



RECRUITMENT

A few guidelines for Project Officers

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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We would like to stress here that these technical notes are not prescriptive. Their purpose is not to "say what should be done" but to present experiences that have given positive results in the context in which they were carried out.

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INTER AIDE

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PRATIQUES

Réseau d'échanges d'idées et de méthodes pour des actions de développement

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I. Introduction

This document is not meant to be a “recruitment handbook”, neither does it encompass all the aspects related to recruitment. These are just a few tips taken out from the recruitment experience at Inter Aide which we hope can be useful to Inter Aide project officers and partners.

There are four main steps that you need to take in a recruitment process :

1. *Precisely define your needs* and the type of work you want to recruit for
2. Decide *how and where you are going to release the job offer* in order to attract relevant candidates
3. *Set a guideline* which is going to allow you to select the right candidates
4. *Take the final decision* between preselected candidates

Once the recruitment process is over, another phase starts which must not be neglected : the integration phase.

NOTA BENE :

It is very important to *establish a schedule* in advance for your recruitments : a recruitment process can take from one week up to three of four months to complete.

This is the reason why you should *anticipate as much as possible* the moves and changes of human resources in your organisation.



II. YOUR NEEDS

A recruitment process always answers to a special need in your organisation :

1. You have to replace someone : there is *a position available* in your organisation
2. You have a special need, which can be temporary or permanent : this is *a job creation*

Even if the job already exists, you really need to pay attention to this first step in the recruitment process.

Indeed, this is the ideal time to :

- go over a position and think about its evolution
- save a lot of time by defining precisely the criteria for this next recruitment
- engage a collective reflection about your organisation if several collaborators are going to be professionally involved with the new person

⇒ The recruitment context

In order to define your needs and the job which is going to meet them, you have to answer the following questions :

1. *Why do I need to recruit a new person ?*

Replacement / job creation

2. *What is this job going to be ?*

Job title

5. *What are the main and secondary tasks for this job ?*

6. *Who is this person going to work with ?*

Hierarchical position / functional relations

7. *Where is this job located ?*

8. *What are the working hours ?*



Full time / part time ; day work / night work, etc.

9. *What are the status and compensation/benefits ?*

Permanent / temporary job

Salary

Other benefits

10. *What is the job evolution prospect?*

11. *What are the specific advantages and difficulties of the job ?*

For instance : advantages can be the interest of the job, the location, the image of the organisation etc. Difficulties can be the location, the salary etc.

⇒ **The recruitment criteria : the “profile” of the candidate**

You have to define the profile of the person you need to carry out the tasks. There are always many criteria to take into account. But always remember that *there is no ideal candidate* : you have to set priorities and allow a few other secondary criteria.

There are different types of criteria :

➤ *Formal criteria*

Education

Professional experience : amount, type of job, responsibilities, job sector etc.

Specific abilities and technical skills

Social skills : communication ability, flexibility, etc.

Financial expectations

➤ *Other important criteria*

There are other criteria that can be very important for the job specific conditions, which cannot be mentioned in the job offer, as they might constitute illegal discrimination :

These are : age, sex and family situation for example.

➤ *The “absolute criteria”*

Bearing all these criteria in mind, you have to prioritise the ones which are really decisive. These are the *absolute criteria*. There are not always the most obvious ones. For example, even if a certain professional experience might be desirable, it can be the personality that matters first.

Once the job context and the profile are clearly defined, the best is to prepare two job descriptions :

- one which is going to be the *job offer* and is going to be released on different supports
- a more exhaustive one which is going to be dedicated to *internal use* and sums up the different elements mentioned above.



⇒ The job description : an example

***INTER AIDE** - a non-profit organisation
which implements development programmes
in 7 different countries
(Philippines, India, Madagascar, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi).
Effective : 70 people. Annual budget : 6 M€*

Is currently looking for a

Project Officer for a micro-finance programme in Antanarivo, Madagascar

Description

- *implementing the technical part of the programme*
- *recruiting and managing a team of (...) people*
- *etc.*

Minimum requirements

- *Postgraduate education in Economics*
- *First professional experience (2 years minimum) either in the financial field, or on a similar programme*
- *Excellent computer skills*
- *Interest for micro-finance and development questions*
- *Fluent English*

Position type and salary

Permanent contract

...€ monthly salary + medical insurance (you do not need to give the exact salary on the job add)

Position to be filled before ../../..

Contact

*Send application (CV + covering letter) **under reference code URB/TANA** to
Inter Aide, 44 rue de la Paroisse, 78 000 Versailles - France*

A good job offer should be *attractive enough* for good candidates but should also enable you to *discourage irrelevant applications*. Being very precise about the minimum requirements will really allow you to save a lot of time in the selection phase.



III. WHERE TO FIND CANDIDATES

There are several sources of applications : the following are the most common.

⇒ Publish a job offer

The press / the Internet : publishing a job offer in the press is the most obvious way to attract candidates. The best option is to choose a few publications that are somehow linked to your activity in order to “target” the right people. There often are a lot of publications that do not charge you for the adds : try and get as much information as possible about the different options.

There are also very often a “*national employment agency*” in your country where you can advertise about vacancies in your organisation.

Remember recruiting is also *a way to advertise about your organisation and its activities* : that is also why the choice of the medium and the quality of the job offer are crucial. A lot of people will discover your organisation through a job offer.

You can advertise for several positions, but you will always get more applications if you only release *one job offer at the time*.

⇒ Open applications and internal candidates files

➤ Open applications

Once you start recruiting for your organisation, you very often get applications even when you do not search for people : these are “open applications”.

It is very important to let these people know that even if you are not recruiting at the moment, you will keep their resumes and will contact them if there is a new opportunity.

If you have time, an option is also to meet these candidates in order to get to know them and inform them about your activity and the kind of work they could do.

➤ Create an application file

Special attention should be given to all applications, as they can prove to be useful in the future. You can create a file where to keep interesting resumes. Ideally, the best is to take time to set different files according to the type of position for which you can need new people:

administrative assistants, field workers, etc.

Then, when you start looking for a new collaborator, you can look up into this file and select a few applications

⇒ Your network

It is always a good idea to let your collaborators and work partners know that you are recruiting. This proves to be very efficient on the field.

Nevertheless, you have to be really careful with the candidates coming from this “network” and make sure they go through *the same selection process as every other candidate*.

A precise job description also allows you to say “no” much more easily.



IV. SELECTING THE RIGHT CANDIDATES

⇒ First selection

Once you have issued a job offer, you can set a *deadline for the examination of all applications*. The first selection phase consists in reviewing all the applications you received for a given position. Once you have selected the candidates who fulfill the minimum requirements, you can start a second selection, setting a multiple criteria analysis like the following :

➤ *Analysing the applications*

Elements based on the resume

	-	+/-	+	++
Clarity, consistency and accuracy of the resume				
Education (level and subject)				
Languages				
Professional experience				
Associative experience				
etc.				

Specific points to be explained during the interview

.....
.....
.....

Elements based on the covering letter

	-	+/-	+	++
Presentation of the letter				
Writing skills				
Clarity of the motivations				

Once you have done this, you can classify the applications :

+ : candidates you want to meet for an interview

- : candidates who do not suit your requirements. Negative answer.

+/- : “stand-by” candidates whom you can keep in order to have a “pool” of possible candidates



➤ *Preselection*

There are two additional methods you can use in order to decide among the candidates you are going to meet for an interview – “candidates +”. Again, this is about saving time...

You do not need to use both : these are going to provide you with rather similar elements of information. From experience, a phone call is always a very good way to “test” candidates and get a first insight on their motivations and ability to fulfill the required tasks.

1. **The additional survey** : you can send a questionnaire which will allow you to obtain elements of information which were not in the candidates’ applications. ,
2. **A preliminary phone interview** : this is the best option, if you have the time and possibility to do it.

Both methods can be useful in order to check objective elements :

About the candidate’s availability and engagement : Is the candidate available? If not, when could he start working? Does the salary and other conditions suit his own requirements? How long does he think he could work?

About the candidates’ former experiences and acquired skills : such as the level of experience in the management area (how long, how many persons etc.), writing capacities (ask for precise examples). This is a way for you to test the veracity of the resume.

The phone interview will also give you a first impression on the personality and motivations
Here is a list of possible questions you can ask :

- *Why does the job interest you ?*
- *Among the different tasks implied, which ones interest you most ?*
- *What skills do you have which you think could be useful for this job ?*
- *What do you think of the conditions (salary, location etc.) / What are your expectations ?*

Just like during the interview, you have to ask “open” questions and let the candidate talk.
Also make sure that the candidate understood the job offer and knows exactly the kind of work he is applying for.

⇒ **The interview**

➤ *The application form*

Before beginning the interview, you can ask the candidate to fill out an application form.

This should provide you with :

- homogeneous information about all the applicants
- additional information such as professional references, and you can also ask the candidate to write down a brief self-portrait.

➤ *Golden rules*

In order to be as efficient and professional as possible, it is important that certain rules be respected during the interview :

- the interview is not a simple conversation
- the interview is not a monologue



- the interview is not a police cross-examination, nor a confession : it is not the time and place to express moral judgements
- the interview is not either an ethical discussion : it is important that you know where the candidate stands, but you should not oppose your own personal views on any aspects.

➤ *A few tips*

The candidate is going to be in self-control in order to show his best angle and induce you to have a positive impression. He is then going to try to protect himself from everything that he considers unfavourable. He can for example :

- avoid talking
- lie deliberately
- agree on negative aspects and try to justify them with false reasons
- get angry about your questions

In order to get the most out of the interview, here are a few tips that you can use :

There is a double question which has to guide you through the interview : Is this candidate suited for the job ? Is the job suited for the candidate ?

1. Prepare the interview

Before starting the interview, you have to ask yourself :

- what information do I already have ? (read again the resume, letter and application form)
- what information do I need (prepare a check-list)
- what style of interview do I choose ?
- what can the candidate know about our organisation, our activity, the post and about my own responsibilities?

2. Arrange a suitable place for the interview

Be in a calm environment, make sure you are not going to get disturbed by noise, phone calls. Ideally the interview has to take place in an isolated room, in order to favour exchange and allow confidentiality.

3. Create the conditions for the candidate to reveal himself

- put him at ease : if he is nervous he will only partially answer your questions and will be less natural and spontaneous
- avoid making the candidate wait before the interview
- pay attention to his/her attitude
- begin the interview by presenting yourself and explaining the three points of the interview

4. The three points of the interview

- the candidate presents himself
- you present the association and the specific post
- you ask the candidate to express his feelings towards what has been said about the work and suggest him to ask questions



5. Ask questions which will cover

- childhood and teenage years
- education
- professional training
- professional history
- family situation
- motivation
- personality

Of course you do not need to ask questions such as “tell me about your childhood” which would sound rather intrusive and tactless, but rather focus on specific points and then try to get information from there such as “where were you born? Did you like the school where you went to?”.

Always have in mind that the applicants come from various backgrounds and have various levels of expression, education and training : every application should be considered according to these specificities.

6. Take notes

7. Don't be too rigid about the order of the questions. You can always ask more specific questions in a second period.

8. Adapt your questions and attitude to the candidate

9. Insist on dates and connections between different experiences : it is a good way to detect lack of honesty

10. Carefully check contradictory points and imprecisions without letting the candidate know what information you already have (from former employers)

11. Take your time. It is very often because of lack of time that you miss out on important elements.

12. Avoid explicit questions which imply a specific answer – ask “open questions”

13. Do not let the candidate know about the issue of his application straight away.
End the interview by informing the candidate about the next step, precisising that he will get an oral or a written answer. If there is a doubt about the candidate's motivation, you can also suggest that he takes time to think about it and let him get back to you.

14. How many interviews?

It is useful to have at least two interviews with different persons in the organisation. You will be less influenced by your first impression if you can confront your opinion to someone else's. You can first have a general interview and then a more technical one.



15. Avoid the following risks

- tiredness : do not schedule a whole day for interviews
- personal inclination : do not get too influenced by the candidate's charm (and vice versa)
- string-pulling : a good candidate does not need to be too "strongly recommended"
- imperatively avoid such subjects as religion, sexuality, politics. Do not ask a woman whether she is pregnant.

➤ *Analysing the resume during the interview*

A resume contains a certain amount of information, which can be more or less exhaustive and precise. As we saw earlier, the resume in itself tells you a lot about the candidate : the way it is presented, the level of preciseness and accuracy it shows are very important indications about the candidate. As it is, it provides you with *a framework for the interview*.

The aim of the interview is to assess the candidate's acquired knowledge and achievements, a sort of professional and personal diagnosis, which will allow you to weigh the candidate's potential and capacity to evolve in new situations, with new responsibilities.

During the interview, every piece of information must be objectively stated and clarified, in order to allow the interviewer to deduce other useful information, on the candidate's personality for instance.

You have to observe and listen carefully to the candidate, in an "active" way, on several levels of understanding which go beyond words. During the whole interview, the candidate gives you information from which you can understand elements of personality.

The way the candidate talks is also important, his vocabulary, his tone of voice, his physical attitude, his look, all these elements provide you with subjective information which all the more interesting, for they are less under control than when you directly ask the candidate to tell you about himself.

The analysis of a CV thus consists of two aspects :

- first level : countercheck, explanation and development of objective information
- second level : search for an understanding of everything that is linked to motivation, "personal drives", personality

Take the different objective pieces of information on the resume (left side of the sheet), and see which personal and more subjective elements (right side of the sheet) you can deduct from it :



CIVIL STATUS

Last name	Origin : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- social- geographical- socio professional- cultural
First name	
Date / place of birth	Where are the personal roots ?
Nationality	
Address	Living standard <ul style="list-style-type: none">- financial needs- financial ambitions
Telephone number	Education
Family situation	
Information about partner / children	Stability
Father / Mother occupation	
Brothers and sisters	Mobility : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- geographical- social- psychological



INTERNSHIPS

<p>Company / organisation</p> <p>Dates</p> <p>Durations</p> <p>Contents</p> <p>Goals</p> <p>Compulsory internships and voluntary ones</p>	<p>Logical links</p> <p>How were they found ?</p> <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of the responsibilities undertaken - of the disposals available - of the work methods - of the results <p>Interpersonal relations (supervisor, team, department...)</p> <p>Remuneration and/or benefits</p> <p>What important memories ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive - negative - why? <p>Contribution to the company / organisation during these internships</p>
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PERSONAL INTERESTS

Sports	Choices
Leisure activities	Level of responsibility
Clubs / societies / associations	Level of commitment
Teaching	Activities and achievements
Various	Results
Para-professional interventions/occupations	Satisfaction level
	What does / did the candidate derive from it ? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- positive- negative



PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

<p>Dates</p> <p>Exact durations</p> <p>Exact locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - urban or rural - material conditions - environment <p>Companies / organisations</p> <p>Exact positions / responsibilities</p>	<p>Chronological analysis</p> <p>Field / office work</p> <p>Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - type of programmes/activities - size - budget and financing <p>Get information about how the candidate got into these companies</p> <p>Ways of integration</p> <p>Job title</p> <p>Responsibilities</p> <p>Position in the company</p> <p>Professional connections</p> <p>External links</p> <p>Work methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organisation - priority setting <p>Specific activities</p> <p>Achievements and results</p> <p>Accomplishments and failures</p>
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You can also “test” – when time has come to end the interview – his motivation to pursue the recruitment process.

Do not forget also that the covering letter provides you with interesting pieces of information about the candidate’s motivation.

Personality

You can end the interview with more personal questions. You have to try and precise the information and impressions that you got during the interview, and make sure that the candidate has the required personal qualities.

You can ask for instance :

- what are your strengths / weaknesses
- what does attract you to someone
- what are the qualities that seem important to you in order to succeed in the work we are offering you
- what can really frustrate you professionally
- what type of people do you really find difficult to work with

⇒ Additional methods

➤ The referees

It is absolutely necessary to ask the candidate to provide referees, ideally his last two or three employers. Asking for three referees is a good way to make sure that you will be able to contact at least two of them...

The way the candidate will give you the information and the type of referees he chooses to provide are very interesting elements in themselves. A candidate who rigorously gives out the name of every former employers appears more serious than one who only provides you with the phone number of a friend he happened to work with or a former manager who has become his friend !

The point is to ask the referee an opinion about the candidate.

In order to optimise the referee process, it is important to :

- know exactly who you are dealing with
- introduce yourself to the person and clearly state the reason for the telephone call
- ask the referee to specify the responsibilities undertaken by the candidate, the organisational relations, the dates and durations, and then to ask a more open question (about his recollection of the candidate for instance...)

These commentaries have to be taken most carefully as they are all the more subjective.

It is interesting to take into account what the referee says spontaneously : does it match your opinion, doubts or interrogations ?



Only ask precise questions once the referee has expressed all he had to say, in order to avoid the risk of influencing him.

You can also ask the referee about the best way to work with the candidate.

Always bear in mind that most of the time people do not like to be asked about such matters. They are afraid of prejudicing the candidate's interests and will be tempted to say only positive things. You thus have to help them by guiding them.

A good idea is to make a final synthesis of all the information you got from the referees, listing similar and divergent points.

➤ *The graphological analysis*

The graphological analysis is systematically used in the recruitment process in Inter Aide. It provides us with a more accurate insight of the candidate's personality.

Graphological analyses are made according to the type of vacancy and do not provide an analysis of the candidate's personality to any further extent.

If the candidate wants to know about the results of the analysis, you must legally abide, and you have to make legal warning about the fact that the candidate's letter can be submitted to a graphologist.

➤ *Tests*

Only technical tests can be put to a certain use for field recruitments. For instance, you can ask a secretary to type a letter...

Be careful : the tasks given to a candidate can not always be tested and analysed easily.

➤ *Practical cases*

The aim of a practical case is to assess the candidate's behaviour in action.

Most practical cases consist in organising a group discussion based on a relevant theme in order to validate some of the recruitment criteria. It is a way to check on personal qualities such as the capacity to interact with other people, the capacity to listen and take into account other points of view, the ability to synthesise a discussion and to express a point of view, etc.

How to organise a practical case ?

- list the main recruitment criterion (cf. Job description)
- identify typical issues which the person can be confronted with
- elaborate written cases, being as precise and concrete as possible

The candidate can then be asked to chose one of these cases which he will deal with in depth, and to discuss the others more quickly.



This exercise is also a way to test the candidate's motivations and to provide him with a more concrete insight on the job he is applying for.

V. THE FINAL DECISION

Now that you have interviewed several people and used additional techniques in order to know the better, it is time to make your choice between the short-listed candidates.

You can use a synthesis form which will be adapted to each recruitment :

CRITERIA	VERY GOOD	GOOD	TO BE IMPROVED	UNSATISFACTORY
Technical skills				
-				
-				
-				
Personality				
-				
-				
-				
Motivation				
-				
-				
-				

Regarding the delays in the decision making-process, always remember that very often candidates have also applied in other organisations, and that even highly motivated applicants have their own constraints.

Experience has shown that making allowances can not be a viable recruitment option : the human and financial cost of a recruitment mistake is very important, therefore it is sometimes better to wait than to hurry the conclusion of a recruitment process.

When there seems to be no convincing candidate at the end of a recruitment process, several questions need to be addressed :

- were enough actions taken in order to generate applications ?
- was the selection too discriminating ?
- is the job description coherent ? Has it been presented so ?
- Is the position difficult to fill ?

Of course the wider employment context has to be taken into account.

Once you have made up your mind about one candidate, you need to :

- Inform all the different supports that the recruitment process is over
- Inform all the candidates about the issue of their applications
- Sort out between the candidates who might be interesting in the future and the others



VI. FURTHER STEPS : closing the recruitment and following the integration

One can never be sure to have made the right recruitment decision. Integration follow-up steps can be taken in order to maximise chances of success.

This follow-up enables us to establish regular contacts focusing on how the new collaborator feels about his job, in order to avoid misunderstandings and to favour continuity on the job.

For instance, an internal interview can be organised after one month, and then after three months. Questions will be :

- What satisfies you about your job ?
- What are the difficulties you've already encountered ?
- What are the difficulties you're already overcome ?
- How do you plan to deal with the remaining obstacles ?
- What sort of contribution / support do you expect from your manager ?

It is then important to end on concrete aspects, by setting precise objectives for both parties, which will serve as a base for the next interview.

