

Getting In 2 HR - Is cloning the answer to recruitment

- Issue 13

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So our summer has arrived at last! Now that the holiday season is over it is time to think about driving our businesses forward before the run up to Christmas.

The last couple of issues have been around ways that good HR practices can help beat the credit crunch, and so, I thought we might take a slightly different tack this issue

I attended a breakfast discussion recently where the subject was simply 'recruitment' with the idea being that business personnel and recruiters could give their opinions on the issues they were facing and pass on any 'words of wisdom'. So I thought you might find it useful to have an overview of the issues being faced, in the current climate and some ideas to resolve them.

1. The 'gut-feel' about the person sitting in front of you.

Recruitment decisions still seem to be based on chemistry and gut-feel and although this may appear a subjective reason to accept / reject a candidate there are some objective elements to this line of thinking. The gut feel can be put down to the fact that you tend to know the type of character you believe will fit in the team or business and so you are actually assessing whether this person has the right communication and customer service skills, the ability to teamwork effectively, etc.

2. Cloning

Companies were interested in knowing how to recruit clones of someone with the same skills and attitudes as one of their existing employees. This can be done by knowing exactly what you are looking for by having detailed job descriptions and by having a number of steps in the recruitment process to assess your potential candidates. Using [psychometric tests](#) can also be beneficial if used to draw up a profile of your good employees' characteristics and then recruiting to this profile - not quite cloning but a good first step.

3. Experience or training

There were some quite lengthy discussions about whether companies recruited experience, or inexperience and then trained up. The general conclusion was that recruiting an experienced person was preferred but that these were becoming harder to find. The perception was that training was wasted as, once trained, people leave to work for someone else, taking their training with them. Remember, however, that the other side of this argument is that if you recruit the right people, train them in your ways, look after them properly then they will stay with you and you will get a very good return on your training costs. Additionally, if no one trains then the pool of skills diminishes!

4. Cultural fit

Recruitment is not just about asking a list of 20 questions at an interview. It is about trying to attract the right people to apply for your vacancy, who will fit your company culture and then, giving them a good interview experience so that they chose your job offer, rather than one from another company. Once employed, getting recruits to stay for a reasonable length of time is the trick and this can be achieved by good retention methods and management [see here for more details](#)

5. Using networks and looking in the community

Companies had found some success in finding candidates from alternative sources such as their network of contacts, social networking sites or making direct approaches to universities and the community where possible candidates might be found. There was a lady on my table from Reading university who matches students with companies, for placements and work trials, so you get work carried out at relatively low cost, which might be really useful if you are trialing a new position or just want some temporary labour. If you would like her details just drop me a line?

6. Skills shortage

Generally there seems to be a shortage of the skills in the areas needed, across a wide range of skills. Again, one way posed to solve this was to approach local schools and communities to raise awareness about your industry and its attractions, i.e. that being a plumber is not just about getting your hands dirty but that good ones can command good rates of pay. I hear you saying, but this takes time and you do not get an immediate result but can you really afford not to do something?

In 2 HR Viewpoint

Back on the impact of the credit crunch, in the last month we have had several enquires from employees, asking whether what their employer was doing was right, legal, etc. Here is a few of the highlights:

- An employee had his first period of sickness in 6 years and the employer has used this as an excuse to cut the employee hours, stating that they only wanted him to work a 4 day week.
- An employee who had agreed to drop to a 4 day week had not been told which four days he was suppose to be working and would have to turn up for work each day to then be advised whether he was working, or not.
- One employee was being asked to take a pay cut, just because he was highest paid person in the department.

In all cases we advised the employee to talk to their managers to raise their concerns and try to come to an amicable agreement. However, in every case the Company has left itself open to a claim which could easily have been avoided.

From a company point of view, cost cutting is important. Our advice is not to just impose changes on people as it will just get their 'backs up' and they may rebel against the change on principle, and increase the likelihood of an employment tribunal claim - a cost most companies can do without.

Talking to all people and getting them to understand the company's issues can bring about some surprising solutions. We were involved in some possible cost-cutting discussions with a company and one employee said they had, for some time, wanted to go on an extended holiday to visit a relation in Australia but did not like to ask in the current climate. The solution was that the employee was granted unpaid time off, and the company reduced some costs. Everyone was happy!

I hope you have found this edition of **Getting In 2 HR** useful.

If you have a particular topic you would like to see included in a forthcoming issue then please send your topic and/or any questions to be answered to info@In2HR.co.uk

Disclaimer The information given in this newsletter is provided as a guide and overview only and not as specific legal facts. If you are unsure about any of the information provided you are advised to contact us directly.

Regards,

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