

New Year... New career... New HR headache

AS THE New Year approaches, peoples' thoughts start to move on from the chaos of Christmas and eventually settle on resolutions, assessing the year gone by and where their lives might be heading. The results of which, often leads to the search for a new job. The period from January to Easter is traditionally the busiest time for recruitment - In fact nearly sixty percent of the 700,000 annual education job searches carried out on Google happen during this period.

All this activity puts HR departments under enormous pressure, especially where courses have already been committed to.

Traditionally, advertising in newspapers and trade magazines has been the preferred option for attracting new staff, with the reluctant use of recruitment agencies as the last resort. However, with both options proving expensive, and with less and less people using them to find their next job, the new year will also bring new challenges to those trying to fill vacant posts.

In 2008, the internet finally became the most popular place for people to start looking for their next job, with over 50% of them using it as their first port of call. In reaction, HR departments have

recognised the need to change their recruitment strategies, with more and more starting to try jobboard advertising as a recruitment tool. However it does not come without problems.

The first, is complexity; there are over 700 job boards available to advertise on, so deciding on the best can be challenging. Just picking one board is rarely a successful strategy as you miss large numbers of potential applicants. Better to choose a broad selection of; generalist sites such as Monster and Jobsite; specialist education sites, of which there are about a dozen good quality ones; a specialist location site; and for good measure throw in a specialist profession site or two.

The second problem is one of resources. Ease of application often means high volumes of applicants, not all of whom will be suitable. You will then need to find the resources to deal with them, especially in a digital

world where applicants expect an immediate response.

Once you have overcome these two issues, you will find that you have the foundations of an effective and successful online recruitment strategy which will work for the vast majority of your vacancies. But what about those hard to fill posts?

Most colleges and universities have vacancies that they live in fear of having to fill. Technical colleges especially suffer more than most with vocational posts that are notoriously difficult to find staff for and generate little, if any, response from advertising - it is often at this stage that HR departments resort to recruitment agencies.

However, a couple of much cheaper alternatives are available. The first is to run a referral program where you incentivise your existing staff to help by recommending people that they know, who might be suitable. The second, much

underused, is that of online CV databases. Many of the job boards have their own CV databases, and with over 6 million people registered, they are very extensive. By finding people with the right skills but not necessarily the experience, they can be approached about the prospect of a change of career; this can often prove very successful.

So this New Year, rather than bemoaning those moving on to pastures new, why not try new ways of replacing them. The internet especially, when properly utilised, can be a highly effective and low cost recruitment medium.

Richard Collins runs Specialist online education recruitment advertising agency www.r21media.co.uk who offer a full online advertising service including free CV database searches.

