



- a thinkpiece from pjb Associates

Personalising job recruitment for both clients and candidates – creating a quality experience

The web has revolutionised the way that job-seeking candidates can have access to vacancies and the way companies – the clients of recruitment agencies can display their employment needs. But, has the process of selecting candidates actually become any easier and more efficient? Are job-seekers effectively using their time find a job that meets their aspirations?

For both questions the answer is most likely to be - No. Think of the current scenario - a company or a recruitment agency posts a job online Thursday afternoon but by Monday morning it may have received perhaps three or four hundred applications if not more. Online submission of applications has encouraged job-seekers to become more speculative and perhaps focus on quantity rather than quality. It's easy to submit a CV online although it does require some effort to modify it to the needs of the specific job specification. However, when a candidate does send off their CV it will join the same pile of modified and unmodified CVs. This results in the company or recruitment agency spending less and less time looking at each job application as they go through the sifting process to try to identify suitable candidates. And, of course, the candidate rarely receives any feedback if they were unsuccessful.

Mass access

Increasingly, people will be turning to the web as the prime means of accessing information about jobs and the TV will also become another important means of accessing information through broadband TV that will create a personalised information-on-demand environment. Personalised job information is already starting to be pushed out to mobile devices via SMS. With a few key presses from a mobile phone it will be possible to send a CV that is already stored online remotely. In fact, several versions could be stored remotely enabling the candidate to select the one that is most appropriate for the job application.

OK, companies do have ways of reducing speculative job applications. They may insist on filling in a paper-based application form or an online application form. It's difficult to assess the impact of such a process on the quality of applications. However, it's certainly a frustrating exercise for candidates and perhaps does not encourage them to think that they are applying for a job in a 21st century company.

Discrimination

In many countries there are strict laws and procedures that job recruiters need to follow when selecting candidates. For example, in the UK, job-seekers are protected from being treated differently because of their sex or marital status during **all** parts of the recruitment process under the Sex Discrimination Act. Similarly, under the Race Relations Act people must not be discriminated against at **any** point when applying for a job because of their race, nationality or ethnic origins.

Quality Experience

So how can the whole process of job match-making be turned into a quality experience for both the candidate and the client as well as have procedures in place that ensure the job selection process is objective and compliant with current and possible future legislation?

Certainly, some software tools are already available that help to recruiters manage the whole process of dealing with a job application. However, few appear to exist to improve and enhance the process for job-seekers – that really create a quality experience for them. Is this important for companies and recruitment agencies? The answer should be - Yes. Job flexibility will increasingly become the norm – creating a continuing flow of job movements. Companies that can really show they care as much for their potential employees as well as their existing employees are more likely to attract the better candidates.

How can this be done?

Create a situation that allows potential candidates to easily self-select whether they might be suitable for the job on offer and provide them with on-going automated help and advice - to a point where they either opt-out of the application process because they have been able to identify their skill deficiencies or they continue to apply. This can be done by better utilising the many hours already spent devising the job specification and articulating it into a series of questions that will enable the candidate to better understand essential criteria for the job and indicate whether they have such skills and competences. It also adds more structure and objectivity to the selection process and is also likely to change the behavioural habits of candidates as they will know that there is a legal record of all their answers.

Simple to use, flexible software tools already exist to enable this process to be done quickly without any programming expertise and easily adding sets of questions that might have previously been prepared for another job. They can be accessed online or through a telephone call by the candidates. In addition, these tools also enable an audit trail to be created not only for the candidate, but also for the company – who will then be able to show that they have been compliant with discrimination laws – at least in this part of the selection process.

Anonymously aggregating the results for one type of job could also provide useful data for training companies helping them to better understand training needs. Unsuitable candidates could opt-in to receive further information of training opportunities. If it is proving to be difficult to get suitable candidates, the job criteria could be modified and “rejected” candidates who were OK up to a specific point could be invited to re-apply again – thus filtering can be modified at any stage of the process.

Critically, exceptional people can be rapidly identified and be fast-tracked through the selection process before they might be “lost” to another company.

Gaining a competitive advantage

Overall, by using these software tools, the process of applying for a job and selecting suitable candidates becomes a more engaging and interactive experience. It not only helps to save time on the selection process for the company but also enables candidates to better self-select which jobs they should apply for, as well as getting automated feedback of their strengths and weaknesses for a specific job – something they rarely get when they actually apply for a job – never mind part way through the process.

As well as the potential cost saving benefits for companies and recruitment agencies it will also give them a competitive advantage over their rivals – as they will be able to select appropriate staff more efficiently and effectively and from potentially higher quality candidates who will be attracted to this interactive process.

This paper - a thinkpiece - has been produced by Peter J. Bates, Senior Partner of pjb Associates. The aim of this thinkpiece is to stimulate discussion and thinking around these emerging issues. If you think that pjb Associates can further help your company or organisation better understand these issues and the software tools available please contact us.

pjb Associates, 52 St Andrews Way, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3DZ, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 1353 667973 Fax +44 709 230 8016
Email: pjb@pjb.co.uk <http://www.pjb.co.uk>