



ROBERT WALTERS

# GUIDE TO RECRUITMENT FOR SME BUSINESSES

ROBERT WALTERS

## INTRODUCTION

**Small and medium sized businesses face many of the same recruitment and talent management challenges as the largest global enterprises. How do you find the best people? How do you retain them? What is your company culture? Do people want to work for you?**

However, there are unique recruitment hurdles and opportunities that face the human resources professionals, hiring managers, managing directors, CEOs and owners in all small and medium sized businesses.

This guide to recruiting professionals for small and medium sized businesses outlines clear guidelines for how to effectively manage your recruitment process and how to build a robust and successful talent management plan that will support your business objectives both today and in the future.

No matter what stage of the business lifecycle your organisation is at, no matter how small or large your team is, no matter how the economy or your industry is performing, these guidelines will provide the blueprint to ensure that you can always find the right talented people for your business.

Based on research of employers and candidates, data driven insight and the experience of operating as a trusted recruitment partner to businesses for over thirty years, this guide will help you develop successful recruitment and talent management strategies.

The risks of getting it wrong are costly, and for businesses looking to secure their future success, ensuring that your recruitment and talent management processes are robust and sound is essential.

The strength of your business rests on the strength of your people.



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Hickey'.

**Chris Hickey,**  
**CEO – UK, Middle East & Africa**

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**72%**

OF EMPLOYERS  
HAVE BEEN  
IMPACTED BY  
SKILLS SHORTAGES



## PLANNING YOUR RECRUITMENT

For any business, incorporating recruitment into your short, medium and long term business plan is essential.

However, in the case of SMEs where a smaller overall headcount means that each individual employee can have a larger impact on the business, effective planning for recruitment is even more vital.

Your recruitment strategy needs to strike a balance between being consistent across your business and remaining flexible enough to handle changing business and economic conditions.

### WRITING THE JOB DESCRIPTION

It can be taken as a given that any role will need a detailed job description to provide information on the skills and responsibilities required.

SME businesses typically have an advantage in being able to involve all potential stakeholders in determining these criteria more easily than larger organisations.

However, it is also important to create a standardised approach to job descriptions across your business. Developing a range of templates for roles at different levels of seniority can provide hiring managers with guidelines that will ensure consistency across the business as the company grows.

#### JOB DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST:

- ✓ **Engage** with all relevant stakeholders when creating the description – line managers, HR and other staff doing the same role
- ✓ **List** the salary and benefits of the role
- ✓ **Outline** the potential for progression and promotion
- ✓ **Explain** where the role is positioned within the business
- ✓ **Include** soft skills and qualities needed to excel
- ✓ **Develop** a range of templates for roles at different levels and departments and make them available to hiring managers

### SETTING APPROPRIATE TIMESCALES



**Identify essential and desirable stages in your process**



**Ensure consistent processes**



**Determine ideal start date**



**Agree policy for accelerating time-to-hire**



**Compare your current time-to-hire to industry standard**

An effective recruitment strategy should strike a balance between being time-efficient and rigorous enough to ensure that you find someone who is the right fit for your organisation.

Particularly among larger organisations, lengthy hiring processes have become the norm. The gap between someone applying for a role and starting work can be as long as several weeks for contractors or sometimes even months for permanent staff.

In this respect, smaller organisations can give themselves an advantage over large companies.

Short recruitment processes are popular with professionals. The flexibility around recruitment that comes with being a smaller organisation can help SME businesses recruit the best professionals over less agile competitors, securing top talent by acting quickly to make a job offer.

## DETERMINING SALARY

If you are recruiting for a role that has not previously existed within your organisation then it may be difficult to determine what a competitive salary should be.

Comparing salaries for similar roles with other organisations is key. While many companies will not publicly reveal what their staff are paid, the Robert Walters Global Salary Survey tracks payscales for roles across a range of professions across the UK and internationally to provide these insights.



**Chad Lawson,**  
**Associate**  
**Director**

“

Advertising a role with an exact salary specified may put off many potential candidates; either those who are looking for higher pay or those who assume that a role is too senior for them if the salary is significantly higher than what they currently earn. Instead, advertise a role with a salary range, leaving room to negotiate.

”

## A CONSISTENT APPROACH

Ensuring that core elements of your recruitment process are consistent across the business is important, particularly as your organisation grows and a larger number of people are responsible for making hiring decisions.

### **Developing fixed guidelines for how your recruitment process should work will ensure:**

- That you are compliant with the relevant legislation when recruiting
- The business can be internally transparent with regards to hiring
- Candidates will have a consistent experience with the business

However, these guidelines should not prevent your process from remaining flexible. In particular, it should be possible to adapt internal time-to-hire schedules, with a clear process for hiring managers to seek approval to do so from more senior staff if this is necessary.





# TEMPORARY VS PERMANENT HIRING

## WHEN IS IT EFFECTIVE TO HIRE A CONTRACTOR?

Determining when it is effective to hire short term contractors is often challenging for businesses, with some managers preferring to recruit permanent staff. However, there are situations when hiring a specialist on a temporary basis can be the best solution.

Taking a flexible approach and recognising that under the right circumstances contract professionals can provide vital short term support allows you to make the most of their skills while still attracting and retaining professionals over the long term.

## CONSIDERING HIRING A CONTRACTOR?

**1**

Does the project require skills or experience that your in-house staff do not have? Consider whether there are staff in other parts of the business who could be seconded temporarily to this team to assist with the project.

**2**

Even if this is a project that is unlikely to be repeated, will the skills needed to complete it be required again in the future? If so, it may be worth taking on a permanent member of staff who can provide training.

**3**

Are you recruiting to fill a short term gap (e.g. maternity leave)? If so, have you considered whether you may want to hire a contractor with the option to make them permanent and expand your team when the original member of staff returns?

**4**

Have you considered what your induction process will be for a contractor? While they may not be a permanent member of your workforce you will still need to ensure that they are aware of your policies and company culture and that they are set up with equipment and systems access to do their job.

## ADAPTING HIRING STRATEGIES FOR CONTRACTORS

When looking to recruit short term staff, employers should consider adapting their recruitment processes. Even more so than when taking on permanent staff, time-to-hire can be the deciding factor when looking to secure the best contractors.

## TIME-TO-HIRE EXPECTATIONS

	CONTRACTORS EXPECT	EMPLOYERS EXPECT
1 WEEK OR LESS	28%	6%
1-2 WEEKS	50%	26%
2-3 WEEKS	17%	17%
3-4 WEEKS	3%	28%
4 WEEKS +	2%	23%



# HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

## HIRING FOR CULTURAL FIT

Determining your hiring criteria is a key part of the recruitment process and this should include the qualities you are looking for in a candidate to ensure that they will be a good cultural fit for your organisation.

Our research shows that jobseekers and employers agree that the candidate's experience should play the deciding role in whether or not they are able to secure a job, but professionals underestimate how much employers value finding someone who is the right cultural fit.

## IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES (ACCORDING TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS)

	JOBSEEKER		EMPLOYERS	
	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT
EXPERIENCE	75%	23%	74%	25%
CULTURAL FIT	48%	44%	64%	28%
QUALIFICATIONS	50%	47%	47%	49%
APPEARANCE	39%	53%	21%	61%

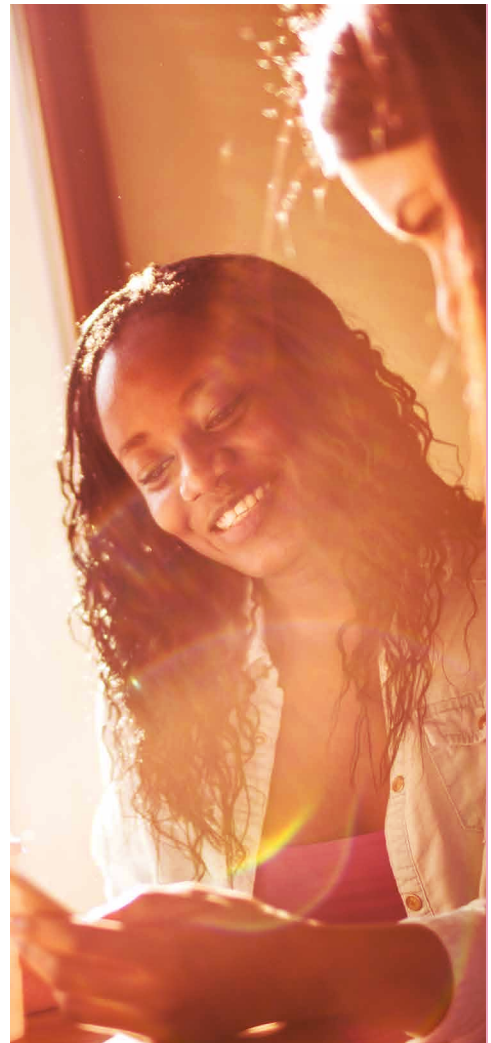
### STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING CULTURAL FIT IN CANDIDATES

- 

Using personality tests such as Myers Briggs can help identify whether the candidate has certain traits you may be looking for (e.g. creativity, extroversion etc).
- 

Involve stakeholders from across the business, particularly at different levels of seniority, in the interview process to gain an impression of how the candidate interacts with managers and colleagues.
- 

Develop interview questions or activities that encourage candidates to show how they deal with uncertainty, solve problems and approach new challenges.





**64%**

**OF EMPLOYERS  
RANK CULTURAL  
FIT AS VERY  
IMPORTANT  
WHEN HIRING**

## **BUILDING A DIVERSE SKILLED WORKFORCE**

In addition to the ethical reasons for embracing diversity in your recruitment strategy, there is also a strong business case for doing so. Recruiting professionals from a diverse range of backgrounds helps to ensure that your business gains opinions, insights and ideas from the broadest range possible, helping to develop a culture of innovation within your company.

Reaching candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds when advertising a role can be challenging. Engaging a recruitment consultancy is the most effective strategy to gain access to a broad network of talent from a variety of backgrounds.



**Sally Martin,  
Director**

“

Finding someone who is a good cultural fit for your business does not necessarily mean someone who will not challenge some aspects of your existing culture. Professionals who can bring new ideas and innovations to your firm will be key to your success, and this can include a different perspective on the culture of your organisation.

”

## **RECRUITING IN A CANDIDATE SHORT MARKET**

When facing talent shortages, businesses may have different solutions available to them depending on their size. Among larger companies (1000+ employees) 14% have used international transfers to manage talent shortages, an option that will not be available to the majority of SMEs. For smaller businesses, using interim or contract staff to bridge talent gaps can be tempting, but doing so may undermine long term succession plans and cannot provide a permanent solution. A more effective strategy may be to reduce your time-to-hire. By shortening the recruitment process to two interviews your company can make an offer and secure your desired candidate more quickly than larger firms.





91%

OF CANDIDATES SAY  
A COLLABORATIVE  
AND ETHICAL  
WORKPLACE IS  
IMPORTANT





## BUILDING AN ATTRACTIVE EMPLOYMENT PROPOSITION

As an SME, it is key to identify the strengths and advantages you have over larger companies when creating your employment proposition. In particular, being a smaller business means you have the capacity to be flexible and to avoid the bureaucracy that is associated with larger organisations.

### COMPANY CULTURE

In a recent Robert Walters survey, 91% of respondents said that a collaborative and ethical workplace was important to them.

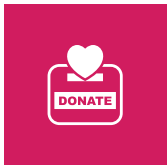
As an SME you have the potential to maintain close cooperation between staff far more effectively than a large multinational. Ensuring that you take advantage of this opportunity is vital to attracting high calibre candidates.



Create a sociable workplace through company events



Use secondments to allow staff to gain an overview of the business



Encourage staff to work together on charity initiatives

### WORKPLACE POLICIES

Our research has shown that professionals are increasingly coming to view work life balance as a high priority, on a par with salary and potential for career progression.

Smaller organisations have a valuable opportunity to capitalise on this change in attitudes by developing strong policies to improve their employees' wellbeing.

### EMBRACE WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY:

Flexibility in terms of working strategies is often listed by professionals as one of the biggest advantages of working for an SME business.

As smaller organisations, SMEs are able to embrace policies like remote and flexible working more easily, adapting to the needs of their staff.

### THREE STEPS TO BUILD YOUR EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION:

1

Take the initiative in building a social, inclusive and creative company culture, taking advantage of your smaller size to create a cohesive and cooperative team.

2

Show your staff that you are interested in their wellbeing through policies designed to enhance their health and satisfaction at work, e.g. subsidised gym membership or complimentary healthy food.

3

Don't be afraid to challenge larger organisations in high-profile industry awards – your ability to innovate and adapt can give you an edge in these competitions.

62%

OF CANDIDATES SAY THEY WANT TO WORK FOR AN AWARD WINNING EMPLOYER

## REPUTATION IN THE MARKET

Even as a smaller organisation it is still possible to achieve high profile recognition in your industry. By entering awards for positive workplace wellbeing policies you can demonstrate that your business is an exceptional place to work.

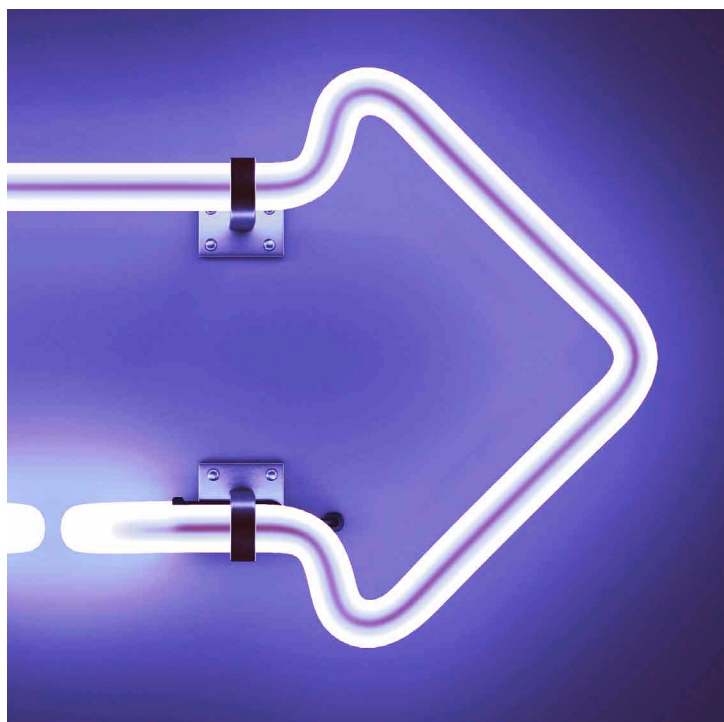
Additionally, the importance of employee review sites, such as Glassdoor, is increasing, with 53% of professionals now saying that online reviews influence their decision when choosing an employer.

For smaller organisations with an engaged workforce, developing a good reputation on these platforms can be an effective means of achieving a reputation in your industry that will attract top talent.

## RAPID CAREER PROGRESSION

When building your employer brand, focus on the benefits that working for an SME can offer. While there will be some opportunities that larger organisations can offer that a smaller business can't, focusing on the potential for career development that comes with an SME can help you identify the strengths your business has when looking to appeal to potential employees.

### EXAMPLE:



**Colin Loth,  
Managing  
Director**

“

As an SME or boutique firm, your employee value proposition will differ from that of a large multinational. However, it's important to recognise that smaller businesses can offer significant advantages over large companies. In particular, the greater flexibility and absence of the bureaucracy associated with large institutions can be a huge selling point in your favour.”

”





**53%**

OF CANDIDATES  
USE ONLINE REVIEW  
SITES TO FIND OUT  
ABOUT POTENTIAL  
EMPLOYERS



## ATTRACTING THE BEST CANDIDATES

As an SME, advertising a role effectively must be regarded as a high priority. Large organisations which are already household names can rely on their high profile status to some extent to attract candidates while smaller businesses do not have this luxury.

Fortunately, SMEs have a wide range of tools available to attract top talent by raising their visibility among key demographic groups.

### ENGAGING A CONSULTANCY VS DIY RECRUITMENT

For SMEs looking to access a wide pool of talent, engaging a recruitment consultancy can provide an effective solution.

Established recruiters with a well-developed reputation can draw on their existing networks to help smaller firms connect with top calibre professionals.

### ADVERTISING A ROLE

In a recent Robert Walters survey, 86% of professionals said that the advertised description of a role would have a strong influence on whether or not they applied, compared to just 69% who said that salary and benefits would have a strong influence.

# 42%

**OF JOBSEEKERS  
WOULD RATHER  
USE A RECRUITMENT  
CONSULTANCY TO  
FIND A NEW ROLE  
THAN APPROACH A  
COMPANY DIRECTLY**

### FACTORS INFLUENCING JOBSEEKERS WHEN VIEWING JOB ADVERTS:

	STRONG INFLUENCE	SOME INFLUENCE
DESCRIPTION OF JOB	86%	13%
SALARY AND BENEFITS	69%	29%
DESCRIPTION OF COMPANY	44%	48%
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYER AND ITS BRAND	41%	43%
THAT EMPLOYER IS NAMED IN ADVERT	41%	42%
QUALITY OF GRAMMAR/LANGUAGE	33%	47%
PUBLICATION/WEBSITE WHERE ADVERT APPEARS	12%	45%
PRESENTATION OF ADVERT (SPACING, LOGOS ETC)	6%	38%

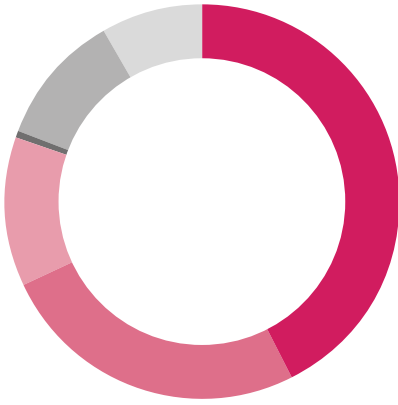
### SOCIAL MEDIA

When professionals were asked which social media sites they were most likely to use to search for jobs, professional networks such as LinkedIn were far more popular than non-professional sites such as Facebook.

While Facebook and Twitter may be useful platforms for certain businesses (e.g. those specialising in online marketing) for most employers, professional networks will have far more impact.

Networks such as LinkedIn also give you the opportunity to engage with candidates online, responding to their comments or questions about a role in a public forum.

## WHAT WOULD BE YOUR PREFERRED METHOD OF FINDING AND APPLYING FOR JOBS?



- 42% Register with a recruitment consultancy
- 26% Using a job board (eg. Monster, Total Jobs etc.)
- 12% Job adverts on professional social networking websites (e.g. LinkedIn)
- 11% Through existing professional networks
- 8% Directly through employer's website
- 1% Job adverts on personal social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.)

A recruitment consultancy can also provide assistance when you are looking to advertise a role via social media. A large consultancy will be able to advise the best way to target a job advert on these networks and you will gain access to their followers making it more likely your ideal candidates will see the role.

### YOUR WEBSITE

8% of professionals said that they prefer to look for jobs as advertised directly on a company's website. While this is a relatively small percentage, it is still potentially a group of professionals that are worth addressing.

### REFERRALS

Your current employees can be a powerful resource for attracting new talent to your company, particularly for smaller businesses which do not have a well known public profile.

Offering incentives to encourage members of staff to recruit new professionals can be an effective way to attract top talent. While direct financial rewards for referring successful candidates may be popular for some businesses, your company culture may be such that incentives such as free activities or holidays are more appropriate, as well as publicly acknowledging members of staff who find great candidates.



**Marcus  
Blackburn,  
Associate  
Director**

“

Your online presence is likely to be the first impression you get to make on most jobseekers. A website which includes a dedicated vacancies section demonstrates that you are a business looking to grow. Even if you are not currently hiring, encouraging prospective candidates to submit their CV will allow you to build up a library of contact information which you can use to reach out to potential candidates when you are looking to fill a vacancy.

”





84%

OF CANDIDATES USE  
YOUR COMPANY  
WEBSITE FOR  
RESEARCH PRIOR  
TO INTERVIEW



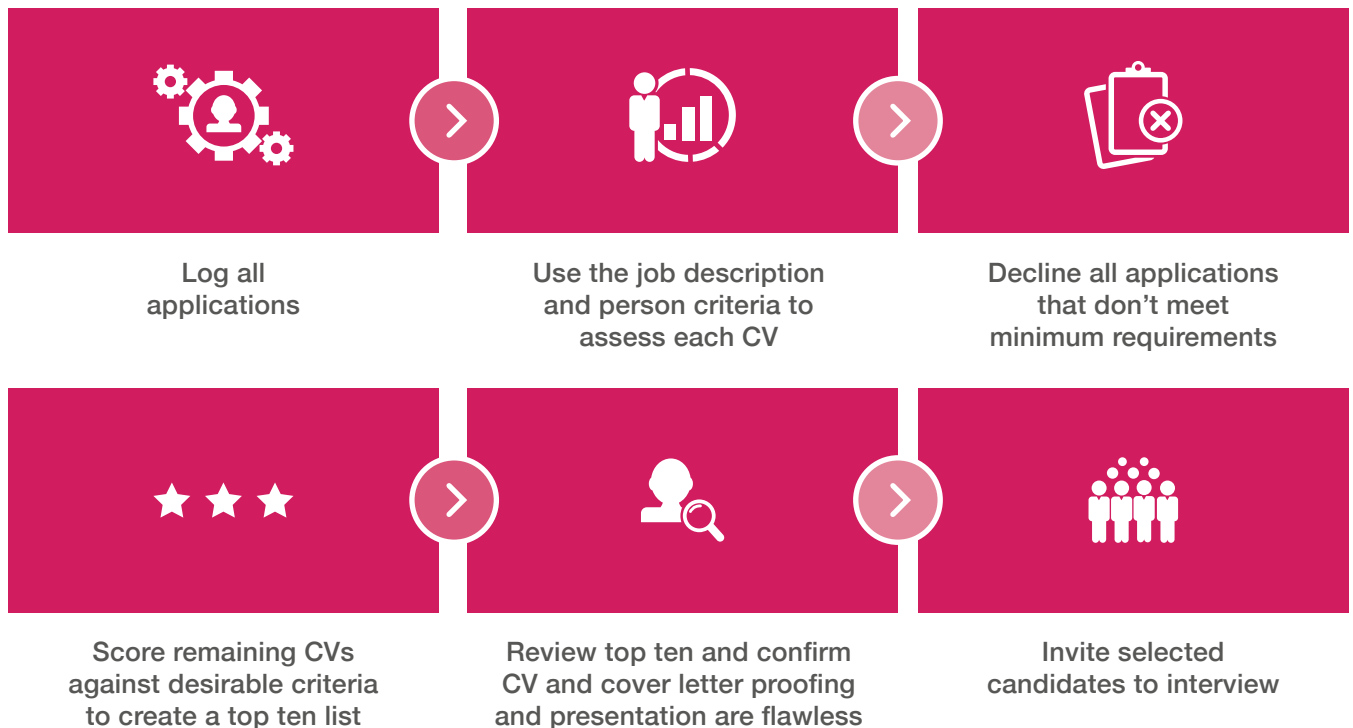


## MANAGING THE APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

Publicly advertising a role is an effective way to attract a large number of applicants. However, it is almost inevitably the case that many of these applicants will not be suitable for the role, and the resulting need for a filtering process will create additional work for the hiring manager.

Particularly for smaller businesses this can quickly create an unmanageable workload for an internal team. Working with a recruitment consultancy outsources this initial filtering process, ensuring that all applicants receive a response in a timely manner and that only suitable candidate CVs need to be reviewed by internal staff.

### STEPS TO CREATE A SHORT LIST



### INTERVIEW PREPARATION

A recent Robert Walters survey revealed the most common sources of information professionals use when preparing for an interview.

By far the most popular was the company website. Ensure that you have a range of content online that will help jobseekers identify the traits and qualities you will want them to demonstrate during an interview.

This will help you identify the candidates who have taken the time to research your company and have recognised what it is you are seeking in your employees.

Contacting existing employees and studying employer review sites are also seen as important sources of information for interview preparation. With regards to employer review sites, it is possible to manage your profile on many of them.

Identify the most popular, noting that there may be specialist review sites for your industry, and ensure that your profile on them accurately reflects your employer brand.



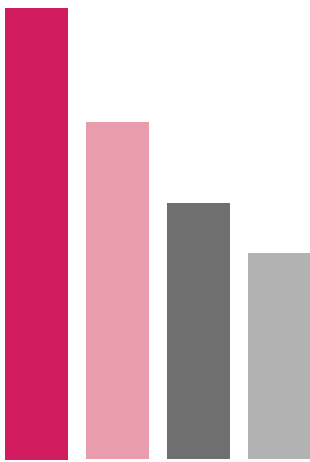
**Habiba Khatoon,**  
**Associate**  
**Director**



As an SME, any negative feedback from candidates over a lack of communication after the interview has the potential to have a large impact on perception of your brand. Therefore, prompt follow up and feedback to candidates who ultimately don't get the job is vital.



## SOURCES USED TO RESEARCH COMPANY



- 84%** Company website
- 54%** Press articles
- 46%** Speaking to existing employees
- 30%** Visiting a review site (e.g. glassdoor.com)

## INTERVIEW TRAINING

Whoever you decide to have present when interviewing candidates, it is important to ensure that they have been provided with adequate training and guidelines so you can be confident in the consistency of your interview processes.

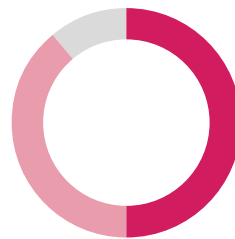
## THE INTERVIEW

Original research from Robert Walters has revealed that professionals generally prefer two or three company representatives to be present at their interview.

98% of professionals think that their potential line manager should be present at the initial job interview, and 60% believe that a representative from HR should also be present. 75% believe that their line manager's manager should also be present for the interview.

For candidates, the interview is also an opportunity to gain insights into your business as much as it is to sell themselves to you.

## PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS THAT PROVIDE INTERVIEW TRAINING



- 50%** Provide training
- 39%** Do not provide training
- 11%** Unsure

## IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC FACTORS DURING A JOB INTERVIEW

	JOBSEEKERS		EMPLOYERS	
	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT
RECEIVING/PROVIDING ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLE	85%	15%	70%	28%
THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS	62%	34%	73%	27%
THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN EXPERIENCE PROPERLY	57%	38%	52%	42%
RECEIVING/PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE TEAM THAT ROLE SITS WITH	58%	38%	37%	57%
RECEIVING/PROVIDING ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY CULTURE	53%	43%	51%	42%
RECEIVING/PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE BENEFITS PACKAGE ON OFFER	40%	46%	33%	41%

## INTERVIEW FOLLOW UP

How you follow up with applicants, particularly those who have reached the interview stage, can have a huge impact on how your company is perceived. Having a policy in place for following up promptly with applicants will ensure that you avoid damaging your reputation among candidates who are rejected for the role and that you do not miss out on candidates by leaving an excessively long delay between the interview and making an offer.



## MAKING AN OFFER

### MOVE QUICKLY TO SECURE TOP TALENT

In the current economic climate, many employers are facing talent shortages across a range of professions. As a result, professionals with in-demand skills are often in a position to entertain several job offers at a time.

This gives SMEs a potential advantage over larger companies as the former can react more quickly to make an offer following a successful interview.

### MANAGING COUNTER OFFERS

Counter offers are increasingly popular among employers as a strategy to combat staff attrition. If you are attempting to recruit professionals from larger companies, it is likely that they may offer an increase in the candidate's salary to try to hang onto them.

### IF A PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE HAS BEEN PRESENTED WITH A COUNTER OFFER CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:



**Can you offer an increased salary?** While you may not be able to match the level of their previous employer, narrowing the gap between salaries may help to retain their interest.



**Consider why the candidate originally applied to join your company.** What was it that you were able to offer that their current role does not? If, for example, they were interested in the potential for career progression the role could offer, consider providing more structure and timescales in how they can expect their career to develop with your company.



**Ask the candidate themselves if they believe the counter offer will help them meet their long term career goals.** Encouraging them to consider their own feelings about staying with their current employer is likely to be more effective than providing a 'hard sell' warning them of the downsides of staying with an employer who knows they have seriously considered leaving in the past.



**Chris Poole,**  
*Managing Director*



Skills shortages are a significant challenge for many businesses, and it seems unlikely that they will abate in the near future. Securing top talent, particularly professionals who can support the growth of a business, is a top priority for SMEs. Fortunately, by reacting quickly to changing circumstances and knowing how to market your business to appeal to professionals over large firms, SMEs can gain a significant advantage in this area.



# 65%

OF EMPLOYERS ARE USING COUNTER OFFERS TO RETAIN STAFF WHO HAVE ACCEPTED ANOTHER JOB



## ONBOARDING AND INDUCTION

### INDUCTION

An effective induction process should provide new employees with an introduction not only to their role, but to the wider business and the company culture as well.

In a recent Robert Walters survey, professionals said that the most important aspects of a workplace induction were the opportunity to shadow experienced members of staff and a mentoring programme to help them adjust to the new working environment.

### WHAT DO PROFESSIONALS CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF A WORKPLACE INDUCTION?



34%

SHADOWING EXPERIENCED COLLEAGUES



34%

DEDICATED MENTORING PROGRAMME



12%

ANNOUNCING THE NEW EMPLOYEE'S ARRIVAL

Our research shows that employees in different age brackets have different priorities concerning their induction.

Among professionals aged 35-50, 15% said that meeting their colleagues socially was the most important aspect of their induction. However, a social induction was the top priority for a third of professionals aged 18-34.

### THE FIRST DAY

A poor induction can create a negative impression about your company, so ensuring that new members of staff are able to hit the ground running should be a priority.

Particularly in the case of contractors, professionals often express frustration at issues logging onto IT systems and not having a fully equipped work station when they start in their new role.

While 89% of employers say that they prepare work stations and IT logins for new starters in advance, 64% of contractors say that they have experienced issues in these areas.

Create a checklist for systems and facilities that should be set up for all new starters and ensure that line managers are aware of it.







64%

OF CONTRACTORS  
HAVE NO WORK  
STATION SET UP ON  
THEIR FIRST DAY



## DEVELOPING YOUR TEAM

### CAREER PROGRESSION

A clear path for career development is a high priority for professionals across a range of disciplines. A recent Robert Walters survey found that 53% of professionals considered it important to keeping employees engaged at work (a figure which rose to 68% among respondents aged 18-34).

	PERCENTAGE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT TO KEEPING EMPLOYEES ENGAGED
REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND EXERCISE INFLUENCE OVER NEW PROJECTS, REGARDLESS OF THE EMPLOYEE'S SENIORITY OR LENGTH OF SERVICE	58%
A CLEAR PATH FOR CAREER PROGRESSION	53%
FORMAL RECOGNITION OF INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS, E.G. EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARDS	28%
PERSONALISED TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR EACH EMPLOYEE	24%
REGULAR NETWORKING SESSIONS OR MEETINGS WITH SENIOR MEMBERS OF STAFF, INCLUDING THOSE AT BOARD LEVEL	14%

SMEs therefore have a significant advantage that they can capitalise on in this respect. With larger firms, career progression can potentially be challenging and opportunities to gain varied experience are limited by roles which are often rigidly defined.

Smaller companies can take advantage of this by encouraging staff to develop and pursue their own projects, making it clear that demonstrating initiative is a quality that can lead to promotion or career progression.

### TRAINING AND MENTORING

Creating a talent pipeline is essential to securing the long term growth of your business. Providing junior staff with training and support to develop their skills will help you guard against future talent shortages and help avoid the issue of staff attrition.

Smaller organisations are potentially in a stronger position to offer a variety of training than larger businesses.

In an SME, senior managers will often work more closely with junior members of staff than in a larger organisation, providing the foundations for mentoring schemes which are extremely popular with professionals.

# 47%

OF PROFESSIONALS HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY POORLY IMPLEMENTED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OR TRAINING PROGRAMMES





With the behaviour and expectations of professionals rapidly changing, SMEs can capitalise on these opportunities. By responding quickly to the shift in attitudes, SMEs can secure top talent where larger businesses are encumbered by bureaucracy when trying to adopt new strategies.

### UNDERSTANDING CANDIDATE BEHAVIOUR

Our research has shown that professionals are increasingly open to being contacted about a potential role even if they are not actively searching for a job. 91% of survey respondents said that they would be happy to be contacted by a recruiter with a potential role.

By engaging with a recruitment consultancy, SMEs are able to gain access to a large network of passive jobseekers, helping them to secure top talent that they would otherwise struggle to communicate with.

### TALENT POOLING

With 72% of employers facing skills shortages, cultivating talent pools will be vital to find the right people who can help your business grow.

To safeguard against talent shortages, businesses must be proactive in building a community of potential candidates they can draw on. Actively searching for candidates should not be something businesses do solely when they have a role to fill but rather an ongoing activity.

Retaining CVs of promising candidates interviewed, encouraging staff to build a network of contacts through participating in industry events and building a strong community online can ensure that you have a steady supply of talent when needed.

### SOCIAL RECRUITING

Simply posting jobs to social platforms may not be sufficient. By providing training to select members off staff from a range of departments and giving them access to post and share on your company's social profiles you can create a more engaging presence on these platforms.

Doing so can give your social profiles a significantly more personal and approachable tone compared to larger, more corporate businesses.

### FLEXIBLE WORKING

SMEs are often better able to accommodate the flexible working needs of their staff than large organisations. Given the increasing priority professionals place on flexibility (84% of professionals want the option to work from home and 88% want to work flexibly outside of core hours), SMEs should take advantage of this opportunity.









## YOUR RECRUITMENT ROADMAP

1

### PLAN YOUR RECRUITMENT

- Define the qualities you are looking for in your new member of staff.
- Engage with as many internal stakeholders as possible when writing the job description.
- Set aside sufficient staff time to filter applications or engage a consultancy to simplify the process.

2

### BUILD YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND

- Create a sociable, flexible working environment that prioritises staff wellbeing.
- Raise your company's profile through awards and by engaging with employer review sites.
- Identify and promote the advantages you can offer over a larger organisation.

3

### HIRING FOR COMPANY CULTURE

- Identify the qualities you are looking for in new members of staff that will ensure they will be a good fit for your business over the long term.
- Make it clear when advertising a role that cultural fit is important to you, as professionals often assume past experience is an employer's top priority.
- Give potential candidates the chance to meet their colleagues as well as their manager so they can gain a fuller picture of your company culture.

4

### ATTRACT TOP TALENT

- When creating job adverts, highlight the culture of your company and provide a realistic salary range.
- Consider engaging a recruitment consultancy to gain access to a wider network of professionals.
- Post jobs on networks like LinkedIn to engage with potential applicants directly.

5

### STREAMLINE THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Make it a priority to filter applications, conduct interviews and make an offer promptly to give yourself an edge over larger, less agile companies.
- Provide prompt feedback to unsuccessful applicants to maintain a good reputation.
- Have a short, medium and long term induction plan for your new hire including mentoring schemes and the opportunity for them to give feedback.

6

### MAKING AN OFFER

- Be prepared for counter offers. Consider what you can offer a top candidate to ensure you retain them, such as a contingency for increasing their salary.
- Ensure you understand what appeals to the candidate about your company.
- Be prepared to negotiate with your desired candidate late in the process.



## ABOUT ROBERT WALTERS

**Robert Walters is a specialist professional recruitment consultancy, working with small and medium sized businesses as a trusted recruitment partner.**

We can help you find the very best skilled professionals, whether it be on a permanent, contract or interim basis, in the following areas:

- accountancy & finance
- banking & financial services
- executive search
- human resources
- information technology
- legal
- marketing
- procurement & supply chain
- projects
- secretarial & business support
- tax
- treasury

To discuss this guide to recruitment for small and medium sized businesses in more detail, or to talk about your recruitment needs, please don't hesitate to get in touch:

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