination, these papers evidence a substantial shift from traditional to more processual forms of recruitment and highlight the need both for an effective brand and to consider applicant needs in the recruitment process.

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