

Recruitment: the role of the manager (2)

KEY WORDS

- » Advertising
- » Desirable criteria
- » Essential criteria
- » Job description
- » Person specification
- » Recruitment
- » Vacancy

In the last paper in this series covering recruitment and retention, we discussed the writing of job descriptions and person specifications as the first stages in the process of employing new staff. This paper will cover the next vital component of the recruitment process: the shortlisting of candidates for interview. Shortlisting is an often overlooked skill that managers need to develop because creating a shortlist that is too long will mean conducting a lot of pointless interviews, while one that is too short might exclude good candidates. The ideal shortlist will contain all of the best candidates from those who applied, who may well be able to undertake the work as described in the job description and person specification. While this is an often rushed part of the recruitment process, it is nevertheless important to undertake this process in a thoughtful and structured manner.

As with all the stages of recruitment, the wise manager will make time to get this process right. Too little time and you may fail to do justice to the candidates and too much time and you may find yourself considering issues that are not that important. There are five key stages to shortlisting that will make the process run smoothly:

- » You need to consider what you want from the person filling the vacancy. These criteria may be quickly ascertained if you are looking for someone who can walk into the job and do it, then the headline issues are qualifications and experience. If there are a lot of applications but very little time available, you might decide that you will interview only a set number of candidates and so the application of the shortlisting criteria will be very strict. Conversely if there are only a few applications, then you may decide to be more generous.
- » Where there are a lot of applications, you might do one of two things as the manager. Firstly, you could delegate the initial sifting to someone in human resources or to a member of your team who will shortlist according to some agreed criteria. As always when delegating, it is important that persons you delegate to fully understand what it is you want from them (Ellis, 2019)
- » If you still have too many applications, thin them out by removing applications that are incomplete or vague. Vague applications are often from

people who send out applications for many jobs, sometimes known as fishing, such people may disappear from the recruitment process either before or after the interview for no apparent reason — a phenomenon recently dubbed as ghosting (Clarke, 2016). Vague applications, especially where there are gaps in employment which are not explained, also cause issues in terms of compliance with regulations for service providers and manager from the Care Quality Commission (Health and Social Care Act, 2014).

- » Now shortlist according to some more exacting criteria, such as:
 - » a. Level and amount of experience and competence to undertake the role as identified in current and previous employment. While the application might not fully cover this, and any claims about ability need to be explored at interview and via references, this is a good way to get down to the best of the best among the applicant for a particular role. Evidence might be found in the applicant's employment history and considered applications will detail such things in their resumé or supporting evidence section. Such criteria might form part of the essential criteria element of the person specifications.
 - » b. Qualifications both for the role itself as well as other qualifications such as leadership and management which might single an applicant

PETER ELLIS

Registered Manager at The Whitepost Health Care Company; Independent Nursing and Health Care Consultant, Writer and Educator

Box 1. Key questions

- What are the key things you are looking for in a new employee?
- Which criteria are you not willing to compromise on?
- Which criteria might not be so important to shortlist for?
- Can someone else undertake the shortlisting?
- What values are you looking for in a new team member?
- Are you sure that the criteria you are shortlisting are legal?

REFERENCES

- Care Quality Commission (2014) *Regulations for Service Providers and Managers*. Available at: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/regulations-enforcement/regulations-service-providers-managers> (accessed 30.12.2018)
- Clarke R (2016) *New 'ghosting' trend means employees just stop showing up to work*. *HR Review*. Available online at: <http://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/61328/61328> (accessed 30.12.2018)
- Ellis P (2017) *Understanding Ethics for Nursing Students (2nd Edition)*. Sage, London
- Ellis P (2019) *Leadership, Management and Team Working in Nursing (3rd Edition)* Sage, London
- HM Government (2014) *Employers: Preventing Discrimination*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination> (accessed 30.12.2018)
- Torjesen I (2014) *Going the Extra Mile*, *Health Service Journal*. Available at: <https://www.hsj.co.uk/hsj-knowledge/downloads/workforce-special-report-going-the-extra-mile/5074916>. article (Accessed 30th December 2018)
- Health Education England (2016) *Recruitment based on the NHS Constitution*. Available at: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/values-based-recruitment> (accessed 30.12.2018)

out as someone who might be suitable for promotion within the organisation.

- ▶▶ One of the important things to do while applying these criteria is to keep a record of the decisions being made and why they were made. This will help if any candidate asks for feedback or if there is any question of fairness ever raised about the processes used.
- ▶▶ If you find yourself in the enviable position of still having too many applicants, this might be the time to apply some of the desirable criteria to the shortlisting process. Again this needs to be applied fairly and consistently to avoid any claims of unfairness.

Hopefully now you will have a number of candidates left to interview who are all suitable for the job being advertised. We will cover the interview process in the next paper in this series.

In reality, this stage of the recruitment process often leaves the recruiter with few, if any applicants, and it is now that you may have to make the decision as to whether to go out to advert again or whether to look at the applications again. In returning to the applications, you may consider applicants who are working towards gaining a qualification you are interested in; who have some, if not all, of the experience you were seeking or whose application stands out for another reason.

Sometimes the shortfall in candidates may be because the role is so niche or requires such specific experience and qualifications that there are only a few people who would be deemed suitable. Again the decisions has to be taken as to whether to go back out to advert with altered criteria or whether to re-examine the existing applicants according to some amended criteria.

Again re-reviewing applicants might uncover someone with particularly strong skills in one area that fulfils the person specification and who has the potential, if you are willing to invest in the person, to meet the other criteria in time. This is a management call and to some extent one which can only be properly tested at the interview and via the reference process.

Of course as with all elements of recruitment, the manager is subject to the laws of the land and may not shortlist by criteria which have no bearing on the ability of a person to undertake the role, such as gender, age or health record. Falling short of such

legislation, which requires that the recruitment processes do not “treat someone less favourably than someone else because of a personal characteristic” (HM Government, 2014), will land the manager in hot water!

VALUES-BASED RECRUITMENT

Values are the things that frame the ways in which we behave and act and what we think. They are things that we see meaning in and that we see as being of worth and having some significance to us (Ellis, 2017). Values can make or break a team and to some extent, the older we get the more our values are ingrained in us influencing the way in which we work and behave. Like attitudes, values are hard for the manager to influence and change and someone with the wrong values in the team can have a major impact not only on how the team thinks but also on how it behaves and ultimately on the quality of care it provides.

Torjesen (2014) wisely points out that we will struggle to identify values at the shortlist stage of the recruitment process because to some extent any of us can learn to write the right things on our application or our CV. Perhaps the only time we can really test values is by questioning them at interviews and via the references we request from previous employers. That said, the roles individuals have been in before and length of time they have stayed in a job will give some pointers as to whether they are the sort of person who stays in a job for a reasonable period of time — always remembering that some people move for other, personal, reasons or perhaps even because their employer does not practice the same values as they do!

Health Education England (2016) has been suggesting for some time that values will form the basis of recruitment in the NHS in the future, although what this actually looks like and how it will be universally rolled out is difficult to know.

CONCLUSION

Shortlisting candidates for a job is an important step in the recruitment process. Getting it wrong may have consequences in that the manager will have too many interviews to do or perhaps that will miss the best candidate. Managers need to be clear as to the criteria they are shortlisting to, so that they can be fair to all of the applicants and provide an audit trail of the decisions they have made.