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E-BOOK RESOURCE

ARE YOU A MAIN CONTRACTOR LOOKING TO ATTRACT THE TOP TALENT IN THE INDUSTRY?

THIS IS THE GUIDE FOR YOU!

It'll tell you how to understand what skills and expertise your business needs to remain relevant in the future. Plus get insights on how to attract and hire the top people in the industry.

FIND OUT:

- How to attract top talent
- How to accurately scope the role
- How to create compelling job descriptions
- Powerful interviewing techniques
- How & when to use executive search

About the Author:

Rupert Price has over 20 years' experience working in the resourcing industry, fifteen which have been specializing in Infrastructure and Utilities recruitment. He has a passion for recruitment and enjoys working at all levels across a diverse range of clients.

Rupert graduated in 1992 with a BA (Hons) in Business Studies from Oxford Brookes University. In the first six years of his recruitment career he worked in search and selection and Interim for Harvey Nash plc. and Glotel plc. respectively.

In 2000 Rupert joined CPW Recruitment and then in 2011 he founded Ellis Fox Recruitment. This has allowed Rupert to build an honest, relationship driven recruitment business that focuses on best practice and instinct.

"I've learnt a lot about recruitment practice in the companies I've worked with – how to operate, but crucially, how not to. I am proud that Ellis Fox combines support and honesty with commercial results. All wrapped up with a bit of personality."

ELLIS FOX
TOP TALENT FOR MAIN CONTRACTORS

Introduction:

As a Hiring Manager you are evaluated based on your ability to attract and land the best talent that exists in the industry. With the ongoing skills shortage in the construction industry, especially when it comes to senior positions, fulfilling your mandate effectively can be a challenge.

While it may sometimes feel as though you're swimming upstream, making a conscious effort to continually review and improve your approach to attracting and securing the best talent can contribute to your success.

This eBook will share with you top techniques and best practices to help you create a more effective strategy to win the war for talent for your organisation. It is divided into three parts: How to attract top talent; How to recruit top talent; and How to retain top talent so that your organisation can remain competitive in the marketplace.

PART 1 - How to attract Top Talent

Quality candidates are in high demand, which means that companies are having to work harder to attract top talent. When there's a vacancy, it's not as simple as hanging up a sign and expecting good quality applications to come rushing in.

Candidates can afford to be choosey, to look for opportunities that will help them further their career and expand their professional knowledge. In as much as companies are looking for the right candidate to fill the role, **candidates too are looking for the right kind of workplace** where the organizational culture aligns with their own personal values and there's opportunity for growth and career progression.

TO ATTRACT TOP TALENT CREATE SELLING POINTS THAT ARE UNIQUE TO THE ROLE ADVERTISED & YOUR ORGANIZATION. IT MUST BE MORE THAN JUST A JOB DESCRIPTION.

To attract top talent you need to consider **what makes your organization a great place to work?** It is a place open to innovation and developing technologies? What is the management structure and style? Are new ideas welcomed or are policies set in stone? Think about what potential employees would look for and what type of things would be attractive to senior level applicants.

Top attraction and retention drivers by age

	< 30	30 – 39	40 – 49	50+
1	Base pay/Salary	Base pay/Salary	Base pay/Salary	Base pay/Salary
2	Job security Career advancement opportunities	Job security Career advancement opportunities	Job security Career advancement opportunities	Job security Trust/Confidence in senior leadership
3	Career advancement opportunities Length of commute	Career advancement opportunities Trust/Confidence in senior leadership	Career advancement opportunities Trust/Confidence in senior leadership	Challenging work Career advancement opportunities
4	Learning and development opportunities Manage/Limit work-related stress	Learning and development opportunities Relationship with supervisor/manager	Organization's reputation as good employer Job security	Organization's reputation as good employer Job security
5	Organization's reputation as good employer Trust/Confidence in senior leadership	Challenging work Length of commute	Challenging work Relationship with supervisor/manager	Career advancement opportunities Relationship with supervisor/manager

Attraction driver Retention driver

Source: Towers Watson 2014 Global Workforce Study

Often the company vision and values set the tone for the company culture, as does executive leadership. In particular if your organization is experiencing change and transition and you're looking for a senior person to fill the gap, you will need to ensure that the right kind of **organizational support** exists for them to be able to operate effectively. There's nothing more frustrating than to be brought in to implement change only to be met with resistance, opposition and red tape at every turn.

Potential employers and employees will carry different perspectives as can be viewed in the table below. Hiring managers should be mindful of this when considering how to showcase a particular role so that it attracts the right kind of talent.

Figure 1. Top attraction drivers — Employer versus employee view

	Employer view — Talent Management and Rewards Study	Employee view — Global Workforce Study
1	Career advancement opportunities	Base pay/Salary
2	Base pay/Salary	Job security
3	Challenging work	Career advancement opportunities
4	Organization's reputation as good employer	Learning and development opportunities
5	Organization's mission/vision/values	Challenging work
6	Learning and development opportunities	Organization's reputation as good employer
7	Job security	Vacation/Paid time off

Source: Towers Watson 2014 Global Workforce Study

Reality Check - Why would people work for your organization?

Main contractors, especially at tier one level are typically very structured and hierarchical organisations. Most are run with a traditional top down managerial style, which in today's marketplace is not always the most effective approach, especially if the business wants to attract younger talent.

Despite what the executive perspective of the organization might be, to obtain a more realistic viewpoint it's helpful to broaden the opinion base. You can go about this is the following ways:

1. **Survey current employees** anonymously asking them the best and worst aspects of their job and what they would change if they could.
2. **Conduct exit interviews** following resignations, while past employees may not want to spill all the dirt, you should be able to at least get an indication of their reasons for leaving.
3. **Industry news sites and journals** provide an insightful third party perception of an organisation as well as the role they play within the industry.
4. **Public perspective.** Thanks to online search, gaining this perspective has become much easier. Opinions can be found in news articles as well as on social media.

Remember that **before a candidate walks through the door** and sits down for an interview, **they will already have formed an opinion about the organization** based on what information is out there. If you want to start attracting top talent you need to make sure that your organization has something to offer and is one that people want to work for.

The harsh reality is that there is a shortage of skills in the construction industry, especially at a senior level. As a result top candidates can afford to be choosey.

If you want attract the best in the business your organization needs to be a worthy consideration for them that goes beyond the salary package.

> "IF YOU ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE SOMEONE'S EMPLOYER, THEN YOU HAVE A **MORAL OBLIGATION** TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE DO LOOK FORWARD TO COMING TO WORK IN THE MORNING."
>
> *JOHN MACKEY – WHOLE FOODS CEO*

WHAT ATTRACTS GREAT TALENT?

- ✓ Opportunity to make an impact in the organization and industry
- ✓ Taking on leadership roles that address a particular challenge
- ✓ Opportunities to work with emerging technologies
- ✓ Flexibility in working conditions
- ✓ Additional benefits such as leave, share options or bonuses
- ✓ Freedom to make decisions and implement change
- ✓ Positive and dynamic work environment

Why are the best candidates saying 'no' to joining your organization?

As we know the best talent is very much in demand in the Infrastructure, Utilities and Built environment. The 'balance of power' is drifting back in favour of the candidate.

However, many employers, especially CEOs and directors, are still of the belief that it is only a matter of hanging up a vacancy sign and a queue of good applicants will appear.

Not so. Indeed, quality candidates are being well looked after by their current employers and in many cases, being wooed by more than one prospective company if they are considering a move. So what are the 3 most common reasons that your employment offer will be refused?

I conducted a snap survey and here are the top 3 issues that lead to rejection:

1. The interview process taking too long. (This was by far the biggest issue).

Whilst candidates expect to have to work hard for the best jobs, protracted selection procedures are a big turn-off. People read in to this that the organization is slow to make all decisions and they also feel under-valued.

2. Too much grilling and not enough selling.

As I say above, people have no problem answering difficult questions or tough interviews but they will make their decision on the basis of the opportunity, quality of the team and very importantly growth prospects. Interviewing should involve buying and selling.

3. Poor handling of the actual offer process.

This often includes trying to secure the candidate at lower than the indicated range. It can be a terrible waste of time and money having got through a recruitment campaign and then needing to start again perhaps for the sake of only a few thousand pounds.

The bottom line is that to make recruitment effective, there needs to be clear strategy in place that is followed through at every step of the process. Recruitment is an investment not an expense. It should be treated with the attention to detail that will help it yield the desired return.

PART 2 – Optimise the recruitment process

Recruitment costs and if you get it wrong it becomes even more expensive. That is why every step of the process must be carried out effectively to ensure that the human capital acquired achieves a return for the business. We've spoken about how to attract top talent, now we dig down into core aspects of the recruitment process and how to use the recruitment resources you have more effectively.

Where to look for talent?

Before looking externally consider the resources you already have within the organization, not only in terms of potential for promotion but also in terms of people they might know within the industry.

Employee referral schemes:

This is a great way to reach out to the network of those you already employ and can save you great expense on recruitment agency fees. Better still, you're likely to get someone who is a good fit with the company and can hit the ground running. With a personal recommendation from one of your trusted employees, you're less likely to be confronted by any surprises.

DO ***offer a large enough incentive to make it worthwhile***

You need to make it worthwhile for someone to go to the effort of referring a friend. Gift vouchers and other incentives are ok, but cash is even better. Offer as much as you can realistically afford.

DON'T ***make it complicated.***

Make sure the process is as simple as possible, from the form (or other means) by which the referral is made to the rules. Don't, for instance, make it that the employee referral form has to be filled in within one hour of the application reaching your HR department. The easier the system is to use, the more likely you'll get repeat referrals.

Industrywide search:

While there is the opportunity to cast the net wider when posting jobs out to the industry, it's not without its drawbacks. This is where scoping the role and creating compelling job descriptions are critically important.

To optimize the recruitment process you want to avoid making these 5 common mistakes:

1. Attracting quantity instead of quality

One of the biggest pain points in recruitment is the volume of unqualified applications. In other words, we're getting good at attracting the applicants we don't want. This is time consuming and leads to a bad candidate experience.

So, you need to work out whom you do want. What are the competencies and capabilities you need? What is the scope of the role? A job description can't be too vague, otherwise a lot of people may think that they qualify when they don't.

2. Job description or shopping list?

Reading a job description shouldn't be like a visit to the supermarket for job seekers. They don't want a long list of achievements, experiences and qualifications that need ticking off.

Instead, they want to understand more about the purpose and context of the role, what it will contribute to the overall business and how valuable it is. Applicants don't respond to lists, they buy into a vision. And good people apply because of the work they will be doing, not the skills they already possess.

3. Showcasing specifics instead of company characteristics

Some of the company specifics will be important – size, industry sector, location – but they won't be inspiring the best talent to action. Applicants want to know more about culture, opportunities for development and business values. They will be using sites like Glassdoor to check out your employer brand and the application process, so the job description will need to reflect what they may find.

4. Keeping it inside the box

Too prescriptive a job description may leave hiring managers thinking they need to find someone who ticks all the boxes right now, but this would be the wrong way to approach this process. A candidate who is ready for the role straight away and has already done a similar one elsewhere may find no scope to develop and want to move on quickly.

The hiring manager needs to think more outside the box than focus on ticking a few of them off – and that means looking for someone who has potential, can develop the role and will fit well with the team. You need a job description that will encourage people like that to apply.

5. Targeting the recruiter instead of the reader

Most important of all is to write a punchy job description that will inspire applicants and offer something they want to be a part of. This means writing the job description for the job seeker, not for the recruiter or hiring manager.

Too many descriptions are written for the recruiter and hiring manager and are full of activities they want someone to do and the previous experience they think they need, but the way to encourage applications from the people who can make a real difference to the business is to write with them in mind.

Truth is, the best candidates will almost certainly not have the checklist of experience that initially goes into a job description. They may have less experience or a different skill-set, but will almost certainly have the desire, talent and potential you need. Traditional job descriptions might filter them out as they presume that they aren't the candidates you're looking for.

You need to stop writing job descriptions that pre-qualify and start writing them to generate interest and drive applications from the people who can really add value to your business.

PART 3 - Creating compelling job descriptions

and why it will make all the difference to your recruitment efforts:

A job description is one of the most crucial parts of the hiring process. It sets the tone for everything that follows and defines the type of person you're looking for and their skills and capabilities. It will set hiring manager expectations and will no doubt also be the starting point for setting expectations for the new incumbent.

Yet we usually began a job description with the person who has been doing the role (or a very similar one) most recently. Inevitably, the job description will then become a replica description of that person's background and the work they did. This will set in motion a search for a similar person — and that could be wrong. Jobs evolve, technologies change and organizations develop which means that the role you have now is likely to be different from the one your last employee did.

The job description is usually written as an internal document, but then gets sent out to candidates when they apply. It's also used as the basis for job advertisements and will often double as a pre-screening checklist for recruiters looking to shortlist for interview. Instead of thinking internally, you need to think about how it will look externally.

DO:

- ✓ Focus on selling the role
- ✓ Use words that help people visualize the position
- ✓ Explain the greater purpose in the role
- ✓ Be clear on expectations and responsibilities
- ✓ Sell the benefits of the position and the company
- ✓ Describe the type of personality that would be suited to the role

DON'T:

- Make a list of skills only
- Focus only on daily responsibilities
- Describe the most recent person who has been in the role
- Leave out key salary benefits
- Make the job description vague
- Include irrelevant information

Example of a compelling Job Description:

Role:	**Business Development & Bid Director**
Location:	**London, UK**
Sector:	**Infrastructure, Highways**
Salary:	**Six-Figure Salary plus benefits**
Description:	**The objective of this role is to help grow the existing Highways business, particularly with the routes within Highways England. This role will have P&L accountability. The successful candidate will get a real 'kick' out of working with people (especially clients) – establishing rapport and relationships with others quickly and easily and likes nothing more than deepening these to form long lasting relationships. This individual will thrive on making connections between people, instinctively making links and introductions to create greater value – for themselves, for the organisation and for the client.**

Skills / Experience required:

1. **Ideally candidates will have experience of working within the highways sector and be able to demonstrate their ability and experience of developing strategic relationships with clients and partners, finding new ways to add significant value to the client's agenda.**
2. **This individual will also have a good understanding of key account management, first class service provision and will be able to demonstrate expertise and experience in the following areas:**
3. **Experience of working with Local Authorities and Highways England and regionally based contractors within the strategic highways marketplace.**
4. **Understanding of Highways England & Local Authority markets.**
5. **Proven track record of building effective networks and identifying/securing new opportunities through new value propositions and partnering with clients.**

Note the conversational tone of the job description and how much it focusses on the personality aspect of the position. How it describes in a fair amount of detail what will make the role enjoyable.

There's no list of qualifications or skills, simply a description of the abilities the applicant will need to have in order to do well in the role. Instead it aims to speak directly to potential applications, inviting them to apply.

The description makes the job sound interesting, challenging and exciting – all the elements that will attract a potential job seeker at that level.

In addition, the description is very clear on the expectations the successful candidate will need to deliver on. i.e. profit and loss accountability. As well as the level of responsibility within the organization.

PART 4 – SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

The construction employment marketplace has changed significantly in the past decade. It is very different to what it was five years ago, in fact, it's even different to what it was a year ago.

Employees, especially those at the top of their game, no longer feel lucky to have a job. (It could be argued that they never felt that way; after all, we're talking about the best candidates.)

Unfortunately, some companies' hiring managers are operating as if it's 2009, mistakenly believing that the only person who has to sell anything during a job interview is the candidate. That simply is NOT the case. Actually, those who adhere to this view significantly reduce the chances that they will hire a top candidate.

When it comes to top tier candidates, you're not just interviewing them, they are interviewing you as well. So what should you be doing during an interview? That's right. SELLING!

However, what is it, exactly, that you should be selling?

Below are five points for selling your employment opportunity to a candidate during the interview:

1. **The position itself**
   This, of course, makes the most sense. However, it goes beyond just the job description. That can be tedious and bland if all you talk about are requirements, skills, and experience. If this is a top candidate, they already meet those criteria. Instead, make it compelling.

2. **The position's potential for growth**
   Go beyond the position in its current form and discuss what the position could be and how the position ties into the company's plans for the future. A-team candidates thrive on vision, so share that vision with them.

3. **The company's potential for growth**
   Part of sharing that vision is sharing the company's potential for achieving growth within the marketplace. Top candidates want to be part of a winner, so show them how your company already is a winner and will be in the future.

4. **The company's culture**
   This point is often overlooked, but doing so can be a serious mistake. The candidate wants to know that the position is going to be a fit, and that includes how they fit into the company's culture. You must be able to communicate that to them.

5. **The candidate's potential for growth**
   When you get right down to it, this whole process is about the candidate, mainly because they are the one being sold. They want to know how making the leap to a new company is going to benefit them, especially in regards to the growth and overall well-being of their career.

Create a positive interview atmosphere

The best interviews take place in a relaxed atmosphere, because it takes the pressure out of the situation. When this is the case, and candidates are made to feel comfortable, then they are more likely to speak naturally and share more information about themselves. Don't underestimate the value of rapport building.

CREATE A RELAXED INTERVIEW ATMOSPHERE BY FOCUSSING ON HAVING A CONVERSATION RATHER THAN CONDUCTING AN ITERROGATION.

3 Ways to build rapport in an interview:

- Share a positive personal experience of working in the company. Shifting the focus to yourself will help candidates relax as they will not feel as though it's only them under the spotlight.
- Share anecdotal information about the company that illustrates what the company culture is like. This can be a specific event or project and should highlight a business success.
- Make small talk, ask about their family, or even talk about the weather. Small talk helps to break the ice and lead into more serious conversation.

Structuring the interview

While it's good to have a relaxed atmosphere, this doesn't mean that one should wing it. Having an interview structure or outline will ensure that all the important points of the interview that need to be discussed are covered. Also if there is a break in the interview, awkward silences can be avoided by simply referring back to the interview outline. It gives you a point to pick up on and know what question to move onto next. More importantly, an interview structure helps you better evaluate the candidate as it serves as a cue to remind you what was discussed after the interview has been concluded.

PART 5 – EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Executive search is a very specialized area of recruiting. It requires someone who is experienced and skilled at dealing with top executives and knows how to approach the process properly.

Most candidates who fit the bill for executive positions aren't necessarily looking to move. After all if they are good at what they do and are achieving results in their current organisation, it will take more than a mediocre offer for them to consider moving.

Executive search is also a delicate process requiring the highest level of confidentiality and professionalism. There's a lot at stake, both for the companies and the potential candidates. As a hiring manager you need to know the recruiter you work with us up to the task.

Here are a few considerations to take into account.

- Executive search is suited to senior recruiters with more than 10 years recruiting experience.
- The recruiter should be a niche specialist in the industry and have a broad network of contacts to draw on.
- They should have a strong reputation within the industry and be able to provide references from successful placements.
- The recruiter will take the time to meet with you in person and visit the company so that they can have a thorough understanding of the business and its culture.

- They will help you scope the role and define the job description and provide assistance and advice when required. More importantly they will provide quality candidates for interview.

- Executive search tends to take longer, but once suitable candidates are identified and interviewed, be prepared to move quickly to secure the best person for the role.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS NEEDED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY:

- Strong understanding of emerging technologies and how they can be applied to projects and processes to make them more efficient.
- Excellent people and negotiation skills and the ability to deal with all kinds of people on all levels of the organization.
- Honesty, transparency and accountability. In an industry that's in crisis, people want to know who they can trust.
- Strategic decision making that allows for adaptation and change so that the organization can be more agile in the marketplace.
- Focus on developing and supporting a culture of learning to encourage innovation on all levels of the organization.

CONCLUSION

Successfully attracting and hiring top talent requires a recruitment partner that understands your business, the industry that you operate in and can anticipate your recruitment needs. With a broad network of industry contacts, they should be able to provide quality candidates that can add tangible value to your organization.

At Ellis Fox, we specialize in recruiting top talent for the top 50 main contractors and take building relationships seriously so that we can always provide the best recruitment service to our candidates and clients. Finding top talent is our specialty, and we can help you find the people you need.

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