



# How To Become A Recruiter

A Career Guide put together by  
Ascendant Recruitment, a leading  
recruitment agency in  
Northampton and Milton Keynes

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# Introduction

Recruitment is an industry that's on the up. The UK market is currently worth over £30 billion, increasing by nearly 10% in 2015 alone, and it's predicted that it will continue to grow over the next few years. That means there are plenty of job opportunities out there if you've got the right attitude and skills to succeed.

Generally, a recruitment consultant's role is two-fold; to help employers find new staff members and to help job seekers find employment. Some recruitment agencies will specialise in a particular sector, such as construction or IT while others recruit across a range of industries.

You may find some within the industry saying that they 'fell into' working in recruitment, which could imply the job is easy and something anyone could do. However, the truth is you'll need a host of skills and abilities if you are to forge a successful career within recruitment and it's definitely not for those seeking an easy ride.

So if you're looking for a challenging, fast-paced career where no two days are the same, read on to find out if recruitment is for you.

# Training, Qualifications, and Development

As we alluded to earlier, there's no set route to starting a career in recruitment. Sales experience is highly valued, so many people find their way to the industry via jobs such as working in estate agency or telesales. Alternatively, they may have a background in customer service roles and wish to increase their earning potential by combining it with a sales role. Others start off working within a certain industry, e.g. finance and then decide to recruit for it once they leave, having gained a good understanding of that sector.

Others begin their career after completing their degree, as subjects such as Human Resources will give you an insight into some elements of recruitment. If you're interested in specialist recruitment, such as medical or construction, having a relevant degree in that area could also help you get a foot in the door.

Most training will be done on the job, but there are qualifications and training courses available through [The Institute of Recruitment Professionals \(IRP\)](#). They run accredited courses for recruitment practice, recruitment management and an apprenticeship in recruitment practice.

# Essential Skills

Although qualifications and courses are a good starting point, the most important attributes you can possess are having the right characteristics and personal qualities. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but if you recognise some of these character traits in yourself, recruitment could be a good career choice.

- **Customer Focused**

Offering a great customer service to businesses and individuals is the best way to build your portfolio and develop long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. Taking the time to learn about an individual or company and their culture will give you a greater understanding of their needs and help ensure you place the right person in the right role. Not only will this build trust and establish you as reliable and professional, it will also make your job easier. Happy candidates are likely to recommend your services to friends, whilst delighted clients will pass your details on to internal departments and other businesses, effectively doing part of your job for you!

It's also important to empathise, as your candidates may be going through a tough time personally. They may be struggling to find a job, facing redundancy, suffering from a lack of confidence or unhappy in their current role, so it's important to be sensitive to their situation and manage their expectations.

**Further Reading:** Anything by Robert Ringer. Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is a must read!

- **Target Driven**

It's amazing how many people considering a career in recruitment don't initially realise it's a sales role! The ability to negotiate, close deals and hit targets are

the keys to success. That's why a focused, driven attitude is important, as it will go a long way towards helping you achieve this.

You'll have to be able to sell in different ways at each stage of the recruitment process. First of all, you need to sell yourself and your company to the client in order to be afforded the opportunity to fill their vacancy. Secondly, you'll need to sell the job to your candidate before you can finally introduce them to your client and help them secure a role. Thirdly, you may need to sell a candidate to your client if their CV doesn't do them justice.

Your ability to obtain and fill vacancies will ultimately determine your success and how much money you make, although it's important to be realistic about earnings. Many new consultants expect to make a lot of money very quickly, but you should focus on building your reputation and client base at the start of your career. Successful consultants enjoy a lucrative career but this won't happen overnight. If recruitment is for you, you'll be highly motivated by the chance to build your "own" business within your employer's business. Your business will, if taken care of, reward you on an ongoing basis and it's typical that great recruiters earn six-figure salaries once they have built a successful business.

**Further Reading:** Zig Ziglar and Tom Hopkins. *The Magic of Thinking Big* - David J Schwartz.

- **Tenacious and Resilient**

To succeed in your recruitment career you'll need to be determined, have the confidence to make cold calls and be motivated to pick up the phone to create and chase leads. If these are skills you possess, you're off to a great start.

There'll be days when the world seems against you, when your client calls don't yield a return or you're struggling to find candidates with the right skills. It's at these moments when you need to stay positive and not take rejection to heart. Recruitment is a numbers game and you may need to make twenty unsuccessful calls before you strike gold, so the ability to keep your spirits up and go again is essential.

Similarly, you may need to be persistent in order to speak to the right person at a company; if you can persevere and get past the 'gatekeeper' at a company with tenacity and good grace, you'll significantly improve your chances of winning new clients.

**Further Reading:** Anything by Tony Robbins and Jim Rohn.

- **Confidence and Optimism**

Selling has to be underpinned by a confident, optimistic outlook, as you're constantly looking to showcase yourself, your company and your roles in a positive manner in order to make them attractive.

Having an approachable demeanour will put your clients and candidates at ease, as will being a good listener. Listening to people shows that you care and will allow you learn a lot about the person you're speaking to.

Whilst it's important to be confident, you shouldn't take any success for granted as things can happen outside your control which could change your situation for better or worse. It's also important to remain upbeat when things aren't going so well; as long as you're doing the right things, working hard and learning from your experiences, the rewards will come.

**Further Reading:** Jim Rohn, Tony Robbins, and Zig Ziglar.

- **Problem Solving**

The ability to be innovative and think on your feet will also stand you in good stead. When cold calling you'll often face questions and objections from clients, so thinking quickly and formulating a response could be the difference between making and losing a deal. You'll also need to act as a mediator from time to time. No matter how well matched a candidate and client seem, issues can always arise once they start working together. If either party is unhappy in any way, you'll be their first call and it's then your job to remain calm, listen carefully and come up with a solution that resolves the situation as amicably as possible.

**Other useful skills and abilities that will stand you in good stead are:**

- The ability to work well under pressure
- Organisation, time management and administration skills
- A professional manner and appearance
- Teamwork
- Self-motivated and opportunistic; the ability to spot openings in the marketplace

# Job Opportunities

Broadly speaking there are two different areas of recruitment you can work in; internal and external. We've been discussing external recruitment so far, but if you like the idea of recruiting without the sales element, you may want to consider becoming an internal recruiter. This type of role usually forms part of the Human Resources department.

As an external recruiter, you're likely to be working with a portfolio of several companies, often within a specialist division e.g. health, construction or office support. This requires lots of client and candidate telephone calls in order to find jobs to work on and people to fill those roles.

Recruitment agencies range in size, from small, independent companies focused on a localised area right up to large, international brands. You may need to research a few different agencies to see which type would be the best fit for you.

Searching for 'entry level recruitment jobs' throws up a whole host of available positions. As we've said, possessing the right characteristics and personal qualities is the most important thing, so it's a matter of deciding whether you'd prefer to work in a large company or a smaller agency.

# Entering the Industry



Whether you're looking to start your career in recruitment or take the next step on the ladder, there are things you should be including in your CV and covering letter to make potential employers sit up and take notice.

If you're an experienced consultant looking for your next challenge, you should include details of financial targets you've met or preferably exceeded. This will allow the recruiter to see how you've performed in your current role and also if you've sustained your sales performance over a period of time. You should also memorise your figures and how much you've been billing as you will be expected to know this at interview.

Demonstrating how you've added value to a business will also be attractive to a potential employer. That means showing not just that you've filled jobs, but

also brought in new clients. This will help to show that you're willing to work hard and grow your client base in order to build mutually-beneficial, lasting relationships.

If you've got no previous experience in recruitment, read through the 'Essential Skills' section and see how you can tailor your CV to highlight these abilities. For example, if you've worked in retail and you have instances of going the extra mile to provide great customer service, display them prominently on your CV so the recruiter notices them and can see how you could apply these skills to a role in recruitment.

Another good way to get yourself noticed, whether you're experienced or not, is to send speculative enquiries to companies you're interested in working for. This will display a proactive attitude and show that you're keen to work or progress within the industry. Once you've sent your CV, follow it up with a telephone call to further emphasise your enthusiasm and show that you're comfortable on the phone.

As well as sending out your CV, approach businesses directly through social media, link with influencers through LinkedIn and join a recruitment to recruitment agency to further boost your chances of landing your dream job.

For general guidance on CVs and cover letters, take a look at these helpful blogs we've written:

[Thirteen top tips for improving your CV...](#)

[Tips for crafting a cover letter that will stand out](#)

[Make sure your CV is up to date](#)

# Working Life

The day to day aspects of a job in recruitment will obviously vary depending on experience. An entry level position will initially involve more shadowing as you learn the ropes while a more senior position may involve managing staff or an office. Generally, though, you can expect to be doing some or all of the following tasks:

- 'Cold calling' companies to introduce yourself and secure vacancies to work on
- Using job boards, social networks, and databases to source potential candidates
- Calling candidates to discuss opportunities
- Keeping in touch with current clients and candidates
- Meeting candidates in person to register and screen them before sending them out to interview
- Developing good working relationships with employers and gaining an understanding of their business
- Going out to visit businesses, including existing and prospective clients
- Administrative tasks; keeping records of calls made, visits booked, keeping records of placements and billings, sourcing references etc.
- Meeting / exceeding set targets
- Negotiating fees with companies
- Writing and placing job adverts

# Career Progression



You'll initially start your career as a trainee recruitment consultant or resourcer. If you are more experienced, you'll start as a consultant. As a trainee, you'll shadow and support a more experienced consultant in order to help you learn the job. A resourcer will primarily focus on candidate generation and a consultant will have a baptism of fire by taking on the full role immediately!

Once you've picked up the necessary skills and experience, you'll be entrusted to build your own database of candidates and clients. In order to progress your career, you must be able to consistently hit your sales targets as this is how your success will be judged.

Career progression will ultimately depend on the company you work at; larger

businesses may have a defined career path, giving you the opportunity to move into a management role or a specialism. Smaller companies may offer you similar options as well as a route to a directorship and possible equity. You could also choose to branch out and set up your own agency if you feel you have all the necessary recruitment skills, business acumen and an appetite to embrace risk (definitely read *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson). Other options open to an experienced consultant include business consulting, teaching and training or specialist headhunting.

Incomes will vary depending on the company and their location within the UK. They typically comprise of a basic salary with commission and bonus on top, which are determined by individual or team performance. Generally, you would be looking at basic salaries in the region of:

Trainee recruitment consultants: £15,000 to £20,000. OTE £25,000.

Recruitment consultants: £22,000 to £28,000. OTE £50,000 +

Senior consultants: £28,000 to £50,000. OTE £60,000 +

Managers: £40,000. OTE £60,000 +

The majority of consultant roles will have an uncapped commission structure, allowing them to earn far more than their basic salary. To gain a better understanding of salaries for recruitment roles near you, take a look at some local job sites.

# Q & A

We asked Ascendant Recruitment MD Nick Peacock to share some pearls of wisdom from his twenty plus years' experience in the recruitment industry. Here's what he had to say:

## **How did you first get into the recruitment industry?**

A family friend owned a recruitment agency and after a successful interview, I joined there, initially on a temporary basis with a pile of 500 CVs to reference. It certainly wasn't the most glamorous job in the world but I threw myself into it and worked as hard as I could. After referencing for a month, my boss offered me a job as a Temporaries Consultant.

After six months, I moved to Cambridge, where I landed a job as a Recruitment Consultant with a regional recruitment business. They were opening a new office in Northamptonshire and despite having only 6 months' experience, they gave me the opportunity to manage the opening! I took on the challenge and within 18 months the Northamptonshire office was the most successful office within the regional business. This led to a succession of promotions and by the time I was 28, I was the Area Manager, responsible for four offices.

When I took over the running of the Milton Keynes office, I realised there were a lot of improvements to be made. That was when I decided that if I was going to do the work, I would rather be doing it for myself. It was a risk but I knew it was the right thing to do and I set up Ascendant Recruitment in 2003.

## **Did anyone, in particular, inspire your career journey?**

I learnt a lot from my first boss in Nottingham. He worked extremely hard and helped inspire me to get where I am today.

**What advice would you give to someone about to climb the career ladder to where you are today?**

Find a person to model yourself on - a person who inspires you. You should also seek a mentor to discuss your challenges with. Take your own personal development seriously, there is no one who has a bigger influence on your success than YOU! Skip a meal, skip a drink at the pub but don't skip on investing in yourself – read, read, and read some more about people who have achieved what you want to achieve. Learn from mistakes, accept more things will be wrong than right initially but learn from mistakes as you go along and make sure you celebrate your little wins as you go.

To be successful you need to be passionate and have a massive Why! If your why is big enough it will keep you going, even when times are hard. Sometimes bad things will happen. You can't choose the events that happen but you can choose your attitude.

**If you could start your career again, what would you do differently?**

I don't believe in regrets, you learn from everything that happens. Every decision I make today is tinged with the successes and failures I've made in the past. I believe in the Law of Attraction and I'm still working hard to attract the people and events into my life which will help me fulfil my short, medium and long-term goals.

### Useful Links

Recruitment career guide: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/recruitment-consultant>

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation: <https://www.rec.uk.com/>

Institute of Recruiters: <http://www.theior.org.uk/>

Recruitment jobs: <http://www.careersinrecruitment.com/>

# Interested?

Contact us for more information on what it takes to be successful in the recruitment industry.

[CLICK HERE](#)

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