

Practitioner Toolkit

Employer Engagement

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#weR4jobs *weR4everyone*

Damien Opolski has over 30 years experience in the employment services sector, including a number of years working closely with employers as an employment consultant. Here are some of his thoughts on Employer Engagement.

Employer Engagement

Put yourself in the employer's shoes. What would you look for in an employment services provider?

Like most aspects of the Australian economy, our employment services sector is underpinned by choice. Job seekers are encouraged to research potential service providers and do their 'due diligence' to find the provider who will best meet their needs, and at the same time employers have many options in deciding how to fill recruitment needs.

In the modern economy employers can choose to list jobs on any number of internet job sites, with other types of recruitment agencies, and with Australian Government employment services providers. In most locations there will be more than one provider possibly competing to be the provider of choice.

It may also be that some jobs aren't listed at all – cold canvassing and word of mouth still play an important role in filling jobs.

As an employer, what would you look for in your provider of choice?

Here are some thoughts:

What makes you stand out? What's your marketing angle? Why would you choose you?

- Are you a local specialist? Maybe you have extensive experience in and knowledge of the local labour market?
- Is your reputation built on achievement, such that employers come to you via 'word of mouth'?
- Is it repeat business? Do employers use you again and again?
- Are you expert in placing particular groups of job seekers into employment – maybe young people or mature age job seekers, or people with disability or mental condition?
- Do you have expertise in particular industries or occupations? Maybe your staff have extensive knowledge of industry and occupations through previous jobs, which can be invaluable.
- Is it the work you do with job seekers – the way you work with them to prepare them for employment?
- Are you an expert in job design?
- Are you 'scalable'? Can you manage small and large scale recruiting projects – sometimes through developing partnerships?



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- Do you have a community presence- organisations, boards and committees, hosting/sponsoring events?
- Do your staff have particular skills and backgrounds that are of interest and value to employers?
- Is it your after sales service?
- Is it your linkages to training organisations and other agencies?
- Are you seen as an expert in all things employment – do you invite employers in to give them updates on your services, labour market conditions and employment policy and programmes?

Are you good at building rapport and relationships?

We talk a lot about building rapport and relationships with job seekers. Do we do it with employers? Building relationships with employers is a key to success. When meeting people:

- Are you good at building rapport – listening and reading the signs to find common ground (family, kids, sports, current events, schools, interests, business, friends and acquaintances, your backgrounds, the picture on the wall or on the desk)?
- Can you ‘talk turkey’? What do you know about the employer? Have you researched the business, industry and occupations so you can talk to the employer about the subject that they are expert in and are most interested in – their business? Can you convey a knowledge of and genuine interest in their business?
- What do you know about economic conditions and the labour market? Economic conditions are central to the success of a business. Can you talk about the economy and labour market – interest rates, inflation rates, currency value, industry and occupational trends? These are subjects that many employers may have a knowledge of and interest in.
- Can you give good advice on recruitment and workforce development strategies, government employment programmes etc.?
- Are you good at listening? Can you pick up the verbals and non-verbals and adjust your conversation?
- The follow up. If you said you would do something did you do it when you said you would do it?

Managing the vacancy

- You are an agent for the employer – when working with the employer as an agent do you use inclusive language to highlight that you are part of the employer’s team – terms like ‘us’ and ‘we’?
- Do you work closely with the employer to identify the inherent requirements of the job, and help the employer to phrase the wording of job advertisements to avoid discriminatory practices?
- Do you work with the employer to develop the best recruitment strategy for *this* vacancy? It may be that you do the shortlisting and arrange interviews for the most suitable candidates.
- Are you able to give your employer a quick assessment of the labour market so they know what to expect and if the vacancy will be easy or difficult to fill?



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- If the vacancy might prove difficult to fill do you suggest positive alternatives – for example, finding candidates with similar skills who could be trained to do the job?
- Do you screen candidates closely so that only suitable job seekers are referred, and do you brief the job seekers you are referring such that they have a clear understanding of the job and its requirements before they meet the employer?
- Do you know what employers value in a job seeker? Research shows they place the highest values in personal qualities such as honesty, integrity, reliability, initiative and work ethic.
- Do you keep detailed records so you can discuss every job seeker in sufficient detail with the employer – either before or after the interview?
- Do you arrange convenient times and methods to contact the employer to discuss progress, and encourage the employer to contact you as soon as they can if the job is filled or, for example, a job seeker performs poorly or doesn't attend the interview?
- Is all your contact over the phone/web? That may work best but nothing beats face-to-face contact for initial relationship building.
- Do you make it easy for the employer? For example, if it's a wage subsidy, do you make it as easy as possible for the employer to complete the paperwork?
- Do you manage the expectations? In engaging you as an employment agent your employer will now have expectations as to the quality of service. The bar may be set high. Are you managing and meeting those expectations?

Putting the good word in

It's always helpful when we have someone who can 'put a good word in for us' or arrange an introduction. Who might be able to do this?

- Think of mutual friends or acquaintances – maybe there's someone you both know?
- Your employer has just rung to thank you for the fantastic recruitment service. Maybe they will write or record a testimonial for you, or maybe you could leave some business cards on their front desk?
- You've got a job seeker who is very comfortable in canvassing employers. She really enjoys meeting people. She is eligible for a wage subsidy. You might give her your business cards so she can say: *"If you need any more info about me just contact Julie at XYZ – here's her card!"*