

## 6 Ways to Avoid Really Expensive Recruitment Mistakes

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Does this situation sound familiar? You recruited someone who you thought was the “ideal” candidate for a key position in your company. You paid a hefty recruiting fee, running into £1000’s and invested a lot of time and effort in the recruitment process. Three months after the person started things just didn’t work out. Your expectations weren’t met. Your new employee’s skills were not what you had hoped. This person turned out not to be a “fit” for your company. The style wasn’t right, their leadership qualities weren’t as they described them to you at the interview and their problem solving capability looked wishy-washy. You are then faced with letting that person go with some kind of termination package. The whole situation just cost your Company thousands of pounds in recruitment and termination costs and you have lost valuable momentum in your business. You begin to wonder why is it so hard to recruit good people?

### **Common Recruitment Mistakes**

Managers everywhere have experienced the frustration, disappointment and expense of making a recruitment mistake. It’s not unusual. There are many reasons why new employees don’t work out. Here are some common mistakes managers make. Any one of these can result in a recruitment disaster:

- **Failing To Write an Accurate Job Specification.** Writing a good job spec is tedious. Managers are busy and have trouble finding the time to do this. Sometimes they think, “I am not sure exactly what I am looking for, but I will know it when I see it.” This is the first step on the road to a recruitment disaster.

- **Casual Interviewing.** Inviting a candidate in “for a conversation” or for a “casual chat” is not an interview. Too often, managers are unprepared and end up having a conversation that yields no real information about the candidate. To make matters worse, the manager asks others to “talk to” the candidate without preparing them in advance.

Recruiting someone based on casual interviewing is usually a big mistake.

- **Love at First Sight.** The recruitment process has parallels with dating. You meet. You talk. You introduce the person to your friends. Then, you decide whether to get together again. Sometimes you meet someone you really like from the start. Suddenly that person can do no wrong. Love is blind and that is dangerous, especially when it comes to recruitment.

- **Rushing the Process.** Finding good candidates and interviewing them is time consuming. In the meantime, other work is piling up. You needed someone yesterday! It is tempting to rush the recruitment process by skipping critical steps such as preparation or thorough background checking. By doing that, it is easy to overlook important information like whether or not that candidate really did get a University degree. It is amazing how many candidates do not tell the truth on their c.v.’s.

- **Using the “Sink or Swim” Approach to New Employee Induction.** “I don’t have time for hand-holding” is a common statement I hear from managers. It is true managers need people who can start producing immediately without a lot of training. However, failing to provide induction and orientation to a new employee in your company’s way of doing things and not setting clear expectations for early deliverables sets the new employee up for frustration and performance problems. It is well worth your time and money to avoid mistakes like these.

## ***How to Make A Successful Recruitment Decision***

Here are 6 things you and your managers can do to avoid recruitment disasters and increase the chances of making a successful recruitment decision.

1. **Write a Thorough Job Spec.** List the most important responsibilities for the position. Then, write down the experience and qualifications that you are looking for. Be sure to include “soft skills.” Think about your work environment, the people and culture and the kinds of skills that a person needs to be successful there. For example, a business start-up will have little infrastructure and people are expected to have a great deal of initiative to get their job done. This environment could well be very different from a well established business operating in mature markets. A well written job spec will guide you and those involved with you in the recruitment process, generating a shared understanding of requirements. This aids the screening process as only qualifying resumé's will get through the net. This will save you time.

2. **Structured Interviewing.** Plan a formal interview schedule for all of the candidates who pass through the initial screening process. Give all interviewers a copy of the resumé and job spec in advance of the interview. Then, decide with each interviewer what skills they are going to assess in the candidate. Create an evaluation sheet so that interviewers can evaluate each candidate in the skill areas you have assigned them. This way, you can be sure all relevant skills will be assessed in the interview process.

Use open-ended behavioral questions that require the candidate to describe a specific situation that demonstrated their skill. For example, “Tell me about a time when you were successful in a hectic and unstructured work environment.” Probe for details about what the candidate actually accomplished. Do not accept hypothetical answers or answers that lack substance.

3. **Don't rely on the interview alone.** Research by occupational psychologists, Hunter and Schmidt, has shown unquestionably that using some form of objective assessment can deliver a recruitment success rate of around 60 to 70 per cent greater than using an interview alone. My own experience demonstrates that you can significantly increase the probability of making better judgements if you use other assessment methods which do not rely exclusively on the interview. Consider some or all of these. For senior and key appointments ask people to make a presentation on their approach and method of operating. Get all candidates to work together on a problem and observe how they work together, exhibit leadership skills or organisational ability. If a job requires particular abilities such as “seeing the wood for the trees”, numerical skills or logic get some help in having these assessed. If you can simulate an activity, such as say checking lists for accuracy, design your own tests of aptitude. Likewise, personality and attitude questionnaires can confirm or uncover information about the profile you are seeking. These methods, appropriately adapted, can be used at any level from Board to coal face.

4. **Be Objective in Decision Making.** Gather all of the interviewers and assessors together right after the interviews and assessments and discuss their evaluations of the candidate. While you have the ultimate authority as the boss to make the final recruitment decision, your staff and colleagues' inputs will be important to a successful selection. Involving others than just yourself also gives the applicant a better flavour and insight into the Company and its people.

5. **Stick To the Process.** Require all candidates to complete and sign a well structured application for employment form before you make your final recruitment decision and verify all prior employment dates, job titles, salaries and reasons for leaving.

In one Company I worked with a candidate who applied for a senior position seemed absolutely ideal. For the recruiting manager, it was “Love at First Sight.” Upon doing the employment checks, we learned that dates of employment and salaries had been significantly exaggerated throughout the

candidate's job history. If a candidate is this careless about how they complete the application for employment form the chances are they will be careless on the job too and not above board with you.

**6. Start New Employees Off Well With Clear And Reasonable Expectations.**

Once you have recruited your new employee provide them with a proper induction which includes the vision, plans and targets of the business as well as its culture and way of operating. The induction must incorporate the provision, discussion and agreement on clear and measurable objectives in writing-sometimes these outline objectives and measures can be included in the recruitment brief. This initial investment can often save hours of frustration and disappointment for both you and your new employees.

Recruitment of new employees is an expensive and time-consuming process. Recruitment decisions are among the most important business decisions you will make as a manager because your employees will either make or break the success of your company. The recommendations I have made here may cost you a little more time in the recruitment process, but they will also save you thousands of pounds in the long run.

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