

**Doing well by doing good:
why successful recruitment must
incorporate values and purpose**

Companies that don't reference their values and purpose when they recruit new staff increase the likelihood of making bad hires and lay themselves open to reputational risk, RL100 members say.

Understanding the challenge

Can you recruit in a vacuum? More importance than ever is being placed on company values and purpose, but this doesn't always translate to recruitment processes. RL100 members believe that unless the talent acquisition (TA) function is strongly aligned with the rest of the organisation when it comes to recruitment, there's a danger that employees won't stay, while company reputation can also be affected.

At the inaugural RL100 Workshop Day titled "Aligning purpose, values and business drivers for a competitive advantage", RL100 members were asked to consider the following "challenge statement":

Not enough recruitment/TA functions align their organisational purpose and values with their key business drivers. Resourcing Leaders should be leading from the front and navigating everything towards a true north. Rewarding and purpose-driven work can impact employee engagement and offer a competitive advantage in your talent acquisition strategies.

Taken broadly, members agreed with this statement but acknowledged that there were restrictions and limitations placed on many TA functions when it came to recruiting in line with purpose and values.

These included the use of external agencies, whose practice may not reflect that of the company or organisation itself, as well as a lack of understanding from senior management that the recruitment function ought to be part of the conversation around vision and values. Too often the focus is on "how quickly can you fill this slot?" rather than "will this candidate be right for us?".

"The relationship between talent acquisition and the rest of the company can be fragile," acknowledged one senior recruiter, while another described the senior leadership's perception of the function as *"reactive and transactional"*.

The challenge, members agreed, was to ensure that the TA function is involved in the company's discussions about vision and values and that the need to embed these values in the recruitment and hiring process is fully understood by all.

The bigger picture: why it's important

RL100 members stated many reasons why aligning recruitment to values and purpose is vital. These included:

- **The elimination of reputational risk:** a bad candidate experience, where the hiring process does not align with the employer's brand, can damage the whole company. One participant described how his company had lost large contracts due to the sons and daughters of leading decision-makers having a bad experience when applying for positions at his organisation.
- **An improvement in vacancy rates:** it's easier to hire the right people if the entire process – from the posting of the job advertisement onwards – reflects the values of the company. “If it isn't what people expect, they're likely to leave,” explained one delegate. Others added that being enabled to continually “work with purpose” tends to inspire employees to remain longer with a company.
- **Increased diversity in the workforce:** recruiting in line with values and purpose may involve engagement with different parts of the community and can improve workforce diversity and output. Research by McKinsey & Co has found that more diverse workforces are more productive and profitable, with the least diverse companies likely to be 29 per cent less profitable. RL100 members agreed that values-based recruitment helps improve diversity and the bottom line.

Focus on solutions: the need to be more joined

Aligning TA processes with a company's values and vision is the way forward, and RL100 members offered several strategies on how to get there. These included improving dialogue with senior leadership, especially explaining how and why it is important that the TA team is involved when it comes to discussions on company values and visions.

“Highlighting the commercial value of what we do,” was one way to explain the importance of this, some delegates stressed, while others highlighted “building trust through constant high performance” and even “managing egos”. Holding workshops with leaders was seen as a positive solution.

Connecting with third parties who have successfully aligned their recruitment with their business goals is another good way to get ideas for your own organisation. “It’s hard to argue with people who have actually done it,” commented one RL100 member. Smaller, practical strategies include ensuring that job advertisements reflect a company’s values and visions, rather than getting caught up with extraneous information.

In conclusion: underline the positive impact

Building your functional outputs based on values is likely to have a number of positive impacts on your bottom line. “You will own the employer brand and the narrative that drives it,” says one delegate. As the box below shows, this can have a real impact on every aspect of the business.

The RL100 delegates concluded with three key ways in which TA can align its functions with the visions and values of the company. The first was to talk to management, get their attention and make sure your voice is heard. Then, explain why it’s important. Hiring cannot exist in a vacuum and success relies on the C-suite appreciating this. Finally, be ready with concrete examples – both positive and negative case studies have a role to play in highlighting the risks and rewards.

CASE STUDY:

The value of values-based recruitment

In the public sector, values-based recruitment is even more important when it comes to hiring and keeping staff. An RL100 member who heads up talent acquisition for a large, public-sector organisation described how vacancy rates had plummeted once candidates were considered through a values-based lens, rather than simply chosen because “they had the right widget to do this particular job”. **“You can train people to do the job, but not to have the values,”** they said. The organisation’s vacancy rates are now far lower than the national average for the sector. People stay longer and job satisfaction is higher.

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