



9 Questions you should ask a Recruitment Agency (before you engage them)

In a survey commissioned by Vanilla Recruitment (UK) Ltd we discovered that **89%** of Hiring Managers were unsure whether they are working with the most suitable recruitment company for their recruitment needs. **64%** were not confident that their recruitment partner was promoting their business positively as an employer of choice. **75%** were concerned that their recruitment agency didn't have access to the best candidates available in the market place.

So we wanted to discover **“How do you identify a reputable agency that will produce results?”** Why is it that you can have one recruitment agency who will struggle to produce suitable candidates for roles whilst another will provide well sourced and suitably matched jobseekers that want to work for your organisation? Most recruitment companies will fall somewhere between the two.

Finding the right recruitment partner can be challenging to say the least! Just as respectable recruitment agencies interview the job seekers, you too should be interviewing your agencies before choosing to work with them. You need to ensure that they will represent your company well and cherry pick the best candidates available in the market for you.

1. What is your experience recruiting within our industry?

Even though a recruitment agency has years of experience in multiple industries, it's important to make sure they have the skills needed to find high quality employees in your specific industry. It is essential that as a business they have credibility with job seekers especially for more senior vacancies as they are representing your business. Do you feel confident that they would understand your business, and your position within the market place in order to sell your opportunity positively and to attract the best people? You also need to make sure they can handle the request. If you're looking to fill 20 seasonal positions, ask them if they have the resources and previous experience to do that.

2. How long has the consultant who will be handling your vacancy been working in their niche market or with the recruitment agency?

The recruitment industry typically has a fairly high turnover of staff. The best recruitment businesses to work with are those that retain their experienced Consultants so that when you work with them on a repeat basis those Consultants will remember your requirements, team fit and company culture in order to be able to respond to your needs quickly and efficiently. An established and stable team in a recruitment business is also a strong indicator of that agency's values; if they invest in their people guaranteed they will be looking for long term business relationships. There is nothing more frustrating than every time you call a recruitment company the person who handles your vacancy has changed. If a Consultant hasn't been with the business for a significant amount of time then enquire about their previous background. You want to ensure that your consultant has credibility with the candidates and a pool of suitable job seekers to be able to recruit from in order to represent your business in the most effective way.



3. What were the last 3 jobs you filled in our industry/market?

This is a quick fire question that will immediately tell you how much relevant experience the agency that you are considering has in your market or field. If they struggle to answer, or lack specific examples of clients that they have successfully recruited for, you might want to consider whether they are the best recruiter to handle this specific requirement.

4. How often do you get client or candidate referrals for business?

Don't underestimate how the recruitment agency you are working with reflects on your business. Put yourself in the shoes of the best candidates in the employment market place, which are who you want to attract. Will they get a good service or experience from this agency? Do their company values fit in line with your organisation and do they treat their candidates well? Unfortunately, in some recruitment organisations, basic customer service skills are lacking, they treat their candidates as a commodity rarely providing feedback on CVs or interview skills, not returning calls or keeping them updated about vacancies. Naturally we all like to work on recommendation and the most highly skilled professional job seekers are the same. They will know from colleagues, friends and family whether a recruitment agency will represent them well and introduce them to employers of choice.

So, even if you have the most exciting job opportunity available at your company, if you are not working with a reputable agency the job seekers you want won't even consider the position. Your company's reputation will be tarnished by the view they have of the recruitment agency. By establishing how often the recruitment company's clients or candidates refer other people to them so they can enjoy the same service will ensure that you do not unwittingly deter job seekers that you want to join your business by engaging an agency that unknown to yourself has a poor reputation.

A recruitment business is only as good as the candidates it can attract and the quality of the service it provides. Only agencies that consistently provide good quality customer service to their candidates and clients will represent your business well and stay in business!

5. How do you market or advertise your vacancies?

You are looking for the very best people to work in your business, therefore you want to ensure that the recruitment company you engage can reach a broad selection of job seekers including passive job seekers; people who are waiting for the right opportunity but not actively job hunting. You should be looking for an agency that advertises with a number of large job boards such as Monster, CV Library, Jobsite, Totaljobs as well as industry specific job boards and CV sites for more niche positions.

Good agencies that work in your market should also have a pool of relevant registered candidates on their database, which is always a great place to start for a quick turnaround of CV's and suitable people.

With the explosion of social media forward thinking agencies will also be turning to Facebook, Linked In and other social media sites to advertise vacancies or headhunt from. Regardless of your location or vacancy, word of mouth and candidate referrals should be a respectable agencies life blood for applicant attraction.



6. How do you choose/shortlist the applicants?

Since the recruitment agency will do the first round of interviews for you and short list (hopefully) suitable people for your vacancy, it's good practice to ask how they're going to choose which applicants they will be submitting. It's important that you approve with how they handle applications and the screening process and also how they will decline unsuitable people. As mentioned previously, the agency will be representing your company and it is essential that they provide a level of customer service that you are happy with and that all applicants are treated fairly, with respect and walk away with a great impression of your business and the agency.

Ask what type of questions they will ask, what their interview process is and most importantly whether they will meet the job seeker on a face to face basis. It is incredibly difficult to match the culture fit of a company if you don't interview the job seeker in person. You can even send the recruiter you're working with a list of interview questions you would like answered to be submitted with their CVs at the shortlist stage.

It is always good practice for a recruitment business to reply to ALL the people that take the time to apply for a vacancy. Sadly, in the fast moving world that we live in some recruitment businesses forget that basic customer service still goes a long way.

7. Do you test your applicants or use psychometric tests?

Skills testing for recruitment agencies is good standard practice. If you are recruiting for an office based support role it would be advisable to request that the agency test shortlisted candidate's skills on MS Office or any other required IT packages, including typing skills etc. Skills testing can add valuable information to support a job seekers application and highlights areas of possible training needs. An agency, depending on their area of recruitment, should be able to provide testing facilities either in their offices or via online portals covering areas such as data entry, typing, MS Office, customer service skills, language testing, warehouse picking accuracy rates etc. If the recruitment agency ask job seekers to take a test, ask to see it alongside their CV if it is relevant to the position they are applying for. Psychometric tests are also a wonderful tool to use in conjunction with your interview to assess whether a candidate is naturally suited to the role that they are applying for. However, please be advised they are just a 'tool' and should not be taken in isolation when making a hiring decision.

8. What are your fees?

When working with a recruitment agency they're going to charge a fee for their temporary, contract or permanent recruitment services. Have them break down how much it's going to cost before you engage their services and ensure that you have it in writing with a copy of their Terms & Conditions of Business. The Terms of Business are there to protect your business as well as the recruitment agency and typically they will need to be signed and agreed to prior to any recruiter working on your requirements. If an agency isn't up front about the costs of using their service and fails to provide the information to you in writing then do not work with them.

Agencies want to create long-term relationships with their clients and they will be looking for repeat business. Find out if there's a discount available should you use them to find more employees in the future. Take the time to explain your recruitment plans over the next 6-12 months, you will be amazed how much more flexible an agency will be with their fees if they truly believe that there is an ongoing relationship available. Another great way of reducing your recruitment costs if you are



happy that the agency can provide you with a variety of suitable people for your roles would be to work with them on an exclusive basis. Offering an agency an exclusive vacancy or vacancies, where they are the only agency recruiting for your position for a limited time, will again encourage them to be flexible on their fees.

9. What's your Guarantee?

A reputable recruitment agency will not charge you if they are unable to find an employee that fits your requirements or are unable to do the tasks of the position. Find out if they offer a satisfaction guarantee. This should be a deal breaker. You want to be working with an agency that is confident in their own abilities to source and provide you with the best staff. In the event that the successful candidate leaves your business in the first three to six months of their employment you want to be working with a recruitment agency that is willing to refund a percentage of your fee, or better still, find you a free of charge replacement for the position.

Having all your questions answered will help make the hiring process run smoothly for your company. Try and have everything out in the open in relation to what you're looking for in an employee and what the recruitment agency can do for you.

Recruiting with the right agency is crucial to your business success, recruiting with the wrong agency can be expensive, frustrating and time consuming and ruin your business reputation.

We hope you have found this guide useful. At Vanilla, we have a passion for helping people transform their lives and their businesses by delivering a unique recruitment service. We are proud to be an independent recruitment agency and we have built our reputation on the quality of the service we provide. We do this through developing relationships and gaining an in-depth understanding of our clients needs, so we work with you to help you achieve exactly what you want.

We currently have 7 specialist recruitment teams working with jobs within Office, Sales, Marketing, Accountancy & Finance, HR, Legal and Executive.

We are truly passionate about recruitment and the positive impact it can have on people's lives and businesses, and are so confident in our ability to recruit the right person for your business that we offer a 3 month recruitment guarantee.