



# Building Remarkable Workplaces

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## Designing a Powerful Recruitment Ad

Once an organisation has worked out its points of difference, it is ready to begin recruiting. Creating a successful job ad is the first and most important step in this process. Think of it as an arrow flying through the air. A well-thought-out advertisement outlining an organisation's points of difference, hits the target, galvanizes suitable candidates to apply for a role, and increases the statistical probability of recruitment success.



Despite this, many recruiters rush out advertisements with little thought. Even though a departing employee may have given them four weeks' notice, many leave the hiring process until right before they need the replacement. Then they give it minimal attention, and end up with cliché-ridden drivel like these actual examples I found in a quick trawl of Australia's largest job search website:

- *'Amist (sic) the suspense, the drama & the intrigue is an opportunity to keep the chase alive & the chase is still on for a Regional Guru to join this co.!!'*
- *'Cool, Committed, Caring, Innovative, Exciting and Energetic? We want you to come on board the starship!'*
- *'Join the in crowd...This exciting, fashion jewellery (sic) & accessories brand is fast, furious and not for the faint hearted.'*
- *'This retail outfit knows their business with their finger firmly planted on the trend pulse & with no signs of slowing down!!'*

This type of descriptive, criteria-led advertising is endemic in the industry and wastes a lot of time and money. A poor advertisement makes a bad first impression and doesn't attract any suitable applicants, but it takes weeks of screening CVs and interviewing to work this out. Then the organisation is forced to re-advertise and go through the whole process again.

By now their recruitment prospects are damaged because positions that are re-advertised create an even worse first impression. It looks like the organisation is desperate for applicants, even though the reality was that the recruiter simply placed a poor advertisement in the first place. By now, the recruiter and the organisation are getting desperate to fill the position so they are more likely to lower their criteria and appoint a sub-standard recruit.

This inevitably leads to future turnover and then the whole wretched cycle starts all over again.

## Creating an Effective Job Ad

Here is my list of factors that guarantee success when putting together a job ad:

### 1. Only use specific, objective facts

Clichés and vague statements have no real meaning to an applicant and do not inspire him/her to apply for the position. Compare *'This brand is fast, furious and not for the faint-hearted'* to *'Company X opens a new business operation every three months and promotes 99% from within'* which is far more likely to achieve a positive result. Selection criteria should also be specific and measurable. Don't just join together a string of meaningless platitudes such as *'Cool, Committed, Caring, Innovative, Exciting and Energetic'*.

### 2. Sell the benefits of the organisation and the job role at the very top of the ad

It is not enough to come up with what people want, you also need to make these attractors prominent so that people see them in the first few seconds as they skim through job ads. When there are only a few suitable applicants in the marketplace an organisation needs to capture the attention of as many of them as possible, as soon as they open up their paper or access their jobsearch website.

### 3. Always put an indicative salary in the ad

I have road-tested this for many years and found that I get twice as many suitable applicants applying when I include an indicative remuneration guide in the ad such as 'generous salary and bonuses OTE \$75,000 +' (where OTE means 'on target earnings'). Keith, a marketing expert I once worked with, often said, 'If it hasn't got a price, it ain't for sale' and research backs this up, showing that customers are more likely to enter a shop if the price of products is displayed outside. Applying the sales concept to recruitment once again, putting a salary into ads works in the same way. I don't often put in the exact base wage because this is usually negotiable with the successful applicant.

### 4. Use the company logo in every recruitment ad

If an organisation has a strong brand then this is a real plus in attracting potential candidates because people like to know to whom they are applying. Often the logos are not used because marketers are almost never involved in HR advertising, even though filling staff vacancies might be the company's biggest challenge. Similarly if an organisation is outsourcing to a recruitment agency, they should try to get their logo in the advertising, unless confidentiality is an issue for the position.

### 5. Use a separate ad for each role

To reach the maximum number of suitable people an advertisement needs to be positioned in its relevant category. Often employers try to save money by doing up a big advertisement with multi-jobs and then plonking it into one section in a newspaper or job-search website. For instance a mining company looking for a chef might advertise this with six other positions in a compilation ad in the mining section. This is the equivalent of trying to sell cans of baked beans in an office furniture shop. It's also false economy because it ends up costing employers more in readvertising when they miss their target market who only read the careers sections specific to their role.

The example ad below demonstrates all these factors. If I want to place this in an expensive medium, I can also run a very small ad that just uses the header and the employee benefits, and then direct applicants to a webpage with more selling points and the selection criteria for them to read at leisure.

## An Example of a Benefits-led Recruitment Advertisement

**Role  
Description:**

# Innovative E-learning Designer

**Key  
Attractions:**

**Use your creative flair and design expertise to build a revolutionary new learning system and enjoy autonomy, flexible work hours and an \$80 K+ package.**

**Selling points  
of company:**

Acme is one of Australia's largest \_\_\_\_\_ organisations and the winner of the Times Small Business Award 2011. It's phenomenal growth since start-up, has earned it BRW Magazine's *Fastest Growing Company* title and its innovative practices have led to it winning such major contracts as \_\_\_\_\_ project, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, amongst others.

**Inspiring  
outcomes-  
based role  
overview:**

Acme is looking to employ a creative designer to transform its people processes by taking content and turning it into exciting, interactive IT solutions. You will be responsible for sourcing, designing, applying and managing innovative multi-media solutions as well as researching and implementing an effective learning management system. This is a unique, exciting, opportunity to help build an integrated people system that is fun, engaging and inspires Acme's teams around Australia.

**Employee  
benefits:**

**Benefits include:**

- **Autonomy to create cutting edge solutions**
- **Flexible work hours with the ability to work from home p/t**
- **Salary and generous merit-based incentive structure (OTE \$80,000)**
- **Start-up position so exceptional potential for career growth**
- **Attractive CBD location, including car park, close to shops & restaurants**

**Criteria to  
motivate high  
achievers to  
apply:**

**Selection Criteria:**

- Tertiary degree in any discipline desirable.
- Demonstrated achievement in this field.
- Existing portfolio of innovative multi-media design.
- Experience in delivering creative IT solutions to achieve effective outcomes, on time and within budget.
- Excellent verbal, written and interpersonal communication.
- A demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement and learning.

**Wrap up:**

An immediate start is on offer so if you are seeking a genuine career opportunity and would like to be a crucial member of Acme's team to build an inspiring workplace, this exciting role is for you. Send your CV and a cover letter to .....

**Branding with  
logo**

**LOGO**

### The Ad as a Template

It does take time for a recruiter to produce the first ad of this kind. I usually spend at least a day working out an organisation's points of difference and then it takes me hours to put together an effective ad. Like writing a short story, I then mull over it, tinker and improve it over a few days, or even a week.

Once a new ad is in place, however, it saves hours of work, as it can be used as a template for all future roles. The organisation's points of difference stay the same and the recruiter simply slots in the benefits, selection criteria and role description for each position. This means that no matter what time pressure the recruiter is under, the job ad is always professional, consistent and effective, and can be rolled out with speed.

Finally don't forget to measure the number of suitable applications you receive from each ad placed. That way you will soon learn which of the elements that you are using generate the most success. I did this and found that that putting 'demonstrated achievement' as a selection criteria doubled my success and including the word 'autonomy' at the top (for those roles that were autonomous) tripled it.

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