Case Study: Online Recruitment and Selection

The first time I met Frank Stillone, managing director of The Silent Partner, he was looking for a 'robust' recruitment process. Finding the right people was difficult. Most didn't live up to what was required for the role. Mistakes and poor performance from his staff were costing him business. He needed a better way of finding the right person who would be an excellent fit. Together we were able to develop a process that delivered the results Frank wanted to achieve.

Background

The Silent Partner, in Sydney, is a provider of virtual office, calendar management and help desk solutions. The growth of the business requires regular recruitment of additional virtual receptionists to deliver these services. Frank had previously done his own recruitment, with mixed results.

Designing the job requirements

Using his knowledge of what makes someone successful in the virtual receptionist role, Frank and I carefully selected the essential and desirable criteria, along with those characteristics he would prefer to avoid.

For each of the eligibility criteria – skills, qualifications, experience – points were allocated to each possible answer, depending on the job requirements. For example, some of the company's clients are medical specialists and allied health professionals, so bonus points were awarded for experience as a medical receptionist.

For the suitability criteria – personality, motivation, work preferences, interests – we were able to add relevant traits and rate them in terms of their importance and frequency of use on the job.

Setting up the campaign

Once the criteria were in place, Frank was ready to start taking applications. He placed an advertisement on an online job board with a link back to The Silent Partner's 'Jobs' page. The advertisement also stated that the only way to apply was by following this link.

When an applicant reached the web page, they could see the job description with an 'apply now' button at the bottom. By clicking on this button, the applicant would arrive at the beginning of the online application form.

The application process

Once they reached the application form, applicants were first presented with details of the job. If they chose to proceed with an application, they completed their name and contact details before proceeding to the first part of the online questionnaire (eligibility).

Answering the eligibility questions took only a few minutes. The applicant was then asked to upload their CV and cover letter. Depending on their score in the first section, they were asked to proceed to the second part of the questionnaire (suitability). Completing this section takes about 20 minutes.

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The results

A total of 269 people viewed the online application form. Of these, 69 decided not to apply after viewing the job description while a further 27 didn't proceed after entering their personal details, therefore self-selecting themselves out of the process.

This left 173 applicants who completed the eligibility questions and/or resume upload, including 132 who went on to complete the suitability questionnaire.

The system automatically short-listed 24 candidates with scores over the pre-determined cut-off. The CVs of the top 15 short-listed candidates were reviewed to decide who would proceed to preliminary structured telephone interviews.

Frank interviewed five people in the preliminary round. Two candidates were selected for more detailed interviews and both were offered - and accepted – a virtual receptionist position.

The benefits

The Silent Partner's recruitment process had rewards in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness.

Efficient

- Frank didn't have to receive and respond to 269 emailed applications, saving him days of unproductive work.
- Once set up, the process was automatic and did not require management or input until Frank was ready to close the campaign and interview.
- Frank only had to read the resumes of short-listed candidates.
- Telephone interviews were structured and effective in further screening of candidates.
- Candidates could be notified of their progress directly from the recruitment system.

Effective

- Frank was able to monitor the campaign via a dedicated dashboard.
- By deciding in advance what he did and didn't want, all applicants were objectively and automatically screened.
- Frank estimated the new process took less than 20% of the time he's devoted to similar recruitment exercises in the past, representing a significant cost saving to the business.
- All applications were checked for consistency by the system, flagging applicants who may not have been honest in their answers to the questionnaire.
- Only those candidates who met pre-set criteria were considered for the role.

At the end of the day, your company is just a collection of people doing stuff and whether that company is Apple or Merv's Mowing Services it doesn't really matter. If you want to be successful you need to get the right people doing things right. As small business owners the same applies to us: We can be experts at many things but we cannot be an expert in everything. That's why we need to bring in someone with specialised knowledge and tools to help us find the talent we need to grow.

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