

How to hire trainees Podcast Transcript

Hi, this is Rhys Jones. Welcome to my podcast. My podcast today is how to hire a trainee into your business.

We know how competitive it is to get good recruiters into your company, so if you've got existing recruiters, the market is really tough. Rec2Recs are always tapping up good recruiters. They'll market them out to everybody they can possibly find, so competing for good recruiters is difficult and it's costly because good recruiters command big salaries. So is it better to make your own rather than buying them in. In one of my businesses when I was growing it, I did find I got a lot of success from hiring in trainees.

Start with a good job spec

So how do you hire a trainee in? Well first and foremost, you have to do your job properly as a recruitment consultant and that means writing a job spec. Now that might sound incredibly boring, but you've got to write a job spec because you need to understand what competencies and skills that you need to look for in the person that you're hiring. Now what I'm saying about that is do you necessarily want a 360 recruiter as a trainee?

The reason I would lean away from that is to train somebody to be a 360 recruiter is very time consuming and pretty high risk. If you're going to hire in a trainee, I would suggest that you hire a trainee to do half the job, either as a vacancy controller doing new business or somebody who is more of a candidate manager/resourcer.

That makes it so much easier to train the person up and also it means they've got a much better chance of success because, as a recruiter, 360 job is pretty difficult. It's commercially demanding, which candidate to work on or which vacancy to work on. You've got the completer-finisher type skills of seeing your job through once you get a vacancy doing a really good search on it. Whereas new business is different skill altogether, different attitude.

Get them to do half of the job

So, looking for somebody to do half the job probably is better and safer and if you want somebody to be half the job that's when you need to write your job spec. Because if you're going to get somebody to be a resource, then what are you going to get them to do. Because if you don't write a job spec the chances are you'll probably try and hire somebody just like you because you like you.

You're successful, so you want to hire somebody like you but if you hire somebody like you they'll be looking to be like you but they won't necessarily want to do the resourcing job because a resourcing

job is the parts of the job that you don't particularly want to do, you want to get somebody else to do so you can do the more interesting parts which is the new business, getting the vacancies, arranging the interviews and closing the deals.

So, if you want a vacancy controller/resource, then list what you want them to do so that could be the LinkedIn mining, it can be going to CV libraries, it can be maybe writing some blogs. It can be doing some social media for you. It can be updating the database, database cleansing; it could be formatting CVs. All the things you want the person to do you need to put into your job spec, not necessarily just to give to the person advertised, but more important is you can get down and clear in your own mind what the job is because it's only when you know what the job is you know what skills you need in the person that you're hiring.

Make sure they have the right competencies

If you look at somebody's going to format your CVs for example, they need to be pretty good in written form, don't they. Because they've got to make sure the grammar's right, they're going to make sure the spelling's right, they're going to set it out properly. So, you need to make sure that's right, so how do you know that's right. Well, you've got to test it. If they say they're good in the written form, you've got to test it.

If you're looking at grammar or you are looking at spelling, then put together a piece of writing on an A4 piece of paper with mistakes in and ask them to highlight them, so you can tell that they are actually pretty good in the written form, and they could spot mistakes. You need to check some of the skills that these people have so if it's on the digital side and they're particularly good on LinkedIn, then test them. Put them on LinkedIn, ask them to do a search. You've got to test their skills because you can't just take people's word for it, because people as we know, won't necessarily give you the truth.

When you're interviewing your first hires or you're looking at trainees, it's very easy to fall in love with personalities because you clearly want to like the people that you're hiring but it's more important they're going to be successful. And quite often with the resource, they won't necessarily have the biggest personality in the world because you can ask them to do the parts of the job that aren't necessarily that exciting so you're not going to get big personalities. It doesn't mean that they're not going to be nice people to work with, but they might not be the sort of person you want to take to the pub, but you think I've got a big personality I'm going to fill the room. You have got to bear in mind that you are interviewing on competencies and skills not necessarily on personality.

Where do you find the right person?

How would you attract the person? If you're looking for a trainee, you know the job boards, the CV libraries - that's a good bet. Put it on LinkedIn, that's a good bet and obviously ask your friends and colleagues - anybody that you know. Because personal recommendations do go a long way. But then when you've got the people you have got to do that thorough interviewing process to make

sure that they have the competencies that match the job. One of the other things I think is important - if you expect them to use the phone, get them on the phone, try them on the phone, see what they sound like on the phone.

But also, as a trainee, one of the most important things for me is the absorption and application of training because if you can train them up, they've got to be able to absorb it and apply it. One of the simple things I used to do was during the interview process, I'd explain to them how they would make a call to a candidate off LinkedIn and introduce them to a job to see if they're interested. And I go in great detail on how they would do it.

Then I would get them on the phone and try them to see if they've absorbed the information and they've applied it. It'll also show that they've listened as well. And it's amazing how many people sound great at interview, but then when you ask them to apply the information that you've trained them on, they can't do it. Now if you've got someone that's not good at the absorption application of the training, they're going to be difficult to train. Common sense suggests that. You could have a test like that, or you could give them something as simple as an online training session that you can get on a part of recruitment; it could be anything, but I would suggest you try somebody on the absorption and application of training.

Give them the correct training and support

Now once you've got them on board, what do you look for, how do you train them up, how do you monitor them. The most important thing for me in a trainee is attitude and that's the sort of thing you look out for at the interview stage. Are they keen; give them a task, maybe ask them to get a book and read it and check they've done it. But once they start work with you monitor closely the attitude, because we've seen, I'm sure we've all seen plenty of people in recruitment that aren't necessarily the most academic or the brightest people that are very successful because attitude is really what matters.

You can't teach attitude; you can teach attitude and skills. So, what's the attitude? Simple things like do they get in early in the morning, do they get their work done quickly, do they break away from it, do they work after hours, if need be, if you give them a piece of reading or training to do, do they do it? Do you need to chase them up? And you're going to watch it closely and be prepared to cut quickly if the attitude is wrong. You need to explain what is expected of them, you need to give them feedback. But if they don't respond, your business isn't a charity you've got to cut them quickly. It's not a nice thing to do but if you haven't got the right clay there to mould them into something, the attitude is not right, you've got to cut quickly.

So how do you tell if you've got the right person for the job? Well, when it comes to training somebody up, I do not advocate trying to train them to do everything at once because people can't absorb all that information. Train them to do small parts of the job piecemeal, so you can train one part of the job, get them to do it, do it well and monitor it and make sure you measure it. Initially you need to be setting tasks that also show attitude, but also there are easy targets for them to hit, so

for example if it's making, I don't know, headhunt calls, initial introduction calls, trying to get interest in your particular job, then just tally up how many phone calls they actually make, because it's up to them to decide how many times they pick up the phone so they can influence that. It's within their sphere of influence.

Conclusion

If you target them for example, how many candidates that you get through to interview, and that's the first target they get, it's not easy for them to do that because they're not skilled enough to do that yet. So, when you've got targets, give them very simplistic targets. Don't necessarily put in a complicated commission structure. It can be, if you've got a bonus structure, it can be just in the amount of candidates they get. That could be it.

But give them easier targets as far as them understanding rather than sophisticated targets which is a bit more demoralizing and that's how you progress them through. But then make sure that you do give them regular feedback but also set them up at the beginning of the day, check back at lunch time and then get them set up for the following day at the end of the day, rather than trying to watch them and listen them all day long because it will distract you from your job.

Anyway, I hope that's helped on how to recruit a trainee. It's not an easy thing to do by any stretch of the imagination but if you get it right, it can be a richer vein of increasing your staff rather than necessarily just buying it in.

Thanks for listening.

