



# EXPERT ARTICLE

## Recruiting for Success

### By Colin Graham, Innovation Centre Sunshine Coast

The right people are the key to success in any business, and making the right recruitment decisions is particularly important to a start-up or early stage business.

A start-up business needs the right mix of skills to move the business forward. Each business is different, but the roles and skills that are often common include:

- Lead entrepreneur - ability to drive the business forward, communicate the vision, motivate the team
- Technical innovator - ability to develop the product to respond to market and business needs
- Sales and marketing - ability to focus on customers, promote the business and win sales for the business
- Finance – manage the budgets and cash flow, help raise investment
- Operations – maximising the efficiency of the organisation and its administration and processes

These roles may be played by several individuals but could also be handled by a couple of people with complementary skill sets and well chosen advisors.

#### Recruiting for start-ups

Initial considerations:

- Understand the range of skills and the people the business will need at different stages of growth
- Honestly assess what skills the business currently has
- Understand when and how the position can be financed; this may be dependent on factors such as making initial sales, raising funds, productive use of time – e.g. hiring an administrator may free up time for another team member to sell
- Consider what type of person are you after – some form of business partner or a more straight forward employee?

#### Next steps:

- Draw up a one or two page Position Description for each new recruit; this should include a profile of the company, the role, skills and experience required hours of work, conditions etc
- Decide the application process and set the timetable; block out times in your diary for interviews, selection decisions etc
- Promote the position – options include University career sites, online directories such as Seek.com; newspaper advertising and circulating details across your network

## **Application and Selection Process**

The recruitment process needs to be managed professionally. Candidates will judge you and your business by the people they meet, their experience in the process; professionalism and speed of follow up for all involved in the process are vital.

The process will depend upon the position you are looking for, but as a guide the following steps will be useful:

1. Define and write up position, confirm budget available to support this
2. Promote position and closing date for applicants
3. Invite candidates to submit a CV with a cover letter highlighting how they meet the specific skills required
4. Initial screening based on written applications; assess them against your Position Description and key skills required
5. Invite short-listed candidates to first interview (may need to see 6-8 people at this stage)
6. Prepare and run a professional first interview with a written list of questions and take notes on answers; hold the interviews in a business like location
7. Consider the candidates attitude, career motivation, enthusiasm, ability to learn, fit with your team and values etc as well as their skills and experience
8. Invite top 3-4 candidates back for a second and final interview, asking that they prepare a 7 minute presentation on how they would approach the job
9. Run individual final interviews, with candidates starting with their presentation and then follow up questions; recommend using a panel interview with one or two additional key team members involved to help assess the person
10. Towards the end of interview have a brief discussion on pay and conditions, e.g. 'If we offered you this position, when would you be able to start'; 'what would your salary expectations be?'
11. Make an offer, possibly advising by phone first very quickly followed up by detailed offer letter (which has to be ready to go in advance)
12. Conclude contract and get ready for agreed start date

Recruiting a good person is important - getting it wrong can be an expensive experience so it really is worth getting organised and running a professional process.

## **Orientation – the next step in recruitment**

Recruiting the right person is really only the beginning - the most important thing is to manage the orientation process to get the person up to speed quickly and contributing. This can be done by organising a good 'Orientation' process.

Getting people started:

- Answer the basic questions everyone will have: 'How does this place work?' and 'How do I fit in and make a contribution?'
- Set up a simple Orientation folder for the new recruit, include a cover page with a list of key areas that they need to cover and some key company info e.g. a business plan or product brochures
- Encourage them to take control of their Orientation period and meet key team members and understand their role in the business

- Sit down with the next team member for 30 - 60 mins on day one, mid week, last day of the week and then once or twice a week for first month or so to work through the basics – stuff that you already know but the new recruit does not
- Make it exceptionally clear in writing what is expected from the new person – e.g. by the end of the first week or month and emphasise why they have been hired and contribution needed
- Review contribution at end of months 1, 3 and 6
- Work at building your personal connection with the new person, take them to lunch or for a coffee or drink

### **Colin Graham**

*Colin is the founding CEO of the Innovation Centre, a company of the University of Sunshine Coast. He has worked with over 60 start-ups in the UK and Australia. He has in-depth HR experience having set up and run his own recruitment and training business, advised many start-ups and some of the world's largest companies.*