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PRACTICE IMPULSE

Recruiting at Speed

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Top tips on how to halve your recruitment time

Part 1: Before Every Search – Laying the Foundation

1.1 Defining the Recruiting Process



A fast recruiting process depends on clarity and standardisation. The interview stage in particular must be clearly structured, otherwise time and momentum are lost.

Pre-screening Video Interview (30 minutes)

A short online conversation, for example via Microsoft Teams, to clarify the basic conditions: salary expectations, notice period, willingness to relocate, key qualifications, and motivation to change. Only candidates who are a fit move forward in the process.

Interview Rounds – How Many Make Sense?

1. One round: For simple operational roles, freelancers, and temporary staff.
2. Two rounds (standard): First, professional skills and motivation; then team fit and contract details.
3. Three rounds (exception): Only for key or leadership positions. More rounds slow things down and put candidates off.

Purpose of the Interviews

- Screening (optional): Must-have criteria.
- Technical interview: Competencies and work samples.
- Decision interview: Team fit, salary, contract.

Each stage delivers a clear result: fit or no fit.

Participant Roles

The recruiter or HR manages the process; the line manager reviews the content; a team member can provide a practical perspective; senior management only has a say in key roles.

In summary

First clarify the basics in a video interview, then keep rounds to a minimum. Clear roles and a fixed structure ensure speed and better decisions.

1.2 Clarifying Responsibilities

A recruiting process needs clearly defined roles. Unclear responsibilities immediately lead to delays. A typical problem is that a process gets started but then nothing happens for days or weeks because the people responsible are unavailable or decisions get postponed.

Recruiter



The recruiter leads the process. They coordinate appointments, conduct the first screening, keep the process moving, and ensure no steps are left unattended.

Decision-Maker



The decision-maker evaluates candidates and makes the final decisions. They determine who progresses and who receives an offer. Without a clear assignment of this role, everything stalls.

Observers



Optionally, specialist colleagues or HR can be involved as observers. They support the decision-maker with assessments but have no decision-making authority.

Availability and Cover

A fast process often fails due to the unavailability of those involved. Holidays or full calendars must not block the workflow. Deputies must therefore be named who can step in if needed. A process must not come to a standstill simply because someone is unavailable.

In summary

Friction arises from a lack of clarity. A recruiter steers, a decision-maker decides, observers advise, and deputies cover for absences. Anyone who establishes this in advance prevents delays and saves weeks.



1.3 Establishing a Selection Criteria System

Without clear criteria, no recruiting process can be fast. Anything not defined in advance gets debated during interviews, and that is exactly where time is lost. Unclear expectations also result in candidates being unnecessarily rejected or assessed for too long.

Must-Have Criteria

These points are non-negotiable. They determine whether a candidate is considered at all. Typical mistakes happen when must-have criteria are defined too broadly.

Example: "5 years of professional experience." This requirement is often counterproductive, because it equates competence with mere time. Five years at one company can mean routine, while two years in a dynamic environment can bring more relevant experience. Must-have criteria should therefore be defined not by years, but by actual competence and context.
The right approach: instead of "5 years of experience," use "experience in project management with budget responsibility" or "successful implementation of IT rollouts in a corporate environment."

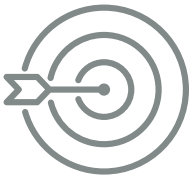
The list of must-have criteria should contain a maximum of three to five points. Anyone who needs more doesn't know exactly what they're looking for.

Should-Have Criteria

These criteria are desirable but not grounds for exclusion. They can help when deciding between several suitable candidates, but must not prevent someone from being invited or hired if the must-have criteria are met.

Nice-to-Have Criteria

Additional skills or experience that add value but are not relevant to the decision. They are a bonus but must not consume time in the process.



Evaluation System

All parties involved must apply the same criteria. A structured evaluation sheet ensures that every candidate is assessed objectively and comparably. It reduces discussions and enables swift decisions.

In summary

Must-have criteria must be precise and competence-focused, not based on blanket years or job titles. Anyone who defines requirements clearly and separates must-haves, should-haves, and nice-to-haves saves time, reduces misunderstandings, and makes well-targeted decisions.

1.4 Evaluating External Partners and Signing Framework Agreements

Many companies lose time because they only start thinking about which channels or partners to use once the search has begun. Anyone who selects external parties at that point loses weeks. The key is to sign framework agreements in advance so that services, prices, and processes are all agreed and a start can be made immediately.

Recruiter

If there is no internal recruiter, external support should be used. Freelancers or models such as "recruiter on demand" (e.g. Constares) can be deployed specifically for a single role. For a relatively modest budget, they take over process management and ensure optimal execution.

Job Portals

Classic job boards are inexpensive and scalable, but often generate many unsuitable applications. It is important to decide in advance which portals adverts will be posted on and how quickly multiposting can be executed.

Headhunters and Recruitment Agencies

For key or leadership positions, headhunters make sense. They proactively approach candidates who would not apply on their own. Recruitment agencies are suitable for mid-level positions or when the search needs to be broader. The key is to clarify in advance who is commissioned for which role.

Parallel Rather Than Sequential

Many companies work through portals, recruiters, or headhunters one after another. This costs time. It is better to activate several methods simultaneously and let the results run in parallel.

In summary

External partners are a lever for speed when they are prepared. Anyone who clearly defines when to use recruiters, job portals, or headhunters and signs framework agreements in advance can start without delay and saves weeks.



1.5 Defining the Offer Process

A fast recruiting process does not end with the selection of a candidate, but with a signed contract. This is precisely where many companies lose days or weeks, and with them, candidates. A clearly defined offer process is therefore a mandatory component of every recruiting structure.

Clarifying Decision-Making Authority

Assign responsibility clearly: Who has the final say on the offer – the department, senior management, or HR? The approval process must be as lean as possible. One person or a small committee makes binding decisions.

Defining Salary Ranges and Additional Benefits

Salary bands and decision criteria must be documented. Additional benefits such as bonuses, perks, or remote working arrangements are defined and communicated in advance. This way, after the decision is made, there are no delays caused by follow-up questions.

Contract Issued Within 24 Hours

No later than 24 hours after the verbal offer, the employment contract must be ready. Standardised templates and digital tools speed up the drafting process and prevent waiting times.

Presenting the Offer and Conducting the Conversation

Who delivers the offer? Ideally, the line manager and HR do this together. The offer conversation is prepared, questions anticipated, and terms clearly communicated. A personal conversation – whether by video or in person – should take place within 24 to 48 hours of the decision.

In summary

The offer process is often the final bottleneck in recruiting – and one of the most common reasons why candidates drop out. Anyone who defines responsibilities, salary ranges, and contract processes in advance can make an offer within a day and signals decisiveness and professionalism.



Part 2: Starting the Search

2.1 Kick-Off Meeting Within 48 Hours

As soon as the need is confirmed, a kick-off meeting is held, no later than 48 hours later. Here, all the foundations are laid: roles and responsibilities from Part 1 are assigned to specific individuals, a budget and priority are established, and the target start date is defined. Without this clarity, the process is delayed from the very beginning.

2.2 Planning the Timeline Backwards

The most important mistake: thinking forwards from the start of the search. The right approach is to plan backwards from the desired start date. Notice periods, onboarding, and probation periods are factored in realistically. This makes it clear when each step must take place in order to avoid losing months.

2.3 Adapting the Process as Needed

Not every position requires the same process. Specialist roles or leadership positions may require additional steps or different evaluation logic. These adjustments should be established at the kick-off, not halfway through the process.

2.4 Ensuring Availability

Processes often fail not because of applicants, but because of scheduling. All parties involved must ensure their availability and block fixed interview times. Equally important: nominate deputies so that holidays or illness do not stop the process. Nothing slows down a hire more than a two-week pause because a decision-maker is unavailable.

2.5 Defining Search Methods

A search strategy should activate several channels simultaneously: job adverts, active sourcing, headhunters, internal networks. Anyone who relies on a single channel loses time and opportunities. At the kick-off, it is established which methods will be used and who will implement them. Afterwards, it is regularly checked which channel is delivering the best results.

In summary

Speed begins with a structured start. Anyone who holds a kick-off within 48 hours, plans backwards, assigns responsibilities, secures availability, and launches multiple search channels simultaneously saves weeks and always stays one step ahead of the market.



Part 3: Executing the Search Without Losing Time

3.1 Getting the Job Advert Live Immediately

The job advert must be online within 48 hours. AI tools help with quick drafting. The advert is short, concise, and mobile-friendly. Only must-have criteria belong in it, no empty phrases like "team player."

3.2 Blocking Interview Slots in Advance

Fixed interview times must be in the calendar before the first application even arrives. This means candidates can be invited immediately. Recurring slots remain in place until the position is filled.

3.3 Introducing Automated Scheduling

Tools like Microsoft Bookings or Calendly avoid back-and-forth emails. Candidates choose from available times themselves; automated reminders increase attendance rates.

3.4 Structured Interview Process

All candidates go through the same process. An interview guide ensures that all relevant topics are covered. A scoring sheet documents the results and makes them comparable.
The subsequent discussion is then based not on gut feeling, but on clear criteria and concrete observations. Decisions are therefore made in a more transparent, objective, and faster way.



3.5 Making Quick Decisions (Within 48 Hours)

After every interview, the scoring sheet is completed. Sleeping on it overnight is fine, but by the following day at the latest, the hiring team makes a decision. The result is clear: Go or No. On Hold is not permitted.

All decisions are documented to avoid going back over them later.

3.6 Preparing Bridging Solutions

Even with fast recruiting, gaps arise. Interim staff, freelancers, or internal transition solutions should already be prepared. This keeps the business stable until the new person starts.

In summary

Execution determines whether the planned pace is maintained. Fast job adverts, fixed interview times, automated scheduling, structured processes, and binding decisions make the difference. Anyone who also prepares bridging solutions avoids productivity losses and safeguards the company's ability to act.



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