



**Sarah Louise Ingham** BSc (Hons) VNS, NCert (A&CC), Cert (PM&A), RVN

Sarah registered as a veterinary nurse in 2004 and spent several years working in both primary care and referral practice before commencing in 2007, and obtaining in 2010, a Degree in Veterinary Nursing Science. Sarah gained the European School of Veterinary Postgraduate Studies (ESVPS) Veterinary Nurses Certificate in Anaesthesia and Critical Care in 2011, and the ESVPS Certificate in Practice Management and Administration in 2014.

# Applying the Ten Steps of Recruitment

**Sarah Louise Ingham** BSc (Hons) VNS NCert (A&CC) Cert (PM&A) RVN MBVNA

**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses the way in which the Ten Steps to Recruitment (Faulkner 2014) may be applied during the employment process, and demonstrates possible learning outcomes. New staff members are required either to replace team members that are departing, to allow a business to expand or to implement additional actions. This article describes how to ensure that individuals with the right personal and practical skills, are selected to fit within the team.

## Introduction

Patient care should be of the utmost importance, and, to ensure this is continuously delivered, an exceptionally high standard ought to be strived for. It's therefore imperative that staffing levels are adequate and the team possesses the right skills.

Brief, unstructured and informal recruitment processes can often be inadequate. It can be difficult to identify an individual with the correct work ethic and attitude at a brief interview, and as a result, poor performance and time-keeping are common complaints in the workplace. In addition, consistently poor performance from an individual or team members creates a negative atmosphere in the workplace as a whole, so it is vital that the correct recruitment procedures are methodically applied.

Individuals responsible for employment must have both a knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the recruitment process as well as an understanding of the importance of using an appropriate recruitment model. Practice training programmes should be initiated and sufficient objectives set for managers to ensure a collaborative, productive and easy-to-manage team of employees.

## The importance of a recruitment process

To establish productivity and success in any business, it's crucial that appropriate individuals are employed with the correct balance of personal and practical ability.

Suitable staff members are an invaluable asset, as they play a critical part in the functioning of an organisation. Staff salaries generally constitute an establishment's largest expense, consequently it is exceptionally important that staff members are correctly recruited and managed.

To minimise the time and money spent on recruitment, the process should be prompt and efficient, allowing only relevant candidates to be interviewed and selected. This is more likely to result in them remaining long-term and developing with the business.

## The Ten Steps to Recruitment

The Ten Steps to Recruitment is a detailed, step-by-step process, ensuring every aspect of each stage of the recruitment process is carefully considered and evaluated. Broadly speaking, it ensures that the requirements of the role are analysed and suitably communicated, and that suitable applicants are matched to the job specification and ultimately selected. Once employed, individuals should be provided with the relevant tools and information to successfully fulfil their new role.

### Task analysis

The first step is to identify the purpose of the role and the tasks that the employee will be expected to carry out. These activities should then be analysed in order to determine the skills, knowledge, qualifications and attitude required by the successful candidate who will fill the post.



### 1. Producing a job description

A detailed job description that reflects an overall business plan should be devised to define the position. This will serve to inform applicants of the principle purpose, function and responsibilities of the role within the organisation. It also briefs candidates on the relevant skills, experience, knowledge and qualifications required by the position. This allows an applicant selection criteria to be established and prevents misunderstanding about the role for both candidate and employer at the interview.

The job title should be precise, and descriptive of the role being advertised. It should include the level of the post within the company: for example, 'Senior Veterinary Nurse'. Applicants are often influenced by the status a title represents and may place great emphasis on it. The expected hours of work should also be clearly stated along with the salary and additional factors, including whether overtime is paid and at what rate, holiday entitlement, and sickness cover. Although not a universal rule, generally salary will be commensurate with the level of experience and qualifications.

### 2. The ideal candidate's personal and skills specification

This originates from the task analysis. By creating an applicant profile for the role, an idea of the personal qualities such as attitude and practical skills required, are easily identified. This enables logical candidate selection when assessing applications, and assists during interviews.

### 3. Advertising

An advertisement is required to begin the recruitment process and attract suitable applicants. It should include the practice name and location, plus additional

information about the practice, for example the fact that it's a multidisciplinary specialist referral centre, and the number of staff currently employed. The advertisement should also contain a brief job description, outlining the personal skills required.

Additional benefits, such as a pension scheme and private health insurance, should be included, as well as information relating to where and to whom to send CVs and covering letters. However, due to the costs associated with purchasing advertisement space, the above details may need to be prioritised.

Consideration should be given to the most relevant place to advertise. For instance, placing an advert at a local agricultural college may be appropriate when searching for Ward Assistants or student Veterinary Nurses, while, the *Veterinary Times* or *Veterinary Nursing Times* will be suitable for veterinary nursing positions.

All adverts should be active for a limited period of time, with a closing date provided to prevent applications being received weeks after the position has been filled. Having to reply to each individual to inform them that the post has been filled consumes valuable time and is generally not considered necessary. However, it's seen as professional courtesy to do so.

### 4. Selecting for interview

Applications are assessed and considered against the personal and skills profile. Covering letters should also be carefully appraised for content, including the applicant's reasons for wanting the job, future ambitions, grammar, spelling and overall presentation.

CVs should be analysed for relevant qualifications, experience and employment, length of time spent in previous posts and for any employment gaps. Hobbies and interests are also of significance to help evaluate an individual's profile and thus how they may fit into the existing framework of the practice. The majority of the evaluation of the candidate's personal profile however, is often completed at the time of interview.

### 5. Interviewing

Interviews are used to determine a candidate's suitability for a role. Similarly, the applicant will be assessing whether the position is appropriate for them and will take into account the tasks involved, as well as the overall structure, objectives and culture of the organisation. The meeting should take place in a quiet room within the practice where no interruptions will occur. Ideally, all interviews for a role should take place over a relatively short period of time, to ensure that candidates remain clear in the interviewer's minds.

Candidates should be politely welcomed, introduced to their interviewers and have each member's role explained. The seating should be arranged as comfortably and informally as possible as placing someone in front of a panel of people can be quite intimidating. The members of the interview panel should be chosen carefully; ideally it should consist of the candidates' potential immediate superior and the Practice Manager. It is undesirable to have more than three people involved as this could make the interview uncomfortable for the candidates and, unless chaired efficiently, it may become disorganised.

Applicants should be given the opportunity to introduce themselves.



Asking simple questions, such as 'How was your journey?' will help put them at ease, as will asking them to talk about themselves, their family, where they live and their career to date. Explain the interview process to ensure that the candidate understands how it will be conducted and how long the meeting will last.

The interview process should be structured and precise, with the same combination of open and closed questions asked to each candidate. However, be prepared to be flexible if a new line of enquiry or discussion arises. Answers can be scored, for example marked out of five, with a greater value being put on responses to the soft skill questions relating to personal aptitude. Relevant objective and basic competency tests may prove useful additions to the recruitment model depending upon the role being advertised.

Always allow the applicant the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview and provide them with a tour of the practice during which candidates can informally meet prospective colleagues. Both parties are thereby able to gain an informal impression of one another. Similarly, as part of a second interview process, a day or part of a day 'seeing practice' may prove invaluable.

### 6. Informing unsuccessful candidates

Applicants should be briefed at the end of the interview as to how the decision will be communicated. Unsuccessful candidates must be promptly informed. This is usually accomplished via an email. Candidates should be thanked for their time and interest to ensure that they are left with a good impression of the practice.

### 7. Making the final decision

Relevant practical experience plus compatible qualifications are obviously significant considerations. However, the correct attitude and an individual's personality are also essential aspects of the selection process.

Never appoint an individual if in any doubt; it's not uncommon to re-advertise. A probationary period should be put in place to protect both parties should the placement prove unsuccessful.

Once having made a decision on who to recruit, a verbal offer is made and any points for negotiation are discussed. On agreement from both parties, a formal written offer is sent, along with a request for references and proof of qualifications, by the provision of a university transcript for example.

### 8. Feedback

In case a candidate asks for feedback as to why they were not offered the post, or raises concerns regarding the interview process, such as potential discrimination, it's best practice that all interview records, including the personal and skills profile, the questions asked and the candidate assessment form, should be kept for a minimum of six months.

### 9. The induction

Prior to a new employee beginning at a practice, inform all staff of the individual's name, role and start date. This may be communicated via the internal email system, memo or newsletter. An induction period should be arranged to last from day one to the end of at least week four. The provision of a mentor may be considered in order to help new employees familiarise themselves with the practice and their new role quickly and efficiently. This may be deemed particularly important in large and busy practices, as these can initially be quite daunting.

### 10. Managing the probationary period

Setting new employees clear targets for the probationary period is considered best practice. This allows the individual to be compared against both their anticipated fit into the organisation and their performance during the early stages.

## Discussion

By employing competent individuals, a harmonious team will evolve that consistently performs well and delivers excellent clinical practice. As individuals develop in a positive environment supported by managers who have increasing confidence in their ability, they can be provided with further responsibility and opportunities, which will further elicit high performance.

In order to implement the model described, excellent organisational, communication and leadership skills are

required, in addition to an enthusiasm and desire for the team to become a success.

A motivated manager and team leader engages and instils their interest into the group they manage, by interacting and empowering them with achievable objectives.

The Ten Step Recruitment model demonstrates the importance of applying a process, but also teaches how this should be carried out efficiently, whilst highlighting key areas to be considered along the way. Managers responsible for employment will feel confident and assured that appropriate measures are being followed.

## Conclusion

This model provides a guide and further reading and research around each point of the recruitment process should be undertaken to constantly improve the process, see the suggested reading list below. Common issues that are poorly performed during the recruitment process include, writing a job description and what information should be included in a job advertisement. Personal and skills profiles are not always recognised, nor are structured interview processes. Unsuccessful applicants are often not informed appropriately. In addition, induction and probationary periods are often not organised or managed.

The aim of this article is to enhance knowledge and understanding, which in turn increases confidence and job satisfaction for the recruitment manager. This will have a positive impact on all staff members and ultimately result in an improvement of overall practice efficiency and capability and importantly, the patients in our care.

### Reference List & Further Reading

- Faulkner, B. (2014) *Getting the right staff and Keeping the right staff*. [Lecture to Practice Management and Administration Certificate delegates]. 19th & 20th March 2014.
- Kelsey, R. (2013). *What's Stopping You? Being More Confident*. Chichester: Capstone Publishing.
- Radcliffe, S. (2012). *Leadership, Plain and Simple* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Financial Times Publishing.
- Shilcock, M. and G. Stutchfield. (2008). *Veterinary Practice Management* (2nd ed.) London: Saunders Elsevier.
- Watkins, M. (2003). *The First 90 Days*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.