

Good applicant care is more than a step towards being an employer of choice, it's a competitive edge.

Applicants judge the attractiveness of working for you by the way you treat their interest in a job. The applicant who was unsuccessful this time may be just the person you need next time or in a year's time.

With fierce competition for talent, it's important to keep applicants connected to your business in a positive way. Word-of-mouth is a powerful reputation maker or breaker amongst job seekers.

Letter of Offer

Once you have decided who is the *best fit* for the job, provide the successful applicant with a *Letter of Offer*. This usually includes confirmation of the job's details including:

- Commencement date
- Review dates
- Terms of employment
- Status – e.g. full-time or part-time
- Probationary period
- Salary/ the award the position is covered by (for further advice on this refer to Wageline)

The applicant should then respond to either accept or decline the position.

• Be timely

While selecting the right applicant is complex and demanding it does not mean you can drag your feet. In a market competing for talent, reducing the "time to fill" will increase the ability of your business to secure the skills it needs.

Decreasing delays will reduce the possibility of the best applicants being lost to competitors. Make no mistake, highly skilled applicants know they are in demand and they may be pursuing more than just your job opportunity. So, while it is vital to attract quality talent it is just as important not to lose them during the process.

• Make a good first impression

First impressions last. It's just as important for you to make a good impression as it is for the applicant.

An application process that is overly bureaucratic or convoluted creates a 'closed shop' message that can deter good applicants from applying. The way you describe and advertise the job and the application process itself are crucial to forming a good impression (see *Attracting Applicants* on this CD).

• Be available

Have a clearly defined process to deal with applicant enquiries. Applicants want to be provided with a timely and personalised response. For example, is there a central contact that applicants can talk to in detail about what they would be doing in the job, what the challenges are or what the work environment is like and so on?

• Be flexible

Keep a degree of flexibility in your processes. For example, if you will be undertaking interviews, what flexibility can you offer applicants whose availability is constrained by their existing employment?

- **Keep applicants informed**

*“The silent treatment can be incredibly wounding but ironically,
it's not personal it just feels that way”
(Toby Marshall, managing director of an executive search firm)*

Keeping applicants informed on the status of the selection process, or letting them know how long the process is likely to take, assures them their interest is taken seriously. Treating unsuccessful applicants with respect motivates them to consider future vacancies you might have. Inform applicants of any significant delay. Keeping them connected to the process will encourage them to hold on, even if they are considering other offers.

- **Provide quality feedback**

To secure your future workforce needs it is important to maintain a good relationship with applicants following a selection process.

Feedback –

- Keeps the door open between you and a potential future employee. Just because someone was unsuccessful does not mean they were unsuitable.
- Provides an opportunity to develop a future pool of talent. Positive discussion of areas applicants need to work on will hopefully lead to skills development and a more competitive applicant in future.

Some tips for providing quality feedback include:

- Think about the feedback from the applicant's perspective. What key information will help them understand why they were not short-listed or selected and how is the information best delivered?
- Don't keep the applicant waiting for feedback. Provide the feedback as soon as possible after it's requested.
- Make the feedback relevant to the applicant. Comparison against assessment benchmarks is valuable for those with identifiable deficiencies. But for applicants who meet or exceed assessment benchmarks, only a comparison of their responses against even better responses will help them understand why they were not selected.
- Make the feedback interactive so the applicant feels comfortable to ask questions that will help them absorb and make sense of the feedback.
- If an applicant is simply not suitable for a position, this message can be delivered respectfully and in a way that helps the applicant make an informed decision about any similar roles in future. Ideally it might be accompanied by feedback on any strengths that the applicant might use as a platform to seek more appropriate types of work.
- Some applicants benefit from specific information on how their application or interview performance might be more successful. For example, an applicant might not have read or complied with specific instructions on how to apply, have provided too little information, or might have exhibited problematic behaviours at interview (for example, going off on a tangent, excessively lengthy answers or some other communication issue).

Source: Office of the Public Service Commissioner 'Recruitment and Selection Resources'