

EXTRACTS FROM....

# How to be A Great Recruitment Manager

Leadership tips, strategies and horror stories  
from the recruitment front line

Dean Gollings 

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## WHY THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU

As far as I am aware, this is the first book ever written which specifically addresses management and leadership in the recruitment industry.

It is designed for ambitious Team Leaders, first time Managers, experienced Managers, Managing Consultants, Directors and owners of recruitment/staffing businesses.

This book would be extremely useful for anyone who might like to be a Manager in the future. You will be shown the traits and behaviours which you will need to demonstrate in order to get that promotion.

Additionally, the book will also be of interest to any recruitment Consultant who would like to know what their Manager *ought to be doing*...

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

The book is in e-book format because in some small way, I wanted to save the planet. Unless your boss has given you permission to work through this book during office hours, the chances are you will be doing this at home, or in-transit on your own computer.

There are various ways to use this book. You can start at the beginning and go through it sequentially, or you can head for the sections which interest you the most.

There are several exercises in this book which will require you to stop, think, and put pen to paper. There is no doubt that you will learn more if you attempt these exercises as opposed to skipping ahead to the suggested answers. The exercises can be done by printing off the relevant sheets, or by listing your answers on a note pad.

Either way, I recommend you take a print copy of the answers and action lists and keep them in a ring binder. Keep referring back and dipping into the book on an ongoing basis.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I approached a number of Directors, owners and Managers of highly respected recruitment companies from the UK and overseas. They were invited to offer 3 pieces of advice, share with the reader a big mistake and to disclose the details of just one horror story. Some said yes and some said no, but as you will see from the various entries, some of the best operators the industry has ever seen were willing to pass on the benefits of their experience.

My sincere thanks for their contributions go to Paul Forrest, Alex Jordan, Paul Smith, Chris Sharp, Anton Muller, Adrian Hitchenor, Renny Hayes, Gary Watson, Nigel Milford, Jamal Khan, Graham Palfery-Smith, Matthew Lewis, the Directors at Cherry Professional, Paul Macildowie and Malcolm Devine.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Whatever anyone else may say about our industry, I believe it contains a higher proportion of bright, enthusiastic, energetic, genuinely likeable personalities than almost any other industry you could mention.

The overwhelming majority of recruitment Consultants, Managers and Directors that I have met over the past 27 years were people I could happily have spent more time with. I could count on the fingers of just one hand, the number of recruiters I have met that I didn't like.....no hang on, I have just thought of a couple more.....make that two hands. Either way, that's a lot more than I can say for many of the clients and candidates we have to contend with.

My first experience of the recruitment industry took place in October 1982. I had just qualified as a Chartered Accountant and decided my immediate future lay in Dubai, where a two year contract would give me some useful experience and the opportunity to save some cash. The going rate was £15000 tax free, which was very tempting to someone who was completely and utterly broke. I contacted the nearest office of Michael Page, which was in Birmingham, and was interviewed later that same day by Terry Benson, the Manager of the office and a Director of the company.

During the course of the meeting Terry smoked 40 Rothmans and asked me if I wanted to talk about a career in recruitment with Michael Page. This further discussion took

place in The Wellington, a public house just up the road, and a venue which I had never previously visited. Little did I know that over the next 6 years The Wellington was to become my second home and the grateful recipient of a good proportion of my hard earned salary.

Terry is a very persuasive man, and after a subsequent meeting with the rest of the team I waved goodbye to my career as an accountant and said 'hello' to what I hoped was going to be a source of endless fun, amusement and massive financial gain.

In fairness, my heart was never in accountancy....let's face it ...I had a lot of friends at Spicer and Pegler (now Deloitte), but I didn't go home each night full of hilarious accounting stories. I also knew, in the darkness of my soul, that I was never really going to be much good. Passing the exams was the pinnacle of my accounting career. Everything after that was going to be a slow slide into bean-counting mediocrity and Ford Sierra obscurity. I had no doubt, unlike my father – who was mortified - that Michael Page was the future. And I was right.

I became the Manager of Page's Birmingham office after just two years as a Consultant. Maybe success came too soon for me....

What struck me most of all in those early months as a Manager was that all of the emotions you experience as a Consultant, the euphoric highs and excruciating lows, all within the space of fifteen minutes, were suddenly magnified by a factor of six, which was the number of Consultants in my team. Each piece of good news or fee earned felt like it my good news, my fee, but each piece of bad news felt like a dagger to the heart. Was this job going to drive me completely insane? Yes, it very nearly did.

Soon after joining Michael Page I asked Terry, a couple of questions. The first was 'So for how long do you think I will have to spend two hours each night calling candidates?' Terry assured me that after a couple of years, this would no longer be necessary as with a bit of luck I would be a Manager by then and 'Wouldn't need to do it.'

My second question was something like 'So for how long do you think I will *have to make placements?*' Can you imagine anyone getting away with such a question now? You see, in my deluded world I wanted to get through the relatively hum-drum task of placing accountants out of the way as soon as possible so that I could do what Terry was doing, ie not much really. Terry again offered some re-assurance. 'I can't see you flicking through candidate cards for much more than a year or two'. How irresponsible and misleading can you get? (In fairness, Terry was a magnificent Manager, the best I have ever worked for.)

You see Terry's remit was to keep the six of us in the game and punt the odd newly-qualified ACA into Thomas Cook. Unfortunately, during the time it took me to become Manager, the goalposts were carefully shifted. On being appointed to the job I was reminded that my role now incorporated the necessity to not only carry on making fees, but to be the *top biller in the office*. How could I have been such a fool?

My ten page job description actually featured the names of Sir Winston Churchill, Florence Nightingale, Babe Ruth, Pele, Abraham Lincoln, Sigmund Freud, Attila the Hun and Vlad The Impaler.

If that were not enough, clear references were also made to the Holy Roman Empire, the Dunkirk evacuation, the Apollo moon landings, the Charge of the Light Brigade, the discovery of penicillin and the bombing of Hiroshima. It was going to be a tough gig.

I spent the best part of four eventful, error strewn, but ultimately successful years as a Manager, before being promoted to the cherished position of Director at Head Office in London. At first, I couldn't have been happier. Unfortunately, things didn't turn out the way I had hoped.

Our London office was on the slide at that time, and calamity was soon followed by disaster, rapidly followed by misery. Mistakes were made, rules were broken and it all ended in tears. But, I learned and improved over the next 15 or so years, and now feel ready to pass on some pearls of hard earned wisdom.

The simple objective of this book is to show how you can learn from my countless mistakes, be a more effective, confident Manager/Leader, and to demonstrate how your team can make more fees, increase its market share and be a happier, more productive, more successful unit. In other words, give your miserable competitors even more sleepless nights. I also hope this book will give you a few laughs along the way. It is not intended to be a dry textbook. Recruitment is meant to be fun isn't it?

The book is packed with hundreds of practical tips and contains several contributions from recruitment leaders who operate across the globe. They were asked to offer three pieces of advice, a big mistake and a horror story. These contributions are spread throughout the book on a fairly random basis. As those views are personal, I do not necessarily agree with all of them. I have also included many toe-curling horror stories, anecdotes and confessions of my own.

You will not find much in the way of management theory in these pages. If that kind of thing interests you, there are plenty of other places you can find it. Neither is it a treatise on all things 'leadership' or 'strategic thinking'. Again, there are other sources.

This book strictly concerns itself with running a team in any sector of the recruitment industry, whatever your job title. There will be a total absence of jargon and management- speak. You can get plenty of that every time you talk to someone in the Public Sector or one of any number of utility companies.

Recruitment is a very simple and straight-forward business. I believe in keeping it that way. There are those who seek to justify their existence by trying to over-complicate things and over-intellectualise the job ....maybe they should try running a manufacturing company. The book is therefore highly condensed, direct and to the point.

Doubtless there will be many tips and suggestions I have missed....and some of these will occur to me as soon as I go to print. I cannot claim that this book tells absolutely you everything you need to know, but it covers everything I can think of.

Recruitment management at any level is a tough job and bad stuff happens, as I shall amply demonstrate. However, if you get it right, it can be hugely rewarding.

This is meant to be the book I wished someone had handed me all those years ago.....so please buy it, work through the exercises, learn some lessons and marvel at some horrendous tales from the asylum.

To give you an idea of the layout and tone of the book, here is a sample chapter.

## **Chapter 8**

### **HOW TO DELEGATE**

Delegation is a tricky concept to grasp. After all, didn't your Mother always say, 'If a job is worth doing well, you should do it yourself?'

The temptation, once you become a Manager or Director, is to prove to yourself and everyone else, that you *can* do it all yourself.

You might even be thinking, 'But it's quicker if I do it all myself. *I have not got time to delegate.*'

It's easy to understand this thought process. There was a time when I thought that way myself. I wanted to show that whatever was thrown at me, however packed my diary was, I would not be beaten by something as prosaic as sheer workload. After all, I was a superhuman, blessed with magical, supernatural powers. Wasn't I?

Surely delegation was a sign of weakness. It sends out all the wrong signals. 'Help me! I cannot cope!' I couldn't have been more mistaken.

In time, I learned that I was making a big mistake, and that I was thinking about delegation (and the whole subject of management and leadership for that matter), in completely the wrong way.

### **Ask Yourself?**

What does delegation mean to you?

What delegation issues have you come across?

Why do you delegate?

What, if anything is delegated to you and how do you feel about it?

Managers and Directors sometimes find it difficult to delegate. Usually this boils down to a lack of trust in the team, resulting in missed opportunities to develop team members and the Manager or Director becoming overworked and over-stressed.

Even worse, this leads to a failure to maximize the productive commercial output of the team.

**The team will only grow if the Manager can delegate and trust it.**

Firstly, identify what you *could* delegate and *who* you delegate to. This should be a balance of capability and development need.

Always follow up. Be available to advise/coach

Do not simply delegate the stuff you don't want to do.

Recognise the contribution. Do not steal the credit/limelight.

Recognise that it is easy to mess up delegation.

These are the potential problems:

1. Not delegating enough.
2. Delegating too much.
3. Delegating too fast (ie before people are ready for the extra responsibility).
4. Delegating too late, (ie when you are totally overloaded you delegate in desperation).
5. Not delegating at all, possibly due to ego, perfectionism or your lack of rapport with your team.

### **Solution.**

*See delegation as a tool to develop others, not simply as a way of reducing your workload.*

Give them the 'what' and the 'why', but let them work out the 'how' themselves. Try not to over-supervise.

*Delegation is about them, not you.*

Do not forget, just because you have delegated task or project, if something goes wrong *it's still your fault.*

**Exercise.**

**Make a list of all the tasks/projects you could delegate. Identify who you could delegate to. This should be a balance of capability and development need.**

1.

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17.

## **Suggested Answer.**

**Make a list of all the tasks/projects you could delegate. Identify who you could delegate to. This should be a balance of capability and development need.**

1. Organize an event for candidates, clients or both.
2. Attend a networking event on your behalf.
3. Give a presentation at an event instead of you.
4. Put the kpi's together. Analyse, draw conclusions, suggest remedial action where needed.
5. Supervise the induction of a new recruit.
6. Organize a marketing campaign.
7. Gather the relevant business news and distribute it.
8. Lead the weekly team meeting.
9. Conduct the weekly One To One meeting with more junior Consultants.
10. Assume responsibility for job board/publication marketing and advertising.
11. Ensure that after-sales service and related actions are happening.
12. Devise a new product/service idea.
13. Be the team's blogger/Twitterer.
14. Be responsible for the team's website presence.
15. Develop links with certain trade bodies ie, CIPD, Chamber of Commerce, Institute of Directors, other relevant commercial/business bodies in your sector or geographical region.
16. Take on the Quality Control projects (See chapter on Quality Control below).

17. Conduct a feasibility study on entering a new market with recommendations.

I think that is a great list, packed with useful and exciting things to do. If you have not been delegating these types of tasks, I recommend you give it some serious consideration. Think how much the various members of your team would appreciate it if, of course, you have the right kind of people in the first place.

### **WHAT NOT TO DELEGATE.....**

There are some things you just have to do for yourself whether you like it or not.

Here are some completely true bad examples of delegation which I have come across during my career.

1. A Consultant was asked to fire another Consultant. The Manager did not have the stomach for it. Very feeble.
2. A Consultant was sent out to buy a bouquet of flowers for boss's wife, following non-appearance of said boss at the marital home the previous evening.
3. Secretary sent on a trip to the dry cleaners to remove incriminating, Clintonesque, evidence from boss's suit.
4. Sending of Birthday cards on behalf of boss to boss's mistress.
5. Sending Consultant to attend Director's daughter's Primary School Nativity play as boss was too drunk to attend.
6. Asking Consultants to offer hospitality, board and lodgings to boss's in-laws over the Christmas festivities.
7. A Director requested his Manager to stand in for him at his own wedding rehearsal citing 'pressure of work'.
8. Director requested that a Manager stand in for him at Mother-in-Law's funeral. The Manager complied.

Some of the above might seem like a great idea, and I have some degree of sympathy for many, but you get the picture.

Incidentally, just in case you were wondering, none of the above incidents involved me.

### **Author's Horror Story**

There are times when an unscheduled team meeting needs to take place. This is usually as a result of some disaster or to communicate an important company announcement.

Early in my managerial career I was under pressure from Head Office to increase headcount in my team. Critical mass was all the rage. My own feeling was that I was not going to compromise on the quality of people that I was going to hire.

This resulted in some conflict between me and my superiors. I simply did not believe that the way forward was to hire substandard staff simply to get the numbers up. I had a great team and did not want to dilute the quality of anything which we stood for.

Under pressure to hire a new consultant I agreed to meet someone who had previously been interviewed, *and rejected*, by another of our offices. I met the guy, let's call him George, and with the best will in the world, he was nowhere near as good as the people I already had.....but I was more or less told to hire him anyway. It was a big mistake.

From day one, the talented prima donnas and mavericks which made up the rest of my team showed him very little respect. I did my best to get him integrated and trained up but I knew he wasn't going to rise to the challenge.

Apart from anything else, he wasn't very bright, had zero charisma and tended to giggle like a girl at everything I said. Let's face it, his days were numbered right from the start.

George and his wife were living in a rented house which was owned by the parents of one of my other Consultants. One fine morning George came into work and asked to see me in private immediately. He seemed very distressed.

He explained that at 2.00 am that morning, four of my best Consultants embarked on an SAS style raid on his house. The raid entailed climbing up drainpipes, scrambling along

the roof and knocking on George's bedroom window. George's wife was terrified, and George himself was livid.

I went back into the main office, rounded up the guilty four, (who were still sniggering, still probably drunk) and took them into the Boardroom for an unplanned meeting. I told them that George was not impressed and that I didn't blame him for feeling that way. They agreed to apologise to George, send flowers to his wife and promised not to do it again. They also pointed out to me that they thought George was a complete and utter waste of space. This I already knew.

For a couple of days I mulled this incident over in my mind before reaching the inevitable conclusion. Someone was going to have pay dearly for this gross misdemeanour .....so five days after the raid, I sacked George on the grounds that he failed to see the funny side.....

Recruitment is a old tough world. George couldn't handle it and it was in his own best interests to operate in calmer waters. I believe he found himself a job in the Public sector. Perfect.

From that day on I stuck to my guns. Anyone who joined any of my teams in future was going to be at least as good as the people I already had, and the existing team members knew and respected that.

['Take Me to Your Leader...'](#)

[Graham Palfery-Smith, Former Global CEO, Five-Ten Group.](#)

### [Advice One](#)

Communicate...

Underestimate morale at your peril.

Make sure everyone knows where the business is going.

Keep your communication style simple & honest.

Don't over-manage or use jargon.

Keep objectives clear, measurable and don't ask those who work for you to do anything you wouldn't (or couldn't) do yourself. Indeed you should work at least as hard as anyone who works for you.

## Advice Two

Work hard, have fun, make money...

A culture of fear is counter-productive; equally you shouldn't befriend your Managers but you can make it enjoyable to work hard and be successful. Learning from their mistakes is as important for Managers in our industry as any other. But if you know they are not going to make it then cull quickly.

Aim for respect, for being fair and doing a good job, not to be liked.

## Advice Three

Learn from others...

Listen to clients, candidates and competitors! Their opinions matter and can enhance what you do. Nobody has all the right answers all the time so it is important to look at different ways to fix problems.

## Big Mistake

Trusting the wrong people...

Sadly neither accent nor education ensures integrity.

## Horror Story

A manager, coaching a new Consultant in following up after an interview, telling a client that the candidate had really enjoyed the interview and was looking forward to feedback; only for the client to mention she hadn't actually turned up! You can never get your credibility back, with the client or the person being trained, after that sort of mistake.

That's it for the free sample. I hope you liked it and decide to buy the book.

You will love it.

Many thanks,

Dean