

RENTONS' BUSINESS TIPS



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FREE TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

Have you ever wished "*If I only had 3 more hours in the day.*"

If you answer 'Yes' then you will get great value from the **FREE** short practical **TOP TIME TIPS** that are put out every two weeks by Robyn Pearce, an international time and productivity specialist and prolific business author.

I have been receiving Robyn's free time management tips by email for a couple of years. She is now giving you the opportunity to also subscribe absolutely free of charge. Send Robyn an email to admin@gettingagripontime.com or you can enrol at <http://www.gettingagripontime.com>.

I have also written an article about my ideas on recruitment. I may not have qualifications in Human Resources but I do have 13 years of experience in hiring staff. I recommend you undertake as much research on this topic as you can. You are welcome to contact me if you wish to discuss your recruitment issues.



Ian Renton
Australian Credit Stationers

"ADULTS ONLY" ZONE

If you've ever staggered in the door tired after a long day, to be met by a barrage of child noise, try a 10 minute 'adults only' zone.

The rules are: kids entertain themselves, no-one requires anything of you, you can talk to your partner (if you've got one),

relax with a drink, and unwind. The children very quickly get used to the routine, and it starts the evening off with calmness instead of the usual frenetic pace.

by Robyn Pearce

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is a skill all business owners need to learn because even if you use a personnel agency you still need to interview that person. Ultimately, it is your decision who you hire.

The first step in recruiting is to prepare a job description. Then, decide if you want someone full-time, part-time, temporary or casual. Next, decide what to pay this person. I like to include this in the advertisement, because if I was looking for work this is something I would like to know.

To calculate an appropriate salary, firstly, find the award rate. Secondly, contact an industry association (if you are a member) to find the average salary as well as a range of salaries for this particular role. Thirdly, read other advertisements to see what other companies are offering.

How you advertise depends to a large extent on the person you are looking for. Advertising in your major city newspaper is one option, but not the only option. You can also obtain staff from your family, referrals by existing staff members, local schools, the internet or local newspapers. I have actually used all of these methods to successfully find staff.

For many years, I have been investigating the best way to find extra staff during our Christmas rush in November and December. It was only two years ago that I decided to contact one of the local schools to see if they had any students available to do some casual work once they had finished their Year 12 exams. This has proved far more successful than I could ever have imagined. Two of the girls from 2002, Emma and Natalie, continue to work here when they are not at university.

From early November there are a large number of capable young men and women with a lot of time on their hands since

not every Year 12 student heads to the Gold Coast in November and December. A large number of students are keen to work until they start their tertiary education in February or March. Many of the students come with excellent computing skills and at 17 or 18 years of age these students could make a worthwhile contribution to your business.

I have also used students younger than 17 years of age to do a number of routine tasks. This has also proven to be a successful policy for McDonalds, Woolworths and a number of other organisations.

In most cases, it is necessary to advertise to find new employees. It is usually done in a major city newspaper, one or more local newspapers, the internet or a combination of all three. Hiring a staff member is very similar to finding new customers. You need to convince a prospective employee to respond to your ad rather than someone else's ad. The only difference being that you are usually only looking to hire one new employee at a time whereas you are pleased to welcome several new customers.

Today, there is virtually full employment in Australia and New Zealand. As a result, your ad is more important than ever before. It must compel the reader to respond to your ad. For this reason, I recommend spending more money rather than less on your ad. There is a skill shortage in Australia and New Zealand so there are less talented employees available. Some organisations will miss out. While there are some industries with a surplus of candidates, this is not something you should rely on.

A lot of the people who will reply to your ad will be currently

employed. A large number of the job advertisements on the internet and in the newspapers are not designed to get the unemployed into the workplace. Instead, they are there so those currently employed can switch jobs. Employees are looking to build on their skills and if a particular role is no longer challenging, then they will look elsewhere for work. You need to sell the benefits of the position you are advertising, as well as list the requirements for the position. You want to attract the right candidates for the position. It will save you considerable time if unqualified candidates do not respond to your ad.

You will notice that in our newsletters we always give you five easy ways to order – mail, phone, fax, email and internet. I do the same in a job advertisement. I want to make it as easy as possible for new candidates to apply for the position.

The next step in hiring is to read through the resumes. Ideally, get a senior staff member to read through these and make some brief comments. To save you time, have the emails directed to someone else's computer so that the emails can be printed and filed for you. I then write yes, maybe or no on each application. Yes meaning that I would be likely to interview that person.

Sorting through resumes is not as easy as it seems. You will usually find that many of the candidates have similar skills. The first thing I look for is evidence of intelligence or success. For young candidates, their university or school results are especially relevant. For experienced candidates, I look at what work they have done and how well they did it. Just because someone has done a particular task does not mean it was done well. I can learn a lot about a person by their covering letter. Firstly, I disregard those candidates with multiple spelling and grammatical errors on their covering letter. It may seem harsh, but I am looking for a reason not to interview someone. After all, I don't have time to interview 50 people. A good number is five or six.

I begin every interview in the same way. I explain the products and services that we offer, the tasks the candidate will be doing and again sell the benefits of working for our business. By the end of each interview two things need to be resolved. Firstly, the candidates need to know about your business so they can decide whether or not they want to work for you. Secondly, you need to find out enough about the candidate to decide whether or not you wish to employ that person.

There is no set time limit for interviews. I usually spend at least ten minutes explaining the role and offer the candidate the chance to ask questions about the position. Then I go over the candidate's work history, computing skills and education if it is recent. In particular, find out why a candidate left a previous job. I have a list of questions I like to cover and I take these into the interview. There are any number of books and reference material available on interviewing.

During the interview there should be an opportunity to

look at more than the candidate's resume. In particular, you should read any references. Look for particular comments on performance, i.e. how well did the candidate perform in earlier roles. Either before or after the interview, you should ring at least two references, and always ask "Would you hire this person again?"

This is the only background check I do. There are a number of other background checks you can make. Someone once suggested to me I check identification, such as a passport or driver's licence. I have not done this, but I recommend you do as much background checking as you wish and are legally entitled to do.

It is important to be thorough, since hiring the wrong person can cost you a lot in wasted time. It is not a process to be taken lightly. If you are not happy with the candidates you have seen it is usually better not to hire or to postpone hiring.

There are any number of hard luck stories of businesses who have hired the wrong people. However, the fear of making the wrong decision is no justification not to hire. I have spoken to the Department of Industrial Relations and have also read literature about the Unfair Dismissal Laws. As long as you treat your employees fairly, you have little to fear. Obviously, do not discriminate against anyone based on age, sex, race or religion. Secondly, do not fire anyone for one-off mistakes. Provide regular feedback to your new employees and document any errors in case you do need to dismiss them.

Once the background checks have been completed, you should make an offer by phone. I recommend making the offer to the candidate as soon as possible. It is likely that you are not the only organisation that thinks this candidate would make a good employee. With unemployment very low and a shortage of skills, it is an employee's market. Try and make the offer within 24 hours if you can. I once made an offer within one hour. There is no rule that says you cannot make an offer until you have interviewed every candidate. This may seem unfair, but when it comes to hiring, speed is important.

It is important to treat unsuccessful candidates well. Ring all unsuccessful candidates within seven days of their interview. Also, contact all who did not qualify for an interview. In your email or letter, say to them that you have kept their details on file in case a position becomes available in the future. This isn't said just to be polite. On more than one occasion, I have contacted supposedly unsuccessful candidates and offered them work at a later date.

There are any number of personnel agencies who will assist you in hiring staff. I prefer to do the hiring myself, simply because it is a job I enjoy. The rewards from doing this job well are enormous. It is very satisfying to see the people you hired really enjoying their work and contributing to the profitability of your business.

QUOTATIONS TO PONDER

"Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

- Will Rogers

"There's a better way to do it. Find it!"

- Thomas Edison

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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