RECRUITING IN A TRAVEL CONSULTING ENVIRONMENT – EXPLORING APPLIED PRACTICES

M Roberts-Lombard (Department of Marketing Management, University of Johannesburg)

Most research on relationship marketing focuses on the building of relationships between a business and its customers. Limited research considers the application of relationship marketing principles to the recruitment market of a business. The purpose of this article is to indicate what the current status is of the relationships which travel agencies in South Africa have with their recruitment market. Personal interviews were conducted amongst 200 travel agency managers and/or owners in South Africa. The statistical analysis applied to the study included the calculation of standard deviations for individual items on the questionnaire, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Cronbach Alpha values, as well as the calculation of practical significance by means of effect sizes. The results stipulate that travel agencies must be marketed as an employer who supports the personal development and growth of employees to ensure that skilled employees are recruited and current employees are retained within the travel agency industry in South Africa.

Key phrases: Recruitment, recruitment market, travel agency, travel agent, employee

INTRODUCTION

A business consists of resources, of which the most important is human resources. The successful existence of the business depends on the manner in which it is able to recruit the most skilled employees. Businesses must focus to retain their employees within a highly competitive labour environment to ensure its competitiveness and success (Boninelli & Meyer 2004:31-35). This requires a comprehensive human resources planning process which provides the business with a competitive advantage over other businesses. Recruitment reflects the process whereby suitable candidates are identified and recruited to the business (Schultz 2001:218-219). Potential employees are therefore recruited with the intention to form part of the value-adding activities of the business. According to these activities, the business attempts to satisfy the needs and wants of customers to the best of its ability. In terms of the service-driven employer, the motivation of employees also becomes an important factor, since an unhappy employee can influence a business or project negatively. A direct outcome of this could be that the business can have a negative influence on its relationship building activities with customers (Maharaj & Schlechter 2007:26-29).

This article will provide a theory discussion on recruitment relating to aspects such as the characteristics of candidates when recruited, the importance of a manpower needs assessment before recruitment is initiated, the relevance of understanding the recruitment policy of the business before recruitment actions are initiated, knowledge on the post description of the vacant position before a candidate is recruited, as well as aspects relating to the business offer that is made to a successful candidate. The

article will further attempt to indicate what the current status is of the relationships which travel agencies in South Africa have with their recruitment market, and will provide recommendations to the management of travel agencies regarding the improved application of the principles of relationship marketing to this market. In addition, the problem statement and the purpose of the article will be highlighted and followed by a focus on the objectives of the study, and an overview of the theory relating to the recruitment market. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology applied to the study and the major findings and managerial implications which form an inherent part of the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of the South African travel agency industry depends on the quality of service which travel agents deliver to customers. Such service deliverance is in direct relation to the skills of management, as well as the knowledge and professionalism of employees (Lubbe 2000:134). This indicates that recruitment is an important function within the business. The business itself is responsible to recruit and retain a successful sales force which can be viewed as an asset to the business. The recruitment policy of the business must therefore ensure that the most competent candidate is recruited for the advertised position (Van Hoye & Lievens 2007:374-375; Flood & Gibson 2002:1-5). For the purposes of this study, the different literature components which constitute the recruitment market will be discussed in more detail.

Candidate characteristics

During the employee selection process, a business must be able to establish and measure the suitability of the candidate to the vacant position. It is done by finding answers to different questions. These questions are does the applicant adhere to the minimum requirements as indicated in the post specification (e.g. skills, experience and the ability of the candidate to learn)?, can the previous experience of the candidate be of value for the position for which he/she is applying?, does the applicant possess the ability to network?, what are the interests, internal motivational level and objectives of the applicant?, does the candidate illustrate the potential to become a loyal employee when his/her career record is studied?, is there any information on the application form which can cause doubt about the suitability of the candidate for the position advertised?(Henkens, Remery & Schippers 2005:423-424). The selection of the most suitable candidate and the establishment of a well-designed training programme can be the key to the success of a business.

Manpower needs assessment

Employee planning should be done within the broader framework of the strategic plan and objectives of the business. It is important to remember that the focis of the recruitment and the selection procedures of a business are to ensure that the correct number and category of employees are recruited at the right time and place to meet the current and future needs of the business. The business must be able to determine what the futuristic demand and supply will be of employees with specific skills. The forecasting of futuristic employee needs must focus on the task and post description of the potential employee, and must incorporate identified aspects which are peculiar to the employment needs of the business (Petzer 2005:50; Bolton 2004:46-50).

Recruitment policy

The recruitment and selection of potential employees is the function of the human resources manager in the business (Berndt 2004:93). The following guidelines can empower a business to recruit the most suitable candidates to build a long-term relationship with customers, namely more comprehensive and aggressive recruitment campaigns; improved recruitment packages inclusive of fringe benefits for both new and current employees; more flexible recruitment packages to adhere to the needs of individual professionals; a higher percentage women and mature students within the workforce; experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students; and cooperation with other businesses with regard to the recruitment of new employees (Townes 2008).

Candidate requirements

The purpose of recruitment should be to recruit, select and appoint the most suitable candidate for the correct position within the business (Henkens, Remery & Schippers 2005:422-424). It must be emphasised that potential employees of a high caliber prefer to work for businesses that are reputable in order for them to be successful (Luna-Arocas & Camps 2008:28-31; Cant 2000:18). It is therefore important to select employees in the service sector according to specified criteria. These criteria are especially applicable to positions which are directly related to customer liaison and incorporate different aspects. These aspects are a mature inclination and a positive self image, well-developed interpersonal skills, a high tolerance level, an inherent need for the satisfaction of individual customer needs, the expression of personal characteristics such as initiative, creativity, perseverance and the need for self development, the execution of efficient communication, and the ability of the candidate to influence other people (Theron, Bothma & Du Toit 2003:183). It is

therefore the responsibility of the business to appoint employees who can add the characteristics of trust, loyalty, respect and commitment to the business.

Post description

The compilation of a framework which specifies the skills, characteristics and qualities which the potential employee must posses, is possible if the specifications, description and expectations of the position are taken into consideration. The possibility exists that the potential candidate does not possess all the required skills and characteristics which the vacant post requires. It is for this reason that a business must determine the skills and competencies of employees who are employed in similar positions within the business (Townsend 2007:477-479). The evaluation of candidates who are already employed by the business is easier, since the business already possesses information on and experience of the ability of the potential candidate and his or her work performance. All parties who have a direct interest in the appointment of the most suitable candidate in a vacant position must reach consensus regarding the required skills and characteristics which the successful candidate must possess. It must further serve as a measurement tool for the recruitment of the most suitable candidate for a position within the business (Henkens et al 2005:423-425).

Business offer

The identification of the most suitable candidate for positions within the business requires comprehensive planning. The offer which the business communicates to the successful candidate must consider the most prominent motives and fears of the candidate. The motives of the candidate (e.g. career advancement), as well as the opportunities and challenges which the position offers, must be central to the marketing of the business offer to the successful candidate (Raub & Streit 2006:279-283). In addition, it must be emphasised that smaller businesses, such as travel agencies, experience problems with the recruitment of appropriate candidates. The reasons for this can be attributed to factors such as salaries being less competitive due to a shortage of funds, training opportunities are not provided to staff on a regular basis, the overall experience of employees with regard to job satisfaction is poor, and work security within the small business is also guaranteed to a lesser extent compared to large corporate institutions (Roberts-Lombard 2006:194-195).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

It becomes imperative for travel agencies to recruit employees who have realistic expectations of job demands and working conditions in the travel agency industry. A realistic recruitment approach implies that travel agencies should provide potential candidates with complete and unbiased information to attract only those individuals who match the job profile and can meet the demands. Discussions with Townes, Heyns and Clur (2008) indicated that there are challenges facing the recruitment market of travel agencies in South Africa. The experienced staff of travel agencies are being lured by recruitment agencies with improved salary and benefit packages, thereby motivating them to change employer. The nomination of a suitable candidate to a new employer also occurs without the references of the successful candidate being contacted by the recruitment agency. The owners and managers of travel agencies in South Africa view this process as the ruthless head-hunting of employees which has a negative influence on the growth and future success of the travel agency industry in the country. This situation creates conflict between the management of travel agencies and recruitment consultants, resulting in the majority of travel agencies recruiting their own staff. Against the brief background on the importance of employee recruitment and the current recruitment challenges in the travel agency industry in South Africa provided above, the problem statement of this article encompasses an investigation into the recruitment market practices of travel agencies in South Africa.

Considering the information provided, there is a clear need for the management of travel agencies in South Africa to apply the principles of relationship marketing to their daily operations. It is furthermore important that travel agencies also apply these principles to their relationship building initiatives with the recruitment market that influences their competitiveness in the marketplace. Such competitiveness specifically depends on the ability of the travel agency to recruit and retain experienced, skilled and qualified staff.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE ARTICLE

Limited research has been conducted on recruitment market practices in South Africa, and no study has focused exclusively on the recruitment market practices within the travel agency industry in the country. Prior research within South Africa includes studies conducted for the purpose of investigating the recruitment market practices in an insurance, banking, hospital or manufacturing environment, or to provide a broad academic perspective on the legal aspects of labour recruitment in

the above industries. This article will provide a discussion on recruitment marketing from a service industry perspective, which will be beneficial to the travel agency industry in South Africa. The results and conclusions drawn may be used to ensure the recruitment and retention of skilled and qualified individuals in the travel agency industry in the country. In addition, the findings of this article could also create a greater awareness amongst South African travel agents of the requirements for establishing positive, long-term relationships with employees of the travel agency. It is therefore proposed that this article will contribute to the theoretical and empirical knowledge on recruitment marketing in the travel agency industry in South Africa.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

The purpose of the article is to research the relationship marketing practices in the recruitment market of travel agencies in South Africa. The article wants to establish the current level of relationship marketing in the recruitment market of the travel agency industry in the country, and to identify limitations in relationship marketing relationships which might exist in this market. The principles of relationship marketing in the recruitment market of travel agencies in South Africa are identified and the application thereof by the travel agency industry in the country determined. The section below highlights the different objectives formulated for the study.

The purpose of the article is supported by the following objectives:

- To investigate the recruitment market relationships of travel agencies in South Africa.
- To make recommendations regarding the improved application of the principles of relationship marketing to the recruitment market of travel agencies in South Africa.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

This study made use of a quantitative research approach and applied a descriptive research focus since it primarily depended on the interviewing of respondents (the managers or owners of travel agencies in South Africa). The study was furthermore cross-sectional since the respondents were only interviewed once.

Research method

Population

The population for this study included all the travel agents registered with the Association of South African Travel Agents (ASATA) in South Africa. The target population for this study was 325 travel agencies of which 200 participated in the completion of questionnaires. In terms of the small size of the population, it was decided to conduct a census.

Research instrument

The measuring instrument used was a structured questionnaire which included some adapted items from previously tested measuring instruments such as the *Relationship Marketing* instrument from Steyn (2000:296) and Otto (2004:264). The empirical research component of the study consisted of the completion of structured questionnaires through personal interviews. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A incorporated closed-ended questions to gather demographic data on the profile of the travel agency. Section B was in the format of a five-point Likert-type scale, comprising twenty- six items on employee relationship building. The purpose of the items on the questionnaire was to test respondents' current and ideal application of identified relationship marketing principles in the recruitment market of travel agencies in South Africa. The item response continuum ranged from 1-5, where 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. The current application of the recruitment market relationship building principles was indicated as x(a) on the questionnaire, whilst the ideal implication was indicated as x(b). Effect sizes were calculated between the current and ideal application of the identified relationship marketing principles in the recruitment market of travel agencies in South Africa. Structured interviews were also conducted with fifteen owners or managers of travel agencies in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa to pre-test the questionnaire before its formal application as a data gathering instrument.

Research procedure

Personal interviews were conducted with the managers and/or owners of travel agencies in South Africa. To ensure the participation of the maximum number of population elements, interviews were arranged on the premises of the travel agency.

Data analysis

The following analysis was done:

- The means of differences between the ideal and the current application of the recruitment market practices by travel agencies were calculated.

- Standard deviations for individual items on the questionnaire were calculated.

- Explorative Factor Analysis (EFO) was applied to determine the validity of the questionnaire as a measuring instrument. According to the MINEIGEN criterion in Table 1, one factor was retained for each identified construct. The research instrument can therefore be regarded as a valid research instrument.

Table 1: Results of the factor analysis for the recruitment market constructs of the study

Construct	Number of factors retained according to the mineigen–criterion	Cumulative variance explained	Communalities
Candidate characteristics	1 factor retained	58,37%	47,63%-72,64%
Manpower needs assessment	1 factor retained	58,05%	43,63%-73,44%
Recruitment policy	1 factor retained	65,82%	65,40%-66,12%
Candidate requirements	1 factor retained	61,17%	48,22%-75,26%
Post description	1 factor retained	70,37%	53,16%-83,76%
Business offer	1 factor retained	72,06%	64,74%-78,56%

- Cronbach's Alpha-values were used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire as a measurement instrument. The calculation of Cronbach's Alpha-values was done for each construct. Hocking, Stacks and McDermott (2003:131) indicate that Cronbach Alpha-values determine the consistency according to which respondents answered the different items on the questionnaire. From Table 2 it can be deduced that the research instrument was reliable.

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha-values for the recruitment market constructs of the study

Construct	CRonbach's alpha co-efficient
Candidate characteristics	0,84
Manpower needs assessment	0,81
Recruitment policy	0,74
Candidate requirements	0,82
Post description	0,88
Business offer	0,86

- Practical significance was identified by means of effect sizes. Cohen's d-values were used for this purpose. This study did not make use of inferential statistics (p-values), but applied the d-values of Cohen to calculate effect sizes. The effect sizes indicate the practically significant differences between the current application of the items on the questionnaire, and what the ideal application of the items should be (Ellis & Steyn 2003:51-53; Steyn 1999:3). Effect sizes (d-values) were calculated by using the following formula (Cohen 1988:20-27):

$$d = \frac{\left| \bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 \right|}{s_{max}}$$

where:

- d = the effect size;
- $\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2$ is the difference between the current situation (a-value) and the ideal situation (b-value) (e.g. respondents had to indicate on a Likert scale of 1 – 5 how they currently experience a specific scenario through a statement on the questionnaire, and how they want to experience it as an ideal scenario); and
- s_{max} is the maximum standard deviation of the two comparable groups.

Ellis and Steyn (2003:52) and Steyn (1999:3) specify the cut-off points below which can be used when interpreting effect sizes:

- If $d \approx 0,2$, it indicates a small effect;
- If $d \approx 0,5$, it indicates a medium effect; and
- If $d \approx 0,8$ or is larger, the effect is both large and practically significant.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The recruitment market practices of travel agencies in South Africa were measured according to six constructs, namely the characteristics of candidates, manpower needs assessment, recruitment policy, candidate requirements, post description and business offer. Each of these constructs was statistically analysed to provide information on the means between the items for (a) the current application of recruitment market practices, and (b) the ideal implementation of recruitment market practices, the standard deviation and the effect size. Table 3 also provides an indication of the total number of respondents (n) who participated in the study.

Table 3: Constructs for recruitment market relationships

Construct	N	Current Application (a) [x(a)]	Ideal Implementation (b) [x(b)]	Maximum standard deviation	Effect size (d)
Candidate characteristics	200	4,35	4,61	0,61	0,52
Manpower needs assessment	200	3.08	3,79	0.89	0,89
Recruitment policy	200	3,35	3,67	1,05	0,52
Candidate requirements	200	4,54	4,62	0,50	0,24
Post description	200	4,39	4,59	0,57	0,43
Business offer	200	3,90	4,20	0,82	0,53

Candidate characteristics

The owners and managers of travel agencies (n=200) view the recruitment of employees as an important function which can directly influence the future existence of the travel agency. They view their focus on the different characteristics which a candidate must possess before an appointment is made, as good [x(a) = 4.35]. However, they want the ideal application thereof to be higher [x(b) = 4.61]. The medium effect size (d=0,52) illustrates that the owners and managers of travel agencies would prefer that more emphasis be placed on the characteristics a candidate possesses before an appointment is made.

Manpower needs assessment

The owners and managers of travel agencies (n=200) put a strong emphasis on determining their current human resource needs [x(a) = 3.08]. They are, however, of the opinion that this focus can, ideally, be strengthened [x(b) = 3.79]. The practically significant effect size (d=0,89) indicates that the owners and managers of travel agencies are of the opinion that the determination of human resource needs must be given priority.

Recruitment policy

The owners and managers of travel agencies (n=200) indicated that they make use of a structured recruitment policy when new candidates are appointed in vacant posts [x(a) = 3.35]. They are, however, of the opinion that a greater focus must be placed on the application of the components which constitute the recruitment policy of the travel agency [x(b) = 3.67]. The medium effect size (d=0,52) indicates that the owners and managers of travel agencies are of the opinion that they must view the components of their recruitment policy when appointing new candidates in a stronger light.

Candidate requirements

The owners and managers of travel agencies (n=200) indicated that they put great emphasis on the individual skills of candidates before they are appointed in a vacant position [x(a) = 4.54]. They are, however, of the opinion that this focus can ideally be strengthened more [x(b) = 4.62]. The practically significant effect size (d=0,24) indicates that the owners and managers of travel agencies appoint candidates who possess the necessary skills required to operate as travel agents in the industry. As a result, there is no practically significant room for improvement with regard to the items in the construct.

Post description

The owners and managers of travel agencies (n=200) indicated that they compile a clear post description for a vacant position before a new candidate is recruited for such a position [x(a) = 4.39]. They are, however, of the opinion that their focus on this aspect can be further strengthened [x(b) = 4.59]. The practically insignificant effect size (d=0,43) illustrates that the owners and managers of travel agencies are doing comprehensive planning before an appointment is made in a vacant position. There is no practically significant room for improvement with regard to the items as specified in this construct, since the post description and responsibilities of the potential candidate are specified before an interview is conducted with the candidate.

Business offer

The owners and managers of travel agencies (n=200) indicated that they make use of different offering sources to recruit qualified and experienced candidates to the travel agency [x(a) = 3.90]. However, they are of the opinion that the use of these offerings must be further developed [x(b) = 4.20]. A medium effect size (d=0.53) was obtained between the current and ideal application of the items in the construct. The medium effect size indicates that the owners and managers of travel agencies want to further develop the use of business offerings to recruit skilled and qualified candidates to the travel agency.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The managerial implications of the study are discussed according to the components of the recruitment market which is characteristic of the travel agency industry in South Africa.

Candidate characteristics

According to the literature, it is necessary for a business to ensure that the most suitable candidate with the correct qualifications and experience is recruited to the business (Cronjé, du Toit & Motlatla 2000:468). The outcome of the study is in accordance with the literature, and states that the highly competitive nature of the travel agency industry in South Africa necessitates individual travel agencies to appoint candidates who possess the relevant qualifications and experience. This empowers the travel agency to deliver a service to customers that will ensure their satisfaction to a greater extent. In addition, travel agencies in South Africa also view aspects such as interpersonal skills, leadership qualities, specialised skills and

knowledge as important prerequisites before a candidate is appointed in a vacant position. This will enable the travel agency to better position itself in ensuring the long-term loyalty of customers, since they (travel agencies) will have the necessary manpower to satisfy the needs and wants of customers more successfully. The criteria stated above which are viewed by the travel agency management as important before an appointment to a vacant position is made, correlate with the criteria stipulated by Theron et al (2003:183) (refer to the literature review on the recruitment market). Theron et al further state that these criteria are especially relevant to positions which are directly related to customer liaison.

Manpower needs assessment

There is definite room for improvement with regard to the manner in which travel agencies in South Africa establish their human resource needs. Travel agencies do not have a structured format according to which they determine futuristic human resource needs, or whereby potential candidates are tested before an appointment is made. These two aspects can have a direct influence on the quality of service delivery of the travel agency to the customers, as well as the futuristic expansion plans of the travel agency. This finding of the study is in contrast with the literature which argues that a business must be able to determine what the futuristic demand and supply will be of employees with specific skills. The forecasting of futuristic employee needs must focus on the task and post description of the potential employee, and must incorporate identified aspects which are characteristic of the employment needs of the business (Petzer 2005:50; Bolton 2004:46-50).

In addition, the literature further stipulates that if a business views the recruitment of individuals as a product and employees as consumers of recruitment, then marketing can be used as a valuable model for the recruitment of employees. This model can determine the tasks which prospective employees must perform to function optimally within the business. The business can apply marketing principles such as the accurate segmentation of the labour market to make the recruitment of the most suitable candidate for a position, easier (Weddle 2008:28; Henkens et al 2005:421-425). However, the findings of the study are in contrast with the stated literature and stipulate that according to the owners and/or managers of travel agencies, the execution of a manpower needs audit is currently or in the future not a priority function for the travel agency, and potential employees are currently not required to complete a skills or psychometric testing programme before an appointment is made. This aspect is also not viewed as important for the future, and travel agencies do not currently possess a database of prospective employees from which they can obtain a curriculum vitae. This shortcoming is disconcerting, considering the large staff

turnover which travel agencies in South Africa currently experience in the industry. The management of travel agencies will therefore have to develop a greater awareness of the experienced and qualified human resources that are available in the marketplace. The recruitment and appointment of these human resources in vacant positions will empower the travel agencies to improve their professional service delivery to customers, which can further lead to an improvement in customer retention.

Against the background provided above, the establishment of human resource needs must become the primary responsibility of the travel agency management in South Africa. The efficient planning of this function will empower the travel agency to appoint candidates with the relevant experience, qualifications and personality in vacant positions for their corporate and leisure market sections respectively.

Recruitment policy

According to the literature, the selection of the most suitable candidate and the establishment of a well-designed training programme can be the key to the success of a business. To ensure that the best candidate is recruited and appointed, requires intensive planning. Recruited candidates must be submitted to a stringent selection process to identify the best trained, skilled and motivated candidates for vacant positions in the business (Sin, Tse, Chan, Heung & Yim 2006:407-412; Ward & Dagger 2005:282-284). The findings of the study agree with the literature by concluding that travel agencies in South Africa should follow a more formal approach regarding the recruitment and appointment of candidates for vacant positions. The use of structured interviews provides every candidate with the same opportunity to prove himself/herself during an interview. This also empowers the management of the travel agency to evaluate every candidate more objectively, since each candidate is asked the same questions, they complete the same practical evaluation form and are therefore assessed according to the same criteria.

In addition, the theory further stipulates that the recruitment process must use a skills approach to determine the personality and skill requirements for key positions, and the process must be integrated with the business function of the business (Bachenheimer 2004:56; Schultz 2001:220). This would require a human resource background to ensure its successful application. However, a travel agency is a small business consisting of a small number of employees. There is only a small number of staff members who possess a qualification in the field of human resource management. This function is usually the responsibility of the manager or owner of the travel agency. This implies that the contracting of a recruitment agency to

manage the recruitment and placement of candidates for a vacant position in the travel agency could hold the following advantages:

- An individual with experience in the field of recruitment and selection is used to recruit the most suitable candidate for an advertised position in the travel agency.

- Professional testing takes place for the evaluation of candidates by individuals who possess the required knowledge of human resource management, and a structured format is applied when interviewing candidates. The design and compilation of the interview questions can be done in conjunction with the management of the travel agency industry. The final compilation of the questionnaire will be done by the recruitment agency, since they possess the required experience in interviewing.

- Recruitment consultants are also knowledgeable regarding the format of questions to be used for the post level being advertised; and a formal approach to the recruitment function is followed from the design of the advertisement for a vacant position to the testing and final selection of the most suitable candidate for the position.

Travel agencies can furthermore also have a more direct approach to include race and gender as criteria for new appointments and internal promotions. This will ensure that the travel agency is pro-active to address gender and race representation on its staff. These two aspects are especially important against the background of the current political climate where affirmative action in the workplace specifically addresses these issues.

Candidate requirements

Jordaan and Prinsloo (2001:171,173) stipulate that the purpose of recruitment should be to recruit, select and appoint the most suitable candidate for the correct position within the business. Theron et al (2003:183) and Streeter (2007:4) stipulate that criteria such as well-developed interpersonal skills; the expression of personal characteristics such as initiative, creativity, perseverance and the need for self development are important when functioning in a service environment. The findings of the study are in agreement with the literature, stating that travel agencies in South Africa view aspects such as interpersonal skills, leadership qualities, specialised skills and knowledge as important prerequisites before a candidate is appointed in a vacant position. This will enable the travel agency to better position itself to ensure the long-term loyalty of customers, since they (travel agencies) will have the manpower on their staff who will satisfy the needs of customers with greater success.

Post description

The management of travel agencies in South Africa compile a post description with great care before an appointment is made in a vacant position. There is limited room for improvement regarding the items as set out in this construct, since the post description and responsibilities of the potential candidate are already specified before an interview with the candidate is arranged. Clarity therefore already exists regarding the new employee, and the post description will focus on whether the employee will be responsible for the corporate market (corporate customers) or the leisure market (individual customers), and whether the position is a junior or a senior position before an appointment is made. Currently, comprehensive planning is done within the travel agency industry regarding the post description of new employees before interviews with potential candidates are set up. The responsibilities and authority that will be allocated to the new employee, the different tasks that will be performed by the new candidate, as well as the influence which technology could have on the future performance of the new employee are currently considered by the management and senior staff members of the travel agency before the recruitment of new employees is undertaken. These findings of the study are in accordance with the literature which states that the compilation of a framework which specifies the skills, characteristics and qualities which the potential employee must possess, is possible if the specifications, description and expectations of the position are taken into consideration (Schultz 2001:218-235).

Business offer

The literature emphasises that identification of the most suitable candidate for positions within the business requires comprehensive planning. The offer which the business communicates to the successful candidate must convey and address the most prominent motives and fears of the candidate. The motives of the candidate (e.g. career advancement), as well as the opportunities and challenges which the position offers, must be central to the marketing of the business offer to the successful candidate (Raub & Streit 2006:279-283). The findings of the study for this construct do not correlate with the literature, since the travel agency management in South Africa does not address the motives and fears of candidates who apply for vacant positions. To overcome this challenge, travel agencies must focus more pertinently on aspects such as the financial package offered to entry level candidates to recruit them to the travel agency, the financial package offered to existing employees to retain their expertise for the travel agency, or their internal promotion to ensure their loyalty towards the travel agency must be addressed, and the marketing

of the travel agency industry as an environment for personal development and growth must be stimulated.

The decline in commission income from the supplier to the travel agency since the 1st of May 2005, the growing tendency in the travel industry whereby suppliers are continuously making use of direct marketing channels, as well as the continuous uncertainty regarding the future role of travel agencies in the distribution channel have made the travel agency industry less lucrative as a career path. The management of travel agencies must therefore address these aspects in the future to ensure that they will still recruit qualified and experienced candidates for vacant positions.

CONCLUSION

The future success of the South African travel agency industry will be determined by the quality of service that travel agents deliver to their customers. Such service delivery is in direct relation to the skills of management, as well as the professionalism and knowledge of employees. This therefore emphasises that recruitment is an important function within a business environment. The business itself is therefore responsible to recruit skilled, educated and experienced individuals who will be an added asset to the business (Lee 2007:84-85).

This article provided a theoretical perspective on employee recruitment with specific reference to the characteristics of candidates when recruited, the importance of a manpower needs assessment before recruitment is initiated, the relevance of understanding the recruitment policy of the business before recruitment actions are initiated, knowledge on the post description of the vacant position before a candidate is recruited, as well as aspects relating to the business offer that is made to a successful candidate. This was followed by a discussion on the findings of the study. These findings concluded that the large staff turnover in the travel agency industry is the result of poor salaries, a lack of educational sponsorships and poor management relationships with employees working for travel agencies. The article concluded with a focus on the managerial implications of the findings. The major managerial implications of the study specified that the highly competitive nature of the travel agency industry in South Africa necessitates individual travel agencies to appoint candidates who possess the relevant qualifications and experience required by the industry. This empowers the travel agency to deliver a service to customers that will ensure their satisfaction to a greater extent. Finally, the travel agency must also be marketed as an employer who supports the personal development and growth of

employees to ensure that skilled employees are recruited and current employees are retained within the travel agency industry in South Africa.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BACHENHEIMER J.F. 2004. Good recruitment practice – Working to create the bond between study and subject. *Actmagazine*, April:56-59.

BERNDT A. 2004. Internal Marketing. *In*: Brink, A. & Berndt, A. *Customer Relationship Management and Customer Service.* Lansdowne, Juta:83-97.

BOLTON M. 2004. Customer centric business processing. International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, 53(1):44-51.

BONINELLI I. & MEYER T.N.A. 2004. *Building Human Capital*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing.

CANT M. 2000. The marketing arena. *In*: Strydom, J., Jooste, C. & Cant, M. *Marketing Management*. Kenwyn, Juta:6,18.

COHEN J. 1988. A*nalysis for the behavioural sciences*. Second edition. Hillsdale: New Jersey Earlbaum.

CRONJÉ DE J.G.J., DU TOIT G.S. & MOTLATLA D.M.C. 2000. *Inleiding tot die Bestuurswese*. Kaapstad: Oxford University Press, Suidelike Afrika.

ELLIS S.M. & STEYN H.S. 2003. Practical significance (effect sizes) versus or in combination with statistical significance (p-values). *Management Dynamics: contemporary research*, 12(4):51-53.

FLOOD P. & GIBSON C. 2002. *Bestuur en Indiensneming – Die werwing, ontwikkeling en motivering van mense.* Kenilworth: Ampersand Press.

HENKENS K., REMERY C. & SCHIPPERS J. 2005. Recruiting personnel in a tight labour market: an analysis of employers' behaviour. *International Journal of Manpower,* 26(95):421-433.

HOCKING J.E., STACKS D.W. & MCDERMOTT S.T. 2003. *Communication research*. Boston: A&B Publishers.

JORDAAN Y. & PRINSLOO M. 2001. *Grasping Services Marketing*. Pretoria: V&R Printing Works.

LEE I. 2007. An architecture for a next generation holistic e-recruiting system, *Communication of the CM,* July, *50(7):*84-85.

LUBBE B. 2000. *Tourism Distribution. Managing the travel intermediary*. Kenwyn: Juta.

LUNA-AROCAS R. & CAMPS J. 2008. A model of high performance work practices and turnover intentions. *Personnel Review*, 37(1):26-46.

MAHARAJ I. & SCHLECHTER A.F. 2007. Meaning in life and meaning of work: Relationships with organisational citizenship behaviour, commitment and job satisfaction. *Management Dynamics*, 16(3):24-42.

OTTO M. 2004. *Interne Bemarking by Geselekteerde Versekeringsondernemings.* Potchefstroom. NWU. Dissertation – PhD: 368p.

PETZER D. 2005. Customer *retention management for the hotel industry in Gauteng.* Potchefstroom: North West University. Dissertation – PhD: 393p.

RAUB S. & STREIT E.M. 2006. Realistic recruitment – An empirical study of the cruise industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(4):278-289.

ROBERTS-LOMBARD M. 2006. Verhoudingsbemarking binne die reisagentskapbedryf in die Wes-Kaap provinsie. Potchefstroom. NWU. Dissertation – PhD:408p.

SCHULTZ H.B. 2001. Workforce planning and recruitment. *In*: Nel, P.S. *Human Resources Management.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press, Southern Africa:218-219.

SIN L.Y., TSE A.C.B., CHAN H., HEUNG V.C.S. & YIM F.H.K. 2006. The effects of Relationship Marketing Orientation on Business Performance in the Hotel Industry, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 30: 407-425.

STEYN H.S. 1999. *Praktiese beduidenheid: die gebruik van effekgroottes*. Wetenskaplike bydraes, Reeks B: Natuurwetenskappe nr. 117. Publikasiebeheerkomitee, PU vir CHO, Potchefstroom.

STEYN T.F.J. 2000. *Relationship marketing at selected manufacturing organisations in the North West province of South Africa*. Potchefstroom: PU vir CHO (Dissertation -D.Phil.):384p.

STREETER W.W. 2007. Abe, The recruiter. *ABA Banking Journal*, March:4.

THERON D. BOTHMA C. & DU TOIT M. 2003. *Focusesing on Customer Service in Southern Africa.* Clubview: Prince Publishers.

TOWNES M. 2008. Personal interview with author. Durbanville. (Cassette recording in the possession of the author).

TOWNES M., HEYNS S. & CLUR C. 2008. Personal *interview with authors*. Durbanville/East London. (Cassette recording in the possession of the author.).

TOWNSEND K. 2007. Recruitment, training and turnover: another call centre paradox*. Personnel Review*, 36(3):476-490.

VAN HOYE G & LIEVENS F. 2007. Investigating Web-Based recruitment sources: Employee testimonials vs word-of-mouse. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 15(4):372-382.

WARD T. & DAGGER T.S. 2005. The complexity of relationship marketing for service customers. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 21(4):281-290.

WEDDLE P. 2008. Developing a positive recruiting experience. *Practice Management Solutions Journall,* November, December:28.