

## **The Challenges of Recruitment: putting the pieces together**

**Erin Allen, Succeed Consultancy**



Childcare Sales Australia is proud to publish yet another article from our regular columnists Erin Allen of Succeed Consultancy. Erin follows up with her second article on staffing “The Challenges of Recruitment: putting the pieces together”. At some stage this year you will be looking at recruiting staff. Are you recruiting effectively?

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:

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We are all very aware of the critical staff shortages the Child Care Industry is facing nationally. Gone are the days when employers had a choice of high quality applicants with up to twenty applications. These days we are fighting for one quality applicant...

Why are we experiencing such shortages? Australia is at record lows in our unemployment rates. Our economy is strong and inflation is rising. Nearly every corner a new Child Care Centre is popping up and let's not forget the poor wages and high pressure work load with an average of three years on the floor for our trained staff.

I can hear you say well “What do I do? I need to recruit high quality staff and KEEP them?”

It is quiet simple really. Here are the facts: all Child Care Centres are regulated by their state Licensing body and are required to meet satisfactory standards as a minimum of the National Childcare Accreditation System. We all need to work within these guidelines. So why are you different, unique and better then the Centre down the street? Recruiting staff should link back to your marketing strategies. Why are parents choosing you over your competitor's?

### **Why did the staff you have at the Centre choose to work at your Centre?**

- Locality
- Operating hours
- Your reputation in the community
- Wages
- Work conditions and benefits
- Position vacant

- Future opportunities
- Commitment by employer for future skills and knowledge

Why are your long term staff still with you?

- Child interactions and relationships
- Family partnerships
- Employer respect
- Clear expectations and guidelines
- Positive team dynamics
- Opportunities for further experience and opportunities for professional growth
- Flexibility
- Happiness and contentment in role
- Positive Centre culture

Your most valuable asset in recruitment are your existing staff to gain feedback and insight into why they applied for their positions and what keeps them at your Centre. What can you offer and what can you not offer staff, look at your budgets, your child bookings, child arrival and departure times and attendance trends over the last year.

It is important to look at your current and past Centre requirements, statistics, staff dynamics and opportunities within the Centre for you to become creative. An example comes from your statistical information: every school holidays for the last two years reflect a 10% decrease in attendance; resulting in the opportunity to advertise for fulltime employment with the benefit of all school holidays off. Not only will you receive a lot of interest in the position and have a choice of applicants you will also be able to meet the Centres needs and will not compromise quality.

Another scenario may result in the last six months Mondays and Wednesdays result in 50% of children have been departing by 3.00pm, resulting in shorter shifts for that part time Teacher to meet family afternoon commitments. Or you have a young staff team and a balance of more mature applicants are required, have you thought about offering a discount for staff with children; to directly target mature staff who have the experience, knowledge of the industry and staff who are also parents?

Once you determine your strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats in your local community and surrounds through conducting your own research with your staff, families and community you are well on your way to prepare your advert.

You have now established what your strengths are, so it is time to write your advert. It is different, it is hip, it is eye catching and you even want to apply for the position!!!

A common error in advertising for staff is that people often follow the trends and place adverts in their local paper, as well as budgets being tight. This results in a simplistic and minimalist advert; overriding creativity. The advert is published and blends into the ever growing "positions vacant" pages. Enquires are few and far between and the position is no closer to being filled. Continuity in care is not being provided, parent complaints are beginning, staff moral is decreasing; with the pressure of different casuals who do not know the Centre routine, family or children. Wage costs are increasing and quality care is being jeopardised.

Look closely at other Centres adverts, yes they are all very similar, yes they only tell the basics of the job and do not necessarily market themselves well in reflecting their strengths. The cold hard fact is you will be relying on marketing yourself to attract staff from your competitor's.

More research and creativity is needed to stand out from the crowd in your staff advertising. Think outside the square. Place your position vacant in your parent newsletter, give it to your staff; staff usually live in the community they work in and yes they do have a life outside of work, with friends from their study days and they also have a strong network of professional associates. (You could also offer staff bonuses if they find you a staff member). Maybe the big local papers are not appropriate to reach your target audience; the smaller local paper may be the paper if you are trying to use location as a recruitment strategy.

Logo placement, coloured borders, coloured fonts are other strategies to stand out from the crowd, advertising in the third person or from a children's point of view are other approaches to consider. Be clear prior to advertising what you can be flexible with or what items are not negotiable such as Rostered Days Off, above award wages, job sharing, the location of the role etc.

Staff recruitment requires a professional assessment of your Centre, a clear plan based on your Centre needs to ensure consistently high quality care and an organised approach to recruit the right person. It is observed time and time again, that a lot of Centres go through the recruitment process on a whim and find themselves continually recruiting staff. A clear system such as a simple recruitment procedure being developed to suit your Centres individual needs will keep you focused and on track to recruit the right person for your Centre.

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Proudly brought to you my industry expert Erin Allen from **Succeed Consultancy**.

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