



Strategic recruitment is finally being seen as one of the ways out of recession. **Colin Cottell** and **Vanessa Townsend** look at where this function should sit in a business

In the good old days, if a business wanted to recruit a new staff member, the personnel department would write up the job description, send it off to the local paper (or nationals if they were feeling flush) and wait for the deluge of applications to arrive in the post room. Simple.

Nowadays, recruitment entails a whole raft of activities besides hiring people, and there are as many places for recruitment within a business as there are businesses. So just where should the recruitment function fit best? Should it be a standalone concern, or one part of the HR function or, with the need to attract the best people becoming increasingly important, should it be aligned to marketing? Indeed, should the actual recruiting be outsourced rather than be part of a company's internal set-up?

A lot of the time there is no hard and fast answer, and it might vary over time within an organisation. Jane Newell Brown, director of specialist consultancy SilverSpace and joint author of *The Professional Recruiter's Handbook*, thinks that each business needs to assess how important recruitment is to them. "Is it a critical success factor right now?" she asks. "Recruitment always needs to sit at the heart of the organisation in spirit and in reality, and its organisational position (within HR, marketing or wherever) may matter less."

Tom Marsden, director of professional services at recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) firm Alexander Mann Solutions, agrees: "Overall, the important thing is less where recruitment sits than the influence that recruitment has in the organisation."

Marsden believes that where recruitment fits is influenced by the scale of the recruitment activity, the skills of the leadership overseeing it and the sector, as the public sector often brings central services together. However, he continues: "Whatever the organisation's structure, recruiters need to be able to work in a matrix liaising with finance (budget and cost management), marketing (employer brand) and of course the business leaders themselves (understanding business strategy and skills gaps)."

Some suggest a stronger link with marketing and aligning with the employer brand is the way forward. Richard Mills, head of UK HR and facilities at Panasonic, says that positioning recruitment, which is mainly the

A fitting place for recruitment

responsibility of Panasonic's HR managers, to work closely with marketing reflects a wider and important trend. "If companies aren't currently looking at their employer brand, how they recruit and using it to best effect, they are missing a trick," he explains.

He says that Panasonic is working on changes to where recruitment sits within the company as it seeks to develop its employer brand. "Creating an employer brand is a marketing not an HR discipline," he argues. And he says that he intends to work with Panasonic's internal marketing staff and brand specialists. Whenever HR develops an employer brand in isolation, he says, the exercise is likely to fail.

Jerry Wright, joint managing director of RPO firm CPH Consulting, agrees that although it depends on a number of criteria, the emphasis on where recruitment should be situated depends on "how strong they [the company] consider their role in promoting the employer brand. A company such as [broadcaster] Sky has a strong employer brand and is able to attract candidates directly". He contends that given the large numbers of people companies like Sky recruit, "the most cost-effective model is to have its own in-house team, and directly source candidates from the market. For companies that don't have the same strength of brand or



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the same amount of recruitment this is not a model they want to adapt.

"For these companies, more typically recruitment is part of HR, with some internal recruitment capability but not to support direct recruitment or a talent team. They will also be more likely to use agencies."

Roopesh Panchasra, head of resourcing, Expedia, maintains that the trend is towards a more internal recruitment function and towards becoming as self sufficient as possible. "Where the recruitment function sits with the marketing function is a relatively new kind of theory," he explains.

Often, the first port of call for candidates with the organisation is when they are speaking with the recruiting team who are therefore seen as representing the company. "A lot of companies will associate one with the other, and will want the marketing team to do that.

"But for high quality outbound recruiters, those who don't just wait for a response from candidates, those who do research into who the best candidates from the most appropriate target companies, it is very unlikely they will want to sit under marketing."

Maybe HR is the best place to position the recruitment function then. Stevan Rolls, head of HR at Deloitte, certainly thinks so. "I see recruitment as an integrated part of what we deliver in terms of HR. I think it is important that it's part of the team," he told *Recruiter*. "But that doesn't mean that recruitment is subordinated to HR; it's part of what is delivered."

Paul Farmer, lead recruiter for Raytheon Systems, also agrees. In the UK, the company's recruitment department is part of the HR function. "HR involvement is vital at all stages of our hiring process," he says. "Gaining stakeholder engagement early and often enables us to continue attracting top talent in a competitive market."

"Through the successful combination of the HR and recruitment functions, we are enhancing our reputation and bandwidth among the hiring community. Although we are part of the HR function, we collaborate cross-functionally."

While this structure provides proven results for Raytheon, he admits that he also understands the benefits of varied recruitment structures across industries: "Ultimately, this is dependent on the business requirements and how they match with the external landscape."

At Nokia, global talent acquisition manager Lewis Milford says that one of the biggest challenges the company faces from a talent acquisition point of view is how to create a consistent experience on a global scale. "An applicant's experience should be the same whether they apply for a role in Beijing, Berlin, Bangalore or Boston. This would be impossible to achieve without the excellent relationship that resourcing has with HR," he told *Recruiter*.

"The recruitment process doesn't stop at 'offer and

acceptance' and that having a 'handing off to HR' style process just doesn't work in creating this consistency. The resourcing community within Nokia is part of HR and as a result it gives out local recruiters much more insight into the big picture when it comes to hiring."

At professional services firm KPMG, recruitment specialists are aligned to business areas, often sitting within the business area, with the whole team supported by a recruitment marketing team. The recruitment function sits within the People function, which incorporates HR, diversity and leadership & development. However, Vanessa Soames, manager, recruitment and resourcing marketing, explains that recruitment and resourcing is its own standalone department within that function.

"I think the role of recruitment function is more and more complex. Essentially it's about partnering with the business. It's the role of the recruiter to read their business, understand the overall objectives and see how they can support."

"It's about understanding the growth targets and overall business plans. As a recruiter you should be pre-empting the recruiting — ahead of when the business actually feel the need."

Perhaps the most important fact about where to position the recruiting function should be the quality of the people who are doing the recruiting. Bill Wynn, managing director of Project Resource, recruitment consultancy to the engineering and construction industry, believes this must mean making recruitment a standalone entity.

"If companies are serious about conducting internal recruitment themselves, then I suggest that the company must have a person or people dedicated to this task alone — if they are to truly perform this job function well," he explains. "Many HR professionals have been requested to look after recruitment during the recession to try and save costs, yet that same person is still expected to perform appraisals, personnel issues etc, so something has to give."

He believes that the most efficient way is separating recruitment. "What is clear is that the recruitment function should be a standalone job function to be performed at its most efficient. But appointing the right recruiter, be it internal or a recruitment company, is of utmost importance."

Wherever recruiting sits in a business, the most important factor is that it should have the freedom and autonomy to hire the most talented employees in order to move the company's strategy forward.

