

HR RESOURCING

PINPOINTING
THE BEST
TALENT

Guide 2: Briefing Agencies on New Roles

| How to be more effective
at hiring top talent



Introduction



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About Us

AR Resourcing has been providing Procurement and Commercial recruitment services across the construction industries since 2011.

We recruit all experience levels across our specialist job functions, managing vacancies from Assistants through to Heads of Department and Directors.

We can support single and multiple hire campaigns, or national transformation programmes.

Our recruitment services help companies hire the best people and maintain high performing, streamlined teams.

Our candidate research services help companies better manage their recruitment and retention strategies.

Many managers and decision-makers find themselves responsible for hiring new people into their team with little or no training as to how to work with recruiters, select and vet potential new hires or what to do once decisions have been made.

That's where this collection of 4 guides comes in. They are designed to tell you what you need to know and what to do throughout the hiring process. The guides will help you get the best out of your recruitment agency by working in partnership with them and explain how to secure the best candidates, while minimising the disruption to your day job.

The 4 Guides:



1. Engaging a Recruitment Agency



2. Briefing Agencies on New Roles



3. Managing Interview Processes



4. Post Interview & Preboarding

All four guides are available, free in the "Insights" section of our website. I hope you find them useful. However, we know every recruitment scenario is unique, so should you require more detail or have any questions, please get in touch and we will be happy to help.



"This is the first time I have worked with Adam and AR Resourcing, he was recommended due to placing other Heads of Procurement across the group.

I was really pleased with how he managed the recruitment process and communicated with all parties, especially as we had a couple of unforeseen delays that needed to be professionally managed. Happy to work with Adam again".

Cecilia Hansen-Saunders

Commercial Director
VolkerRail



Vacancies

Scope and Briefing

To help your recruiter to deliver candidates who are a good fit for your vacancy you must brief them well. The more specific you are about your requirements, the better your shortlist of candidates will be. However, beware “the Unicorn Trap”: the more prescriptive you are about the ideal candidate’s required skills and experience, the fewer candidates will fit the brief.

For less prescriptive briefs with a ready supply of candidates, contingent recruitment may work well. Reputable recruiters in this area, like us, differentiate ourselves in this market by how well we understand the brief and company cultures in the industry as well as our ability to manage candidates through the process.

We recommend our retained or exclusive recruitment service when the brief requires us to look beyond the active candidate pool. We, and other good recruiters, may also push back on the brief if we feel changes will open up your candidate pool and still deliver the result you want. As a niche recruiter (Procurement and Commercial recruitment across construction) we know the sector so it is worth considering our advice.

One way to avoid the unicorn trap is to separate out mandatory and nice-to-have skills and experience making the first list as short as possible by moving requirements to the second list.

Writing a Vacancy Brief

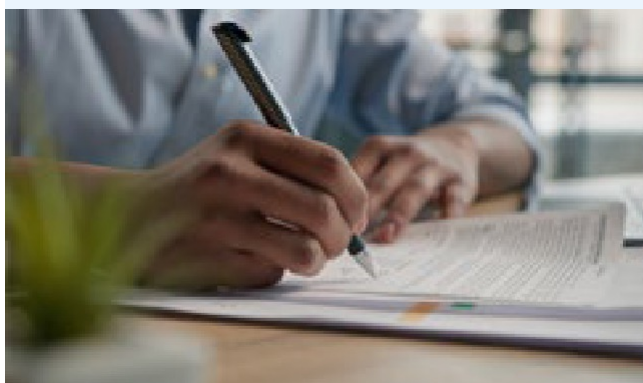
When writing the brief about the vacancy, include any information you feel relevant, for example:

- Skills and the level you require - awareness, competency, expert
- Qualifications
- Experience in doing an activity or using a tool
- Locations
- Willingness to travel
- Where they will need to work - office or home
- Remuneration they must accept - salary, bonus/commission.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements
- What good really looks like for this role

Why not also ask the recruiter's opinion about the brief and the opportunity, for example:

- Is it going to be possible to find the perfect candidate?
- Is your EVP strong enough (see opposite)?
- Is the package you're offering going to be competitive in the current market?

Finally, give each vacancy a unique reference number and insist that each candidate submitted should have the vacancy reference number on the CV & in the email subject line.



Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Research suggests that most candidates are as interested, or more interested, in the company they are being asked to join as the job they are being offered.

It's your job to explain this key information to the recruiter. We have a separate guide to creating and promoting your EVP available to you upon request

We can't stress enough how important this is, especially if you want to attract passive candidates.

Agree your Timetable

Concise recruitment processes make a huge difference to the likelihood you will secure your preferred candidate. As such, when issuing the vacancy, agree with the recruiter when you expect CVs to be submitted and when interviews with the most suitable candidates will take place.

Asking for all CVs to be submitted on the same day and making it clear that any CVs submitted before that date will be relegated to the B pile means you can put time aside on that day to review all your CVs at the same time, making it easier to select the best candidates and making the process as efficient as possible for you.

If you take this approach, it may be necessary to be very clear about it with some contingent recruiters, otherwise:

- you will be peppered with CVs that you must either review immediately or keep somewhere until you have time to process them.
- some less reputable agencies will submit CVs even before they have spoken to the candidate because they know it's the agency that submits the CV first that gets the interview.

This can cause problems later, and often the hiring manager is drawn into a squabble between the agencies to decide who gets the candidate. The best way to deal with this is to make clear that if two agencies submit a candidate, you will let the candidate decide who they go through. This normally dissuades recruiters from submitting candidates they have not spoken to first.

CVs for Exclusive and Retained Search Briefs

For exclusive and retained searches, you can usually agree on the layout of CVs you would prefer with the recruiter.

We find the best layout is a profile header page (or two pages) that contains the following information:

- Vacancy reference number
 - Candidate's name and location
 - Salary / rate expectations
 - Notice period or availability
 - Requirements matrix showing:
 - Required skill / experience
 - Years used & last used
 - Recruiter's assessment of their competency
-
- Recruiter's comments containing:
 - Their reasons for submitting this candidate
 - References to the attached CV that illustrate their reasoning
 - Anything else the hiring manager should be aware of

Contingent recruiters are more likely to submit CVs in their standard format because they won't have the time to do anything else.

Strawman CV

If your role is very specific or it's the first time you have used a particular agency, consider asking the recruiter to submit a Strawman CV. This is a made-up CV of what they consider to be the perfect candidate.

From this you'll soon be able to see whether they have understood the role and know what they are looking for.

Retained and exclusive recruiters are more likely to do this than contingent recruiters.





Processing CVs

This is so much easier if you have agreed a shortlist submission date to receive the CVs. If not, we advise you to put CVs into a separate directory without looking at them until you are ready to look at all of them together.

Reviewing all the CVs in one sitting means you'll be able to directly compare which candidates are better than others making it easier to grade them. We suggest using a simple grading approach:

- A** | Really good match on your mandatory and nice-to-have requirements.
- B** | They are not a perfect match, but you would consider these candidates
- Z** | Rejected as not being suitable.

NB - Your HR department may have a process they expect you to follow to ensure that EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) rules are adhered to.

Even if they do not, keeping notes as to why you accepted or rejected a candidate is a good idea. You can feed this back to your recruiter to help them find more suitable candidates. Plus, when looking at several candidates' CVs, it's very easy to forget why you made a yes/no decision.

Another option available for retained or exclusive searches is to have the recruiter present their candidate CVs either in person or, more likely, over a video call. Since a typical shortlist will only contain between 3 and 7 candidates, this is a very efficient way to decide who to interview and often picks up great candidates who don't present well on paper.

The recruiter can talk you through the CVs and answer many of the questions you might have there and then. They can quickly contact the candidate and find out the missing information if they still need to.

It's good practice to let the recruiter know as soon as you can who you will be taking to interview and who you are rejecting (and why).

Top Tips for Briefing Your Agency & Collecting CVs



Before You Engage an Agency

Secure budget sign-off: always confirm budget approval before initiating recruitment to avoid delays and protect your credibility with both recruiters and candidates.

Align internally first: check whether HR or Talent Acquisition (TA) has a preferred supplier list, briefing process, or recruitment policy to follow.



Top Tip:

Good candidates are always hard to find and a delay of even a few days often results in good candidates accepting alternative offers. You lose a great candidate, and, potentially, both you and the recruiter must start the search again. Feedback delays are a lose-lose.



Writing an Effective Brief

Invest time writing the brief: a vague brief leads to irrelevant CVs, while an overly specific one narrows your candidate pool unnecessarily. If unsure, work with your agency to help shape the role.

Include all relevant context: share details like team structure, goals for the role, future growth plans, why the role is open, reporting, EVP, cultural fit etc.

Prioritise requirements clearly: divide skills into “Must-have” and “Nice-to-have” so recruiters can prioritise without guessing.

Be realistic about salary and expectations: unrealistic briefs (especially on salary) can deter good recruiters and result in a poor candidate experience.

Share a ‘Strawman CV’ or role model: give recruiters an example of an ideal or previously successful hire or ask them to draft one for feedback to confirm their understanding.

Highlight your employer value proposition (EVP): help recruiters “sell” your company. Share what makes your organisation attractive beyond just the job spec.

Be clear how many agencies are working the brief: use no more than 2-3 agencies should you not want to offer exclusivity.

Be consistent across agencies: if engaging multiple agencies, use the same brief to ensure fair candidate access and avoid confusion.

Clarify ownership of candidates: Set rules around candidate ownership (e.g. which agency submitted first) to avoid disputes and delays.





Managing the Process

Set a clear and compact timeline: agree upfront on CV submission deadline (batch vs rolling); review date; interview dates; and final decision date. NB: A tight process maximises the chance of securing your preferred candidate before they accept another offer.

Keep the brief stable: avoid making major changes to the brief mid-search unless absolutely necessary—it demotivates agencies and wastes time.

Request CVs in a consistent format if possible: Ask for CVs with: summary overview; notice period; salary expectations; optional short video from candidates (1–5 minutes).



Evaluating CVs

Batch and score CVs together: review submissions in one session or two close together. Use an A/B/Z method: A = interview; B = potential; Z = reject

Give timely, specific feedback: let agencies know why candidates are shortlisted or rejected—it helps refine the search and improves results.

Keep interview notes: document decisions and impressions throughout. These help later during offers and candidate comparison.

Encourage in-person or video presentations: ask recruiters to talk you through their shortlisted candidates live. This can provide valuable insight beyond a CV.



Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Don't expect to be a priority with a narrow brief: if your role is extremely niche and inflexible, understand that it may not be prioritised unless you're clear on urgency and willing to reward success.

Don't overload with admin: avoid drip-feeding feedback or asking for daily CV updates. Instead, agree set windows for submissions and reviews.

Additional tips:

Ask for market insights: invite agencies to share candidate availability, salary benchmarks, or competitor intel to help calibrate your expectations.

Create a scorecard: based on role criteria to assess CVs consistently and speed up decisions.

10 Important Hiring Dos and Don'ts while Recruiting

- 1 Don't prejudge candidates before meeting them. It's harder than it sounds!
- 2 Don't kick off a search until you have the budget and approval to hire signed off.
- 3 For hard-to-fill roles, be prepared to flex on your requirements.
- 4 Take the recruiter's advice on timescales to hire and salary expectations.
- 5 If your candidate CVs are wide of the mark, consult with your agency as to why.
- 6 Remember, the candidate will often judge you on the quality of their interview.
- 7 Money is often less important than many people think – focus on your EVP.
- 8 When assessing candidates, don't let perfect get in the way of progress.
- 9 Never discuss money with the candidate. That's your recruiter's job.
- 10 Avoid making low-ball offers. You'll look cheap and will often lose top talent.

Summary

The secret to successfully and efficiently hiring the right people depends upon 4 things:

- Work with professional recruiters and treat them as partners.
- Consider if the role would better be filled with an exclusive or retained search.
- Fully communicate everything the recruiter needs to find you great candidates.
- Process candidates in batches and be swift and decisive at each stage.





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