

# Recruitment training ... or lack thereof!

**By Gaynor Lowndes, Managing Director of The Recruitment Factory and The Recruitment Training Company**

There are very few industries or professions that do not have stringent training requirements for those wishing to practice within. Unfortunately, the recruitment industry is one of these few.

It is no secret that, as a trainer, I see recruitment training as an issue that affects, and will continue to affect, the evolution of our industry, as we attempt to improve our reputation, and provide a higher standard of service.

The recruitment industry is notorious for throwing its new consultants in the deep end and we continue to wonder why our industry has such a high burn-out rate, and a less than desirable reputation with many candidates and clients.

The reason is so simple that you would expect it to be obvious: You can't do the job, when you don't know the job!

As an industry, we have managed to develop implied "excuses" to release ourselves from the need to properly train our consultants, and face the training issue as a whole.

Here are some of the most common excuses that I have come across in my time as both a consultant and a trainer. It is my hope that you, whether you are a manager, consultant, resourcer, or administrator, will join me in releasing the grip these excuses hold over our industry, and take steps to ensure that our credibility as an industry is improved by an emphasis on quality training of our consultants.

**Excuse No 1:** "It's personality that really matters." While it is true that some people may have a personality suited to sales roles such as recruitment, we tend to focus on this element too much. Often, if somebody has a "bright and bubbly" personality, we assume that this trait will, almost by default, bring them recruitment success!

Sure, personality plays an important role, but it is not more important than learning the basic and advanced skills of the job!

I know a number of highly successful consultants who are very quiet and

reserved. People are often surprised that, with their personalities, they "made it" in recruitment, but it shouldn't be surprising at all, as they have an intimate and practical understanding of the skills required to succeed in the industry, as a result of dedicated and intensive training.

Knowledge is power, and the most outgoing, extraverted individual will have great difficulty succeeding without it!

**Excuse No 2:** "A promotion from receptionist to consultant is a logical progression." I make a point of questioning team leaders I train who admit to promoting receptionists to consultants. I have absolutely no problem with this in itself; it is more than likely that the receptionist has the potential to be an excellent consultant, but not without sufficient training and skills development!

I have a client in legal recruitment, who cannot understand why every receptionist that she promotes to run the agency's temp desk leaves. She is an excellent manager, and her agency is highly successful (except for the temp desk), but she still shakes her head every time her promoted receptionists burn-out and resign like clockwork, saying: "But they had so much potential!" And they probably did. But potential by itself is nothing; it needs to be nurtured and empowered by knowledge and skills development.

I urge you, if you are a manager, not to make the mistake of assuming that, because your receptionists observe consultants in action, that they immediately understand how to do it properly themselves. Promote them, by all means, but make sure you provide them with the training and mentoring that will equip them with the skills to get results!

**Excuse No 3:** "All sales professions are the same!" They may be similar ... but they're not the same! I have known many consultants who have come from other sales backgrounds and they have been next to useless as consultants. Why?

Because in the recruitment industry we assume that, because they have experience selling software packages or used cars, that they don't need any further training in order to place candidates. It is this attitude, more than any other, that has given the industry the less than desirable reputation it has with candidates.

There is an art to candidate management and care that is obviously different from the client sales process. While there are some agencies where candidate management is left solely to resourcers, the majority of the industry does not work this way.

With this in mind, the software salesperson will need to learn how to handle a product that is a living, breathing person whose needs, goals and priorities need to be nurtured and catered for! Once again, there is nothing wrong with employing a non-recruitment salesperson as a consultant (their sales experience will be highly useful), but it must be ensured that recruitment-specific skills training in areas such as candidate management are not neglected.

These excuses have caused the recruitment industry to suffer for long enough. I believe that it is time to legitimise our existence as a profession and industry, by taking our training requirements seriously. The greatest obstacle to this cause will be changing the mindset of the industry, but if we acknowledge the problems that our "excuses" cause, then solutions can, and will, be found! ■



**Gaynor Lowndes**  
**Managing Director**  
**of The Recruitment**  
**Training Company.**

*Gaynor has over 17 years recruitment experience, gained in Australia and the UK. The Recruitment*

*Training Company provides training and consulting services to the recruitment industry in Australia and New Zealand.*