The human resources cheat sheet for small businesses without an HR person

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Introduction

Research shows that HR-related tasks take up **25 to 35 percent** of a small business owner's time at work. With UK small business owners already working an average of **17 days' overtime per year**, that means anywhere from 590 to nearly 830 hours are spent staying on top of human resources. It's a huge time investment, made even more daunting by the consequences of a mistake.

Luckily, the process of hiring an employee is rather simple. But if you're managing it without a dedicated HR professional and you're stretched for time, there are plenty of cracks for your conduct to slip through that could leave you vulnerable to legal trouble. You're also missing out on hiring talented employees if you haven't got your HR act together.

Here's our hiring cheat sheet. It's a start-to-finish checklist that'll cover the major bases and it ensures you've got the fundamentals of HR sorted, saving you some of those precious hours.

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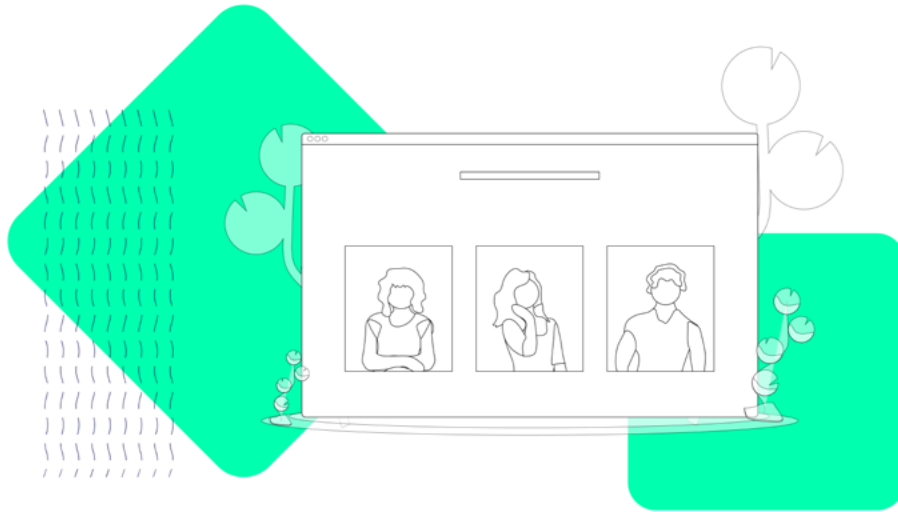
The hiring process: what you need to know

There's a lot of work that needs to be done between deciding you need more staff and signing a contract. From vaulting legal hurdles to crafting a clear job description and written statement of employment, it's a multi-step process that has a lot of moving parts. But it's not as difficult as it might sound.

Here's the hiring process deconstructed, ready for you to reassemble.

Brush up on your legal knowledge

Before you do anything, make sure you're familiar with the **rules and regulations** surrounding the recruitment process. Mistake or not, **an infringement of the law could mean the end of your entire business, especially if it's related to things like discrimination**.

Make sure you're well-versed and up-to-date with current regulations and the **HR onboarding process** to avoid getting caught out.

Perfect the job description

If you've already established a definite need for a new employee, creating a thorough job description won't be difficult. But, if you're struggling to detail exactly what the potential hire will do on a day-to-day basis, it's worth asking yourself whether you actually need someone new, and what gap they'd fill within your business. If you can't answer these questions with confidence, it's not time to hire.

Remember that **the recruitment process goes both ways – talented people are deciding whether or not they'd like to work with you** just as much as you're deciding whether or not you want to hire them. It's important to present your business as organised, helpful and professional.

The ideal job description is clear and concise, but it's also detailed enough that candidates know exactly what is required, and whether or not they're qualified.

The job description doesn't need to be complicated, but it must cover a few critical areas, including:

- What is the job title?
- What will their responsibilities be?
- Why are you looking to fill this role/what is the goal that they will help you reach?
- What is your company culture? Summarise it so candidates can decide if they're a good fit.

Write the job title last. You should be fitting the title to the requirements and the responsibilities, not the other way around.

Make sure you're also telling candidates what you're looking for. Ask yourself which skills your ideal candidate would need to perform their job properly, and distinguish those from things that sound great, but aren't really relevant to the position. **It's not a wish list, it's a set of criteria to help candidates determine whether or not they're a good fit**.

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Conduct a proper interview

The **interview process** is an opportunity for you to figure out whether the CV matches the candidate, and to find out more about the person behind the CV. Keep in mind that **it's also a chance for you to see if they're a match for your company culture**, and for candidates to decide whether you're a good match for them.

There are two major things to remember when it comes to interviewing, both of which could land you in some potentially embarrassing soup if you don't act with them in mind:

- **You are required to show an interviewee any and all interview notes if they request them.**
- **If you make a job offer, it's legally binding. Even if it's just verbal.**

It's easy enough to avoid problems with regard to the first one – make sure you're respectful and honest in your note-taking. Keep copies of interview notes for all candidates, as well; if a candidate suspects discrimination during the hiring process, you'll need to explain why you picked someone else instead of them. For a properly scalable HR process, this should be common practice across your business. As John Crowley of People HR **says**:

'The most effective action HR can take in a small business, is to digitise and centralise their personnel files. So many smaller companies make the mistake of 'making do' with paper files and spreadsheets, but it causes a nightmare when the time arrives to expand the workforce.'

To keep true to the second point, make it clear that there won't be any offers made during the interview process. Any offers should be explicitly conditional on the receipt of references, background checks, and proof of the ability to work in the country.

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The written statement of employment and contract checklist

You need to provide a 'written statement of employment' within the first two months of hiring someone. This includes much of the same information as you'd find in a standard employment contract, so we've created a shared checklist to avoid confusion. (Don't worry, though. Just like many aspects of basic HR, this step is simpler than you think – you just need to know what should be included.)

Here's what to include in a written statement of employment:

- **Names**: Include both the employer and the employee's names.

- **Date of employment**: Include the date that employment started. If this is different from the date of continuous employment, both should be included.

- **Job title and description**: Write a few sentences reasserting the work they will be responsible for.

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- **Location**: What is the address where work takes place? Are there any important details regarding extensive travel requirements? For work outside the UK, you must include the currency employees will be paid in. If you anticipate moving locations, include a provision to avoid awkwardness later on. If you **work remotely**, write the address your business is registered to.

- **Remuneration**: How much will the employee will be paid?

- **Hours**: When will they be expected to come to work?

- **Holiday policy**: Make sure to note the terms and conditions relating to holiday leave and pay, public holidays, and remuneration for accrued holiday if the contract is ended.

- **Sick leave**: What is your policy regarding sick leave and pay? Let employees know where they can find more information on this (usually in an employee handbook).

- **Notice requirements**: How much time prior to ending their contract you will give them? And how much they must give you if they want to resign?

- **Pension information**: Note the basic information on the pension policy at your business.

- **Duration of employment**: Are employees contracted for a set term? Are they full-time ongoing employees?

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- **Collective agreements**: Note any information relating to collective agreements that will affect the contract, if any.

- **Disciplinary policy**: Where can detailed information about your organisation's disciplinary process be found? (It's usually found in employee handbooks).

- **Grievance policy and contact**: What is your organisation's grievance process? Where can it be found? Who is the designated contact for complaints and appeals within the organisation?

- **Probation period**: How long is an employee on probation for?

This is by no means an exhaustive checklist, but it does cover the essential basics that you must include. It's worth going over some examples before finalising your templates for both.

For a more detailed look at contracts and written statements of employment, the **ACAS website** has a great set of resources aimed at employers.

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Employee onboarding:
What you need to know

The work doesn't stop when you've got your hands on a signed contract. Now that you've officially made a hire, it's time to get your new recruit into basic training. As your business grows, the employee onboarding process will become more and more important, and the more efficient you can make it, the more time you will save and the easier it'll be to scale.

The argument for onboarding

The employee onboarding process can either pass you like a ship in the night or have a significant and positive impact on your new hire's productivity and happiness. Research shows that those who don't experience a thorough onboarding process don't think they've missed much, but those that do see it as extremely useful and beneficial.

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In fact, organisations with a strong onboarding process found that new employees were 54 percent more productive. That isn't the only big number involved in the onboarding discussion, either. Every year, around 37 billion dollars are spent in the UK and USA to manage and compensate for unproductive employees.

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The onboarding cheat sheet

We've already established that onboarding is important, but what do you need to include in the process? Here's what you need to do.

Create an onboarding checklist

To make the onboarding process as smooth as possible, you'll need a checklist specific to your organisation. This might include industry-specific training that is required, applications they need to be set up, or even gamified checkpoints for them to reach. Everything that you can't afford to forget should go on the list.

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A checklist-style approach (like the one you're reading now) is the simplest way to make sure that you're not forgetting anything, and to keep new hires aware of what's left to be done. Invest some time in creating a checklist once, and you can copy it for each new hire. Paperless automation means **infinite scalability**.

Get them in the loop

Once you've made a hire, your first step should be to open strong lines of communication with them. Send them your onboarding checklist, set them up on your communication channels – like email, Slack and Basecamp (or something similar) – and start introducing them to their coworkers.

Making communication a priority means new arrivals can flag any confusions they might have. It also opens the door for workplace friendships early on. This is more than just a nicety, too – **friendships** in the office translate to better performance and engagement.

Pair up

Buddy systems are a human way to make new hires feel welcomed and to clear hurdles to their success. Look for someone in your organisation who is enthusiastic about showing newbies the ropes, and who is available to answer any questions they might have.

It's a fast-track method for helping recent arrivals feel involved and in touch with their coworkers.

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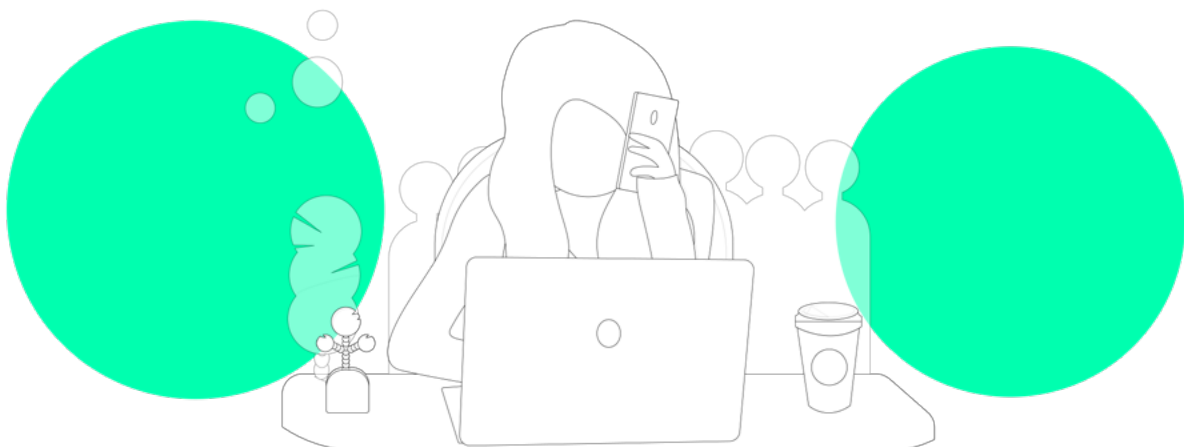
Explain the way you work

Every business has its own way of doing things. Ensuring that your new teammate knows the ins-and-outs of the applications you use, HR policies you follow and even any slang or in-jokes they might encounter will help them feel welcomed and able to do their job properly.

HR policy, in particular, should be as clear as possible. If you read through our contract checklist, you will notice we refer to an 'employee handbook' several times. It's worth putting one of these together, whether it's kept on your business's intranet or printed as a handout.

In the employee handbook, be sure to include in-depth explanations of things like holiday policy, disciplinary procedures and the complaint system you have in place, as well as any written material you have on your company culture. FAQ's and improvements can be iteratively added as you get feedback over time.

Provide training

Depending on your industry, training might seem unnecessary. But, it isn't. No matter what you do, it's always a good idea to put new hires through their paces to build the right foundations and ensure a high level of consistency.

LinkedIn's **Lynda** allows users to create custom lesson groups, and many applications will feature some basic training elements if they're complex to understand. HubSpot, for example, has a series of **certification courses**.

Take the time to come up with a foundational training scheme that you can reuse, and you'll demonstrate to new hires that you're treating employee development as a priority.

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Today's new hires are tomorrow's experts

If you have one takeaway from this cheat sheet, it's this: **Invest time in welcoming your new employees, and they'll invest effort and enthusiasm in their new role**. Supporting a teammate from their first day on the job sets a good precedent for the rest of their time at your organisation, and it's one that has a **positive impact** on performance.

As you grow, today's new hires will become tomorrow's welcoming committee. Tick off the points on our list to get a proper onboarding process set up, and you'll be transforming confused newbies into invaluable assets.

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A little bit about Turbine

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We love the paperwork you hate.

Instead of paper forms for purchasing, expenses and time off, Turbine lets you take care of everything online.

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Why not **take the tour**? Or **get in touch with us** to see what Turbine can automate for you.

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