A. THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

People are the most important aspect in any business and management should make every effort to get the right people in the right jobs at the right time. For a company to stay competitive it must recruit and retain an efficient and effective team of employees.

Although the recruitment and selection processes work hand in hand (insofar as you cannot have one without the other) there is a distinction between them.

- **Recruitment** involves the *attraction* of suitable candidates to vacant positions from both inside and outside the organisation.
- **Selection** involves the *choosing* of suitable candidates by means of the recruitment process.

The advent of the flexible workforce has encouraged companies to re-engineer their working and recruitment practices. Recruitment and selection is no longer a straightforward process. Many variables have to be taken into consideration, including employment status (full-time, permanent part-time, temporary part-time, subcontractor, self-employed, etc.), the external labour market, and even whether external recruitment is necessary. It is also important to ensure that the process is undertaken fairly, and that means being aware of equal opportunities requirements.

Recruitment in organisations can be viewed as a systematic process. It has a number of stages, each of which needs to be completed for the process to be a success. This process is outlined below in Figure 9.1.

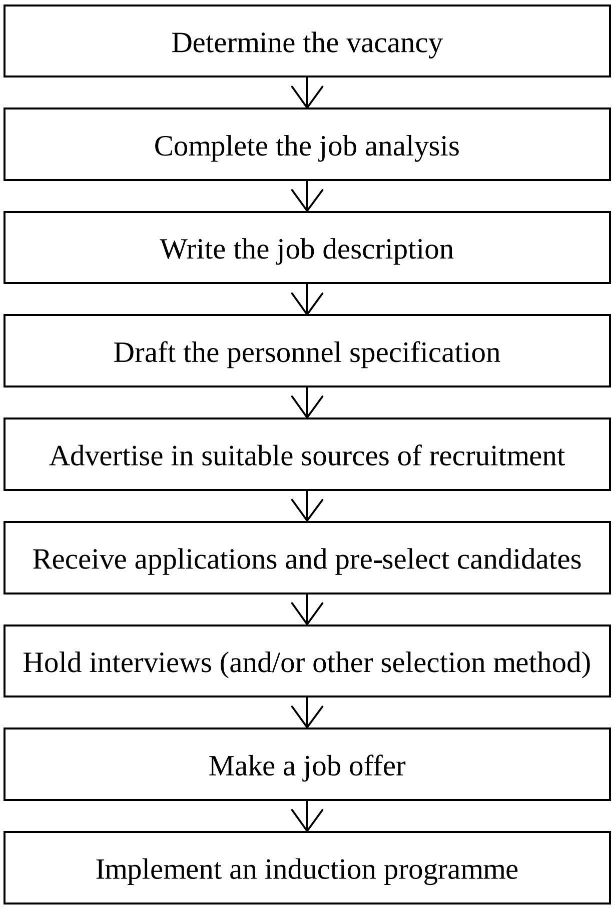

Figure 9.1: Stages in the Recruitment/Selection Process

B. DEFINING THE VACANCY

Recruitment is likely to be necessary when either an existing employee leaves or a new position is created. Whatever the reason, though, there should initially be an assessment of whether there really is a vacancy or whether the work could be done in some other way. Reorganisation of work or training could solve the problem, and there is also the possibility of overtime or internal secondment to cover the work.

Where it is determined that a vacancy does exist, there are a number of alternatives to undertaking the full recruitment and selection procedure. This can be expensive and time-consuming and, where appropriate, it may be better to fill the vacancy through:

- **Subcontracting** – A growing number of companies are subcontracting certain jobs in order to avoid oncosts such as national insurance contributions, sickness pay, etc.
- **Agencies** – The use of temporary agencies is yet another option. Temporary cover can be provided for occurrences like long-term sickness or maternity leave. Such workers are not directly employed by the company.

Internal recruitment is also a possibility. This is cheaper than external recruitment and has the advantage of ensuring the appointment of someone already accustomed to the organisation's culture and values. However, the requirements of fair selection (particularly with reference to equal opportunities) imply that the process should still be worked through in its entirety, with internal advertising of the vacancy and proper selection procedures used to make the final decision.

Once it has been determined that a vacancy exists and needs to be filled, the first focus of the process is on defining the requirements of the job. The first stage in this is job analysis.

Job Analysis

Job analysis is the process of collecting and analysing information about the tasks, responsibilities and the context of jobs. The objective of this exercise is to provide the information on which the job description and person specification may be based. It is, therefore, a key part of the process of matching individuals to jobs.

A job analysis exercise involves two elements:

- defining the information required; and
- collecting the information from appropriate sources.

(a) Information required

The acquisition of useful data is a vital element in any job analysis exercise, so it is important that it is done in a systematic way. A checklist can be useful here. The checklist outlines the various categories under which information needs to be collected.

You can see an example of a checklist (adapted from Torrington and Hall (1987)) set out in Figure 9.2.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

Summary of data to be collected in job analysis

Title of Job

Outline title of job in unambiguous terms.

Organisational Context

Should include: location of job, department or division; chain of command (if appropriate); reporting relationships.

Summary of Job

This should provide a breakdown of the purpose of the job and its objectives.

Content of the Job

Should include a detailed description of the duties and responsibilities of the job, and its importance in relation to other jobs it may relate to.

Physical Working Environment

This should include the working conditions (office or shop floor); hours of work; salary/wages; associated benefits and incentives.

Other Information

Outline whether the job is open to "advancement" i.e. promotion; give an indication of the education and training requirements (if any).

Performance Standards

Indicate the systems that will be implemented to monitor performance (e.g. appraisals or professional development interviews) and state the review periods (whether quarterly or half-yearly).

Human Requirements

Describe the profile of the individual who must meet the job specification. This will be detailed in the personnel specification.

Figure 9.2: Job Analysis Checklist

(b) Information collection

Among the more common methods of carrying out job analysis are:

- Observing the job – the observer has to check that he/she understands all the actions
- Interviewing the job-holder
- Work study techniques – measuring and timing actions
- Diary method – the job-holder completes a diary recording all actions
- Work performance – the analyst performs the job
- Critical incident technique – observing the key incidents in the job

These all relate to examining the job itself, but a complete job analysis will also make reference to the perceptions of others to whom the job relates.

- **Line manager/supervisor** – he/she should have had day-to-day contact with the previous job-holder and know what is required. If the vacancy is a new job that has just been created, the line manager/supervisor should know the details of the activities the postholder will be doing.
- **Colleagues/peers** – these staff can provide details of how the job-holder should integrate with others and perform in group tasks. Note, though, that the job analysis must beware of personal bias intruding here and maintain a high degree of objectivity when obtaining the opinions of others.

Job Descriptions

The job description does basically that – it describes the job in terms of its duties, responsibilities and purpose. It sets the parameters of the job by covering the total requirements – the who, what, where, when and why. The key elements are as follows:

- The job title
- To whom the job-holder reports (possibly including an organisation chart to show where the job fits in)
- Primary objective or overview – the job's main purpose
- Key tasks
- How the responsibilities are to be carried out
- Extent of responsibility
- Key contacts and basic conditions of work.

Job descriptions provide essential information to both the organisation and the potential employee:

(a) To the individual**:**

- Provides information to the potential employee/job applicant so that s/he can determine whether or not the job is suitable
- Gives the potential employee (or the job-holder) the opportunity to set individual goals, objectives and targets

(b) To the organisation**:**

- Enables the personnel specification to be written
- Gives the organisation an in-depth overview of the job
- Is the basis for a training needs analysis to be undertaken and appropriate training to be planned for, implemented and evaluated
- Provides an additional source of information during performance appraisals or professional development interviews

You can consider a job description as an **authoritative document**, or the blueprint that guides the individual through day-to-day task achievement. However, job descriptions are not necessarily definitive, i.e. they are not cast in tablets of stone, and as such can be reviewed and added to when necessary.

Job descriptions may vary in length and content depending on the duties, responsibilities and seniority of the post. However, there are two basic rules for writing job descriptions. They should be:

- **Unambiguous** – they should be written in simple, straightforward terms and language. Jargon and semantics should be avoided at all costs, as this can lead to both job and role ambiguity.
- **Succinct** – the job description should not ramble on or contain unnecessary information. It should be to the point and as concise as possible.

Figure 9.3 gives an example of a job description (adapted from Cole (1997)).

Once the job description has been written and finalised with the line manager (who will be responsible for the post-holder), the next stage in the recruitment process is the drafting of the personnel specification.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Human Resources Manager

Reports to: Human Resources Director

Immediate Subordinates:	Human Resources Officer Safety Officer Training and Development Officer Occupational Health Nurse

Purpose of the Job:

Within the limits of human resources policies, to provide a full human resources service to line management and to provide a framework for maintaining good relationships between management and staff (including staff representatives).

Responsibilities:

1. Ensuring the efficient recruitment and selection of suitable and sufficient employees to meet vacancies identified by department managers.
2. Implementing the company's remuneration policy in accordance with laid-down procedures.
3. Advising line managers on employee relations and legal matters during negotiations with trade union representatives, at branch and local level.
4. Establishing and maintaining a regular programme of joint consultation with employee representatives and senior management.
5. Providing adequate training programmes for the induction of new recruits and training and development for managers and employees.
6. Advising department managers on management development programmes.
7. Maintaining adequate records for employees.
8. Providing a routine health and welfare service for all employees including arrangements for giving first aid.

Economic Conditions:

Salary will be commensurate with the grade and scope of the post, as laid out in the contract of employment.

37 hours per week with five weeks' holiday per year.

Company car will be provided.

Qualifications Required:

Over 3 years' experience in human resources management. Previous experience of negotiating with trade union representatives. Professional qualifications (including membership of the Institute of Personnel and Development) essential.

Figure 9.3: Example of a Job Description for a Human Resources Manager

Person Specification

The personnel specification is used in the recruitment process to provide recruiters with an "ideal" profile of the candidate the company wishes to attract. In its simplest form, it is a psychological blueprint of the candidate who, the company hopes, will possess the requisite knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience to enable him/her to do the job efficiently and effectively.

There are two well-known models used by recruiters to construct these specifications:

- Seven point plan
- Fivefold grading system

We will now look at these in some detail.

(a) Seven Point Plan

This model was developed by **Professor Alec Rodger** in the 1950s. The model is based on seven headings and each candidate is "judged" or assessed under **essential** and **desirable** criteria within each category. The seven headings are:

- ***Physical Make-up***

  This covers an individual's personal appearance, dress sense, etc.

- ***Attainments***

  This covers an individual's education and training, qualifications, etc.

- ***General Intelligence***

  This considers the "mental set" of the individual – how they respond to problem-solving and decision-making, how they think, etc. Some companies use psychological tests or intelligence tests to determine how "intelligent" an individual is. Of course, you cannot just rely on intelligence in the selection process. Just because someone scores highly in an intelligence test does not mean that he/she will be effective in the job. (We shall look at psychological tests in the next study unit.)

- ***Special Aptitudes***

  This includes things like skill with words (essential for an editor and journalist), skill with figures (essential for quantity surveyors) etc.

- ***Interests***

  This heading covers any outside interests the individual might have; these interests might make one candidate stand out from another. For example, if a job was being advertised for a journalist or editor and the candidate had an interest in creative writing or word games, this might give him/her the edge over another candidate.

- ***Disposition***

  This covers the overall personality of the individual, including sense of humour, introvert/extrovert, etc. For example, the job of a leisure centre assistant who organises children's birthday parties would not suit someone who did not have an outgoing personality and did not get on with children!

- ***Circumstances***

  This covers any situation that makes the job unusual or demanding, such as frequent travel, unsociable working hours (such as a police officer or firefighter) etc.

The seven point plan is split into **essential** and **desirable** categories. The **essential** criteria are what a candidate **must** possess, and the **desirable** criteria are the **minimum** standard that will be accepted.

Figure 9.4 shows a typical example of a personnel specification used in the recruitment process based on this model. Recruiters use the seven criteria as benchmarks to design specifications to their own corporate look and feel. It is also important that recruiters take a balanced view of the **essential** and **desirable** qualities, to ensure that equal opportunities are not infringed. For instance, they should try to avoid making the specification so watertight or discriminatory that it restricts certain groups, be they women or ethnic minority groups, from applying.

(b) Fivefold Grading System

This system was devised by **John Munro Fraser** in 1978. The criteria are very similar to those in Rodgers' plan and the model is intended to be a guide for recruiters. The fivefold grading system is as follows:

- **Impact on others**: this is very similar to "physical make-up" in the seven point plan.
- **Acquired qualifications**: this is similar to "general intelligence" in the seven point plan and also includes work experience.
- **Innate abilities**: this is similar to "general intelligence" in the seven point plan.
- **Motivation**: this relates to the individual's ability to formulate and achieve his/her own objectives. It bear similarities to "special aptitudes" in the seven point plan.
- **Adjustment**: this relates to the disposition of the individual and how s/he relates to other people. Again, this is similar to "disposition" in the seven point plan.

You can see clearly from the above that both models are similar in their approach. Some people argue that they are outdated and no longer have a role to play in the recruitment and selection process. However, the seven point plan continues to be popular with some recruiters who use it to benchmark the drafting of corporately-tailored personnel specifications.

ABC AIRLINES **PERSONNEL SPECIFICATION**		
Position: Flight Attendant Based: Gatwick Airport		
Criteria	**Essential**	**Desirable**
Physical Make-up	Weight in proportion to height, hearing and eyesight perfect. Neat, clean.	None
Attainments	GCSE level of education.	Experience in hospitality industry, nursing
General Intelligence	Quick thinking/able to "think on feet". Alert.	None
Special Aptitudes	Ability to deal with passengers in a firm, confident manner.	Fluency in one or more language
Interests	None.	Interest in travelling
Disposition	Out-going personality. Ability to work long periods under pressure. Ability to remain calm in a crisis.	Sense of humour
Circumstances	Must live near the airport; must be willing to stand for long periods of time; must be willing to work irregular hours and be away from home for long periods of time.	Domestic situation must be flexible

Figure 9.4: Example of a Personnel Specification for a Flight Attendant

C. CASTING THE NET

When authorisation to recruit has been granted, and a job and person specification have been prepared, there is, first of all, a basic choice to be made as to whether applicants for employment should be sought from within the organisation or whether it will be necessary to recruit from any one or more of a number of external sources.

Internal Sources

The mechanics of contacting internal candidates are quite straightforward – details can be put on a notice board, or published by means of a circular – in any organisation which employs staff in a number of different offices. There are several advantages in recruiting staff internally, along with several disadvantages.

(a) Advantages

- It is cheap. Few direct costs are incurred.
- The advice of managers who know the applicants can be obtained. Written comments may be available if a performance appraisal system is in operation.
- Offering promotion to staff is a good policy. It helps to satisfy their ambitions, encourages them to seek promotion and may help to motivate the workforce to greater effort.

(b) Disadvantages

- For many jobs, particularly those that are highly specialised, the number of applicants from internal sources is likely to be limited. If recruitment is **only** internal, the manager may then be required to accept an applicant who is less suitable.
- Delays sometimes result from the fact that a whole series of replacements have to be recruited, starting from a vacancy at the lowest level.
- Although there may be a motivational effect from offering promotion to some staff, there may also be a sense of grievance in those who are unsuccessful.

External Sources

There are several external recruitment sources which may be used, either on their own or in combination. No single source is better or worse than the others. Managers must evaluate each source in relation to its merits for particular vacancies.

- **Casual Enquiries**

  These occur where applicants write or call. It is a free source and applicants can be provided quickly.

- **Recommendations**

  These may be made by existing employers and other contacts and are often a cheap and quick source of new staff.

  There is, however, a potential problem in that the people recommended are likely to be of the same social and ethnic groups as existing staff. Therefore you may be preventing the same diversity from appearing as you would expect to find in the local environment. An individual who could do the job but who is from a different social/ethnic group could claim that he or she has suffered racial discrimination if recruitment is mainly by way of recommendation.

- **Advertising**

  Many jobs are filled in response to advertisements. To be successful, the advertisement should be well-worded and placed in an appropriate medium. The choice of medium depends on the nature of the job, i.e. low-grade clerical jobs in local weekly newspapers, more specialised jobs in regional or national papers and sometimes in trade and professional journals. The cost and delay will be greater for these higher-grade positions.

- **Job Centres**

  These are located in High Street shopping centres and they act as an intermediary, introducing prospective applicants to employers who have notified vacancies to the job centre. The service is provided free of charge.

- **Agencies**

  Private employment agencies may operate on a nationwide or on a local basis and usually work on a "*no placement, no fee*" basis. Introductions are made to employers and if and when applicants are employed on a permanent basis a fee is charged which is usually a proportion of the starting salary.

  The service can be quick but is expensive. Most agencies specialise in a particular type of vacancy.

  Agencies have grown in importance in recent years and have the advantage of reducing costs in the recruitment process and providing specialist recruitment staff. However, the disadvantage is a loss of control over who is shortlisted and selected.

- **Consultants (Headhunters)**

  This type of agency is more expensive and is used for more demanding and high-ranking positions. The service provided usually includes advertising and preparing a profile. Preliminary interviews are carried out and a small number of applicants, well matched to the profile, are presented to the client.

- **Universities and Colleges**

  When the recruitment is for recently qualified graduates, it makes sense to contact the educational establishments directly. Most universities and colleges operate careers services, providing introductions to employers free of charge.

- **Careers Offices**

  These are a good source of school-leaver applicants for appropriate vacancies.

- **The Internet**

  Increasingly, certain types of job are being advertised in the Internet, a method which considerably extends the potential pool of candidates, although it does restrict the pool to those with access to computers and who are actively seeking jobs through this medium.

Choosing the Correct Source

The choice of recruitment sources for particular vacancies should take account of factors such as:

(a) The speed with which it is necessary to fill the vacancies.

Time is a difficult element to manage in the recruitment process. How long does it take to fill a vacancy? This will depend on various factors such as:

- The method chosen for attracting candidates:
  - (i) If advertising a vacancy, the time which can elapse between booking advertising space in the next edition and the advert appearing can vary significantly depending on the publication chosen, e.g. daily, weekly, monthly.
  - (ii) If internal recruitment or word of mouth is used the replacement can be found almost instantly.
- The interview procedure used:
  - (i) A single interview.
  - (ii) A series of different interviews or tests.
- The period of notice that the successful candidate is required to work at their previous place of employment.
- It is possible that no suitable candidates apply at the first attempt and you have to wait until you can find a suitable person for the job. In some industries there are only certain times of the year when people change jobs, e.g. in education, where term-time is static, and in travel where jobs are seasonal, etc.

(b) The costs involved

Cost is an important element in effective recruitment. At one end of the scale word-of-mouth methods of attracting candidates cost nothing, whilst using headhunters or recruitment consultants costs a percentage of salary (and as this method is only likely to be used for top positions this means a considerable amount of money). Once candidates have been attracted time must be spent screening, selecting for interview, interviewing and testing them. There is a significant time cost tied up in these procedures.

There is also the cost of work which is lost or productivity which falls due to staff being involved in the selection process and not having as much time to spend on their usual tasks. The position which is being filled may be empty for a time during the recruitment process and this may cause loss of production or a drop in activity.

(c) Making sure you attract a pool of suitable applicants

Quality should not be compromised without careful consideration. It is not always possible to employ the perfect person for the job, but it is definitely a mistake to limit the possible applicants because the constraints of time or money have put the pressure on.

Recruitment Advertising

The two most important decisions you must make when advertising a position are **where** to place the advertisements, and **what to put** in them. If advertisements are wrongly placed or badly worded they can be costly and ineffective at attracting the right candidates. You also want to avoid receiving a flood of replies from unsuitable candidates due to advertisement misplacement or a misunderstanding of the job's requirements.

The following guidelines will help in the design of effective recruitment advertisements.

(a) Style

The look of the advert may be the first impression of the company that the reader has. Use the company logo for identity and choose a clear, easily read typeface and layout. Think about whether you want to use the job title itself as a heading or prefer something else, such as an attention-grabbing catchline.

(b) Content

The list below gives the essential information which a good recruitment advertisement should include:

- **Job title** – the title should be attractive yet describe the job accurately; a "supervisor" in one company may be called a "manager" or "team leader" in another.
- **Job content** – duties and responsibilities (plus working hours). This does not need in-depth analysis, simply enough to give a fair idea of what the job involves.
- **Location of job** – especially important if the job requires some flexibility of location.
- **Name and description** of the organisation.
- Description of **minimum qualifications and experience** needed for the job.
- Any **unique elements** to this particular job, e.g. travel, wider responsibilities, etc.
- **Rewards and prospects** (if any).
- Clear instructions as to **how to apply** – whom to contact.
- **Reference** – so that records can be kept of response rates, etc.

If you are careful it is possible to include all the above information in a surprisingly small amount of copy. There is no need to go into great detail about the job or the rewards at this stage.

It is important to make the advertisement stand out from others in the same publication. As well as using design and layout to do this, the content should also contain some kind of USP (unique selling point) to make good applicants want to apply for your position first. The USP may be that the salary is good, that there are good prospects, lots of responsibility, security, a nice location, etc. – it doesn't matter what it is but you should try to find something special to say about the job.

Form of Application

The number and quality of respondents to an advertisement depend not only on it being well written and laid out, but also the way in which response is invited. The advertisement should state the way in which application for the job may be made. There are two possibilities:

- by a curriculum vitae (CV); or
- by an application form.

It is still not unusual for applicants to be asked to write off for an application form, which makes for a slow and drawn-out process with extra work involved on both sides. The best procedure is for the advertisement to give interested candidates a telephone number and contact name so that they can make initial enquiries by phone and get any additional information they need prior to applying formally. This also helps to minimise the number of applications from candidates who do not fit the requirements.

Alternative methods of application are the submission of CVs or application forms on-line through computer communication.

(a) Curriculum Vitae

The curriculum vitae is a résumé or review of an individual's life history. It provides an account of an individual's qualifications, past working history, etc. A curriculum vitae is difficult to accept as a definitive document as it is open to manipulation and fabrication. Because of this interview questions should be particularly probing, in order to identify any candidates who may have been economical with the truth! A curriculum vitae should be two to three sides in length; any longer and it runs the risk of not being read!

Advantages of the curriculum vitae include the following:

- They give candidates the opportunity to detail their experience in previous jobs
- There is no standard format so a certain degree of "flair" can be used in designing a curriculum vitae

Disadvantages of the curriculum vitae include the following:

- They are open to fabrication and manipulation
- It can take longer to "study" a curriculum vitae than an application form

Remember that every curriculum vitae is different, and as there is no set format they can take on a variety of guises.

(b) Application Forms

An application form is a selection tool that is specifically designed by companies to match candidates to a job in a structured way. Unlike a curriculum vitae, where the content and layout are determined by the **candidate**, the content and layout of the application form are determined by the **company**. In this way it can control (to a certain extent) the information candidates submit.

Application forms vary from company to company, but the type of information required is very similar. Many companies prefer application forms to be completed in the candidate's own handwriting. This allows the company to assess the candidate in terms of structure, neatness, comprehension, flair, etc.

Advantages of using application forms include the following:

- They can help to speed up shortlisting
- They allow information to be submitted in a structured way
- They can assess "neatness", sentence construction and "flair"
- They give the opportunity for graphology to be used
- They help the HR department structure questions for the interview in order to obtain information that may be ambiguous or absent from the form

Disadvantages of using application forms include:

- Like a curriculum vitae, they can be open to manipulation

- Candidates may restrict the information given so that it fits into the boxes provided; they may not continue on a separate sheet

As with a curriculum vitae, application forms should be accompanied by a covering letter or letter of application.

The Institute of Personnel and Development have produced a set of guidelines on application forms, in order to encourage and assist HR departments and recruiters to adopt best practice standards in recruitment and selection. They recommend that application forms should:

- Be realistic and appropriate to the level of the job
- Not request detailed personal information unless it is relevant to the job
- Use clear language
- Be accompanied by details of the job and clear information about the application and selection procedure
- State the procedure for taking up references, how these will be used and at what stage in the recruitment process they will be taken

D. SELECTION PROCEDURES

Selection starts when the candidates' applications have all been received, usually by a specified cut-off date. The first stage is to pre-select potentially suitable candidates from the total of applications through the process of shortlisting. Following this, the final selection will be undertaken by one or more of the following methods:

- interviewing – the most usual method;
- testing;
- group assessment.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting is the first stage of selection. It involves assessing the candidates' applications to determine their suitability for the post, with some being rejected and others being retained to go forward to the final selection process.

The key to the process lies in assessment of the candidates' suitability. This should be done in relation to the person specification and the job description. These two items provide the criteria against which information about the candidates may be compared. If they have been prepared properly in the earlier stages of the recruitment process, the task of shortlisting is made considerably easier.

In order to ensure that the shortlisting process is fair, and may be seen to be fair, there are two factors which should be applied:

- that the information about candidates which is taken into account is limited to that provided by them in their applications; and
- that the process is carried out by more than one person.

The most appropriate people to carry out the shortlisting are those who will subsequently be involved in the final selection procedure. This provides for continuity in the application of assessments and comparisons with the person specification across the different stages of selection, and builds up knowledge and understanding about the candidates which can be valuable at the later stage. At a minimum, good practice would suggest that the line manager for the job in question and an employee resourcing specialist should be involved at both stages. It may not, though, be possible for *all* those who will be involved at the later stage, particularly where this includes an interviewing panel, to be included in the shortlisting panel.

It may sometimes be appropriate to include other people with an interest in the job in the shortlisting process. This may be the case where team working is an essential feature of the post and the inclusion of some or all of the existing team on the shortlisting panel may be useful.

Preliminary interviews are also sometimes used as a means of narrowing down numbers where there are a large number of suitable applications. This approach provides the opportunity to meet a wider range of candidates and explore their applications in greater detail before narrowing the field down further for the final selection.

It also allows others to be involved in the selection process. It is likely that preliminary interviews will be conducted by staff who will not subsequently be involved in the final selection procedure. Thus, if the line manager will form part of the final interview panel, it may be appropriate to include his/her manager in the preliminary interview process.

Good Practice During the Pre-selection Stage

It is important that "good practice" is adopted during the pre-selection of candidates for interview. It not only promotes professionalism, but suggests to the candidates that they are not just a name on the top of the curriculum vitae or application form. It is important, therefore, that:

- All applications are acknowledged (many companies send a postcard with the application form and ask candidates to add their details to it (plus a stamp) if they want their application to be acknowledged). Some companies (because of expense) state on the application form that if candidates do not hear from them within four weeks of the closing date they can assume that they have not been successful (i.e. not made the shortlist).
- Candidates' details should be treated in strict confidence and only those who are directly involved in the recruitment and selection process should have access to them.
- Application forms should not be left lying around on a desk. They should be filed appropriately in a lockable filing cabinet or cupboard.
- The matching process incorporates the application form/curriculum vitae, job description and personnel specification. No other criteria should be used to select candidates for interview.

Adopting best practice standards portrays a good corporate image to candidates applying for jobs.

Many employers now term themselves **equal opportunities employers** and have policies and procedures in place to discourage discriminatory practices in the workplace. One aspect of this is the monitoring of applications to ensure that recruitment procedures are in line with such policies. To this end, the majority of application forms ask candidates to state their age, nationality, ethnic origin, gender and whether they have a disability. This information can then be used to:

- Monitor the level of disadvantaged groups that apply for jobs (disadvantaged groups are classed as: ethnic minority groups, women, the disabled, offenders, older workers).
- Monitor the balance or ratio of the above groups in the company so that positive action programmes can be implemented to increase the percentage employed (positive action programmes are implemented by police forces, to encourage ethnic minority groups and women to apply).

References

All forms of application require candidates to supply references, usually two and including at least one from the candidate's current or last employer. It is usual to take up a person's references once the preliminary selection has been made as a way of confirming the choice and obtaining independent information about the candidate's suitability.

References can be helpful but again they must be treated with caution. There is usually an unknown factor with references because you do not know the precise relationship between referee and candidate. A reference may be:

- Biased in favour of the candidate due to a personal friendship
- Biased against the candidate due to a personal dislike
- Biased in favour of the candidate because the referee wants to get rid of them!
- Biased against the candidate because the referee wants to keep them!
- Impartial and accurate

You may get a more informative reference if you telephone the referee; in this way you may be able to form a better impression of the referee's true opinion of the candidate. It is important not to take up a reference without the applicant's consent.

Selection Interviews

Basically, an interview is a face-to-face meeting between the candidate and the interviewer or a panel of interviewers. The interview is intended to be an exchange of information, not an interrogation – the objectives are:

- to allow the organisation to assess the suitability of the candidate for the vacancy in question; and
- to allow the candidate to assess the suitability of the vacancy and the organisation for him/herself.

(a) Types of Interview

There are a variety of different methods of selection interviewing.

- ***One-to-one interviews***

  Traditionally, this has been the most common form of selection interviewing, although it is open to criticism over its ability to guarantee fair and equal treatment where just one person is responsible for the process.

  As such, in most organisations, this type of interview has declined in importance, although it may still form a part of sequential interviewing, as described below.

- ***Paired interviews***

  These are interviews conducted by two interviewers – usually the line manager in respect of the job concerned, together with a member of the employee resourcing function. This resolves the problem of ensuring fair and equal treatment associated with one-to-one interviews, whilst retaining their friendly and relaxed atmosphere, and not overwhelming the candidate.

  Such interviews are now becoming the norm for selection interviewing in most organisations.

- ***Appointments boards and panel interviews***

  These types of interview are very common in the public sector, but are also growing in importance in the private sector. They involve a number of interviewers – usually between three and six – questioning the candidate, often with each concentrating on a different aspect of the job or person specification. There is only limited time available for each member of the panel to ask questions, but they do offer the opportunity to listen and observe the candidate whilst others are questioning him/her.

  The panel approach is used where there are a number of different interests which need to be represented in the selection process. This is normally only necessary for very senior appointments.

- ***Sequential interviewing***

  Under this process, the candidate moves through a series of interviews – on a one-to-one or a paired basis – with different interviewers. Often each interview will concentrate on different aspects of the job or the person specification.

  The interviewers come together at the end of the process, with each having seen all the candidates, and discuss the performance of each candidate before arriving at a collective decision. This collective approach overcomes any problem of bias in a single one-to-one interview.

  Such interviews have a number of advantages over panel interviews in that the same variety of interests can be involved in the selection process, but more in-depth questioning can be pursued. With each interview lasting perhaps 20 minutes, there is a lot more opportunity to explore the candidate’s responses than in a panel of five people with interviews lasting about one hour. The process is also much less intimidating for the candidate.

(b) Interview structure

All interviews need a structure. The structure of a typical interview would be as follows:

- ***Opening***

  It is quite usual for the inexperienced interviewer to be nervous, but being well prepared will minimise this problem. Candidates are also often a little nervous to start with and the interviewer’s first task is to encourage them to get over their nerves, relax, speak freely and perform well. It is best, then to begin gently, perhaps with some informal comments about the candidate’s journey or the weather. Then explain how you are approaching the interview, its format, when the appropriate time for their questions will be (as they come up or when you give the candidate a specific opportunity to ask questions) and how long the interview will take.

- ***Give information***

  Give some background information about the company, the position you are interviewing for and your own position in the company.

  This information is important to the candidate and it will also allow him/her a bit of time to settle down before they have to contribute. Be careful not to overdo the detail at this stage; outline information is sufficient to begin with.

- ***Collect information***

  Start talking to the candidate about areas with which they are familiar and comfortable, such as their current job, then work backwards to discuss their previous experience and, finally, forwards to find out their ideas about their future, their thoughts on the job for which they have applied and their reasons for applying.

  The importance of appropriate questioning during this stage cannot be stressed too highly. It is usual for there to a list of set questions which the interviewer will ask of all candidates. (This is important for equality of opportunity.). The questions should be worked out in advance to ensure complete coverage of all aspects of the job description/person specification.

- ***Allow questions and queries***

  Provide an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions.

- ***Closing***

  Ask the candidate how they feel about the job now that they have had the chance to meet you and find out more. Confirm that they are still interested in being selected, and close the interview by telling them when they will hear from you about the outcome of the interview.

Once the interview is over it is important to make notes and record your impressions. It is wise to note your reasons for either selecting or not selecting a candidate at this stage so that they are available for future reference if any query (such as a complaint about racial or sexual discrimination) arises.

An Interview Checklist

The success of the interview will depend on the skills of the interviewer(s). The tips set out in the Figure 9.5 should help.

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Do:

- Introduce yourself. Say what position you hold and how it is relevant to the position for which you are interviewing.
- Explain the format of the interview.
- Listen. Listen to what the candidate is not saying as well as to what he/she is saying. Encourage the candidate by your body language: look interested, nod, etc.
- Ask open-ended questions, keeping them short and specific.
- Offer the chance to ask questions and take notes.
- Explain that you will be taking notes during the interview.
- Press the interviewee for a specific answer if he/she appears to be avoiding a question.
- Pause. If there is a gap after an answer, don't rush to fill it. If you remain silent the candidate will often go on to offer further information which may not otherwise come to light.

Don't:

- Ask "Yes/No" questions.
- Take notes immediately after the candidate has made a slip up. It is best to put your pen down if you are being told about something difficult or personal. You may wish to note it later.
- Ask for information which is on the CV unless you need the candidate to expand on it.
- Make assumptions or guess answers.
- Patronise the interviewee.
- Ask leading questions.
- Criticise.
- Be aggressive; you will rarely see the best side of a candidate by being aggressive.
- Ask overtly complicated or gimmicky questions.

Remember the 80:20 rule

A good interviewer will be listening for 80% and talking for 20% of the time.

Figure 9.5: Interviewing checklist

Problems in Interviews

However objective interviewers may feel they are, there are times when things go wrong in interviews. This is sometimes due to the inexperience of interviewers, their lack of training or errors of judgement.

One particular problem is that of asking discriminatory questions. The IPD has noted the following points for avoiding this:

- Ensure a clear job description has been defined and clear criteria set. Check that there is undisputed justification for any absolute criteria.
- Ensure the interviewing staff have been trained or otherwise briefed.
- Ensure that interviewers are aware of criteria being used.
- Ensure all candidates are asked the same questions about matters that might create a problem, e.g. overtime or travel commitments.
- Do not ask questions which are based on stereotyped assumptions.

Additional problems may arise in respect of the way in judgements are formed by the interviewer(s). In particular, three issues need to be avoided.

- ***The Halo Effect***

  This is where the interviewer or interviewers see the person in an "exalted" way because they have the same hobbies or interests, belong to the same golf club, went to a top school, are smartly dressed, etc. These perceptions often cloud the mind and judgement of the interviewer and the candidate gains a halo whether they are good or bad at doing their job.

- ***The Horns Effect***

  This is the opposite of the halo effect. The interviewer takes a dislike to the candidate, their personality, the way they dress, etc. This alters the interviewer's perception of the candidate and, no matter how good that candidate may be at doing the job, s/he gains a set of "horns"! Once the interviewer adopts this perception of the candidate, it is very difficult to shake off. This is why it is often important to have more than one person interviewing; it helps to avoid scenarios such as the halo and horns effect happening.

- ***Stereotyping***

  This is where the interviewer's perception of a candidate alters because the individual is a woman, black, Asian or disabled, etc. Some common societal stereotypes or preconceptions about the above groups are:

  (i) That a woman's place is in the home

  (ii) That it will be difficult to get a group of white workers to work under a black or Asian team leader/supervisor

  (iii) That disabled people are difficult to employ

Interview training will help to remove some or all of these preconceptions – but it very much depends on the individual interviewer and his/her perceptions about society and the groups that live within it.

Testing

A growing number of recruiters are using a variety of testing techniques as part of the selection procedure. These tests supplement the traditional interview as a selection method and include a variety of styles and content. Of particular importance are psychometric tests which are designed to test an individual's mental capacity and process.

The most common forms of test used in selection are as follows.

- **Intelligence Tests**

  These test an individual's intelligence quotient (IQ) or the individual's capacity to think logically, quickly, and/or in a problem-solving situation. Recruiters must use these tests in the right context and view them as part of an holistic process and not as a process in itself. This is because a high IQ does not necessarily mean that the individual has the ability to carry out the tasks and responsibilities of the job or the personality to get on with people at all levels within the organisation.

- **Personality Tests**

  These are used by recruiters test or measure an individual's character and personality. This would take into consideration the individual's capacity to relate to and get on with other people, what motivates him/her and how ambitious he/she is. Such tests include the 16PF test (16 scales which measure factors that influence behaviour) and the OPQ (occupational personality questionnaire – a series of questions which test the individual's attitude to certain situations). Again, as with intelligence tests, these should be used holistically.

- **Aptitude Tests**

  These are used primarily to assess an individual's ability to do the job for which s/he has applied. Aptitude tests include spatial reasoning and manual dexterity tests.

- **Proficiency Tests**

  Like aptitude tests, proficiency tests assess the ability of the individual to do the tasks involved in the job. The best known example of this is a keyboard skills test for speed and accuracy.

Although recruiters are increasingly making use of psychometric tests as part of the selection process, they cannot always be relied upon to be valid and reliable. Recruiters should be aware of the following points:

- Scoring highly on the tests we have mentioned does not mean that individuals will necessarily be good at carrying out the tasks and duties of the job. Such tests should be used with care.
- Testers should be qualified and trained to carry out the tests; in some cases they are members of the British Psychological Society, the body that regulates the use of tests.
- Tests are not always reliable, as individuals can try to choose questions which will give the best results. This can leave the tests open to manipulation.
- The nature of the tests often makes it difficult to remove bias. Women and some ethnic minority candidates tend not to perform well in such tests because of the way some of the tests are designed. This infringes the equal opportunities legislation which was brought in to protect individuals against race and sex discrimination.

In order to promote best practice standards in administering selection tests, the IPD has produced a guideline document on psychological testing. This includes the following points about the way in which they should be used.

- Everyone responsible for the application of tests, including evaluation, interpretation and feedback, should be trained at least to the level of competence recommended by the British Psychological Society.

- Potential users should satisfy themselves that it is appropriate to use tests at all before incorporating tests into their decision-making process.
- Users should satisfy themselves that any tests they decide to use actually measure factors which are directly relevant to the employment situation.
- Users must satisfy themselves that all tests have been rigorously developed and that claims about reliability, validity and effectiveness are supported by statistical evidence.
- Care must be taken to ensure equality of opportunity among all those individuals required to take tests.
- 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.

In summary, although psychometric tests have their place and can be useful in terms of helping to select the candidate for the job, they must be used holistically, taking into account the **entire** recruitment and selection process. Testers must be qualified and trained to apply the tests and should ensure that bias and subjectivity do not cloud their judgement.

Group Assessment Approaches

Psychological testing and interviews have their place in the selection process and, if conducted appropriately, can prove to be effective selection tools. However, both methods have their limitations. They cannot be relied upon to assess an individual's ability or competence to interrelate with people, cope in stressful situations, solve problems and work with or lead others.

One way of assessing these characteristics is to apply group assessment (or selection) methods. Group assessment methods are used to:

- Assess how individuals behave in a group situation and how they interact with others
- Assess how individuals respond to "realistic" situations
- Assess how individuals think and respond to problems
- Identify individuals' thoughts and views on particular topics

Plumbley (1985) identified three types of groups assessment methods:

- **Leaderless groups**: this is where six to eight candidates are asked to discuss a general topic of interest. The discussion is usually recorded and/or observed by assessors.
- **Command or executive exercises**: here the group is given a real case study and each individual is assigned a role s/he must fulfil. Each individual then outlines their views on the situation and how the particular problem can be solved.
- **Group problem-solving**: the group is allocated a task to solve. The group does not have a leader and must organise its own activities in order to reach an effective solution to the problem.

The above activities are usually undertaken in an assessment centre. The centre houses trained assessors/selectors whose job it is to observe and assess the candidates' abilities under set criteria, such as "*the ability to communicate effectively with others verbally*".

Advantages of such an approach include:

- Assessment can be done on a group basis
- It can be used for a variety of jobs, including management and supervisory positions

- It can be used as an additional selection tool to interviews and psychological tests

Disadvantages are that:

- Individuals may be unwilling to take part
- Individuals may not perform to the best of their ability in such a competitive situation
- An individual's contribution can be difficult to measure, particularly if all candidates contribute equally
- It is expensive and time-consuming
- Assessment can take a couple of days and candidates may find it difficult to be available for this length of time

Making the Job Offer

It is likely that a choice will have to be made between candidates and this will mean comparing the performance of candidates in the selection procedure(s) against the requirements of the person specification. It is important to wait until you have seen **all** the candidates before making a decision. The decision should, though, be made without delay as a good candidate may receive another offer in the meantime.

Once you have decided on the right candidate for the job you must make him/her an offer. You should know from your discussion with him/her what pay and conditions package will be acceptable to them. If there are any qualifying conditions these should be mentioned, e.g. subject to references, health check, etc.

Once the candidate has accepted the position you can reject any other candidates that you were holding in reserve. It is best to tell these candidates that you were impressed by them and that the decision was close as you may find that you need them in the future (or if the chosen candidate lets you down at the last minute).

E. EMPLOYEE INDUCTION

Selecting the right candidate for the job is just the beginning; now it is time to convert the successful applicant into a reliable and productive member of staff. We have already noted the high cost in terms of both money and time that recruitment incurs. It is therefore obvious that it is better to **retain** good employees than to be called upon to replace them regularly. The induction of a new employee is the beginning of the process that may turn him or her into a long-term, loyal member of staff. Poor induction demotivates people and demotivated staff will lead to high staff turnover.

The induction process begins even before the candidate is offered the job. The impressions formed at interview or on other visits to the organisation's premises will remain with the successful candidate once they begin work. The attitude of company staff that the candidate has met and the style of correspondence or telephone communications involved in the process of inviting the candidate to interview and making the job offer will have given the new employee expectations of how he/she will be treated. Written documentation will demonstrate the standards that the organisation finds acceptable so, for example, a spelling mistake in a letter inviting a candidate to attend an interview will have created a poor impression even before they have come to the premises.

It is therefore important that everyone involved in the recruitment and selection process, even if only indirectly, is aware that they are out to impress.

Post-acceptance Letters

Once an offer has been made and the successful candidate has accepted the position, it is necessary to send a letter giving all the details which are required by the new employee. This letter should include the following details which will be needed to prepare the employee for a successful first day at a new workplace.

(a) Starting Instructions

- **Time**: Usual start time or a little later to be sure that those necessary will be available to meet the new employee.
- **Place**: Which entrance? Report to reception or go to a specified office or department.
- **Transport**: Where should the car be left? What public transport is available?
- **Appearance**: Is there a uniform required? If so, from where should this be collected? If not, is there any particular dress code which the employee should know about?
- **Documents**: Are there any specific documents which the employee will need?

(b) Package Details

- Starting **salary** and when it will be due for review.
- **Overtime** arrangements (if applicable).
- Details of car, health insurance, pension, etc. and any other "perks" to be included in the package.

(c) Other Requirements

- **Medical**: Is the employee expected to have a medical?
- **Catering**: What facilities are available? If most employees bring a packed lunch as there are no facilities either nearby or on the premises this should be mentioned.

A lot of information can be provided in written form, along with the formal offer of employment and the above information, in documents such as:

- Statement of particulars of employment which must be provided to new employees – this is a statutory requirement
- Employee handbooks, which some companies provide
- Safety policy statements (another statutory requirement)
- Pension scheme booklets
- Job description

There is a noticeable tendency for staff to leave during the early months of employment – during the induction period. The stresses of induction are experienced by all new staff, and if not handled with care can quite easily result in early resignation. So much for a careful recruitment and selection process!

The reasons why induction is a stressful experience (the induction crisis) need to be examined. Induction training can help to mitigate the stress and overcome the problems.

Induction Training

It is important that a systematic induction process is carried out effectively. The following guidelines set out a comprehensive approach to achieving this.

(a) First Day

This is an important part of induction, with emphasis on:

- ***Introduction to other employees***

  Establishing friendly relations with colleagues can help to provide psychological support and it assists the employee to get to know behavioural norms. Allocating a new member of staff a "friend" who can answer questions is often a sensible approach to take.

- ***Physical layout of the office***

  A quick understanding of the layout of the premises, the location of departments, cloakrooms, canteen, etc. is helpful and necessary. Perhaps the "friend" could take the new employee on a "walkabout" to become familiar with the layout.

(b) First Week

Induction will normally continue on subsequent days of the first week covering such matters as:

- Explaining essential procedures, e.g. for claiming expenses, payment of wages, etc.
- Highlighting important safety provisions, e.g. fire evacuation procedures.
- Sparing some time at the end of the week to discuss first impressions and answer any queries.

(c) Formal Courses

Less immediately urgent matters can be given to new employees through formal courses. In large organisations induction courses may be held each week, but elsewhere they will be run when the numbers justify them. Topics covered may include:

- General information about the history and development of the company/organisation.
- Information about trading policies, company projects, etc.
- Descriptions of what each department is responsible for within the organisation.
- More detailed explanations of personnel policies and procedures.

(d) End of probation period

Most offers of employment specify a fixed period of, say, three or six months as a probationary period. Feedback should be provided to the employee during this period acknowledging success and pointing out weaknesses. At the successful completion of the probationary period the employee should be interviewed formally and given a letter confirming that his/her employment is now permanent.

The induction process should not finish at this point – the manager/supervisor should have informal talks at regular intervals with the new member of staff to make sure that he/she continues to be happy in his/her job.

Induction training can be extremely cost effective if it succeeds in helping new employees to settle down quickly. It can also help to reduce labour turnover in the early months of employment, saving both inconvenience and costs.