

4. How to Review Job Applications

1 OVERVIEW

Once you have decided to recruit, defined your job vacancy, written a job description and advertised the role, you will begin to receive applications for the position. The next step is to review your applications.

The objective of reviewing the applications for the vacancy is to work out which candidates meet the requirements of the role, so that you can make an informed and fair decision about inviting candidates to attend an interview for the position.

2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of one or more protected characteristics, and job seekers are covered by this. The protected characteristics are; age, race, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

3 KEY POINTS

- To minimise the risk of claims for unfairness or discrimination in your selection process, it's advisable to have a clear strategy underpinning how you choose who to interview.
- Using a rating system can help you conduct a fair and objective screening process, reducing the risk of unconscious bias.
- If you have written a job description and person specification, you will have outlined the criteria that are essential and desirable for the performance of the role. Use the top skills, qualifications and abilities outlined to screen the candidates.
- Avoid requesting a certain number of years' experience as part of the criteria to perform the role. Define the required ability and focus on how each candidate demonstrates how they meet the criteria rather than length of service.
- Remember to document your screening process and retain any relevant notes for the required length of time. In the event of any claim for unfairness or discrimination, this will help to demonstrate that you have followed an objective process. You should retain personal HR data in accordance with data protection legislation. Ensure that data is retained for no longer than is necessary for the legitimate purpose for which the data is processed (for example, one year from the date of application) and in a secure location.
- If the candidate has submitted a cover letter with their application, make sure you read it. A cover letter can tell you whether a candidate has put thought and careful consideration into applying for your role. You can also check for spelling and grammatical errors and whether they have tailored their application for your particular vacancy and company.
- If there is more than one person involved in the reviewing of applications, make sure all those responsible are familiar with the criteria required for the role.
- Acknowledge all applications, even if it is just an automated email. Once you have shortlisted candidates to be progressed to the next stage, ensure you respond to all candidates regardless of the outcome.
- Be aware of data protection regulations, including GDPR, that govern how you maintain and record information relating to your recruitment process.

4 STAGES OF SCREENING

Be aware that you are unlikely to find a candidate who matches all your essential and desirable criteria. So how can you filter the applications which are best suited to the role?

As a first stage, you could simply exclude all those applications that do not meet the criteria that you have determined are essential for the performance of the role. This will immediately filter out unsuitable applications.

As a second stage, review the remaining applications and assign the candidates a score against each essential and desirable item according to how important each one is. This gives you a way to rank the candidates objectively according to the needs of the business.

Don't forget to check for inconsistencies, grammatical errors and spelling mistakes throughout the application, cv and cover letter.

5 NEXT STEPS

- Create a rating system to assess each candidate objectively against what is required for the role.
- Ensure that everybody involved on the interview panel is in agreement with the key criteria for the role.
- Make sure you take notes of your decision making process and store them correctly for the required length of time.

6 FACTSHEETS TO HELP

- How to Create a Job Description and Person Specification
- Promoting an Equal Opportunities Workplace and Avoiding Discrimination
- How to Invite Candidates to an Interview
- How to Conduct a Telephone Interview
- How to Conduct a Face to Face Interview
- How to Review Candidates and Make a Hiring Decision

7 FOR MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

ACAS - (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. www.acas.org.uk

Achieve in Bath & North East Somerset - free recruitment support, advice and help. Matching job seekers, employers and course providers to help employers recruit, train and retain employees. www.achieveinbathnes.co.uk

Future Bright - free help & support for businesses and employees to realise their full potential. Provide access to training and development, workshops and networking. HR support to promote career progression and best practice to attract and retain staff. www.futurebright.org.uk

***Bibliography** - this fact sheet was produced by Rathbone HR Solutions in association with Cool Ventures Ltd in December 2018 with content sourced from; HR Inform (www.hr-inform.co.uk), ACAS (www.acas.org.uk), CIPD (www.cipd.co.uk), the pensions regulator (www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers), HMRC(www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs), the Information Commissioner's Officer website (www.ico.org.uk)*



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