



Recruitment, Strategic HR

## Ask a recruiter: surprising mistakes that hiring managers make

By **Jasmine Crittenden**

13 September, 2019

We all make mistakes, but mistakes in recruitment can be costly. Here's how you can avoid some common ones.

Written an accurate job description? Check. Prepared some heavy-hitting interview questions? Check. Read every candidate's resume thoroughly? Check.

Whether you're a novice hiring manager or you've been at the game for a few years, you're probably well-versed, most people understand the fundamentals. But what about the possibilities you haven't considered?

In part one of our 'Ask a Recruiter' series, we asked experts to share their best [out of the box interview questions](#). In part two of this series, *HRM* speaks with six recruitment specialists who share some surprising mistakes that hiring managers make – and explain how to avoid them.

## **1. Ignoring the receptionist's input**

*The mistake:*

"If a candidate behaves one way in the interview, but another when greeting your staff members, that's a red flag," says Karen Gately, founder of Corporate Dojo.

"It's a case of blowing sunshine upwards and blowing something far less pleasant downwards – having the attitude that 'you're so beneath me, I'm not going to give you the time of day.'"

*How to avoid it:*

"Go to reception and ask, 'What did you think?' You won't believe the number of times the receptionist will say, 'That candidate was an absolute...!'"

## **2. Assuming the best and brightest are looking for you**

*The mistake:*

"Sometimes, hiring managers assume everybody looking for a new role is actively looking on job boards," says Tim Newham, general manager Queensland at HR Partners.

"But, in reality, people are busy. And, even if they are looking, they might be looking passively."

*How to avoid it:*

"In some organisations, it's possible to set up an applicant tracking system, which allows you to pool your talent together. Another option is to consult a specialist recruitment company, they are in regular contact with hiring managers, passive and active candidates alike. They develop trust with their connections and understand what is happening in their markets."

## **3. Turning on, tuning in and dropping out**

*The mistake:*

"A common mistake is failing to maintain momentum throughout the recruitment process," says Eliza Kirkby, regional director at Hays Human Resources.

"Highly-skilled professionals are in demand, so you should communicate a positive message that sells your organisation, rather than driving a strong candidate elsewhere."

*How to avoid it:*

"Make sure your process is succinct, convenient and informative. Your prospective employee should be kept up-to-date and reassured at every stage."

## **4. Putting all your eggs in one basket**

*The mistake:*

"Be careful of having your heart set on one candidate," says Charlotte Perkins, manager at Frazer Jones.

"I've had clients fall in love with a candidate, then cancel all other interviews – only to find the preferred candidate takes another job. You might like the candidate, but so does everyone else! The more impressive the candidate, the more offers they're likely to get."

*How to avoid it:*

"Recruitment is a two-way process. Clients should hedge their bets. It's important to keep the process moving, so you don't have to start all over again – especially when you're running out of time."

## **5. Relaxing too soon**

*The mistake:*

"It's a mistake to think recruitment finishes on the day you make the offer," says Gately.

"The reality is that the process finishes the day the candidate successfully completes their probation period. In an interview, we can reduce the risk of making the wrong decision, but we can't test it thoroughly – not until we've worked with someone for a while."

*How to avoid it:*

"Add review points up to the probation period ending. After four weeks, look at cultural alignment; at eight weeks, assess capability; and, at twelve weeks, decide whether or not you want to confirm employment."

## **6. Failing to consider the family**

*The mistake:*

"70 per cent of Australian businesses are family-owned," says Michael Simonyi, director at LiquidGold Consultants.

"Whether you're recruiting for a corner store or a manufacturing plant, there's probably a family involved, with a particular purpose, vision and values.

"If you recruit someone into an influential role who doesn't align, it won't work out. It doesn't matter how great that person is at what they do."

*How to avoid it:*

"Instead of looking only at what a candidate has achieved, look at the environment and context in which they achieved it. Proper reference checking – in which you drill down into these things – is important. You can also conduct psychometric assessments, to determine qualities like emotional intelligence and resilience."

## **7. Forgetting you're being assessed too**

*The mistake:*

"Two hiring managers were conducting an interview, when one passed a note to the other, commenting on her thoughts on the candidate!" says Sinead Connolly, co-founder and director, Lotus People.

"Needless to say, the candidate felt instantly put out and didn't come away with a positive impression of the company."

*How to avoid it:*

"Always, always be respectful in interview. Someone has taken time out of their day to meet you. It's important to keep that in mind and be courteous."

## **8. Saying too much, especially in writing**

*The mistake:*

This one is particularly an issue with internal candidates, but sometimes happens with external candidates. It's where you accidentally let them see feedback you hadn't intended for their eyes.

"We've had a couple of situations in which hiring managers shared negative feedback about a candidate over email, only to discover the candidate – often an executive assistant – had access to the inbox!" says Connolly.

*How to avoid it:*

"Never put anything negative in writing. Often your devices are synced and you never know who is going to see it!"