



HR Advisory Plan for Recruitment for the Swansea Aquarium

Operations Management

Leisure, Events, Tourism & International Travel & Tourism Management

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Project Context

This advisory operational plan will focus on recruitment for the new Swansea Aquarium in the Swansea Civic Centre. Recruitment is important because hiring high-skilled motivated staff directly influences the professionalism, consistency, and overall visitor experience in the aquarium (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2020; Nickson, 2013). The target market for the aquarium is families and schools due to its educational aspect, tourists in Swansea, locals and environmental enthusiasts who are interested in marine conservation (Swansea Council, 2026). It is a mid-range attraction as it is family friendly, educational and paid entry however it isn't too expensive and is comparable to Swansea's other mid-range attraction Plantasia Tropical Zoo with similar experiences and audience (Plantasia Tropical Zoo, 2026).

Problem or Opportunity Identification

Recruitment is how an organisation recruits or selects employees ensuring that it recruits suitable staff for the job (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). The problem the aquarium is facing is a slow hiring process as they cannot find people who are suitable for the job and it is taking them a while to discover the best hiring process.

Tourism is a labour-intensive industry which means service quality for the aquarium relies on having enough trained staff. Slow recruitment causes understaffing which leads to longer queues and inconsistent guest service interactions (Shyju et al., 2023).

When suitable staff cannot be recruited the employees working there experience work overload and emotional strain. This pressure negatively affects performance and increases the likelihood of customer complaints or staff errors (Kravariti et al., 2022)

For the aquarium guest satisfaction is strongly linked to interaction quality, emotional labour, responsiveness and personalised interaction. Understaffing weakens responsiveness and visitor engagement lowering satisfaction and perceived value (Shyju et al., 2023; Zeithaml et al 2018).

Visitor experiences shape brand image. Poor service quality caused by lack of staff spreads quickly through word-of mouth and online reviews which leads to poor brand reputation and reduced customer loyalty, so guests are less likely to come (Abdulrab and Hezam, 2024). This will make it harder to attract high-quality staff as they will not want to work for a company with a poor brand image (Kilson, 2025).

Aquariums face peaks due to seasonality if recruitment is slow the attraction will enter the peaks understaffed which means existing staff will have to be constantly working

losing work life balance and motivation for the role which will make overall staff performance drop (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020; Heimerl et al., 2020).

Academic Theory & Literature

The service-profit chain is a management framework linking internal service quality and employee satisfaction to customer loyalty and then to revenue growth and profitability. If employees are satisfied then they will perform better in their role which leads to customer satisfaction and they will spend their money through the gift shop, café, buying memberships and repeat visits (Stobierski, 2025).

Hiring staff with the right skills like guest interaction and animal care enables the aquarium to deliver strong internal service quality (Heskett et al., 1994). Highly skilled staff are confident and satisfied in their job which makes them loyal and productive and reduces stress and turnover in guest-facing roles (Sasser et al, 1997) Aquariums rely on staff to deliver talks, answer questions, create memorable moments for visitors and deliver service value that drives customer satisfaction. The aquarium's brand reputation will be poor if it is understaffed leading to less talks and longer queues which means customers are less likely to be loyal, come back and recommend it to others which means they are less likely to buy memberships and spend money in places such as the café and gift shop (Sasser et al, 1997) (Heskett et al., 1994).

The Human Capital Theory explains that investing in staff wellbeing, skills and knowledge increases their economic value and productivity making them a core asset in the aquarium's success (Sweetland, 1996). The aquarium must recruit skilled animal care specialists and guest facing staff because it is a new attraction and must hire people with the right skills, knowledge and abilities to manage effectively from day one. This reflects the theories' view that staff capabilities function as valuable organisational assets (Becker, 1993; Sweetland, 1996) Recruiting high-quality staff is therefore an investment as the aquarium gains a better guest experience and safer animal care and stronger overall performance. This shows that human capital development is central to organisational success (CIPD, 2017)

The Psychological contract theory is the perceived obligations and unwritten expectations that shape the relationship between employees and employers beyond the formal contract (Rousseau, 1995).

Although during recruitment the aquarium will provide a formal contract employees have unwritten expectations about support, fairness and communication such as managers being approachable and reachable during the busy periods especially when it first opens to provide guidance or help with difficult visitors (Rousseau, 1995). If

employees feel the aquarium hasn't lived up to their expectations it becomes a psychological contract breach which leads to the employee being less motivated, increased turnover and they will deliver poor guest service which impacts visitor satisfaction and repeat visitation which are critical for the aquarium as it grows its reputation (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994) (McCabe, 2024) However, if the aquarium meets or exceeds employee's unwritten expectations they are more likely to go and beyond in their job (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000).

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory that organises basic human needs into a five-tier pyramid. Psychological needs are the lowest level on the pyramid and are basic needs that will be stated in the contract such as competitive pay and reliable hours. To meet safety needs jobs must advertise safe working conditions especially for roles which involve animals and water (Maslow, 1943; Miller et al 2018) To meet love and belongingness which are emotional needs recruitment must show a supportive, friendly and collaborative environment (Nickson, 2013). Applicants are more likely to apply if the aquarium meets esteem needs by promoting career progression, recognition systems, and training opportunities (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Self-actualisation needs are the highest level and the drive to reach full potential, opportunities for creativity and meaningful contribution such as jobs involving conservation and marine education help employees meet their full potential ((Maslow, 1954; Tribe & Booth, 2003).

Advisory Operational Plan

These tables show the aquarium's key objectives for the hiring process and how they will be achieved. This is a strategy plan which is a framework that will guide the aquariums key decisions and actions to achieve its goals. Strategy plans are useful as they provide clear direction for goals and support effective decision making (Johnson et al, 2020).

Objective	Reduce how long it takes to hire staff
Key Actions/ Strategies	• Map out the current hiring process to see any delays • Set a clear time frame for each stage such as screening within 48 hours • Create an interview schedule that only lasts a few days, so managers aren't delaying decisions
Who is responsible	HR Manager
Timeline	1 month
Resources Required	• Time from managers • Clear recruitment workflow

Expected Outcomes	• Aquarium being fully staffed • Stable operations for opening week
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Objective	Get job adverts out quicker and reach more suitable candidates for aquarium roles
Key Actions/ Strategies	• Write clear job descriptions • Post advert through multiple platforms such as Indeed and the Aquarium's social media • Build a list of applications and what type of work they're looking for such as part or full time
Who is responsible	HR Manager
Timeline	2 weeks
Resources Required	• Time from managers • Social Media
Expected Outcomes	• Applicants who fit the job description • Less time waiting for the right applicants

Objective:	Strengthen Candidate Screening Efficiency
Key Actions/ Strategies	• Use AI to filter out any unwanted applicants and look for key words • Use simple scoring sheets so managers pick consistently • Add pre-screen questions to the job application to easily identify the right people for the job
Who is responsible	HR Manager
Timeline	2-3 weeks
Resources Required	• Time from managers • AI • Scoring templates
Expected Outcomes	• Faster screening process • Better quality applications for the interviews

The Input-Process-Output-Outcome framework is a key performance indicator (KPI) model that evaluates organisational effectiveness by measuring resources, activities, immediate results and longer-term outcomes. It is useful for the aquarium's slow hiring process because it identifies where delays occur across recruitment enabling targeted

improvements that speed up hiring and enhance staff quality (Armstrong, 2020). The following tables will show how the input-process-outcome works for the objectives.

Objective	Reduce time-to-hire from 6 weeks to 3 weeks
Input	Managers approve hiring within 48 hours
Process	Structured screening and interviews completed within 7 days
Output	Job offers issued within 72 hours of final interview
Outcome	90% of roles filled by opening week

Objective	Get adverts live within 48 hours and increase suitable applicants by 25%
Input	Managers create adverts within 24 hours
Process	Adverts go live on platforms such as Indeed and LinkedIn within 48 hours
Output	Applicants beginning applying within 74 hours of posting
Outcome	25% increase in number of applicants who meet the job criteria

Objective	Strengthen screening so 90% of shortlisted applicants meet the criteria
Input	Scoring sheets are used consistently by hiring team
Process	Applications are reviewed within 48 hours
Output	Shortlist made within 72 hours with candidates who meet the criteria
Outcome	90% of candidates interview successfully

Impact on Service Hospitality & Guest Experience

A fast strong recruitment process is crucial for opening an aquarium as the aquarium needs a stable workforce from day one to avoid service gaps and operational issues and risks because less mistakes are made when employees aren't rushed or overstretched (Okumus et al, 2010; Mullins & Dossor, 2013).

Recruiting staff with the right skills for the job increases overall staff capability because if they are confident in what they are doing they are more likely to do their job confidently and effectively which improves how they interact with guests because confident staff naturally create a more positive atmosphere (Heskett et al., 1994).

A fast and clear hiring process means that the roles will be filled efficiently which spreads the workload, so it isn't focused on only a few staff. This supports employee

wellbeing and engagement which is a key factor in guest service for the aquarium (Kravariti et al., 2022). A structured and fair screening and selection process and strengthens the employee's psychological contract, increasing motivation and willingness to contribute positively (Rousseau, 1995; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000).

Hiring competent staff ensures more predictable and reliable service delivery which is essential for the aquarium starting out (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Preventing understaffing avoids service gaps such as long queues or missed educational talks which improves consistency (Shyju et al., 2023). Reducing pressure on employees stabilises employee performance, supporting reliable service across busy periods (Heimerl et al., 2020). These moments have a big impact on visitor satisfaction and keeping them consistent is crucial.

Recruiting staff who are experienced with guest interaction and education supports the aquarium's aim to offer friendly, informative and engaging experiences (Nickson, 2013). When staff feel that their psychological contract for the aquarium is met, they are more likely to work in a way that aligns with the aquarium's service standards and culture (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

When the aquarium is fully staffed with capable staff guests get quicker responses, smoother interactions and overall a more enjoyable experience which are drivers of guest satisfaction which is crucial during opening week because first impressions shape early reviews and how quickly the aquarium builds a good reputation (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Staff who feel supported and confident in their role create memorable moments for guests making them want to return and recommend the aquarium to others (Heskett et al., 1994).

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