

PRINCIPA ALLIANCE – *People Working Together to Build a Better Business*

PEOPLE

Victory In The Battle For Talent – Part 1

It's no secret that one of the greatest strengths any business can have is its team of people. They are the critical link between your customers, and you and they are the ones who ultimately determine whether your business will succeed or not.

And frustratingly, one of the most common catch cries of managers today is “we can't find good people” or “we can't hold onto our good people.” Why is that? One place to look for answers is your recruiting process. It's amazing how little time many employers allocate to bringing new team members into their business, when the right people are such a pivotal part of the very success of the business.

Even more astonishing is the little amount of time invested in really training them, helping them understand the core values of the business, what is expected of them and the role they will play in your organization (not just the tasks they will perform, but their real role in the business).

Your people are a huge part of your UVP (unique value proposition) – don't leave your recruiting process to chance

This article focuses on the first stage of the process – attracting great candidates and exciting them enough to really want to be on your team.

We will address the induction and training components of the process in later articles in *The Consulting Accountant*.

Take a good look at the type of recruitment ad you're running, and your employment process.

If it comes close to the example below, and you're not getting the results you'd like to get – then it's time for a makeover.

The 'Standard' Recruiting Process – Long Overdue For a Makeover:

Here's how the 'normal' process flows:

1. When a vacancy arises, a member of your administration or office team is given the task of running an ad (usually dominated by the costs associated with running it in the local newspaper).
2. The ad will often look something like this:

Senior Accountant

Jo-Blo and Company, a progressive accountancy firm in Nth Sydney has a vacancy for a qualified senior accountant. Experience in the areas of (etc) is required and some supervisory experience is desired. Jo-Blo offers competitive salaries and opportunity for promotion. Please apply in writing to PO Box 9999. Applications close on March 3rd 2002.

3. As the applications roll in, they're sorted into no chance, possibly and maybes (generally there are not too many to get excited about) and a series of interviews are scheduled – usually for no longer than ½ - 1 hr each.
4. One of the partners or business owners meets with the candidates and asks them a series of predictable questions about their employment history, their career goals, and their strengths and weaknesses.
5. From there, you might run a second round of interviews with the short listed candidates (assuming, of course, you've been lucky enough to get more than 2 possible candidates responding).
6. A decision is made, and the candidate is offered the position, and may, or may not accept. Let's assume s/he does.
7. New employee starts and is shown to his/her desk. The necessary paperwork is completed to get on the payroll etc.
8. The new employee will probably meet with the business managers on the first morning and will be given a run down on some key business policies and procedures.
9. There may be a 'guide' or mentor who shows the new team member around for the first few days, and of course, the new person is told that your 'door is always open'.
10. The new employee rolls up his/her sleeves and gets started right away. (You're very busy, indeed - that's why you hired them, right?).
11. The new team member asks questions when s/he doesn't know something, and will learn about how the business works from colleagues and observations.
12. Eventually, the new person will understand what's expected and required to 'fit into' your organization, and will settle into a routine and become one of the team.

Often, new people don't perform at the level you'd hoped they would – sure they might get the job done, but that's it. This is pretty much the same less-than-desirable employment process that is followed by hundreds of thousands of business owners every day.

It's little wonder so many of them get the same less-than-desirable results.

If you want to attract dynamic, innovative, top-performers to your business, then doesn't it stand to reason that your initial interactions with them should be exactly that? Dynamic, innovative and standing apart from the 50 or so other ads for the same position in the same types of newspaper columns.

Your 5-Step Process for Attracting a New Level of Candidates

Step 1 – Define Your Needs Carefully and Clearly

Decide exactly what sort of person you want to attract to your business. Are they self-starters, interested in life-long learning, bright, articulate, creative, dependable, honest? Make a list of the things that are very important to you and of those that are intolerable – such as dishonesty, politicking, self-interest etc.

You'll notice we didn't suggest you start with the requirements for the position you're filling. There's a very good reason for that. We believe wholeheartedly that an organization's culture is the blueprint for its ultimate success. For that reason, we suggest that you first find a fit for your culture, and then look for or develop the skills you require to perform the tasks. **Hire Attitude, Develop Skills** is the hiring mantra we use at Principa.

Having said that, the next step is to determine what the person will be doing in your organization. Leave nothing out. Then prioritize these activities from the most important to the least important. To perform those activities, what skills are required? What degree of skill is necessary? Is specialist knowledge or previous training required, or is "on-the-job" training better for your needs?

The main point is that you need to know exactly what sort of person you need in terms of job output and personal characteristics. You're looking for a fit for both culture and output requirements.

The Consulting Accountant has ready-to-use position descriptions for a Business Development Consultant or Business Coach. You'll find those in the Premium Content section of the website.

Step 2 - Excite Them With Your Advertisement

The Headline Is The Ad For The Ad

The same basic principles of advertising apply for your Want Ads – irrespective of whether you're trying to sell a product, a service, or the appeal of working in your business. And that's exactly what a Vacancy or a Want Ad is doing – selling your business, selling the promise of the truly positive experience people will have by working with you.

THE CAREER OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME FOR A PASSIONATE, INNOVATIVE AND TALENTED BUSINESS SYSTEMS WRITER

You're ready for a truly exciting career move and are looking for a way you can make difference as opposed to simply having a job.

You're passionate about business consulting, you're experienced in business writing and are excited by the prospect of helping Small and Medium Enterprise businesses achieve real performance excellence. If so, this role could be for you – if not, you won't need to read on.

As a Business Systems Writer, you have exceptional writing skills, an editor's eye for detail and an excellent understanding of business processes. You have extensive business consulting and/or business writing experience, plus the ability to research, analyze and evaluate the applicability of core subject data before turning your creative genius loose on it.

You thrive on tight deadlines, can handle multiple projects and you are able to solve problems easily. You're driven by your achievement of personal goals and you are prepared to work long and hard to carry projects through to the end – on schedule and on budget. You believe in lifetime learning as much as we do.

You'll be working with Principa. We are headquartered in Reno, Nevada USA and have offices in Brisbane, Australia. Our clients are situated throughout the Asia-Pacific region, the North Americas and Europe.

As a key member of our *Content and Systems Development Group*, based in either of our Brisbane, Australia, or Reno, Nevada offices, you will be responsible for creating content and integrating 3rd party resources into our structured business consulting systems.

Variety plays a key part of your role and some of your responsibilities will include: writing and editing online content, articles and newsletters, creating marketing materials, conducting research and working to help develop management, marketing and consulting systems for our accounting clients and for their SME business clients. You will also play a role in communicating with our clients to determine their needs and ensure they are achieving the desired results through our product offerings.

There is opportunity for travel with this role. Your salary will be in line with your experience – we want only to hire the best, and we're prepared to make the necessary investment to see that we do. Ideally, you will be available for an immediate start.

Visit our website to review our business mission and vision. If your core values are aligned with ours, and you can be as excited about what we do as we are, take the next step and impress us with your application. If it's what we're looking for, you'll win a place on our high performing team. A team that prides itself on being the best we can be and having fun doing it.

Call us now on <insert telephone number> and be prepared to tell us over with why you should meet with us to further explore this extraordinary opportunity.

Principa
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Creators of The Consulting Accountant
www.consultingaccountant.com

Employers today face a different climate to those of days gone by when jobseekers were grateful for any job they could get. These days candidates are interviewing you as much as you're interviewing them. When you consider it that way, how do you think you stack up?

Above is an example of an ad we ran recently at Principa when we were hiring a Business Systems Writer. We received 67 applications from a \$50 online placing. Yes, you read correctly, we spent just \$50 to place this ad, and received 67 applications – and of those the overall quality of 40 of those candidates was outstanding.

We received expressions of interest from PhD's, attorney's, experienced business consultants, qualified journalists, self-professed marketing gurus. We even had a prominent politician's 'spin doctor' put up his hand.

And not only that, our candidates came from all over the world (and were qualified to work in both countries we operate in) – so the pool of experience we had to choose from was extraordinary.

So what made this ad different from the dozen or so others that were in the same industry, requiring much the same skills and experience?

Firstly, the expectations of a member of our team are clearly spelled out.

Secondly, the ad demonstrates that the work will be interesting – that this is not going to be 'just a job'.

And the third thing, in a word, is *passion*. This ad oozes with the excitement our group feels about doing what they do.

Incidentally, team members who perform much the same role wrote this ad. It's interesting to see how they feel about the work they do, isn't it? And as was our intention, we hired another one just like them – talented, passionate and committed to upholding our core values and delivering real quality to our clients. The positive spiral effect you can achieve when you shake things up just a little bit is amazing.

Step 3 – Begin With The End In Mind. Start The Process From The Very First Contact

Why wait till another round of standard-issue résumés arrives in the mail? Does your candidate's ability to create a résumé really have anything to do with the type of work s/he'll be doing with you?

One way to stand out from your competitors, and to see what stuff your candidates are made from, is to have a pre-recorded answering machine message waiting for their call. That message will deliver the instructions for their next step. This is a great way to see how the candidate thinks 'on their feet' and will also save you time – and help to weed out those candidates whom you really wouldn't want to put in front of your clients.

You'll have one of four responses –

- Your candidate will quickly hang up and call back again when they've composed an appropriate response. This is fine – it shows they're willing to be prepared before acting.
- Your candidate will launch confidently into why they should be given an opportunity to meet with the team. This shows how well they can think on their feet, and how they might perform in similar situations when dealing with your clients. In the real world, we don't always get an opportunity to prepare ourselves first.
- Your candidate will hang up and never call back. This is part of the screening process and is a good thing. If a candidate is neither confident enough nor prepared to leave you a recorded message, they are generally neither interested enough nor suitable to work with your clients and your team.

- Your candidate will leave a stammering, disjointed and generally unpolished message. Again, this is a valuable part of the screening process. Do you want people on your team who are unable to communicate clearly with your clients when caught off guard?

Step 4 - Leverage Your Time and Differentiate Your Firm – Both At Once

There's little doubt that one of the most frustrating things about recruiting is how much of your precious time is invested (dare we say wasted) in screening and interviewing unsuitable candidates.

Steps one and two of this process will go a long way towards helping you to eliminate unsuitable candidates well before the interview stage, and step three makes sure you get the biggest bang for your money – time wise.

Rather than bringing your candidates in one at a time, why not hold a single information session where you bring them all in together, provide an overview of your company and the position they're applying for, enable them to meet your team, and have the opportunity to observe them in action as they mingle with people they have not met before. After all, isn't that exactly what will be required of them when they become a member of (and an advocate for) your firm?

If their role is one that will involve public speaking or delivering workshops or information sessions to your clients, then have them get up in front of the group and deliver a 10-minute speech about anything they want to. We usually provide them with a set of topics we'd like them to address, such as: *"If I could change one thing in the world it would be..."* or *"The most memorable thing I've ever experienced is..."* or *"The most influential person in my life is..."*. It's a neat way to see how they operate, and to learn a bit about them in the process.

Not only that, it shows your candidates in a very clear way, that you're not a 'run-of-the-mill' business and that you're willing to do different things to get different results. If your target candidate is an innovative, talented and passionate person, this process will undoubtedly pique their interest in you.

Perhaps even more importantly, it's a huge time saver for you. You get to meet all your prospective candidates at once, you get to see them interacting with your team, and you have an opportunity to see how they might perform in a work-like situation. All of this in one 3-4 hour session! Have your team take notes throughout the session and have your candidates leave their CV or résumé as they leave. You're now armed with all the information you need to narrow your choice to a couple of qualified finalists.

Step 5 – Set Them Up For Success. Have Your Team Do The Hiring

Picture this.

You've just announced to your existing team members that you've filled the vacancy. You give them some background information on the successful candidate – prior work history, the things that impressed you, a start date etc. Then you leave and expect them to all get along famously when their new colleague comes on board. But in reality, it isn't always that simple. People are different; they have different personalities, different values, and different levels of skill. It's difficult enough to get a group of individuals to work together as a team, let alone thrusting them together and expecting them to work like a well-oiled business machine.

Teams who self select have the highest probability of success. So why not empower the people who will be working with your new team member to select him/her? It's pretty obvious when you think about it – at this stage of the process, you only have candidates who have the necessary qualities to fill your position. Empowering your team will give them the responsibility to find a good fit for the team. It gives them a sense of responsibility to ensure the new team member is successful and equips them with a valuable new skill.

Try it, it really does work.

Join the Principa Alliance or Work With a Principa Alliance Member:

If your Business Advisor is a member of the Principa Alliance they have business growth protocols and resources especially tailored for small and mid-sized businesses. Contact them today to learn how they can help you grow a more profitable business.

To learn more about how to grow your business, contact a member of the Principa Alliance, a global network of consulting professionals. Visit online: www.principa.net