



UNIT-1

Overview Of the Recruitment Industry

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the main duties and responsibilities of the recruitment consultant
- ✓ Understand the difference between skilled and unskilled labour
- ✓ Identify the similarities between recruitment consultants and salespeople

Unit 1

Overview Of the Recruitment Industry

An Introduction To Recruitment

Worldwide, recruitment is one of the most relevant, lucrative and fastest growing of all contemporary sectors. A recent estimate suggested that the global recruitment industry is valued at approximately \$500 billion. A competitive and dynamic sector, recruitment is nonetheless wide open for ambitious entrepreneurs looking to start their own businesses. The greater the extent to which employers worldwide acknowledge the value of quality workers, the greater their reliance on talented recruiters. Oftentimes, the quickest and easiest way to procure the most capable employees on the market is to work with a recruitment company.

The UK Recruitment Industry

The global picture is reflected in the UK recruitment industry, which has been growing on an annual basis for some time. Further growth of 10% in 2018 contributed to a market with an estimated value in excess of £30 billion. Again, the growth and expansion of the UK recruitment industry adds up to exceptional career opportunities for qualified recruitment consultants.

Roughly summarized, the responsibilities of the recruitment consultant are two-fold. Along with helping jobseeker pinpoint their perfect positions with established employers, consultants help businesses locate and secure the most talented workers. Some cover a broad range of industries, while others focus on one specific sector – IT, construction or driving jobs, for example.

Increasingly, it is becoming rare to encounter successful recruitment consultants who ended up working in the field by accident. Job opportunities for talented recruitment consultants are broad, but it takes a unique set of skills and abilities to reach the very top of the ladder. Particularly if you intend to run your own recruitment business, you'll need to invest heavily in your education and development.

The Structure Of The Industry

Recruitment companies work with businesses spanning a diverse range of sectors, providing both skilled and unskilled workers for a variety of roles. Some recruitment companies help companies find experienced supervisors and senior management personnel, others are more about entry-level

positions and even temporary contracts. Detailed below are some of the different types of recruitment that are commonplace today in the UK:

Executive-level recruitment

Some recruitment companies help organizations locate and appoint executive-level members of the workforce. While it's often assumed high-ranking managers and executives can simply 'walk' into the jobs of their dreams, actually finding a suitable role can be difficult. Many senior management candidates contact recruitment companies due to dissatisfaction with their current positions, or their desire to climb to an even higher level. Recruiters who specialize in executive-level recruitment must have an extensive knowledge and understanding of their specialist sector accordingly.

Middle To Senior Management

It's a similar situation with middle to senior management, wherein the recruitment company must have a detailed knowledge of the relevant industry or sector. For the most part, recruitment companies are contacted by businesses (usually having already established a professional connection) to create job descriptions and advertise the available positions accordingly. After which, the recruitment company takes control of short-listing potential clients, organizing initial interviews and generally screening clients on behalf of the business. This has the potential to save the employer significant amounts of time and money, while freeing up valuable resources.

However, the accessibility, affordability and simplicity of online advertising has led to a significant decline in this type of recruitment. The reason being that it is now relatively easy for businesses to post their own vacancies online, using various forums and specialist recruitment websites.

Knowledge-Based Specialists and Professional Staff

These kinds of specialist recruitment consultancies focus on professional staff and qualified professionals. They assist employers at a variety of levels with the recruitment of teachers, doctors, lawyers, financial experts, engineers and so on. They can also play an invaluable role helping such professionals locate and access superior job opportunities.

One of the biggest points of appeal for the specialist worker or professional is that of accessing preferential rates of pay as a contractor. By making yourself available as and when required, it's not uncommon to be paid TWICE as much as an employee with a permanent contract. The downside being no formal guarantee of work, though many contractors appreciate the flexibility.

'Workers'

The term 'workers' is used in a broad sense in recruitment, covering the vast majority of everyday office workers and less-established professionals in fields such as healthcare and IT. This category may also be populated by salespeople, experienced hospitality workers and so on. Recruitment companies are able to pair workers from all backgrounds and with all skill levels with their ideal employers. Sometimes on a temporary basis, often with the opportunity of a permanent contract.

Again, it's often up to the candidates to determine whether or not they want to work fulltime, or on a contractual basis. However, contractors in this category do not usually gain access to the same preferential rates of pay as their professional counterparts.

Unskilled labour

Often the lowest paid area of the workforce, unskilled labour refers to the kinds of roles that can be staffed by almost anyone, with little to no specialist knowledge or skills required. Experience may be preferable, as many unskilled roles involve working directly with the public. Retail staff, waiting staff, catering roles and so on – priority will always be shown to those with relevant experience. Other positions are open to anyone looking for work, which may include fruit picking, construction labouring, kitchen porter roles and so on. The vast majority of such positions are temporary in nature, though many can lead to permanent contracts where candidates demonstrate genuine enthusiasm and commitment.

Flexible Staffing

One of the primary benefits of working with a recruitment company (on the part of the employer) is access to flexible staffing on an ad-hoc basis. In a working example, a recruitment agency could provide immediate cover to fill an urgent employment gap, followed by an interim candidate for several months and ultimately a permanent candidate to fill the role. They can provide employees to cover maternity leave, extended sickness or sabbaticals. Rather than going through the process of formally hiring permanent employees from scratch, the employer can simply specify their requirements and have the recruitment company fill them accordingly.

In the meantime, the popularity of flexible working is growing among job seekers and professionals across the UK. More people than ever before are focusing heavily on their work-life balance, prioritizing their personal lives and families over their careers. Where a permanent nine-to-five job simply isn't for you, flexible working could be preferable. If you'd prefer to work hard for six months and take the following six months off, it's never been easier to do just that.

Permanent Staffing Solutions

While many recruitment companies specialize in temporary contracts on an ad-hoc basis, others work hard to set their candidates up with permanent contracts. Permanent staffing solutions cover all sectors and all levels, from introductory/unskilled positions right through to senior management and executive roles. As competition on the job market increases, more candidates than ever before are turning to recruitment agencies to help them find and secure their perfect jobs. To such an extent that some of the most prolific employers in the United Kingdom and beyond now lists their vacancies *exclusively* with one or more designated recruitment agencies.

What Do Recruitment Consultants Do?

Whichever way you look at it, recruitment consultants are salespeople. In order to succeed as a recruitment consultant, you need to be able to successfully sell yourself *and* the services you provide. Both to the businesses you recruit for and the candidates you recruit, you need to portray yourself and your agency as the perfect pick for the job. Attracting new clients (employers) means doing whatever it takes to persuade them you're the recruitment agency they need. Attracting new customers (candidates) means getting the message across that you and you alone can help them find their dream job. Hence, it is a role that predominantly revolves around sales and marketing. Not to mention, a detailed knowledge and understanding of your field of expertise.

What Is The Recruitment Process?

Effectively, recruitment consultants represent a professional liaison between the employer and the prospective employee. Hence, they are tasked with shouldering two enormous responsibilities at the same time. Both parties are relying on you to get the job done – the candidate's very career could be in your hands. On the plus side, successful recruitment consultants have the potential to earn generous and ongoing commissions.

The recruitment process consists of various steps, which will vary significantly in accordance with the type of agency you run and your field of expertise. Nevertheless, you can expect to spend much of your time reaching out to employers to win their business, headhunting candidates online, producing accurate job descriptions, inviting candidates to apply for available roles and ultimately screening potential candidates. It will always be up to the employer to make a final decision, but you and you alone will determine who makes the final cut.

These days, the vast majority of communications within the field of recruitment take place online. Cold calling companies in an attempt to win their business still happens, but unsolicited sales and marketing calls are becoming increasingly ineffective. Hence, you'll spend a lot of your time reaching out to prospective clients and candidates online, which may involve organizing telephone conversations at an agreed time and date. Face-to-face interviews are usually carried out only after initial screening processes have been completed.

You will also spend a great deal of time researching the sector or specialist area you work in. You need to keep on top of the latest developments and keep a close eye on your competitors at all times. In addition, it's important to keep on top of the general promotional and marketing requirements of your business. Competition in all areas of the recruitment sector is fierce, so you need to be on your toes and working on your competitive edge at all times.

What Is It Like to Be A Recruitment Consultant, and Are You Right for This Job?

Recruitment consultancy has the potential to be an exceptionally fulfilling and rewarding career. Nevertheless, it is a demanding field of heavy responsibility that is *not* for the fainthearted. If you're getting into recruitment in the hope of an easy ride, you can forget about it. What's important to remember is that recruitment is almost exclusively a target-driven role. As such, you and you alone have control of your progression, your development and how much money you stand to make.

Roughly translated, targets are established by recruitment agency owners for each day, week, month, quarter and so on. These targets may be purely financial in nature, or established using key performance indicators (KPIs). In a working example, you may be expected to arrange interviews with at least 10 potential clients (employers) each month. Or perhaps, fill a minimum of five vacancies per week. Do so and you gain access to a predetermined rate of commission – fail to do so and your job could be on the line.

You therefore need to ask yourself – are you the type of person who enjoys a challenge? Can you motivate yourself to get the job done, irrespective of the difficulties you face? Are you capable of working almost completely under your own steam? Can you manage your own workload and demonstrate tenacity in high-pressure situations?

It's worth remembering that in the field of recruitment, every candidate you encounter will be different. In addition, the exact requirements of each specific role you're hired to fill could also be unique. Precisely why it's true to say that no two days are over the same. Working hours also tend to be somewhat non-standard, as recruitment agents have to cater to the needs of candidates that may

already be working full time. Many recruitment consultants enjoy the flexibility of a nonstandard working week, which can involve early morning starts, mid-evening finishes and weekend work.

Ultimately, you need to be the quintessential multitasker to succeed as a recruitment consultant. Not only this, but you need to be able to acknowledge and accept the fact that things don't always go the way you expect. In these kinds of target-driven environments, you can quickly go from cloud-nine to rock-bottom with no prior warning.

One minute, you're hiring candidates left, right and centre, generating sizeable commissions and doing your clients proud. The next, everyone seems to be letting you down at the last minute and making a fool of you. Frustration is inevitable in the case of the latter, but you still need to be able to make informed and objective decisions – both for the benefit of your agency and those you work for.

You need to be able to pick yourself up and get back on the proverbial horse, without a second thought. You also need to be extremely thick skinned, as you can expect to be blamed by *both* parties (candidates and employers) when things go wrong.

On the plus side, those who demonstrate the traits and qualities of a successful recruitment consultant have this incredible field at their fingertips. Now more than ever, career opportunities for those with the skills, knowledge, confidence and commitment to succeed are wide open .

Essential Skills For A Recruitment Consultant

Customer Focused

Recruitment consultancy is one of many specialist fields where the customer is always right. Even if they're clearly wrong, they're right...or you have to act as such, anyway. As a recruitment consultant, your customers are not usually the candidates you're hiring. With the exception of more executive-level recruitment consultancies, the candidates you seek and hire typically won't pay you a penny. Instead, it's the businesses doing the hiring that pay the fees and commissions. For obvious reasons, you'll want to keep them on-side.

Even when things go wrong, you need to do whatever you can to keep your customers sweet. Always remember that it's better to bite the bullet (even when it's not your fault) than to run the risk of losing a customer entirely. Or worse still, ending up with a dissatisfied customer who then tells as many people as possible not to use your services. Customer focus is essentially a form of PR and reputation management. Anything you can do to keep customers happy and on your side is something you should be doing.

Target Driven

Not everyone is cut out for a target-driver sales role. Some prefer the kinds of jobs where just as long as you do the bare minimum, you still get paid and everyone's happy. With recruitment consultancy, it doesn't always work like this.

In a target-driven environment, doing everything by the book doesn't necessarily guarantee success. In fact, there are times when you'll have genuinely gone the extra mile and worked yourself to the bone, only to come up with nothing in return. Once again, this is where resilience and tenacity make all the difference.

Filling vacancies as a recruitment consultant comes down to your ability to sell yourself to your clients and the jobs you advertise to your candidates. If a candidate's CV and general professional profile isn't all it could be, you may also need to sell *them* to the prospective employer. Under no circumstances is there ever any allowance for sitting back and taking a passive approach. Recruitment consultancy is a 100% proactive, 100% target-driven sales role that's not to be underestimated.

Tenacious and Resilient

As touched upon repeatedly, your tenacity and resilience will determine the extent to which you succeed as a recruitment consultant. It's one thing to have the skills and knowledge needed to work in recruitment. It's something else entirely to continue performing like a professional in the face of adversity.

On both sides of the spectrum, failure is all part and parcel of the job. You attempt to win the business of 20 companies, investing 20 days of work in the project and securing precisely *none* of them. You invest countless hours in a high-level candidate who's perfect for a prestigious role, only for him or her to let you down the day before they were due to start. All the kinds of eventualities you can expect to encounter.

Confidence and Optimism

The cornerstone of effective selling has always been confidence. The reason being that if you don't appear to have complete confidence in whatever it is you're selling, you can't expect the intended recipient to take you seriously. Still, it's important to know where to draw the line between confidence and arrogance. Not to mention, keep things as pleasant and personable as possible, without reverting to the 'hard-sell'.

Optimism as a recruitment consultant means focusing on all the benefits and advantages of successful recruitment. When dealing with clients (employers), they need to be presented with a picture of all the ways they stand to benefit by doing business with you. With candidates (employees), you need to be positive and enthusiastic at all times, giving the impression that the proposed position really is an irresistible prospect. The more upbeat and outgoing you are, the more likely you are to succeed as a recruitment consultant.

Problem Solving

In a sense, every recruitment request you are presented with represent a problem to be solved. Likewise, your agency's job to secure the business of as many employers as possible also constitutes a problem. While attempting to solve these and other problems, you'll encountered countless additional problems along the way.

How to rescue a deal that went sour at the last moment? How to approach a candidate whose previous application was unsuccessful? How to fill the requirements of a particularly demanding employer? How to secure the business of an employer that's currently using a rival agency?

Some problems can be anticipated, while others demand quick thinking. If you consider yourself to be a natural problem solver, a career in recruitment could be right up your street

Additional skills of value in the recruitment sector include:

- The ability to work well under pressure
- Organisation, time management and administration skills
- A professional manner and appearance Teamwork
- Self-motivated and opportunistic; the ability to spot openings in the marketplace

What Makes A Recruiter Successful?

The field of recruitment combines psychology with selling. As in all aspects of sales and marketing, its primarily about presenting something in a positive and engaging light. Whatever it is you're offering, it needs to be offered in a manner that makes the perspective recipient think they need it. Recruiters *need* your services to find talented candidates – candidates *need* your services to find their perfect jobs. The mechanics of processing applications and forwarding CVs is comparatively easy – the sales aspect of recruitment is where the real challenge lies.

How Do I Become A Successful Recruiter?

The key to successful recruitment lies in approaching your work from the perspective of your clients – aka the employers. It's all about quality control – how specific are you with quality of the candidates you present? Would you be happy to recommend a client that fulfilled 70% of the job profile? Or would you only present candidates with 100% certainty of their capabilities?

Your quality and capabilities will be reflected in the quality of the recruits you provide. If you fill positions with the best of the best, that's how you will be regarded. If you're happy to settle for second-best, that's how you'll be interpreted.

In terms of specific habits and practices in recruitment consultancy, the following 13 should be followed at all times:

1. Keep it personal
2. Maintain a calendar
3. Focus on the candidates
4. Perfect your outreach
5. Adopt a modern approach
6. Learn the ways of the business
7. Track your efforts
8. Get social
9. Turn off notifications
10. Stop screening out
11. Get proactive about referrals
12. Use automation tools
13. Take control of your reputation

1. Keep it personal

Keeping it personal means taking the time to address and treat every candidate as a unique human being. Or to put it another way, get out of the habit of copying and pasting chunks of text for mass-email marketing. At all stages of the recruitment process, refer to them by their name and communicate with them in a genuine and personal way. Ensure they never feel like just another statistic for your business.

2. Maintain a calendar

Your organisation skills will be put the test on a daily basis. As a recruitment consultant, you can expect to work independently and be charged with looking after your own workload. Hence,

maintaining a calendar is anything *but* optional. Even if you think you've got a photographic memory, it's only a matter of time until things start slipping from your grasp. Maintain a calendar and get into the habit of writing EVERYTHING down.

3. Focus on the candidate

We've already touched upon the importance of ensuring your candidates never feel like pure statistics. This can be achieved by ensuring you focus heavily on the candidate experience from start to finish. From initial outreach to screening to interviews and so on, think about what the candidate needs and how you can give it to them. Think about their expectations and what you can do to exceed them. Always remember that the happier they are, the happier you'll be with the result.

4. Perfect your outreach

Reaching out to a candidate with the offer of employment is easy. Actually getting them to take an interest in the role is something else entirely. The way you approach each initial outreach will therefore have an impact on everything else that happens subsequently. If you approach candidates in a stiff, formal or laboured way, you can't expect them to get too excited about the job. By contrast, make them feel it's the opportunity of a lifetime and you're golden.

5. Adopt a modern approach

Gone are the days when cold-calling and harassing people by phone was the way to get things done. Today, it's all about using the technology at your disposal to attract and engage candidates and clients. Email, WhatsApp, social media and so on – all fast replacing telephone communications for the purposes of recruitment outreach. There's still a place for the telephone, but it's taking a huge backseat to 21st century communications technology.

6. Learn the ways of the business

The better you understand your recruitment company, the better the position you'll be in to make things work. If you're right at the top, remain in close contact with employees at all levels. If you're part of a multi-department business, don't isolate yourself from what's happening elsewhere. Learn from your peers, take suggestions from your employees and get to know your business inside and out. Stay on top of the latest trends and ensure measures are in place to deal with any contingency you may face at any time.

7. Track your efforts

The fact that recruitment is a target-driven field makes this pretty self-explanatory. If you are setting targets and working towards them, it simply makes sense to track your efforts. This also means keeping a complete record of your failures – not just your successes. Over time, you'll produce an invaluable resource documenting your strengths, your failures and various opportunities for improvement. You'll also want to ensure every member of the team within your agency does likewise.

8. Get social

Far from a simple communication tool, social media has become a part of everyday life for hundreds of millions of people worldwide. It's the first thing they see in the morning, the last thing they check at night and something they instinctively turn to for information and entertainment. LinkedIn is the obvious port of call for professionals, but don't overlook the power and reach of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on. All of which can be used to boost your company's image, provide insights into what you do and even post the latest job advertisements. If done right, "behind the scenes" views into your business can attract applicants and really help you sell your company.

9. Turn off notifications

This forms part of the wider task of minimising distractions across the board. If you're constantly being distracted from whatever it is you're doing, those few seconds and minutes here and there quickly add up. Particularly if you're consulting with a client or a candidate, ensure ALL notifications across the board are silenced. There's nothing worse than feeling like your recruitment agent has better things to do than talk to you.

10. Stop screening out

It's not uncommon for recruitment agents to get somewhat carried out with the screening process. The more complex or demanding the role, the trickier it becomes to find the perfect candidate. As a rule of thumb, it's better to focus on the positives of each applicant. Focusing on the negatives will only every result in a long list of clients with a ton of faults identified during the screening process. When you focus on their strengths, the result is a far more appealing list of plus points. The candidates with the most plus points being those you then put forward for the job.

11. Get proactive about referrals

Referrals from friends, family and colleagues can be worth their weight in gold. The problem being that far too many recruitment agents take a wholly passive approach to referrals. Rather than waiting for them to fall into your lap, why not get proactive? Introduce some kind of incentive in the

workplace, wherein referrals translate to rewards. Encourage as many people as possible to send referrals your way, or to hand you the details of those they think might be interested in your services.

12. Use automation tools

As a general rule of thumb, anything that can be (effectively) automated these days probably should be. There are limits to the capabilities of automation tools, but they can nonetheless play an invaluable role in your everyday operations. Examples of which include scheduling tools that allow applicants to make their own appointments, email automation tools for newsletter distribution and automation of KPI tracking. Some tasks will always need your manual input and personality – others can be done faster, more consistently and at a lower cost with automation tools.

13. Take control of your reputation

Last but not least, your reputation will ultimately determine if and to what extent you succeed. Competition is far too ferocious to leave your reputation to its own devices. You need to know what's being said about you online, who's saying it and why. You also need to proactively focus on brand development and positive PR at all times. Encourage reviews and feedback, engage your audience on social media and ensure all complaints are dealt with – before the disgruntled party wreaks havoc on your image.

Conclusion

Recruitment is all about placing capable and qualified candidates in suitable positions. However, making this happen takes confidence, commitment and established sales acumen. If you can effectively sell yourself and the agency you work for, you'll be on your way to a successful career.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Fundamentals of Being a Great Recruiter by Steven Mostyn, 2016.*