

# Getting the right man for the job

As technology moves forward and increased regulation combined with shrinking margins place huge demands on managers, recruiting the right people can be key to business survival. **Peter Shakespeare** reports.

**G**et the recruitment process wrong and at best it will impact on your bottom line in terms of wasted time and poor business performance. At worst it could cost you your business.

Most employers will have fallen foul of the first scenario. An employee is taken on following an inadequate recruitment process. A hefty fee is paid to the recruitment agency and the employee turns out to be nothing like their CV or interview performance suggested. Hopefully this will be spotted at a reasonably early stage and the unsuitable individual can be weeded out during the probationary period. If the employee's incompetence or poor work ethic goes unnoticed in the early stages a haemorrhage of company funds and poor service levels will soon highlight the individual's shortcomings. But at this stage it may be a case of damage limitation. The cost of getting rid of 'Mr Wrong' goes up exponentially the longer he is with the business

and the spectre of an employment tribunal can loom. While the messy business of managing a disciplinary process goes on, more cost will be incurred thanks to poor morale among other staff and a new recruitment effort will have to be funded to replace him. Poor recruitment affects all levels of staff but it impacts most at managerial level. So it is crucial to get this selection process right first time every time.

Mark Botham, the MD of one of the oldest white collar recruitment firms servicing the logistics sector, George Henderson, says that many companies fall at the first hurdle of the recruitment process: attracting the right calibre of candidate. "Look carefully at what you want the person to do," explains Botham.

## Relevant background

"If you are recruiting a transport manager, for example, don't just ask for a CPC holder with experience of a 30-vehicle fleet. Dissect your operation. You use telematics, so ask for candidates with IT experience. Someone with 20 years in containers, for example, will struggle with chilled food distribution. Make sure their background is relevant. You need your transport manager to drive down cost and react to the environmental agenda so request these specific areas of experience.

"Many firms undervalue transport managers. They require a unique skills set. It is a high pressure, 24/7 role and they have to manage a team they rarely see. If you pay peanuts you will not attract the right quality of applicant," he continues.

"There is a golden recruitment triangle. Job requirement, the candidate's experience and salary. If you don't match up all the points of

the triangle you will not get the person you want. Once you have completed the triangle the job description must be communicated comprehensively in a job advert. Invest time and money in this. I see so many three-line job adverts that could be aimed at anyone. The companies placing them end up with a number of unsuitable applicants and end up picking the least bad one. It is a fatal mistake. If you don't get what you want from your adverts, stop the process. Re-evaluate and re-advertise the role. Most good agencies will offer help in this area as part of their service package if companies are struggling."

Botham continues: "Other mistakes made during the initial selection process include asking for inappropriate skills. A request for a strategic thinker is not necessarily appropriate for a line manager role. If you are looking for a business development director to take your business forward you need a strategist, but look for this in a warehouse shift manager and you could end up with someone with ideas above their station who is not interested in nuts and bolts management.

"Too many firms assume that replacing senior people means recruiting from outside, when in fact the skills required have already been trained into the business by the departing manager. Look at those around you before running the external recruitment gauntlet. Another short-sighted approach is trying to replace old Ted with another old Ted. The skills required to be an effective manager in the logistics industry 12 years ago do not necessarily apply in 2008. The basic management skills will be the same, but legislation has changed everything from working time regulations to discrimination laws and



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