



Government  
of South Australia

Department of Trade and  
Economic Development

# BizFacts

www.southaustralia.biz

## Selecting the right employee

Read the BIZFACT **Employing People in Your Business**. As suggested, write up the details of the work to be done in terms of the person who would be best suited for the job (The Job and Person Specification). You will also have to do some **homework** on the wages and conditions of employment and all the requirements under Industrial Relations law. This will give you the facts you need to frame your advertisement.

### How should you advertise the position?

You should consider discussing your employment needs with your local employment agency where you can get informed advice on selection procedures and any wage subsidies you might be eligible to receive to assist in staff training.

If you want to advertise through the press, consider these things. You should be as precise as you can about the description of the work to be performed and put in details of the duties, the qualifications and the work experience required. Also include how you want the applicants to present themselves to you. Do you want them to phone for an interview, call in person or write an application? Do you require references? Are you willing to send them out a job and person specification and how do they apply for this? What about the closing date?

How will you limit the number of applications you want to screen, and how many are you prepared to short-list for an interview? One advantage of using a recruitment agency is that the applicants are screened for you and you will only have a small number to choose from, saving you time and effort. If you are asking them to apply in writing it would be courteous to acknowledge the application and then to inform the unsuccessful applicants when the job is filled. If there are too many for this, consider putting a brief **thank you** advertisement in the local paper to notify that the position is no longer open. This creates goodwill for your business.

### What about work experience requests?

Another way you might get good applicants is to take on students for work experience, but you must make sure that they are covered by workers' compensation insurance and that you are not going against employment rules.

There is a difference between work experience placements and **try-outs** which should be paid for by casual or other wage arrangements.

If in doubt seek advice on the legalities of this with the Department for Administrative and Information Services – SafeWork SA, the Office of the Employee Ombudsman or Business SA.

### What must NOT be included in advertisements?

It is against the law to discriminate against any person on the grounds of age, marital status, pregnancy, gender, physical ability, race or creed. Words for advertisements must be carefully chosen to avoid breaches of the law. Use the term **person** instead of *male* or *female* and avoid using he or she where it might imply that only a person of that gender should apply.

There are some exceptions to the general rulings and it is possible to target some positions for special groups on occasions. The Equal Opportunity Commission is able to advise you on the wording if you are unsure of your grounds for specially selecting one type of person over another. If you want a junior person and will be paying junior rates then the advertisement must say this.

### What about the physical ability to work?

If you are unsure whether a person may have the strength or health to perform the work comfortably and safely you have the right to ask for a medical check.

Colour blindness, medication, hearing, eyesight and hidden problems such as heart and spinal conditions might be critical if the work involves lifting and carrying, operating machinery, driving or climbing. Checking these could save you from legal problems later.

### What is the best way to interview?

There are different questioning techniques which can be used and a basic knowledge of these can help you work out the best method of getting the information you want.

A **closed** question is one which will only get you a **Yes** or **No** answer. Use **open** questions like "Can you tell me about your experience as a retail assistant?" rather than "Have you ever worked in a retail store?" The first question will get you much more information about the ability of the applicant.

You can also ask some very direct questions about how the person enjoys work, or even what they least enjoy and in what areas they would like further training. An interest in learning more about the job can provide you with a clue about the motivation to do the work.

Some very useful skills can be gained through community work or involvement with sporting and leisure organisations, so remember to ask about these. If the person has been involved in an activity that might give them good team skills and some leadership ability, then you will get a better view of their potential ability and commitment to the job.

If good manners and good personal presentation matter in the work, then watch how the applicant greets you and whether they treat your questions with courtesy. Of course, they may be nervous, particularly if this is their first job interview, so a smile and a friendly greeting will help them feel more comfortable. Always introduce yourself by your full name and the way that you would like to be called on the job.

Ask them about the people who have provided a reference and check back with referees, particularly if you are trying to make a difficult choice between two or three candidates who might all make suitable employees.

## What else should you cover?

Always leave some time for the applicant to ask you questions about the job. It is their opportunity to find out if they would like to work for you, as well as yours to find out if you would like to work with them.

Make sure that you give them the full information about rates of pay, hours and any special conditions at the interview, or give them some notes which they can take away – this reduces the risk of misunderstandings later.

## What about Training?

If you are offering training or expecting the new employee to undertake it, then this should be talked about in the interview. It is especially important if you are encouraging new employees to take on training in their own time, or willing to assist them with this in some way, such as time off for study.

## Training is important

Training your employees improves long-term productivity. Case studies show that training reduces staff turnover and leads to better work performance. Your staff will appreciate the investment you make in them.

Although it takes up time, think of the consequences for your business if the employee is not trained and does not work to her or his best ability. Training doesn't cost - it pays.

If you are taking on an apprentice or a trainee then you are legally obliged to train the employee. These obligations should be explained to you when you take out the Contract of Training through the Traineeship and Apprenticeship Services on 1800 673 097.

## What skills do you need to be a good trainer?

Many employers have discovered that there is more to training staff than expecting them to pick up skills on the job or by observing other *staff members*. Industry training advisory bodies have been set up to advise you on where you can get training materials produced for your industry at a reasonable cost. The Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED) can also refer you to courses and information for your specific needs.