



**seek**

# Small Business Guide

Your guide to seeking, hiring and retaining talent

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# The small business guide to seeking, hiring and retaining talent

Great people are essential to running a successful small business. But how do you find great talent? And once you've found them – what can you do to retain them?

We've spoken to hundreds of small business owners about the most common issues they've faced when seeking, hiring and retaining talent.

**This guide answers those questions, giving you clear and simple advice on:**

- ✓ Finding the right candidate
- ✓ The questions you need to ask before you hire them
- ✓ Welcoming new employees into your business
- ✓ Retaining great employees



# Finding candidates

Recruitment can be a difficult and often time-consuming task for any business, but these straightforward strategies can save you time and help you attract the right person to the job.

## Start with your needs

To get the right candidates applying, think about the types of skills and experience you need to fill the role. The clearer you can be the better. Write down the duties and responsibilities the employee will have, and the education, qualifications and experience you want. For example, waiters may need to meet and greet guests, take orders, use EFTPOS for bill payments and clear tables.

Be clear on the minimum amount of experience you want, in addition to personal characteristics, such as having great customer service, a positive attitude, and being well-groomed and punctual.

## What candidates want

For the majority of candidates, salary is the key consideration. Candidates often use the quoted salary in a job ad to establish whether the role fits their experience and capability.

Other drivers that attract candidates are opportunities for career development and work-life balance.

Flexible hours, part-time opportunities, staggered starts, or other benefits such as parking and proximity to day care or public transport can help candidates decide if the role is a good fit. Benefits like these will assist you to find the right person for the role and may even improve talent retention.

## Understand how candidates search

“Most candidates begin their search by typing in a role title and location,” says Nicola Laver, SEEK Associate Client Training Manager. “If your role title is something like ‘Excellence Facilitator’, people won’t find your ad. Keep it simple.”






Understanding keywords is also important when it comes to posting job ads. According to Laver, “69% of all searches on SEEK include a keyword search. Candidates are looking for things in your job ad that cut through straight away.” For example, early childhood workers may search for mentions of ‘Diploma’ or ‘Certificate III’.



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## Structure your job ad

-  **Make it easy**  
 Creating an easy-to-read ad with lots of white space is crucial for creating a job ad that entices candidates to read and apply.
-  **Be bold**  
 Use bolded subheadings to tell the candidate about the company, role, skills, experience, culture and benefits.
-  **Address your candidates**  
 Write your ad as if you are speaking directly to the candidate, referring to readers as ‘you’.
-  **Pack a punch**  
 Use short, punchy sentences with action words such as drive, develop, manage, create and build.
-  **Unpack the role**  
 Tell candidates a little bit about your business. For example, let them know if they will be working in a busy environment, who they will be reporting to, and if they will have direct contact with customers.

## Key Tips

- **Be clear** on exactly who you want and what you offer.
- Keep the job title **simple**.
- Include a location and **keywords** in your advert.
- Use **bolded subheadings** to direct candidates to succinct and simple explanations about the business, role, skills, experience, culture and benefits.
- Emphasise **career development** opportunities and work-life balance.



# Interviews, reference checks & job offers

Once you've clearly defined who your ideal candidate is and placed your job ad, it's time to prepare for interviews. They might be time-consuming, but interviews are an ideal way to explore a candidate's skills, experience, personality and fit for the role.

## The interview process

Less is more when it comes to the number of interviews. Matthew Gribble, Regional Managing Director of Michael Page ANZ, suggests a two-stage process: the first round covering a standard set of questions, the second allowing additional opportunities to draw out specific experiences on an individual's resume.

Chris Edwards, a pastry chef who manages a team of five, says practical second interviews, such as on-the-job trials, are a good way to see how candidates realistically fit into your team.

"I do a screening interview first, and then organise a trial where the applicant comes in and works for a couple of hours with me. Personality comes before skills for me. In a small team and small physical environment, their personality has to fit in with the existing team."

## Take notes

Give yourself time to review, and take notes on any interviews or trials you hold. You should refer back to them when it's time to make the final decision – and it will also help if there are any disputes.

## The best questions to ask

### What appealed to you about our business?

This question shows whether a candidate has done their homework on your business, as well as allowing you to find out more about what attracted them to apply.

### Describe your most significant accomplishment in a previous role.

Ideally the candidate would be able to talk you through the issue, how they managed it and gauged its success.

### Why do you want to leave your current employer?

Knowing the reason why the candidate is looking for work is crucial, including their motivation to change roles.

### Tell me about the best and worst working relationships you've had in previous positions.

This will give you insight into the way the candidate likes to work, how reflective they are and whether they will be a good cultural fit for your business.

## The importance of reference checks

Reference checks are absolutely critical to verifying a candidate's skills and experience, so making a few phone calls is worth the effort. Ensure all candidates provide contact details of a person they have reported to in their last couple of roles.

"It would be really rare that there is a compelling enough reason that a person cannot be contacted as a referee," says Gribble. "Candidates can leave very difficult bosses but still leave in such a way that they could provide a reference."

## Making an enticing offer

Edwards says flexibility is the key when making an enticing job offer, and recommends highlighting the benefits and opportunities associated with the role and the workplace. "I try to find the middle ground between what works for them and what I need," he says.

Edwards also makes it known he will pay for additional training for his team members. "I will pay for training for my casual employees in good faith," he says. "It's an investment that I hope gets returned, and it does the majority of the time."

## Key Tips

- Ask a mix of **planned interview questions** and some that draw out the specific experiences, skills or reflections of individual candidates.
- **Two-stage interviews** are ideal, with an on-the-job trial forming the second interview if applicable.
- **Request referees** as this will give you a chance to confirm a candidate's skills and experiences.
- **Enticing job offers** emphasise salary, work-life balance, opportunities for training and career progression.

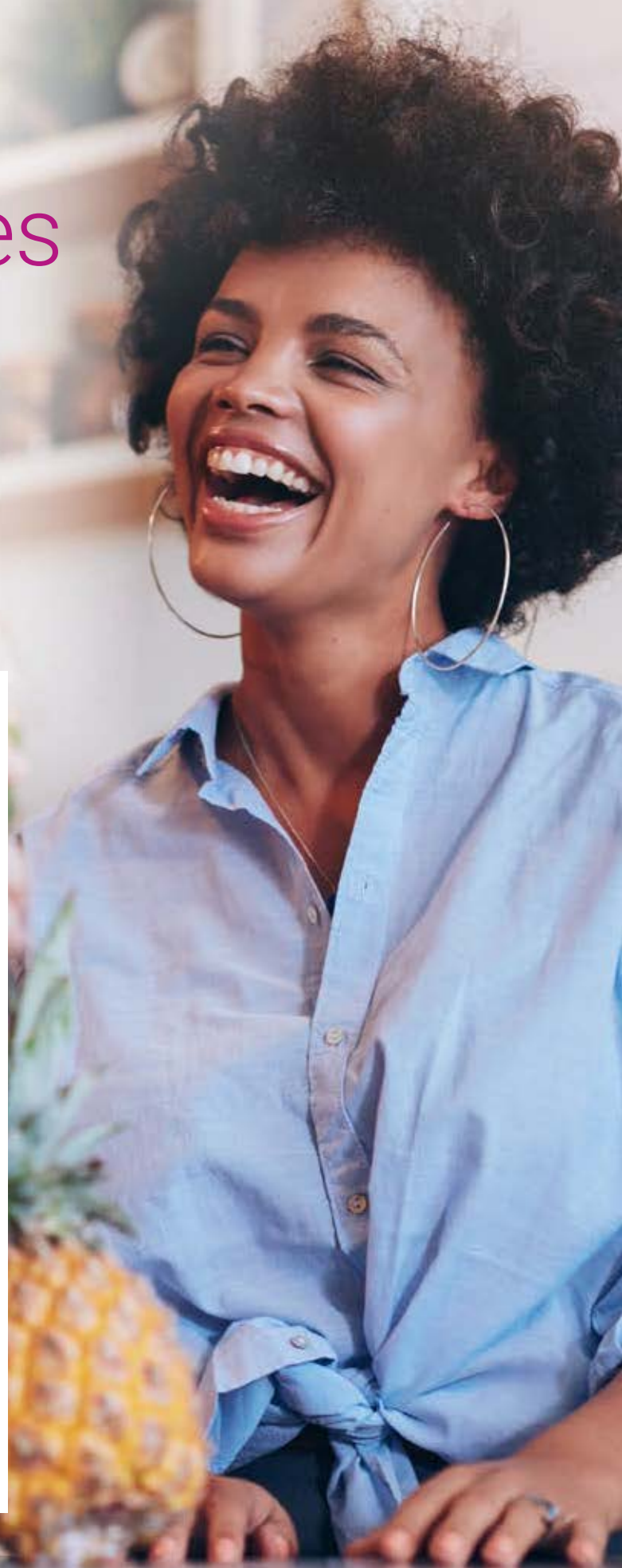
# Onboarding new employees

Having an effective process for integrating new employees sets them (and your business) up for success. This ensures your new team member starts their role on the right foot – and with a positive view of your business.

## New team members

There are easy and practical things you can do during the onboarding process to make your new employee feel welcome. Little things like having a uniform, name tag and training schedule ready on day one helps new employees feel supported and appreciated. “I show new employees where to put their bag, phone and car keys before giving them a guided tour,” says Eva Bodno, the owner of an organic grocery store. “It gives them an instant sense of ease and security that they are part of the team and will be coming back.”

New starters at Bodno’s shop shadow a more experienced employee. “New employees would do that for the first three weeks or so,” Bodno says. “This helps employees feel comfortable and confident and allows them to get to know their colleagues.”





## Show employees they matter

Enjoying positive relationships with your employees makes them feel happy, valued and engaged at work. Create a great day-to-day environment by being approachable, friendly and supportive.

Asking new employees how you could improve the onboarding process lets them know you are open to feedback and value their opinion.

Extras such as benefits for families or friends (e.g. discounts at specific retailers), family days or regular morning or afternoon teas can also help employees feel valued.

## Communication tools

There are plenty of simple tools that can help employees feel part of your team and make your business run more efficiently at the same time.

Email platforms such as Gmail let you utilise free collaborative tools, while task management apps such as Trello or Slack allow you to share timetables and job-related updates.

## Key Tips

- **Be prepared** for your new employee's first day. For example, organise their uniform, locker, name tag and training schedule.
- Set up a **buddy system** or have new employees shadow more experienced team members to ensure they have support and feel confident in their duties.
- Ask new employees for **feedback** about the onboarding process.
- One-off occasions or ongoing **benefits for employees** help them feel valued.
- **Free technology** such as Gmail, Trello and Slack can ensure all team members receive the same information at the same time.





# Retaining talent

Once you've found great talent, you'll want to keep them.  
So what makes people stay?

## A good recruitment process

"If you hire people that are capable, from a skills perspective, and aligned to your business, from a cultural-fit perspective, then you're more likely to retain them." - Matthew Gribble

## Knowing where you're going

"People like to know where a business is going, including what it stands for. A clear, compelling vision of the future from management drives both engagement and retention." - Andy Pope, Remunerations and Benefits Expert

## Bringing your team together

Emphasise the importance of your employees spending time together. Consider functions, trips away, educational seminars, or even simple options such as regular breakfasts or lunches as a team.

“ People like to know where a business is going, including what it stands for. ”

- ANDY POPE

## Check-in regularly

Checking in with employees is crucial for knowing how they are going. Schedule a regular catch-up over coffee or between shifts with each of your employees. Ask them what they enjoy about work, if there are challenges and where they may need assistance. "Taking the time to catch-up with your team individually leads to more genuine and open conversations." - Andy Pope

## A career development focus

One of the benefits of working in small business is the opportunity for employees to be exposed to different parts of the business.

"Candidates are really focused on continuing to develop and learn new skills when they enter a job. For small businesses this can present a real opportunity not only for retention, but also to expose people to grow their skill set."

- Hamish Coutts, SEEK National Client Training Manager

“Taking the time to catch-up with your team individually leads to more genuine and open conversations.”

- ANDY POPE

## Key Tips

- Spend time on your **recruitment strategy** to ensure you attract and recruit the right person.
- **Check-in** with employees to see what they are enjoying about work and where they may need help.
- **Create opportunities** for your employees to get to know one another and bond as a team, as everyone benefits from better working relationships.
- Have a **strong vision** for your business, and share it with your team.



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