# CCA Standard© White Papers

## Recruitment Methods & Models

### CCA Standard© User Groups

Since the launch of the CCA Standard© in 2001, over 100 contact centres have successfully achieved CCA accreditation. At the end of 2004, it was agreed that the knowledge and experience garnered by these accredited organisations would benefit being shared by the group and within the broader circles of CCA members. CCA has established several working groups to examine specific topics known to be of importance within contact centres, to learn how to overcome problems, and to establish how best practice can be implemented in line with the ethos of the CCA Standard© of continual improvement.

Based on a presentation given by Siobhan Higgins of LS Trillium and Carol Toner of Lloyds TSB, this white paper outlines the key findings of the Recruitment, Induction & Retention User Group (click on link for more info) relating to recruitment methods and models.

CCA would like to thank the following additional individuals and their organisations for their input to discussions on this topic. As organisations that have demonstrated best practice in their own contact centres, their contribution to the development of these specific guidelines is greatly valued.

- Fran Beale – Telereal
- Lorraine McGhee – BT
- Debbie Maciver – Lloyds TSB

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### Introduction

This paper has been written to reflect the recruitment models implemented by certain accredited members who have made significant gains in managing attrition. These models have been developed over time and reflect changes made to enhance the process and improve results in selecting and retaining employees at agent level.

All contributors agreed that it was absolutely essential to invest management time and effort in developing a strong recruitment process and in implementing this. Time invested in making correct selections resulted in retaining new staff. Whilst all contributors used some external resource in the process (e.g. agencies/telescreening organisations), experienced managers were closely involved in the final selection process.

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### Best Practice Guidelines

1. Developing Detailed Role Specification
2. Selecting & Interviewing Candidates
3. Working With Agencies
4. Induction of New Staff

### Developing Detailed Role Specification

It is essential that employers understand the job requirements, what is involved, as well as associated pressures and demands on the individual before recruiting. This will allow employers to be able to determine the type of person who will best fit the role and who will find it worthwhile. In addition, clarity about the role itself will lessen the likelihood of early dropout.

- This job specification should identify the skills, competencies, behaviours and attitudes required in the **ideal applicant**.

- One way to approach this is to identify the **'best' agents** and determine what they have that makes them successful. Involve your agents in this process; they are the ones doing the job!

- Remember that where different roles are involved (e.g. sales role compared to service role), the **competencies** will change.

The following should be noted when deciding upon the desired qualities and skills:

- It is extremely important that candidates possess and exhibit the desired **attitude**. Some of the essential qualities (which should be tested thoroughly at the interview stage) identified by this group were:

  Enthusiasm
  Motivation
  Commitment
  Communication
  Resilience
  Sense of humour
  Attention to detail
  Desire to help others
  Desire to succeed
  Empathy

- **Customer service** skills and the ability to work with people can often be more valuable than formal qualifications. At the same time, employers should remember that the contact centre is an excellent training ground for future management.

- Specific **IT skills** requirements should be tested to determine competency.

## Selecting & Interviewing Candidates

At the outset, it should be stated that sufficient **time** should be allowed for the overall recruitment process. Rushing this will result in selecting inappropriate individuals out of necessity.

- While there is no standard **process** which must be followed, the following steps were evident in the practices of this particular group:

  Stage 1: Agency interview or telescreening with structured questions/answers
  Stage 2: Web/ or practical skills assessments
  Stage 3: First interview with experienced management
  Stage 4: Second interview with experienced management

- Internal **referral programmes** can be helpful. This is where existing staff personally recommend potential applicants, and receive a reward if the recommended person is employed.

- A **consistent approach** to interviewing should be aimed for with everyone involved clearly understanding the requirements.

- **Telescreening** has proven to be successful for pre-screening candidates. This is carried out by an independent organisation against agreed criteria. Using an external provider to carry this out has been found to be more cost effective.

- Web **behavioural assessments** can be developed to test new applicants. One organisation has developed this with questions being answered to determine personal attributes.

- **Assessment centres** can be used but were found to require significant resource and proved costly. In practice they proved less successful than the models proposed in these guidelines.

- All staff involved in interviewing should have a thorough understanding of the role being recruited for and the type of person who is most likely to be successful. It is essential that interviewers have the necessary experience and skills to conduct interviews, identify good candidates and exclude those who are not suited. As such, it is important to ensure that excellent **training** is provided to provide interviewers with the necessary skills and knowledge.

- **First line management** should be employed in the process, as it is important that those with knowledge of the personalities already employed in teams can determine whether a potential applicant will fit in.

- It is essential that **honesty** is encouraged and practiced in interviews, and that a realistic, 'warts and all' vision is delivered.

- Organising **'tours'** of the contact centre as a first step for potential applicants can be helpful and need not be time consuming. This can allow them to see the operation, ask questions and determine if they would like to take this further with the organisation.

- Involve experienced contact centre **agents** in the process either directly at interview to gain an alternative viewpoint on the candidate, during an assessment centre or for potential candidates to spend time with to gain a view of the job and organisation.

- Encourage candidates to spend time with **existing staff** to really get a feel for the job and to be able to ask questions. There is no benefit in recruiting some one who is unsuitable or who does not feel comfortable with what is being asked of them. Time invested at this stage by all will pay dividends later.

## Working With Agencies

NB: Specific guidelines have been developed which focus on this area. See CCA website for details.

- Recruitment agencies are expected to provide applicants who meet the detailed specification or statement of requirements provided. The organisations must work closely together to develop a **common understanding** of the key requirements. It is appreciated that it is in the agencies financial interest to provide interview candidates but care needs to be taken to ensure that an accurate picture of the role is given to applicants.

- Ensure that the agency provides original applicant **CV's** as these provide an insight into the applicant and job history. Beware of job hoppers!

- Be aware that agency applicants may well be 'coached' in **interview techniques**.

## Induction of New Staff

The induction period for new contact centre employees is critical and can make the difference between retaining or losing staff. Induction training should be designed to equip the individual with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their role to an acceptable standard. New employees are usually very enthusiastic about their new challenge and wish to succeed.

- Initial training **periods** will vary dependent upon individual requirements.

- Generic **programmes** can be put in place with centre-specific elements added, covering skills, knowledge, systems and processes.

- **Senior management** should ensure that they play a part in the induction process and that they meet new staff.

- **Continual assessment** against defined criteria has been found to work well rather than a pass/fail at the end of a programme.

- Incorporating **role play** into the induction training ensures that agents can become comfortable with the total process of speaking to customers whilst using IT systems to record information. Make it as real-life a possible.

- An induction **checklist** is useful to ensure that all essential elements are covered. Welcome packs are usually given to new staff.

- Organisations usually have a **probationary period**, which tends to vary between 3 and 6 months. It is important that feedback on performance and appropriate developmental training is given to new staff during this period so that any under-performance issues are addressed in a supportive and positive manner.

- Some organisations use experienced members of staff as **mentors** to help new employees become comfortable in their new role and organisation.

- Following induction training, it is common for organisations to use **'nurseries'** for agents emerging from training. The nursery will afford a high level of support and further training as appropriate to individuals.

- In terms of the longer-term retention of staff following initial induction, it was noted that permanent employment **contracts** are more desirable and appear to be a positive factor in retaining staff.

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## Further Information

For further information on this topic, or for more details regarding the CCA Standard© User Groups, please contact Judy Smyth, CCA Best Practice Specialist, at judy.smyth@cca.org.uk