

5 top tips for recruiting the best talent for your business

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Recruiting talent for your business is an art as well as a science. Follow these five tips to make sure that you're recruiting the best talent for your business - people who will help your business grow, and who are able to put your dreams into action.

1. It's a cliché, but: Have a job description

Yes, you're busy. Yes, you know exactly what type of candidate you're looking for. And yes, you require staff to go beyond what's in their job description.

But it's easy to develop a 'business crush' on a candidate during the recruitment process – someone who blows you away with their talent and enthusiasm, and who can really help take your business to the next level.

There's nothing wrong with recruiting for the future – after all, you need people who can put your dreams into action. But you have a need *now*, and meeting this need is why you're recruiting.

Taking the time to write up a job description, and having those requirements in black and white, will help you tame that business crush and make sure you're recruiting the right person – whether it's for a current need, or for a business-growth need.

2. Know what it's going to cost you

It's easy to think only of gross salary when budgeting for new staff. But the real costs are far higher.

Yes, you begin with the gross salary, but you also need to consider additional overhead costs: things like a desk and chair, computer or laptop, software, and licensing expenses.

If you're working through a recruitment agency, consider their fees and charges. And remember that recruitment agencies often charge these fees even if your newly appointed candidate resigns. So, you might end up having lost your ideal candidate, but still owing money to the recruitment agency!

3. Do, do, do due diligence

In the current South African economic environment, employer demand is far lower than employee supply. Given the staggering unemployment rate, there are likely to be hundreds (or even thousands) of candidates who are desperate for the job you're offering. Unfortunately, this desperation sometimes leads to little white lies, or even full-blown deception.

So, make sure that you contact references to check that your applicants are who they say they are. Insist on certified copies of qualifications. And better yet, ask your shortlisted candidates to do a project as part of the final interview process – this way, you can check for yourself that they have the skills they claim to have.

4. Consider the internship model

Interns often get a bad rap. Business owners imagine a slouchy Gen Z waltzing into the office, complete with lacklustre education, zero experience, and an overwhelming sense of entitlement. No thanks!

But managed correctly, interns offer opportunities for your business that simply can't be ignored.

There are thousands of unemployed graduates who are desperate to make a difference and build a career. Yes, there might be some chancers and 'bad apples', but with the right recruitment and selection process, you'll find amazing talent and dedication – and at a fraction of the cost (and in some cases, AT NO COST)!

Internships have been around for time immemorial, and were traditionally used by businesses to reduce the workload of full-time employees, and identify and appoint future stars. Interns bring enthusiasm, motivation and energy to the workplace, and their unique perspective often leads to innovative solutions to old problems.

For this very reason, South African legislation provides incentives for the recruitment (and subsequent appointment) of interns – not least of which is points on your BEE Scorecard.

But as an unintended consequence of these incentives, internships aren't always given the pride of place that they deserve. Too many businesses hire internships purely to enjoy the related incentives, but forget that interns are a key part of the succession plan!

Yes, you'll need to recruit your interns carefully, and be clear on exactly what (and who) you're looking for. And yes, you'll need to provide proper onboarding, oversight and mentoring. But don't you already do this anyway when you appoint new staff?

If you change your mindset from incentive to talent management, you'll find that the benefits of hiring interns far outweigh the time and effort spent developing them. (And if you're not developing your staff, you have a far bigger problem – one that won't be solved by recruitment alone.)

5. Don't make the final call alone

As humans, we're all biased. We have a natural tendency to favour some types of people over others, and we all suffer from 'blind spots' when it comes to recruitment. In particular, business owners tend to recruit people just like them – people they can relate to, who share their interests and passions.

But if you recruit only people who are like you, you'll have a business full of entrepreneurs! What about the slog work? What about the admin (which you're probably terrible at)? What about the repetitive, monotonous but important work that you absolutely hate? Someone needs to do this!

So don't make the final appointment decision alone. Call in your trusted staff (especially those who'll be working directly with the new appointee) to get their input. Ideally, make sure that you put together an interview panel from the start of the recruitment process, consisting of a variety of individuals with different viewpoints.

Conclusion

Surviving in today's turbulent business environment requires that all business owners give 120% every day. If you dream of getting support from a competent and committed staff complement (and maybe even achieving some of that illusive work-life balance), you need to make sure that you're recruiting the right talent.

Do your homework, get the basics right, and don't forget to consider interns to boost your business success. It will all be worth it!

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