



Situations vacant?

Every successful print operation is built on a great team, but finding and keeping the best people is a huge challenge.

Andy Knaggs asks what value a recruitment agency can add in finding high quality employees.

Recruitment, like training, can be a double-edge sword: you can invest valuable time and money into assembling a great team, but there is always a chance that another recruiter tempts your star players away with another opportunity, whether for financial or professional reasons.

Given that human beings are naturally inclined to seek advancement, it is perhaps best to accept the inevitable ups and downs, and that usually means playing the recruitment game yourself.

The print industry in the UK is served by a good number of specialist recruitment agencies, run by people that have worked within the print sector for several years. There are also online job boards, where both recruiters (recruitment agencies and print companies) and those looking for a job can make their presence and their desires known to all.

One such job board is Ozzle, and here it is necessary to be transparent: Ozzle was acquired by Whitmar Publications, the company that publishes *Digital Printer*, in August 2018, and is run from the Whitmar offices. There are other print sector job boards, and some of these are also linked to publishers to the industry.

Ozzle was established in 2005 and prides itself on successfully connecting people with job opportunities and enabling recruiters to find highly skilled candidates. 'We

help companies find people through tailored solutions, utilising the latest technology to match the right people to the right job,' the Ozzle website claims.

'We carry more live jobs on our site than other job boards,' says Kelly Morris, sales director at Whitmar Publications. 'We are also unique in offering a guarantee that if a vacancy isn't filled within the timeframe, it can run for another month for free, and we have a CV search facility, enabling recruiters to match job vacancies to our job seeker database.'

'With generic job boards that serve lots of market sectors, recruiters will be inundated with CVs that are not relevant. With Ozzle we can guarantee that all of our candidates have experience in the print sector, which cuts out a lot of wasted time for recruiters.'

Reputation and understanding

Posting jobs onto a job board can be an effective way of recruiting, but for a print company uploading its own vacancies onto a website, it does mean that the responsibility for sifting CVs, interviewing, putting together shortlists, and finally appointing a successful applicant falls entirely upon you. This is fine for companies with dedicated HR staff, or perhaps where the MD likes to retain a tight grip on everything that is going on. Most printers want to get on with winning business and producing work to a high standard, however, and for these there is the recruitment agency route. ▶

NOW HIRING...
PRINTING JOBS... NATIONWIDE!

**FUTURE
RECRUITMENT LTD**

FIND YOUR PERFECT JOB! CALL US ON 0161 485 8888





◀ *Thomas Blay of Rec Line Group – clients don't see all the behind-the-scenes work*

'A good recruiter acts as an extension of a client's business,' states Thomas Blay, principal consultant at Rec Line Group, which covers print and packaging as well as other sectors. 'They understand the intricacies, personalities and individual nature of the business and are able to

take that to market to attract the right kind of people. CV job boards and advertising are all well and good, but these are very passive routes, only attracting those that are actively looking for work.

'A lot of the work [that] clients don't see is the sifting of applications and qualification of potential candidates, who may not even be looking for a new job. A business manager just doesn't have the time to dedicate to searching and identifying, then qualifying potentials, even before they've walked in for an interview. Recruiters specialise in taking away that pain, allowing our clients to run their businesses, rather than being a part-time recruiter, and letting us spend the time to provide a quality shortlist that maximises their chances of success.'

Mr Blay has been working in the print and design sectors for almost 25 years, the last 14 of them as a recruiter. Naturally, he contends that this gives him an understanding of the market that generalist recruiters can

only aspire to. Dorinda Gibbons of Profile Recruitment also claims more than 20 years in the print and packaging sector, and now runs her own recruitment agency, mainly dealing with the digital inkjet part of the market.



◀ *George Thompson of Harrison Scott Associates – supply doesn't always meet demand, and fees reflect this*

Success comes through reputation and understanding, she says: 'I know a lot of people in the industry and I try to keep my finger on the pulse. It is about reputation, giving a quality of service, understanding candidates and being there to support them through the process. It's not just helping the client, it's helping people looking for jobs. Sometimes recruitment companies can forget it's a person on the other end of the phone looking for a job, so you need to understand what they want, rather than pushing them into a job they don't want.'

This is an aspect that is also picked up by George Thompson of print, packaging and paper industry recruitment consultancy Harrison Scott Associates. He says the firm has a 'unique policy' of putting the candidates' interests first in the recruitment process.

'We understand that getting the recruitment process right for both client and candidate requires specialist consultants to handle each project,' he said. 'Our consultants have been with Harrison Scott for a significant period, many with more than 20 years' service with us, and during this time have seen changes develop. Their key strengths lie in their ability to use their knowledge of each print sector's adaptations to both the client and candidates' advantage.'

Truth and honesty

Not everyone is entirely appreciative of the work of recruitment agencies, however. While not quite up there with politicians, journalists and estate agents in terms of public opprobrium, recruitment consultants do not have a great public image: many consider them over-paid and overly self-regarding; not to be trusted.

In fact, truth and honesty are all-important, says Thomas Blay. 'The best way to stand out is to stay true to your word, always work with the best interests of the client and the candidates in mind, and don't be afraid to ask the hard questions or walk away from an unworkable situation,' he said.

'Some businesses do not want to be speaking to a recruitment consultant. They see it in the same way some



Profile Recruitment

Specialists in the Digital Inkjet Market

Recruiting across the UK and International Print, Packaging and Digital Inkjet markets
Quality in service is the key to our success

www.profile-recruitment.co.uk

large corporates use an invitation to print tender: send out the tender and pick the best price, have minimal contact and treat it as an administrative function. Whereas in actuality, by having good communication, marketplace understanding and trust between a client and recruitment partner, the business' chance of success is far greater, as is the chance that the selected candidate is a good fit and is more likely to stay for a sustained period.

'Businesses also have to realise that it's a two-way street: in a candidate-scarce market, they are being judged by the candidate as much as they are judging the candidate's suitability for a role.'

Mr Blay points to the ability to provide salary benchmarking, market mapping, recruitment process improvement, confidential feedback and business information as added value services that are all entwined in his company's

recruitment process. 'If we're not providing those things as part of our service, it isn't the kind of business relationship we would want,' he said.

It is certainly an inexact science to match a candidate's personality to the culture of a business, and this therefore requires judgement and experience to do well. This is a key part of what a recruiter must do, and therefore makes them, in their eyes, worth their fees. The extent of a fee charged is also usually dependent upon the seniority of the position to be filled and the degree of research and diligence required to get the right person.

'If the client is looking for a top salesperson, and there is a much greater demand than there is supply within their sector, then the fee will reflect this,' explained George Thompson. 'Clients are always happy to pay for a service which gets them the best possible result with positive long-term benefits.' **dp**

A print company's view – Bluetree Group, Rotherham

In mid-March 2019, Bluetree Group, which includes the instantprint and RouteOne brands, attended a job fair in its local South Yorkshire community, seeking recruits for a variety of positions in the fast-growing organisation.

It has also forged closer ties with Sheffield Hallam University, specifically targeting web developers and software engineers, who will now, come graduation day, know about Bluetree and the opportunities that are available.

This activity could be categorised as 'building awareness', and it is a marked change to how Bluetree has

operated in the past. Vicki Russell, the company's head of HR, told Digital Printer: 'Previously, we've used a pull approach to recruitment: advertising online and using recruitment agencies to fill more technical positions. We are moving to the above approaches to give Bluetree a real competitive edge in the market and to look at what drew people to the business in the first place.

'We want to create a variety of positive links in the community so that, when people are starting their job search, Bluetree is already a consideration.'

The company used to use recruitment agencies, but has started to move away from this strategy because, as Ms Russell says, 'whilst they have always been great, we feel that the best people to sell our business to candidates are us, the people who live and breathe the company'.

► *Bluetree head of HR Vicki Russell – building local community links*



**UK'S LARGEST RECRUITMENT COMPANY IN
PRINT, PACKAGING & PAPER**

**TO VIEW OUR LATEST VACANCIES
www.harrison-scott.com**

South: 0207 838 9695 | Midlands: 0121 233 1522
North: 0160 687 0017 | Scotland: 0141 647 6688

