



# UNIT-8

## How to Run a Recruiting Service Successfully

### Learning Outcomes

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

## Unit 8

### How to Run a Recruiting Service Successfully

Since we have already discussed each of the four key areas of recruitment practice, explaining in detail not only what to do but also how to do it. The quality of what you do, coupled with how much you do makes the difference between modest capability and significant success as a recruiter, in-house or external. There is a direct correlation in this business between effort and attainment – assuming a reasonable level of competence.

You'll learn the differentiators between an average and a great recruiter. Each market will have its own particular needs so you'll also need to overlay tools and techniques with this knowledge. This section is peppered with tips from successful recruiters or business owners who have built their (often large) businesses from scratch. You may recognize some of the tools from the previous section that we use in a different way here.

As you already know, you can start anywhere in the recruitment cycle, depending upon your market needs:

- candidate management;
- client acquisition;
- client strategy;
- Candidate attraction.

Your success as an all-round recruiter, whether working on the high street in a regional office or as a successful senior search practitioner, will depend upon working regularly in each of the four areas of the cycle appropriate to your personal business situation on a weekly basis at least.

If you do 80 per cent of the activities you will be successful; do 100 per cent and you will be in the top 20 per cent of the industry

#### **Developing key performance indicators**

First we look at your work levels and then how to plan your day so as to fit all the activity in – time being the one commodity you cannot increase!

## ACTIVITY LEVELS

In the recruitment industry activity – actions you are actually taking – can be seen as a key predictor of success. That is not to say raw activity without talent is all it takes to deliver success, but talent alone is not a sufficient criterion. You need to put both together. It's no accident in this industry that people who spend most time on the phone or in front of clients and candidates are the most successful. It is also no accident that when asked for a key piece of advice for recruiters some of our profiled industry gurus said: 'make more "calls" than anyone else'. Activity is really important.

If you have a target to achieve, it is important to develop a plan to achieve the number of placements needed to reach the target. For external recruiters the drive is likely to be revenue or margin-based, with measures on the pipeline-building activity needed to reach those revenue targets. For internal recruiters the emphasis may be on placements made, cost per hire and time from 'requisition raised' to 'job filled'.

These are the sorts of questions you might ask about your performance to explore where it might be improved:

- Can I generate more candidates?
- Can I generate more clients?
- Am I getting the best quality candidates?
- Can I improve my process?
- What opportunities for development are there in my recruitment process?
- Am I getting as much work done as I can in a day?
- What are my conversion ratios and drop-out rates like?

These can all become KPIs to drive up your delivery capability. We would encourage you to develop and use your own KPIs to support your drive for improved overall performance or maybe even your ability to get better results with less effort. If you fail to measure how you do your job, or to look at what you are really good at and what needs support or further development, then you are not taking responsibility for your own work.

If you know what you do well, and what it takes to meet your targets you are immediately in control of what you are doing and can predict your own business results. When you are having a difficult patch you can trace what needs to happen to change, and when things are going really well you won't miss the opportunity to explore why and what it is that underlies this success.

Artistic or scientific recruiters may have different feelings about KPIs. The true artistic are unlikely to pay much attention to these indicators and may also find them constraining. The artistic recruiters will prefer to do as much as they can, relying on their natural drive and creativity to achieve their goals. The artistic scientists will perhaps collate their KPIs weekly, retrospectively, to admire their strengths, especially if they are doing well! Those with more of a leaning towards the scientific artist style may use them to write a PDP (personal development plan) as well.

A scientist will review them a couple of times a day and live by them to help achieve his or her target. Either way, even extreme artists can, we hope, see some value in understanding how the recruitment process works, and how well we manage it, in order to improve on what we do.

## Measures to take

Below we set out some of the measures, or activity targets, which you may find helpful in developing an analysis of your work. Our general advice would be to keep it relatively simple. It's better to measure three things each week than to measure 40 occasionally when you get round to it, as those three things will build up a better picture of trends than the occasional 40

### **Plan...and then plan some more**

Spend at least fifteen minutes at the end of every day planning what you are going to do the following day, and about an hour on a Friday afternoon planning for the following week. Although it may sound like a complete drag, but being disciplined about this practice means you are less likely to forget anything (so fewer 3 am wake-ups); plus you'll feel really motivated heading into work in the morning knowing you can leap straight into work without thinking about what needs to be done.

### **Love your to-do lists**

This is the first part of the planning process.

You have three lists on the go at any one time. The first is a list of your top priorities (a maximum of three) you need to achieve that day. These priorities are both urgent and important and WILL get crossed off by the end of the day come hell or high water. The second is a longer list of things that are important but less urgent; they can get recycled on to the next day's plan if necessary. The last list consists of what you can call 'pipeline' work; longer-term projects that you need to keep chipping away at every week.

Studies show that people tend to overestimate what they can achieve in the short term and underestimate what they can achieve in the long term. So: make your first list short, and your last list longer and more ambitious.

### **Block out your time**

This is the second part of the planning process.

Take your lists and slot them into dedicated hour-long blocks on your calendar. You can use shorter blocks for lunch, meetings and travel to and from any off-site appointments. Put in an 'odds and sods' block towards the end of the day – this is for keeping on top of anything that gets thrown at you during the day that isn't super-urgent. Make sure that no matter what you've got on, you leave at least one block for progress towards your longer-term goals. Don't forget to block in some planning time at the end of the day, too. When you're done, your whole calendar should be solidly booked.

### **Don't be a slave to the email**

Check your emails at the beginning of the day when you first come in. If an email can be read and replied to in under two minutes, then do it right away. If it needs further investigation, flag it or file it and incorporate it into your existing plan – think critically about how urgent it actually is and don't get sucked into thinking you need to deal with it right away.

Next (get ready for this 'cause it's a big one): Turn Your Email Off. Close your browser too, if you don't actively need the internet for whatever you're doing. I know, scary. Don't worry; you can turn it on again in a couple of hours and those Miley Cyrus videos will wait. But email and the internet are such massive distractions – most studies suggest people waste around two hours of time every day on them. That's two hours you could spend at home with your kids.

Another great tip to help you get on top of your emails: send less to receive less. Think carefully before writing an email – would it be quicker and more effective to pick up the phone? Could you jot down a few points throughout the day and compose one email rather than several?

### **Don't multitask**

Studies show it's not an effective way to work. Instead, focus intensely on what you're doing for that block – you'll get into the flow of it and get through much more good quality work.

### **Schedule downtime**

The hour-long blocks mentioned earlier are actually 50-minute blocks. At the end of the 50 minutes of focused work, get up and get some time away from the computer screen - even if it's just staring at the jug while it boils. This is often when you'll have those 'a-ha' flashes of creative inspiration or solutions to problems you're working on, and it'll help to keep your energy levels up, too.

### **Protect your time**

Yes, you need to be flexible, and some days your plan is going to go up in flames. But you'll be a much more effective and valuable employee if you can learn to say no on occasion. Do you really need to be at that meeting? Would it actually be more efficient for your colleague to complete the project they've started on, rather than passing it on to you?

A benefit to being well-planned is a much clearer understanding of your priorities and workload, so you can communicate that to your colleagues and push back on demands on your time if necessary.

### **Make the KPIs relevant**

It's equally important of course to tailor what you measure to what you are measured on in your role. There is little point in measuring things that you are not measured on yourself. So if you work internally and you are measured on candidate attraction only, this is the key measure for you. There is little point in your measuring conversion rates, as although they are interesting from the business perspective they will not help you improve your results.

### **Task**

Complete your own performance measurements and design your own table to measure them on. Make sure they are aligned to what you will be measured on. Measure yourself for the next four weeks and see where there is an opportunity to develop your skills.

### **Managing Your Time**

This is not a book on time management and if you want to read more about that there are a wide range of books available. Here are some basic guidelines that work.

## Four key rules

The first thing, which you have already done, is to start at the right place. Work out what you are measured on and what you therefore should spend your time on. The key rules are:

- Work on what you are measured on.
- Allocate time to measured activities and be ruthless, keeping to it.
- Work nearest to the placement.
- Work all of the recruitment cycle each week.

## Divide up your day

Be ruthless about your day. Often working out what you are being paid an hour can help you focus on whether you want to spend that amount of money on that activity. Taking the view that each hour is an investment of £50, what will you happily spend that much money on? It may be a good investment to spend £50 going out for lunch or to the gym at lunchtime, as it will leave you recharged for the afternoon. Spending an hour desultorily surfing the net and the job boards for inspiration (almost every recruiter must do that from time to time) may not be such good value, as you feel no better afterwards, have sat at your screen too long and still have the afternoon to contend with. If you are not feeling inspired, go and get some fresh air and let the afternoon incubate away in your mind. That is to say, ask yourself what you should do this afternoon to best effect (this may appeal to the artistic!) and instead of trying to answer it immediately go out for a walk, window-shop, and pick up some lunch. When you come back and have eaten, you'll be surprised what might have popped into your head – or you scientists may feel re-invigorated to tackle that list you made!

Then allocate some blocks of core work time in your day when you cannot be interrupted, unless for a real crisis (there is a fire or a placement falling out). Make outgoing calls only and return incoming ones later unless, again they are business critical (client calling with an offer, candidate calling to accept). You might choose two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon with a further hour for returning calls, arranging interviews, doing database searches and general service to candidates and clients that is not about driving business through.

So your two hours are focused on:

- resourcing roles you are recruiting for;
- taking candidate and client feedback;
- prepping candidates and clients for interview and de-briefing;
- making new business calls;
- making business development calls to existing clients;

- arranging to meet candidates and clients;
- attracting new candidates;
- Taking job briefs/vacancies.

That leaves you two hours a day to do your administration and deal with unexpected things that happen: a new client rings in, in the afternoon, with four contract opportunities that he wants CVs on by tomorrow and your allotted time won't cover it; an old client drops by for a coffee; a fantastic candidate calls and wants to meet for a drink for some advice; or a candidate fails to get the job she really wanted (your client has chosen another of your candidates) and wants to talk through her career options now. Of course many recruiters work longer hours than this; that is your choice. When you first start the job you may need to put in more time.

### **Working Nearest The Placement**

It's surprising how easy it is to become diverted by activities that may not directly lead to a placement. Of course it's also important to work on activities that will lead to a placement in the long term. If you are in a specialist niche market almost all activity will lead to a placement at some point, as there are a finite level of people and companies. If however you work in a very broad market, you need to be much more careful about dealing with candidates you can never place or companies who are using you for a shortlist to assess their internal candidate.

The activity nearest the placement is the candidate's job acceptance, then the offer management, then the interview de-briefing and so on. Time tends to kill business in this industry, so the longer you leave it between stages, the slimmer the chances of success, particularly at a lower level.

### **Working The Recruitment Cycle**

You need to be working in all four areas consistently over the week. The temptation is to pick up a search or vacancy (or several) and to work on that until it is filled. Meanwhile, you ignore client acquisition. Even as an internal recruiter, if you are not out having conversations with potential clients in your business, when they come to recruit they will forget you are there and call their favorite external recruiter – they will certainly have one. The result is that you place all your roles and have nothing to work on, so need to start from scratch again.

Every week you need to devote some time to client acquisition and candidate attraction. These two activities are the engine room of the recruitment cycle. Either of them will kick off the recruitment process and move you towards a placement or a deal. So, set some time aside to undertake both of these activities each week. Think of it as £50 invested well every day in your future prosperity!

## Running A Search

If you are a search consultant and run several projects at one time, allocate a certain amount of time each day to each project. In this way, you won't come to do your status reporting to your client at the end of the week and find you have good progress on three searches but nothing on a fourth, because you've not planned your week well. If you make that mistake, don't berate your researcher; planning your activity is your responsibility! Mark Forster (2000) in *Get Everything Done and Still Have Time to Play* suggests setting an alarm timer and being ruthless about when it is time to move on.

There is an argument that the most successful recruiters are the ones who naturally do all the right activities all of the time, but within that they manage their time ruthlessly. Managing your time well – without becoming diverted on to tasks that don't lead to successful placements – is one of the hallmarks of the really top recruiters.

## Task

### Writing your plan

In this chapter we have focused on how to measure what you are doing and manage your time well. Now it's time to put that all together by developing your own business plan. We have earlier outlined the process to develop your plan. By now you should have completed all the activities you need to put the plan together.

You know:

- your goals or target;
- the gap you need to close;
- the external environment and what is relevant to you;
- your SWOT results;
- your strategy;
- the tactics you plan to employ;
- when you will measure and re-evaluate your plan (we suggest monthly);
- your own strengths and weaknesses and how to work with the strengths;
- how you work at your optimum;
- How to manage your day.

Write your plan including all the sections above. It does not need to be anything complicated. In fact, the simpler the better, but having a clear picture of what you are trying to achieve and how you plan to do so will really focus you on what you need to do on a daily basis. Once you have completed your plan, you may wish to share it with your manager or your partner – or pin it up on your wall if you are

a sole operator working from home. Keep it in your mind the whole time; it can be a powerful motivator to see how far you have come.

This section has all been about planning and preparation for what to do in your role as a recruiter. It has enabled you to explore your business more strategically and think about how to take your business forward to achieve what you want in your job. All of the extremely successful people in this book started in recruitment with a desk or a patch or a few people to recruit internally, and have built their businesses or employer brand from very little. The opportunity is there for you to do exactly the same.

### **Further Reading:**