

Are You Asking the Right Questions?

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Childcare Sales Australia is proud to publish yet another article from our regular columnists Erin Allen of Succeed Consultancy. Erin follows up with her third article on staffing "Are you asking the right questions? At some stage this year you will be looking at recruiting staff. Are you recruiting the right person?"

As usual it is sound practical information for owner operators, investors and new buyers alike. You can contact Erin Allen on the numbers provided below or visit the Succeed Consultancy website for more information at:

www.succeedconsultancy.com.au

You've now made yourself stand out from the crowd with your staff advertising. You have received several promising applications. Now it's interview time? Are you ready to get the right person for your Centre. Someone who is committed to their chosen career, has vast experience, a sound communicator, competent, a team player, can program, quick learner, proactive in their learning and the list goes on and on.....

Let's go back a few steps. You've short listed the applicants. Are you ready? What's your procedure? Have you one? It's recommended that you have a "recruitment procedure" in place to ensure you are organised and consistent in your approach. Gone are the days where potential employees have to impress you and you only. **You now need to impress your applicants.** There are thousands of jobs out there for high quality applicants. So get organised and develop a recruitment procedure.

A recruitment procedure outlines each step you will follow in your recruitment, interview and selection process. It is a step by step guide for you to use each and every time.

Some example items which should be included in your Recruitment Procedure:

- Interview date and time
- Interview Panel
- Confirmation letter to confirm the interview
- Tour of the Centre
- Interviewee's names
- Interview location
- Interview Questions are ready
- Interviewee has had time to read questions prior to the interview

- Staff Package is ready with:
 - Sample Offer of Employment
 - Job Description relevant to the role
 - Staff Handbook
 - Parent Handbook
 - Confidentiality Agreement
 - Working With Children Check Forms, Police Check form etc
 - Staff Details Form
 - Tax File Declaration
 - Superannuation Forms
- Interview summary rating the interviewee
- Reference Checks to record reference responses
- Is a trial going to be offered, when and how long. Is it [aid or voluntary?
- Success or non successful letter forwarded to the applicant

Being organised and having a clear system says so much about you and your Centre. It portrays your professionalism, organisation skills and dedication in getting high quality applicants. First impressions count for potential employees. Providing a staff package at interviews give the interviewee the opportunity to take information away and read thoroughly too why they would love to work at your Centre, there is no surprises and they have the package ready to fill out at the time they are offered a position.

What about Interview Questions?

Interview questions should be written beforehand for all positions that exist in your Centre such as Authorised Supervisor, Group Leader, Assistant, Cooks, Administration, and Cleaners etc. Every position has unique skills and expectations that differ from other roles in your Centre.

Open ended questions receive more detailed responses. Limit developmental questions for trained staff, they know it and it's easy to relay information taught. Ask more specific scenario questions specific to child development. .Limit the development questions for assistants as well as you are setting them up to fail as they haven't the formal qualifications.

Ask staff questions such as can you explain your Early Childhood Philosophy? Can you explain how you would provide an Emergent Curriculum program for 0-2 year olds? Open ended questions like these give you insightful information to their dedication, commitment and professionalism in Early Childhood as well as gauge if their values and beliefs fit into your Centre and your existing team.

Also asking direct questions like "can you explain why you are leaving your current position? Why do feel our Centre will fit into your career goals? Tell me about conflict you have been involved in with staff, management, children and families. Tell me your strengths and weaknesses? These types of questions will give you insight into their work ethics and personality traits. It's imperative when you are recruiting that you get the right person to fit into your current team. **You cannot afford to recruit the wrong person.**



What about the Interview Day?

Be prepared for the interview day, ensure the environment you will be conducting the interviews is well presented, clean and comfortable. Ensure there will not be any disruptions e.g. staff coming in, phone calls etc. Plan sufficient time between interviews to provide tours, conduct and summarise the interviews.

Advise your current staff that interviews will be conducted and the times asking for no interruptions, delegating the phone to another member of the team. Consider who will welcome your next interview if you are still in your previous interview and where will they sit whilst they wait.

Have all your information ready for the interviews, questions, pens, water, staff packs etc. Be on time; consider what kind of employer impressions are you giving if you are late and disorganised to potential employees.

Setting up the environment; don't have tables between the interview panel and the interviewee. This is a threatening situation which is likely to intimidate your applicant. Introduce everyone at the interview and commence with an overview of the Centre, children, families, staff and management community and you. Be honest don't hide negative aspects of the role such as it's a permanent late shift and that you close at 7.00pm. This is the quickest way to get your new staff member resigning when information is withheld.

Allow the applicant time to think about their answers to questions. I tend to observe if an applicant is struggling to collect their thoughts others jump in and answer the questions for them. Be conscious of this, as we often want to help people who are struggling.

Record their answers or delegate one person to record their answers in short hand. You miss so much non verbal communication if your head is down writing word for word, as well as not showing respect to the interviewee.

At completion thank the applicant for their time, advise when you will be contacting them and then do it. Follow up with phone and written confirmation of success or not. Sadly this common courtesy is fast dwindling. You need to remain professional and consider the impression the applicant walks away with about your Centre. What will they tell others about you, remember word of mouth is so strong in your community.

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Look out for next month's on "Getting off on the Right Foot: Staff Inductions"

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