

How to hire your first employee in 2011

Congratulations! Your start-up has reached a point at which you have to hire someone in order to keep growing. This is an exciting and daunting time for most new businesses.



So how do you ensure that you not only hire (and then keep) the best person, but also stay on the right side of any legislative concerns?

Stop! Prepare...

Before doing anything else you must prepare. Write a clear and concise job description for both the newcomer and for yourself.

“But I know what I do!” I hear you cry, “The new person will do XYZ, and I’ll do everything else...”

Well, that only works when there is just you to think about. The new person will need to understand their role and responsibilities, and also see how that fits within the existing structure.

You will also need to clearly identify your role so that you know what responsibilities you are handing off to the newcomer, and which you will retain (at least until employee number two comes along).

Once you have outlined the job descriptions, ensure you are clear about what sort of salary you are prepared to pay your new employee.

What qualities and skills will the new person need? What culture are you looking to build? You may think that your business is too small to have a culture, but it will have one, and now is the time to set out your values and goals so that you can communicate them to your new staff member. The company you want to be starts here.

Find the person

Depending on your industry, this may involve advertising, networking, recruitment agencies, or referrals.

Ensure you reply to every applicant, even if they are unsuccessful. From here you can create a short-list. Interview a selection of people, so that you can make an informed decision.

Interview

Think about the interview process you want to follow. Do you require the applicant to undergo any sort of skills testing or psychometric testing? Is it necessary that they have a medical examination for your line of work?

Think back to the criteria that you stipulated were necessary. How can you best evaluate these in an interview? Asking a candidate if they are highly motivated is likely to get you a 'yes' answer, and tell you nothing at all.

Asking a candidate to tell you about a situation in which they had to achieve a particular target, specifying how they went about it and what motivated them to succeed, will give you more of an insight.

Brush up on your knowledge of discrimination legislation. There are questions that should never be asked at interview, including those relating to an applicant's age, marital status, race, or religion (among others). Ensure that you are very clear about what you can and cannot ask.

Make sure your candidate brings original documents of all relevant qualifications and certificates, along with proof of identity which, where necessary, should include their right to work in Australia.

Background checking

So you have found your first employee. Now make sure that no nasty surprises await you. Conduct reference checks, talking to at least two professional referees who supervised your applicant (ie., not their best friend from another team).

Ensure that they can validate your applicant's work dates and responsibilities, and that you ask enough questions to confirm/ reject your current opinion of that applicant and their abilities.

Offer

Regardless of whether the applicant has accepted your offer verbally, make sure that you put it in writing.

Include start date, salary and benefits, an employment contract (what do you mean you don't have one? Put one together, and make sure a lawyer reads over it too), and details of any other working

conditions that your new employee will need to know.

Ensure that your applicant signs and returns the contract to you, so that you have a copy on record.

Induction

Before the new employee is due to start, prepare for their first day. Make sure that their working environment is ready. Do they have a chair/desk/equipment? Is there somewhere they can keep their lunch?

First impressions are important. Ensure that you have a plan of action for the first day. Perhaps you will start by taking them for a coffee, and giving them a handbook of useful information, then you might show them around the working environment and talk to them about health and safety issues or fire procedure.

You may need to conduct a training session, building in breaks where they can review written information (and give you a well-earned break too). Plan the first day well and it will run smoothly for you and your new employee.

Paperwork

Determine whether or not superannuation payments are due to your new staff member. If so, they will need to complete a super form.

You will also want them to complete a tax file number declaration, and you can obtain the forms for this off the ATO website. Ask them to complete an employee record form, detailing address, phone numbers, emergency contact information and bank account details.

First day

You're ready to go! Good luck and have fun. Remember, this is an exciting time for you, so let that show and make it an exciting time for your first employee too.

(2010). *How to hire your first employee in 2011* Available:
<http://www.startupsmart.com.au/management/2010-12-20/how-to-hire-your-first-employee-in-2011.html>

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