

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

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### ABSTRACT

The human resources of most organisations are properly viewed as their most important asset. The success and failures of the organisations are largely determined by the calibre of its workforce (starting with management) and by the efforts they exert. Therefore the policies and programmes an enterprise adopts to meet its manpower needs are of vital significance.

The employment function of a personnel programme encompasses the areas of human resources planning, recruitment, selection, placement and changes of employment status such as transfers, promotions, layoffs and discharges.

**Key Words:** calibre, manpower, placement, transfers, layoff

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## Introduction

A labour market is a geographical area within which employers recruit workers and workers seek employment. Beach (1980) says that the place where the forces of supply and demand interact is the labour market. It is unusually thought to consist of a central place or places and the surrounding areas in which persons can change their places of employment without changing their places of residence. When management decides to go into the labour market to obtain additional employees, it finds that it operates vastly differently from product or financial markets (Robb and Warren D., 1998). A labour market tends to be unstructured for the most part. The procedures which a company recruits workers and the methods by which workers go about obtaining jobs, are highly variable. The process is not necessarily channelled through a public or a private employment agency. Laws and regulations governing the process are of a very minimal nature. In fact one looks at the process from the standpoint of workers seeking jobs, the whole procedure seems rather haphazard and catch-as-catch-can. Some job seekers obtain employment through friends and relatives, others through their trade unions and others through employment agencies. Also pure chance, plays a large part in determining whether one gets a job in plant A or in plant B.

## Background to the study

Mahey, Salaman and Storey (1998) state that a labour market is characterized by a great diversity of wage rates for the same occupations. If one were to examine occupational wage survey statistics compiled by a Bureau of Labour Statistics for any of a number of major cities in a country, he would find the highest wage paid for an occupation being in the nature of two to two-and-one-half times that of the lowest. This variation in wages for the same kind of work is caused by many factors. Principal ones are differences among the employers in ability to pay, productivity and management attitude toward wage levels. Certain non-wage factors such as greater job security, may mean that a firm that pays only modest wages may still attract and hold the labour it requires. For in the labour market (except for very high level talent) it is the buyer (employer) and not the seller (worker) who establishes the wage level.

Lack of labour mobility is still another characteristic of a labour market. An employee generally will not resign from his job in company A to take a job in company B for 15 cents more per hour.

Non-wage factors play a large role in determining the attractiveness of jobs. Beach (1980) enumerates non-wage factors as job security, employee benefits, quality of supervision and the friendliness of co-workers. Employees do not have ready access to information on wages and non-wage factors at the various employers in a labour market. Unless conditions are very bad at one's place employment or unless the person knows conditions are very good at another company, she will tend to stay put.

The labourforce is not fixed and unchanging in size. Annually, young people enter the labour market and the older workers leave through retirement and disability. In a given community, there may be a net in – migration or out – migration caused by a complex of factors. The principal is the availability of decent jobs. Also the pool of people who are available and looking for work expansion and contracts over time. In times of high demand for labour, people who would not ordinarily seek employment are retired people or certain house – wives for example. However, in times of low demand, many people may withdraw from the labour force. Those who withdraw may include persons with very limited skills and those who have suffered protracted unemployment and who have become discouraged about the job prospect.

The experience of companies that have built new plants or facilities in towns where one would ordinarily expect they would find difficulty in obtaining sufficient labour, has often revealed that a good reputation as a place to work, can exercise a powerful pull to draw people from great distances to obtain employment. In-plant training programmes for previously untrained people can frequently supply the necessary skills.

### **Process of recruitment and selection**

The aim of recruitment and selection process is to obtain at minimum cost, the number and quality of employees required to satisfy the manpower needs of the company. There are three stages of recruitment and selection process and these are:

- Defining requirements – preparing job descriptions and job specifications, deciding terms and conditions of employment.

- Attracting candidates – this involves reviewing and evaluating alternative sources of securing applicants internally and externally by either advertising or using employment agencies etc.
- Selecting candidates – sifting applications, interviewing, testing, assessing candidates, offering employment, obtaining references and making follow-up to find out how new employees have settled down at new places of work.

### Defining Requiring

The number and categories of the required manpower are usually specified in the recruitment programme that is derived from the human resources plan (Beach, 1980). In addition, there will be demands for replacements or for new jobs to be filled in. These demands should be verified for the purposes of justifications. In large organisations, there are forms for requisitioning staff. If a requisition form is not available, then the job has to be analysed and a job description and job specification prepared. It is also necessary to establish the terms and conditions of employment at this stage. Job specification encompasses, qualifications, training and skills, experience and age.

### Attracting Candidates

Attracting candidates is primarily a matter of identifying, evaluating and using the most appropriate sources of applicants (Armstrong, 1992). However, in cases where difficulties in attracting candidates are being met, it may be necessary to carry out a preliminary study of the factors that are likely to attract or repel candidates – the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as an employer.

Mabey, Salaman and Storey (1998) say that the analysis of strengths and weaknesses should cover such matters as the national or local reputation of the company, pay, fringe benefits and working conditions, security of employment, opportunities for education and training etc. These require to be compared with competition in order that a list of what are in effect, selling-points can be drawn up as in a marketing exercise in which the preferences of potential customers are compared with the features of the product in order that those aspects which are likely to provide the most appeal to the consumers can be emphasized. Candidates are, in a

sense, selling themselves but they are also buying what the company has to offer. If in the latter sense, the labour market is a buyer's market, then the company which is selling itself to candidates must study their needs in relation to what it can provide.

The aim of the study might be to prepare a better image of the organization for use in advertisements, brochures or interviews. Or it might have the more constructive aim of showing where the organization needs to improve as an employer if it is to attract more or better candidates and to retain those selected. The study could make use of an attitude survey to obtain the views of existing employees. One such survey mounted in an engineering company wishing to attract science graduates, established that the main concern of the graduates was that they would be able to use and develop the knowledge they had gained at the university. As a result, special brochures were written for each major discipline giving technical case histories of the sort of work graduates carried out. These avoided the purple passages used in some brochures (which the surveys established were distinctly off-putting to most students) and proved to be most useful recruitment aid. Strong measures were also taken to ensure that research managers made proper use of the graduates they recruited.

### Research Methodology

Methodology is defined in two major ways. In one form, methodology is identical to a research model employed by a researcher in a particular project including basic knowledge related to the subject and research methods and the framework employed in a particular context (Lathor, 1992). In this sense, every investigation has a distinct approach and every researcher employs his/her approach which might vary from study to study. Another definition relates to the nature of approach to a theoretical and more abstract context and perceives it in conjunction with distinctive undimensional and mutually exclusive theoretical principles (Westhuizen and Ahrahams, 2002).

Here, an approach offers the research principles which are related closely to a distinct paradigm translated clearly and accurately down to guidelines on acceptable research practices. The approach is determined not by the research model but rather by principles of research entailed in a paradigm. The approaches that result from this definition are the qualitative approach and the

quantitative approach. As this study applies qualitative approach, below it is going to be discussed briefly.

### **Qualitative Approach**

The study which is under review is a qualitative or case study one. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding, based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. Qualitative research is invariably conducted in the field and for this reason, it is sometimes referred to as field research (Dooley, 1992). Guba and Lincoln (1992) say that qualitative research is sometimes referred to as case study research.

This means that the qualitative researchers, study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and usual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

### **Sources of Data and Sampling Method**

The study employed two sources of data collection and these are primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources included relevant academic journals, text books and publications by employment agencies. The primary sources involved the use of well-structured questionnaires administered on 240 randomly selected respondents from the civil service, manufacturing companies and Harare City Council. It is often said that the success or failure of an organization is largely caused by the calibre of its workforce. To this end, the study was intended to find out the policies and programmes the three organisations referred to above put in place to boost their operations successfully. The data collected were analysed with the aid of qualitative methods which included the use of tables and frequency distribution.

## Sources of candidates

First consideration should be given to internal candidates, although some organisations with powerful equal opportunity policies (often local authorities) insist that all internal candidates should apply for vacancies on the same footing as external candidates. If there are no people available within the organization, the main sources of candidates, as described below, are advertising and outsourcing to consultants or agencies although the internet is being increasingly used, especially for graduates.

## Advertising

Armstrong (1992) says that advertising is the most obvious method of attracting candidates. Nevertheless, the first question to ask is whether an advertisement is really justified. This means looking at the alternative sources mentioned above and confirming, preferably on the basis of experience, that they will do. Consideration should be given as to whether it might be better to use an agency or a consultant. When making the choice, refer to the three criteria of cost, speed and the likelihood of providing good candidates. The objectives of an advertisement should be to:

- attract attention – it must compete for the interest of potential candidates against other employers;
- create and maintain interest – it has to communicate in an attractive and interesting way information about the job, the company, the terms and conditions of employment and the qualifications required;
- stimulate action – the message needs to be conveyed in a manner that will not only focus people's eyes on the advertisement but also encourage them to read to the end, as well as prompt a sufficient number of replies from good candidates.

To achieve these aims, it is necessary to carry out the actions set out below:

### a. Analysis of the requirements, likely sources and job features

First, it is necessary to establish how many jobs have to be filled and when. Then turn to the job description and person's specification to obtain information on the responsibilities, qualifications and experience required.

The next step is to consider where suitable candidates are likely to come from; the companies, jobs or education establishments they are in; and the parts of the country where they can be found.

Finally, define the terms and conditions of the job (pay and benefits) and think about what the job or the organization is likely to attract good candidates so that the most can be made of these factors in the advertisement. Consider also what might put them off. For example, the location of the job, in order that objections can be anticipated. Analyse previous successes or failures to establish what does or does not work.

#### **b. Selecting Candidates**

After the receipt of applications for a job, what follows is the sifting of these applications. Some organisations send standard acknowledgement letters but others (in order to cut on cost and to save time) go straight into short-listing of applicants. Suitable candidates are called for interviews. The unsuccessful applicants will only be notified accordingly after the offer and acceptance for the successful applicant will have been received.

#### **c. Interviewing arrangements**

Most organisations issue official application forms to the interviewees. These forms contain details which the interviewing panel would use during the time of the interview to rate applicants.

#### **d. Interview**

The purpose of the interview is to obtain and assess information about a candidate. It involves processing and evaluating evidence about the capabilities of a candidate in relation to the job specification. Some of the evidence will be on the application form, but more will be obtained from selection tests or references. Good interviewers know what they are looking for and how to

set about finding it. Finally, they have a method for recording their analyses of candidates against a set of assessment criteria.

#### **e. Assessment Criteria**

The criteria for assessing candidates and the method of recording assessments are standardized for regular recruitment exercises. Some organisations have standard forms they use for assessing applicants. Members of the panel individually complete these forms and discuss the rating just after the interviews in order to come up with the successful candidates.

#### **f. Psychometric tests**

The purpose of selection test is to provide an objective means of measuring individual's abilities or characteristics. These involve the application of standard procedures to subjects which enable their responses to be quantified. The differences in the numerical scores represent differences in abilities or behaviour. A good test has the following characteristics:-

It is a sensitive measuring instrument which discriminates well between subjects.

It has been standardized on a representative and sizeable sample of the population for which it is intended so that any individual's score can be interpreted in relation to that of others.

It is reliable in the sense that it always measures the same thing. A test aimed at measuring a particular characteristic, such as intelligence, should measure the same characteristics when applied to different people at the same time.

It is valid in the sense that it measures the characteristic which the test is intended to measure. Thus, an intelligence test should measure intelligence and not simply verbal facility. The main types of psychometric tests used for selection are intelligence tests, aptitude and attainment tests and personality tests.

#### **g. Offers and References**

After the interviewing and testing procedure has been completed, a provisional decision to make an offer by telephone or in writing can be made. This is normally subject to satisfactory reference on medical examination and the candidate should be told that these will be taken up.

## h. References

The purpose of a reference is to obtain in confidence factual information about a prospective employee and opinions about his character and suitability for a job. Factual information is straight forward and essential. It is simply necessary to confirm the nature of the previous job, the period and the candidate if he/she has passed the medical examination required for pension and life assurance purposes.

### Background investigation

An investigation into a promising candidate's background is too often overlooked by the employing organisation. Armstrong (1998) states that it requires a little time and money, but the trouble is generally well worth the effort. Previous employers and school officials can often provide valuable insights into the applicant's personality and behavior. Because of what is often spoken, the best guide to what a person will do in the future is what he has done in the past, it assists the carefully employing manager to examine this past.

How then should the background information be obtained? There exist four sources and these are school and college officials, previous employers, character references supplied by the applicant and other sources such as neighbours of the applicant, the retail credit bureau, police etc. The above four sources are to be briefly discussed hereunder:

#### a. School and College officials

If a person has graduated from a high school within the last five to six years, it is advisable to contact the school headmaster/principal/guidance counselor to obtain information on attendance record, grade point average, rank in graduating class, motivation, emotional adjustment and other impressions. Similar data can be elicited from college professors and departmental chairmen.

#### b. Previous Employers

The employing organisation can carry out reference checks through phoning or writing managers of the organisations the applicant previously worked for. Previous employers can volunteer information regarding quantity and quality of work produced, cooperativeness, dependability and

relations with fellow-workers and supervisors. This provides a good opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information the applicant has given.

**c. Character references supplied by the applicant**

This is generally unreliable for a person does not always write things against himself or herself. In addition, personal friends of the applicant have usually not been in a position actually to observe the work habits of the individual. They know him “yes” but not necessarily as a worker in the work environment.

**d. Other sources**

The employing organisation can also get the background information from other sources like the applicant’s neighbours, retail credit burueau, police and so on. Most employing organisations refer the new recruits to the police to get clearance before appointing an applicant expressly.

**Responsibility of Line Management**

Line management plays a key role in an employee-hiring programme. Not only does the line manager or supervisor make the initial decision to add someone to the payroll, but he or she conducts the final selection interview, at which point the candidate who has been sent to him from the personnel department can be accepted or rejected. Beach (1980) says that line or operating departmental managers are held responsible for the successful and efficient operation of their units. Accordingly, they must have a say in the selection and placement of workers in their departments. The calibre of their workforce virtually affects the success of their efforts. The personnel department performs very valuable services for line management by recruiting, testing and interviewing job applicants. Normally it chooses the individual it feels is best qualified to fit the particular work situation. This person is then sent to the departmental manager or supervisor for final selection interview and decision.

There is still another reason for involving the prospective supervisor in this hiring process. Employment is a two-way street. Not only does the company have a right to reject applicants but also candidates have the right to interview a future boss to decide whether they would like to work for that person.

## Confirming the offer

Confirming the offer is the final stage in the selection procedure of employment after satisfactory references have been obtained and the candidate has passed the medical examination required for pension and life assurance purposes.

### i. contracts of Employment

Individual contracts of employment must satisfy the provisions of the Labour laws (e.g. Zimbabwe Labour Act of 1985 Chapter 28:01). Contracts will include a statement of the capacity in which the person is employed and the name or job title of the individual to whom he/she is responsible. They will also include the details of pay, allowances, hours of work, leave and pension arrangements and refer employees to relevant company policies, procedures and work rules. Other information to be included in the contract are:-

- duration of sickness payment;
- deduction of national insurance benefits;
- termination of employment because of continued illness;
- notification of illness (medical certificate);
- length of notice due to and from employee;
- grievance and disciplinary procedures of work rules; and
- employer's right to vary terms of the contract subject to proper notification having been given.

### j. Induction

It is the process of receiving and welcoming new members of staff on joining the organization. It is when basic information is imparted to these new staff members so that they settle down quickly and happily. Induction has three aims and these are:-

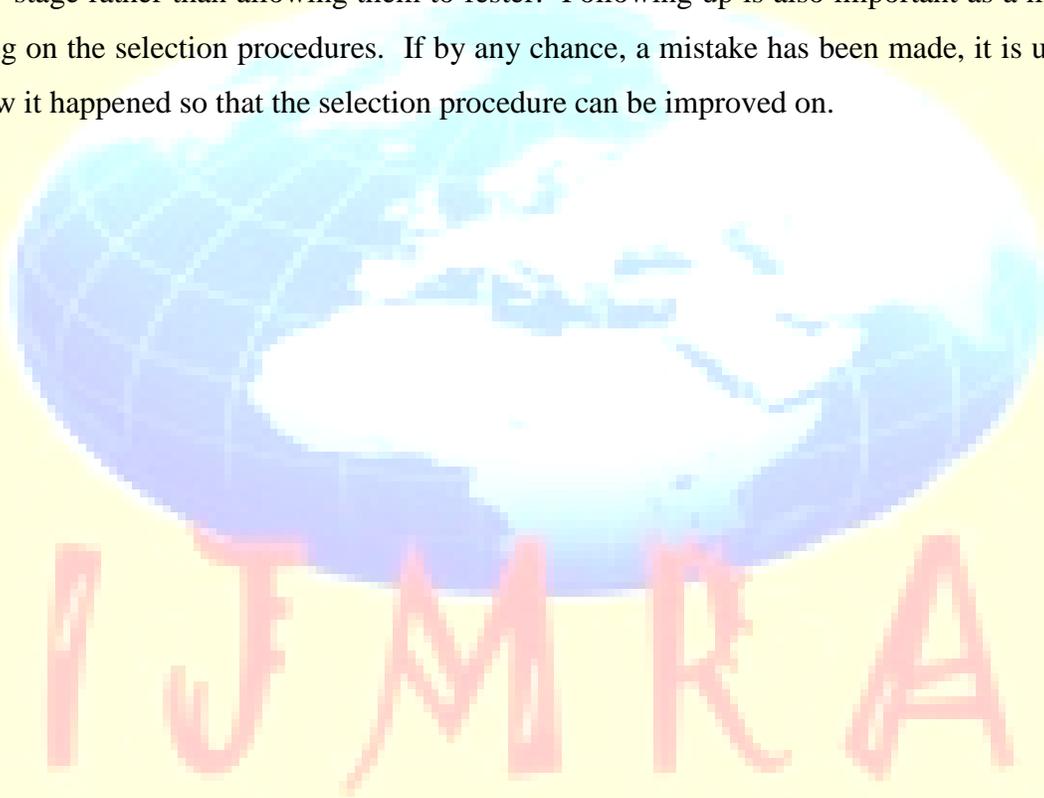
- to smoothen the preliminary stages when everything is likely to be strange and unfamiliar to the starter;
- to establish quickly a favourable attitude to the company in the mind of the new member so that he/she is more likely to stay;

- to obtain effective output from new employee in the shortest possible time.

Provision of employee handbook is useful for this purpose.

### **Conclusion**

It is essential to follow-up newly engaged employees to ensure that they have settled in and to check on how well they are doing. If they are any problems, it is much better to identify them at an early stage rather than allowing them to fester. Following up is also important as a means of checking on the selection procedures. If by any chance, a mistake has been made, it is useful to find how it happened so that the selection procedure can be improved on.



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