

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a brown blazer over a white shirt, is looking through black binoculars. She is standing in front of a large window with a view of a modern building. The image is used as a background for the article.

RIGHT FIRST TIME

Hiring the wrong person can end up costing you a lot of time and money, not to mention the damage it can do to your business. Choosing the right person, however, is no longer simply a matter of employing the candidate with the right qualifications and the most experience.

Whether it's at store or head office level, any retailer striving for a customer-centric business needs to also consider who will be the best fit for their customer base. This means that popping an advertisement in the newspaper, or sticking a sign up in the window and hoping for the best is not good enough.

Employing staff is a complex business and the advantages of enlisting the help of a recruitment agency shouldn't be underestimated. Far from taking over, companies which specialise in retail placements – and there are several in New Zealand – consider it their job to work with you to save you time and effort, while at the same time attracting quality candidates to the role.

Dealing with high numbers of candidates daily, recruiters are experienced in screening candidates, reviewing cvs, interviewing, testing and negotiating, among other things, meaning they can be more efficient and effective than an in-house HR team which may deal with job vacancies less frequently. But, the true challenge is often in attracting high-calibre talent and this is where an agency has a real advantage.

Networks

Trish McLean of Retail World Resourcing cites access to a strong database of candidates as being one of the key benefits. She says, in their case, this is both a national and an Australian database. McLean estimates that 50 per cent of appointments they facilitate are from candidates that have come from their

database and contacts, as opposed to a response from advertising.

The importance of these networks is echoed by Pete Macauley of Michael Page International which sources applicants worldwide. The significance of this, he says, is that as the demand for qualified professionals in the Asia Pacific region increases and regional job opportunities grow, local skill shortages are likely to develop. He expects companies like his to play a key role in the transfer of talent from other countries to fill these roles.

Social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter and internet job boards – such as Seek and Trade Me – are now seen as crucial in attracting new talent. A 'current vacancies' page on the employer's website is also considered important.

Jodi Linder of Frontline Retail says a recruitment company will be aware of what the market is currently responding to and can adapt the recruitment process accordingly. She adds that, "as a client's representatives we can honestly educate candidates about the brand, communicate aspects of the vacancy and business that are relevant to them and encourage them to consider options they may not have been open to previously."

Linder says an agency is also useful in protecting a company's brand. "In situations where a



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client may be working through a performance issue or restructuring, they can use us as a way to keep upcoming vacancies confidential". Likewise, according to McLean, a recruiter can, if need be, provide brand protection should the applicant be a customer.

After all there is nothing worse, she says, than having to reject a loyal customer!

Niche

QJumpers, a new player in the market, is carving out a niche for itself by providing a full on-line



WANT TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT TALENT?

- ⇒ Social media sites and internet job boards are crucial.
- ⇒ Promote your company culture on your website.
- ⇒ Be bold, expand your search to include international talent.
- ⇒ It's not always about the money.

recruitment service. Simon Oldham of QJumpers says their innovative system can save employers up to five hours per vacancy. Each job is advertised across multiple job sites; job seekers apply on-line and all applications are held in one place. The employer can then log-in from anywhere to manage the applications and communicate with candidates easily and in a timely manner – thus avoiding negative feedback which could damage the brand.

Different levels of the service, including filtering of applicants, shortlisting, testing and assessing, allow employers to do as much or as little as they want. Oldham says their service is ideal for anyone who wants to take charge of the recruitment process, but still do it professionally.

Students

The swiftness with which the Student Volunteer Army was formed

and mobilised in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake was impressive. However, in normal circumstances these students are on the lookout for paid employment to finance their studies.

Student Job Search has been helping to match students with casual and part-time employment opportunities since 1982. With over 160,000 students on its database – and many with retail experience – this is a valuable resource for retailers. Best of all, students often have flexible timetables and are happy to work weekends and nights which can supplement a full-time workforce very effectively.

Signing-up to use the service is free and employers are even allocated their own employment consultant who will work with them to understand their business, help to write the job ad, screen applicants and send through referrals. They will

also follow up to find out how the placement went so that they can continually improve their service.

Paul Kennedy of Student Job Search points out that students are the biggest pool of emerging talent. Not only are they the workers of the future, they are also the consumers of the future. A lot, he says, can be learnt from what does or does not attract students to jobs in the retail sector – information that retailers can use to their advantage. To take this a step further, Student Job Search is launching a new initiative in October to encourage employers to work closely with them to prepare students better for careers in retail – and other sectors.

Kennedy adds that not only can students provide extra help on the shop floor, “they can also help with other facets of the business, such as website development. Talented IT students are in hot demand,” he says, “as businesses now realise these students can cost-effectively develop websites, set up on-line selling services and even develop iPhone applications”. Kennedy says many retailers could benefit greatly from these skills.

inspire them and attract them to your brand.”

Macauley agrees it is the overall package that is important; however, he asserts that offering competitive salaries and bonuses will always be a key way to attract the best talent. “Financial reward is an important retention strategy in the current market, given the limited salary increases that were given during the global financial crisis.”

Top performers, he says, are now looking to be paid more to reflect the improved outlook and recruitment agencies can help with this by providing employers with information on current salary levels and market trends.

Richards points out that there has not been a lot of movement in the retail job market in the past couple of years. However, she believes that once it does start to move there will be a lot of activity as people who have been keen to change – but have been sitting tight until the economy improves – will be eager to progress their careers.

Smart employers, she says, will be ready and waiting to pick up this enviable talent. ■



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More than money

Attracting quality employees can come at a price, and it's not all about the money. Kim Richards from OCG Consulting says people seldom leave a role because of money, so attracting them to your business could take more than simply upping the dollars. Richards says that most often people are looking for strong leadership, opportunities for development and the right culture within a company.

McLean agrees, saying she encourages companies to work on their employment brand proposition and to have a clear idea of what makes their brand attractive to prospective employees over that of their competitors. “Have some great success stories about your team that you can share with candidates to



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