

Ask the experts: Recruitment without regrets

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David Glassman, business coach and visiting fellow at Cranfield Business School

“Arrange an interview process that is in three stages, on three occasions, at three different locations with three different interviewers or groups

“At interview number one, pass out lots of information. At interview two, the candidate should give a presentation to you, and your board and sales representatives, that contains the information you have given plus whatever the candidate’s energy and research can add. Interview three is the ‘beer test’. The candidate goes to the pub with the team, for whom it is not a social. Fair game as, for senior staff – particularly sales professionals – social awareness is crucial.

“The ideal is a shortlist of no more than three candidates, all of whom would seem to be able to function successfully in the role. The outcome of medicals, reference checks and psychometric tests – and you must do all of these – should be assessed before ‘the personal chemistry’ sways the final decision.

“Show professionalism when you make the offer by recording the outcome of the inevitable negotiations in contractual form. Do it quickly. Make the chosen candidate’s first day, first week and first month special through the induction programme and your behaviour. Make them realise how lucky they are to work for you. Then continue to reinforce that sentiment.”

Jon Wood, managing director of CBSL People

“The key is to know what you are looking for. If you don’t, when you interview your shortlist of applicants, you will have 10 different conversations with 10 different people. Then, when you take someone on, that person will be disappointed because the job was not the one talked about at the interview.

“A lot of people get into trouble because they don’t know why they are doing the interview. They feel that the decision should be based on gut feel and chemistry.

“You need to prepare five or six key questions that are relevant to the role, including an objective question about what the person has done in the past. You need to have some method of scoring the candidates’ answers so you can benchmark them. Finally, and most importantly, get references – ideally, a telephone reference from the candidate’s line manager.”

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