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Making an offer of Employment – “The Right Decision”

Making that final decision to hire an Employee is so important, not just for the associated recruitment costs but to the future growth of your practice - more particularly to the smaller legal practices.

To reach that all important decision you would have gone through the initial interviewing process to obtain a short list, a second interview process and in some cases and where appropriate Psychometric Testing. Psychometric Testing is a useful tool when you have specific role/tasks in mind, or you just want to get that right cultural fit for your practice. Psychometric testing in most cases is specifically designed for your needs, and when attended to by a professional is both accurate and informing.

We would recommend that you complete the preliminary interviews with a fair and rigid process preferably using a list of structured questions to ask all Candidates. From here you would have been able to determine a short list preferably of at least three (3) Candidates, if the current job market allows you to have that luxury. That will of course depend on a number of factors such as the economic market, job description, experience required, salary expectations and possible demographic environment.

Once you have determined your short list you should arrange a second interview with the best and most suitable Candidates. The difference between the first round of interviews and the second interviews are often that the questions should deepen, and statements that the Candidate made in their first interview are tested and explored. Often both parties can express their different ideas and thoughts where appropriate.

Whereas the first interview would have focused on checking the academic background of your Candidates, their skills base and relevant experience to confirm what is reflected in their Resume, the second meeting should be more in depth particular to the duties of the role and therefore the Candidate's suitability. The second interview is likely to include the presence of Principal/Managing Partner and possibly the Section Head. It could be suggested that in some areas you revisit or obtain further clarification on the Candidate's responses from the first interview, or just wish to ask the Candidate to expand further in other areas yet to be discussed.

Other benefits of the second interview process are having an opportunity for the Candidate to meet with other Partners, Management staff or in some cases other employees. Also you will be able to explore the Applicant's suitability to fit into the unique culture of your firm and also with other relevant team members. The behavioural interviewing technique when applied correctly is another useful tool and can be quite enlightening.

In some cases if you are able to meet an Applicant out of an office environment at a nearby café for example, you may be able to see the Candidate in a different light and see how he/she responds in an external environment. Often you will be able to notice how confident he/she may be, as sometimes in a more relaxed and not typically sterilised environment you can often find out more about the Candidate and their individuality etc.

Finally in summary we would recommend that you always be positive and enthusiastic, always advise upfront of the firm's expectations, budgets etc, as well as of the firm's training and ongoing professional development.

It is advisable where possible to walk the Candidates through the office for an opportunity to view the office environment and facilities, which can then allow both parties to ask any further questions. Then you will need to determine the best Candidate who is the right fit for your firm, in order to finalise your decision.

Once you are ready to make that all important offer, and discuss with the successful Candidate - be precise and make sure to explain and confirm all the applicable terms and conditions of employment to include the commencement date, salary either as an annual salary plus super or as a whole package, billable hour requirements, budgets and any other pertinent details.

In most cases the successful Candidate will need to give the appropriate notice to his or her current employer, and if you are able to allow a further week to give this Candidate a short holiday, you will certainly have a fresh and much more relaxed new employee joining your firm. Following your call and the acceptance by the Candidate to accept your offer forward a letter of confirmation to your new employee enclosing any applicable employment agreement, which should set out all of the above, as well as the job description, KPI's and any other relevant information. It would be suggested for the new employee to be allowed an opportunity to peruse the agreement for at least seven (7) days, ask any questions, and then produce the employment agreement to you duly signed upon commencement with your practice.