



An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí
Public Appointments Service



e-Recruitment Practices and trends in Ireland



publicjobs.ie



An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí Public Appointments Service

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Bryan Andrews
Chief Executive

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Public Appointments Service Research Advisory Panel, I am pleased to present this report 'e-Recruitment: Practices and trends in Ireland' which explores how Irish organisations are using internet based technology to facilitate and improve their recruitment and selection processes.

The recruitment environment in Ireland has changed dramatically in recent years. With low levels of unemployment and skills shortages in key areas, there is strong competition amongst organisations to attract and recruit the best people. As in other areas of business, technology is being used to transform the recruitment process and to maximise the efficiency with which it can be carried out. Internet technology in particular is dramatically altering the recruitment process and allowing recruiters to reach large numbers of quality applicants in diverse locations in a very cost efficient manner.

Recent years have seen Public Sector organisations modernising their processes in a broad range of initiatives embracing new and enabling technologies as part of the drive on eGovernment. One such initiative has been the development of Publicjobs.ie as a comprehensive and candidate friendly online recruitment facility. Through this development the Public Appointments Service has created a centralised gateway to Public Sector careers which has been a key element in the improvement and modernisation of recruitment in the Civil and broader Public Service. We aim to continue to develop our online recruitment facility and our expertise in this area to ensure that the Public Sector has access to the most effective and efficient online recruitment methods available.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of how e-recruitment is being used in Ireland and highlights the key benefits and potential challenges in using e-recruitment, in addition to discussing likely developments in the area and how the benefits of e-recruitment can be maximised in the future. This report addresses a gap in existing knowledge in relation to e-recruitment in Ireland and it will provide a useful resource for practitioners who are developing or progressing their e-recruitment strategies.

Bryan Andrews
Chief Executive

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PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS SERVICE RESEARCH ADVISORY PANEL

This research report was produced jointly by the Public Appointments Service and the Institute for Employment Studies, under the guidance of the Public Appointments Service Research Advisory Panel.

The Public Appointments Service is the centralised provider of recruitment, assessment and selection services for the Civil Service. It also services the recruitment needs of many parts of the Irish health and local government sectors, An Garda Síochána and many parts of the broader public service. Annually it deals with approximately 50-60,000 applications in filling 3 - 5,000 public sector jobs. Publicjobs.ie is the premier recruitment facility for public service recruiters and is the main access route for candidates interested in joining the public service. Through this website the Public Appointments Service aims to provide a comprehensive online recruitment facility, which is easy to use and effective for both clients and candidates.

The Public Appointments Service initiated a Research Advisory Panel in mid 2005 aimed at shaping the advancement of Public Sector recruitment, selection, assessment and development by prompting discussion and debate on topical issues of particular interest to Public Sector organisations and HR practitioners in general. Membership of the Panel (see below) represents a cross section of HR managers and experts from across the Civil / Public Service, academia and private sector.

The Panel identified the scope and oversaw the implementation of this project as part of the research programme 2005-2007 focusing on issues relevant to the Public Sector.

Members of the Public Appointments Service Research Advisory Panel 2005-2007:	
Bryan Andrews (Chair)	Public Appointments Service
Niall Leavy	Public Appointments Service
Brian Duff	Department of Social & Family Affairs
Mary Flynn	Public Appointments Service
Pat McBride	Department of Finance
Orla Sheridan	Revenue Commissioners
Bernie Donnelly	South Dublin County Council
Chris Gavigan	Local Government Management Services Board
Vincent Norton	Dublin City Council
Willie Murphy	Health Service Executive
Roger Fox	FÁS
Eric Brady	An Garda Síochána (ex Bank of Ireland)
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The **Institute for Employment Studies** (IES) is a UK based, not for profit, independent and apolitical centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. IES aims to bring about sustainable improvements in employment policy and human resource management by increasing the understanding and improving the practice of key decision makers in policy bodies and employing organisations. IES have conducted previous research in the area of e-recruitment in the UK.

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Case Study Organisations:

- Diageo
- Bank of Ireland
- Musgrave Group
- Microsoft
- Merrill Lynch
- Iarnród Éireann
- Oracle
- Vodafone Ireland
- Health Service Executive

Other organisations who provided information

- FÁS
- Candidate Manager
- Hudson
- SHL
- GTI Online Solutions
- PSL
- World Careers Network (WCN)

We would like to thank the Research Advisory Panel for their informed and considered input, as well as their active support and encouragement throughout the course of this project. We would also like to thank the Civil Service Change Management Fund for supporting this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the rapid growth in the use of e-recruitment methods and technologies in recent years, there has been little research looking at the practices of Irish organisations in this area.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of e-recruitment practices and trends in Ireland, to identify what e-recruitment methods are being used and what benefits are being experienced by organisations using these methods. A discussion of likely future developments in the area of e-recruitment is also provided.

The research is aimed at HR practitioners or others involved in implementing e-recruitment, and is likely to be of interest to practitioners new to the area of as well as those already experienced in using e-recruitment methods.

The research involved a survey of a cross-section of medium to large Irish organisations, interviews with a number of organisations who have made significant advances in this area and an analysis of market information to identify how the Irish situation compares to practices and trends internationally. The findings of the research indicate that the use of e-recruitment in Ireland is broadly on a par with what is happening in the UK and North America, although it appears less advanced in some areas, in particular in relation to the use of the internet for selection testing.

Online recruitment is an important part of the recruitment strategy for a large majority of the Irish organisations surveyed. A significant proportion of Irish organisations are using the internet to facilitate the recruitment process in some way, but many are using e-enabled processes alongside traditional methods rather than relying solely on e-recruitment.

The most significant progress has been made in using online methodologies at the front end of the recruitment process in terms of advertising posts and receiving application forms. Increasing numbers of Irish organisations are also using Internet based technology to track applications and communicate with and manage relationships with applicants.

The use of online tools for screening and assessing candidates is less prevalent amongst Irish organisations, but there is evidence that this practice is set to grow in the future and that this facility will become increasingly valuable to organisations as greater use of online advertising attracts larger numbers of applications.

Irish organisations who have implemented e-recruitment methodologies have done so for a number of reasons, most notably to reduce costs, increase the efficiency of the process, reduce time to hire and provide access to a larger and more diverse candidate pool. The most notable benefits reported by organisations having introduced e-recruitment are the cost savings, which have mainly been due to reduced advertising cost, a reduction in the resources required to process applications and a reduction in recruitment agency costs.

Other substantial benefits include more efficient management of communication with candidates and the ability to easily report on key performance metrics as a result of internet based tracking systems.

The challenges faced by Irish organisations in implementing e-recruitment have included problems with the technology and difficulties in tailoring e-recruitment systems to meet the particular needs of their recruitment process. Other challenges have included problems with having to simultaneously operate both online and off-line systems, and a lack of integration of e-recruitment systems and existing HR systems.

A traditional concern with e-recruitment was in relation to its acceptability to a broad spectrum of applicants. This appears to be

becoming much less of an issue as more and more job applicants are using the internet as part of their job search process. In fact, there is significant evidence to suggest that the internet is the preferred application method for a large majority of candidates. Nevertheless, many organisations involved in this research showed concern about candidate access and perceptions and are designing their online processes to be as candidate friendly as possible, in addition to accepting applications in some cases through other methods.

The role of HR in the recruitment process is changing, with line managers becoming more involved in dealing with particular vacancies and HR taking on a more co-ordinating and strategic role. Increased use of e-recruitment methods and systems is helping to facilitate this trend by removing much of the routine administration involved in recruiting and allowing HR to more easily monitor and track recruitment related activities.

The involvement of a range of service providers, such as applicant tracking system providers and vendors of online assessment tools, in facilitating the recruitment process is also increasing, with organisations often engaging multiple vendors to provide them with an 'end to end' online recruitment solution.

A substantial growth in the use of e-recruitment amongst Irish organisations seems inevitable, with significant potential for relevant and objective online screening and assessment tools to add value in terms of matching the competencies and skills of the job applicant with the requirements of the organisation.

This report will provide organisations with an indication of how advanced/developed their e-recruitment practices are in relation to other organisations and will help them identify where their e-recruitment strategy needs to be further developed to enable them to attract and recruit the best candidates in the most efficient manner possible.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The rise of e-recruitment

The recruitment landscape both internationally and in Ireland has changed significantly in recent years. Low levels of unemployment and increasing skills shortages in many areas has led to increased competition to recruit the best people.

The increased competitiveness in the recruitment market has led to organisations spending more time, effort and resources on developing their recruitment brand and expanding the range of advertising methods (both online and traditional) used, to try and attract quality applicants from as broad and diverse a pool possible.

The recruitment process itself has also undergone a dramatic transformation in recent years with the utilisation of the internet. The use of the internet as a means of connecting the job seeker and the employer, and as a medium for conducting certain elements of the recruitment process is described by a number of different terms including online recruitment, internet recruitment, web-based recruiting and e-recruitment. We use the terms interchangeably in this report.

Internet tools that enable employers/recruiters to reach a wider pool of potential applicants and to fill positions faster with less cost to the organisation are obviously advantageous in such a competitive environment.

e-Recruitment is becoming a significant part of the recruitment strategy of a wide range of organisations world-wide, in addition to becoming an increasingly popular method for job seekers in searching and applying for jobs.

Online recruitment has shown consistent growth in recent years such that nearly all of the Global 500 companies now use some form of online recruitment [1].

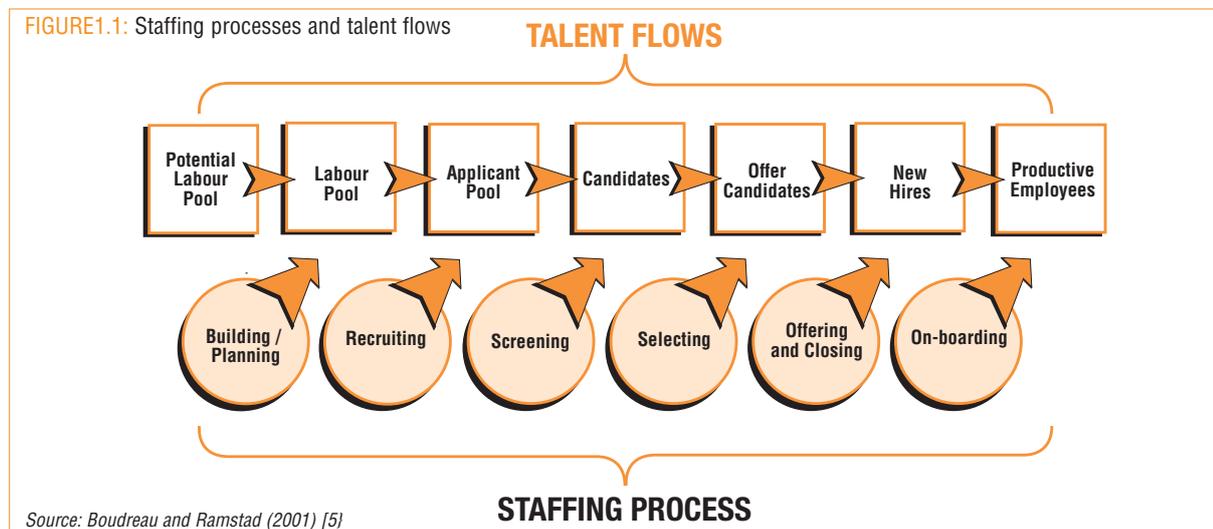
Research internationally [2], [3] indicates that some sectoral differences exist in the take up of e-recruitment. Research conducted within the UK suggests that the public sector exceeds the private in terms of the use of e-recruitment. US experience [4] has been that adoption of internet-based recruitment is mainly concentrated in larger multinational organisations recruiting large numbers of staff, or those looking to recruit from international candidate pools.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the typical process involved in recruiting staff. The internet can be used to facilitate any or all of the main processes of:

- attraction (advertising/ recruiting)
- selection and assessment (screening and testing)
- on-boarding (offering and closing, induction)

In addition e-recruitment can be used, in parallel, to support applicant tracking and workflow systems.

As we will see, organisations differ in the extent to which they apply web-based tools. Organisations most commonly use online recruitment at the attraction stage of the process in terms of advertising positions and receiving application forms/cv's from candidates.



Using the internet to attract and recruit applicants can be done in a number of ways, some of which are relatively passive, such as posting job advertisements on a website or job board, or more proactive in terms of actively searching internet sources to identify potential candidates. Lievens and Harris [6] have identified the following methods of using the Internet to attract candidates, but also acknowledge that approaches are continually changing.

- **Company websites** - Advertising posts and providing information to candidates through the company website. The facility to apply online is often also provided.
- **Job Boards** - Commercial general purpose recruitment portals, (e.g. Monster.com, Yahoo!) or niche job boards aimed at a specific industry.
- **Online Searching** - Recruiters searching online sources such as company websites/professional chat sites/organisational profiles etc. to identify potential candidates who may not be actively looking for a job.
- **Relationship recruiting** - Using the internet to build and maintain long term relationships with passive candidates, through using internet tools to learn more about web visitors interests and experience and to e-mail regular updates about careers and their fields of interest.

As is illustrated by this and other research, the use of online methods during the screening, selection and on-boarding elements of the selection process is less common than at the attraction stage, but is becoming more widespread as the technology available to organisations evolves and becomes more sophisticated.

Organisations are also facing increasing choice in terms of the particular e-recruitment technology they can employ and whether they use e-recruitment services/products developed in-house or hosted by a third party.

1.2 Our Aims and Objectives

This report focuses on the practices and experiences of Irish employers in relation to e-recruitment and encompasses public and private sector perspectives, in addition to making international comparisons where appropriate.

The level and extent of the use of the internet in recruitment is wide and varied. By gaining an understanding of the advantages and challenges associated with the different approaches that are available and being used, a better understanding can be reached on how to optimise the use of e-recruitment systems here in Ireland.

The main aims of the research were to:

- establish the overall trends in e-recruitment use and practice in Ireland;
- identify what e-recruitment methods are being used, and what are the experiences of organisations trying to implement e-recruitment;
- establish how organisations are evaluating the success of their e-recruitment initiatives, and establish the level of success being experienced.

It is also intended that this research will help to establish a baseline on the use of e-recruitment in Ireland, thereby enabling the on-going monitoring of progress and developments in this area.

1.3 Our Approach

A number of methods were used to collect information and build a detailed picture of the current status of e-recruitment in Ireland. A survey of a broad sample of medium to large Irish organisations was conducted to establish the extent to which e-recruitment was being used. In parallel a number of meetings were held with organisations using some form of e-recruitment in order to gather more in-depth information on the approaches implemented, and the impact of introducing e-recruitment within these 'case study organisations'.

Interviews were also held with a number of e-recruitment technology vendors to obtain information on the web enabled products/solutions they provide, and on their views on likely future developments in this area. A review of e-recruitment in other countries was also carried out in order to compare the findings from this study with what is happening in an international context.

SURVEY

A survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed with the aim of collecting baseline information in a number of areas including:

- Current recruitment methods
- e-Recruitment methods used
- Reasons for adopting e-recruitment
- Evaluation of e-recruitment
- Benefits of e-recruitment methods
- Difficulties encountered
- Future plans/developments in relation to e-recruitment

A sample of medium to large organisations (i.e. over 500 employees) was drawn up from a range of sources, including the Irish Times top 500 companies. In choosing the sample there was a particular emphasis on getting a good balance between private sector and public sector organisations, in addition to including organisations from a cross section of industries

The survey was administered to 358 organisations (249 private sector and 109 public sector) during November/December 2005, with senior HR personnel (e.g. HR Director/Manager) being targeted. Respondents were not required to identify their organisation but could do so if they wished. A reminder was sent and follow-up calls were made in early December to encourage participation in the survey.

92 organisations (representing 26%) completed the survey. These organisations represented a wide range of industries and sectors, principally:

- Financial Services (11)
- Manufacturing (11)
- Wholesale and Retail (9)
- Transport and Communications (7)
- Health and Social Services (9)
- Local Government (13)
- Construction (3)
- Hotels and Restaurants (5)

- Education (5)
- State Sponsored Bodies (3)
- Civil Service (2)
- Agriculture and Fishing (1)
- Other (13)

The response rate of 26% was considered satisfactory for a survey of this type. As the responses were from a broad range of sectors this increases the likelihood that the findings of this research are highly reflective of the current status of e-recruitment amongst medium to large organisations in Ireland in general.

CASE STUDIES

The aim of the case studies was to provide a deeper understanding of what e-recruitment looks like in practice, and to collect more in-depth information on some of the issues addressed in the survey, such as, the key reasons for implementing an e-recruitment strategy, benefits and challenges associated with e-recruitment methods, how the success of e-recruitment methods was measured and strategies and plans for future developments. Discussions were held with HR managers/directors in the case study organisations.

Organisations from a range of industries/sectors were selected on the basis that they had adopted some e-recruitment methods as part of their recruitment strategy. The following organisations kindly agreed to participate as case studies and were interviewed as part of this research:

- Diageo
- Microsoft
- Oracle
- Bank of Ireland
- Merrill Lynch
- Vodafone Ireland
- Musgrave Group
- Iarnród Éireann
- Health Service Executive
- The Public Appointments Service



1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 of the report presents a detailed analysis of the survey and case study results, along with key findings from international research, to give an indication of how Irish experience compares with practice and trends internationally.

Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion on the key trends in e-recruitment in Ireland and looks forward, identifying possible future issues and developments.



CHAPTER 2 E-RECRUITMENT IN IRELAND

This chapter brings together the findings from the organisational survey, interviews with case study organisations and discussions with suppliers of e-recruitment services, to provide a detailed insight into practices, trends and experiences of e-recruitment in Ireland. The findings are also compared to international practice where possible.

2.1 Recruitment methods

In order to understand the extent to which e-recruitment is being used and how significant it is alongside other more traditional recruitment methods, the survey sought information regarding the full range of recruitment methods used by the organisation during the past year.

TABLE 2.1: Recruitment methods used in previous 12 months (n=91)

	Usage Percentage	Effectiveness	
		Rated top	Rated in top 3
1. Regional newspaper	73	9	36
2. National newspaper	86	30	55
3. International newspaper	13	0	3
4. TV advertising	3	1	1
5. Professional magazine	39	0	8
6. Executive search	26	1	8
7. Recruitment agency	71	19	40
8. Online corporate website	58	3	32
9. Third party jobs website	64	14	39
10. FÁS	39	0	4
11. Employee referral	48	5	19
12. Internal recruitment	74	6	24
13. Speculative applications	45	8	14
14. Direct mailshots	3	0	0
15. SMS text messaging	1	0	0
16. Other	8	5	7

Table 2.1 shows employers use a wide range of recruitment/attraction methods, with the most common ones being:

- newspapers
- internal recruitment
- recruitment agencies
- internet

30% of respondents considered national newspapers to be their most successful recruitment method, however the survey results also show that employers place significant value on the use of websites, be they corporate or third party, with about 60% of respondents using these as part of their recruitment strategy.

This is in line with other research [7] suggesting that online recruitment methods (both corporate websites and online job boards) are seen as amongst the most effective attraction methods, along with newspaper advertising. Surveys [8, 9] suggest that, where an organisation has a

corporate internet, posting of vacancies on this is the norm. Recent CIPD research [8], does however show a significant increase in the proportion of organisations using commercial web sites, which along with the results of this survey, suggests that organisations are advertising online on a number of different sites.

Some research in this area [10] also found that many employers believe that industry-specific sites/job boards are a better resource than general job boards, as they enable employers to identify more suitable candidates because specialist boards tap into a self-defining market.

These findings were borne out in the discussions with case study organisations, where most were using a 'mixed- model' approach to recruitment, and maximising their chances of attracting the right candidates by using a range of methods. It was also common for employers to use different strategies for specific groups of staff, such as advertising in specific/trade journals/niche internet sites for specialist technical or professional staff or executive search for senior or executive appointments.

CASE STUDY 2.1:

'Mixed Model' Recruitment: MICROSOFT

Microsoft believes that the best recruitment results are achieved through being flexible and combining various approaches, to broaden the reach to diverse groups of potential applicants. Microsoft believes that the recruitment methods used need to be tailored to each job vacancy and that one size certainly does not fit all. Microsoft advertises their vacancies on their corporate website but also use a range of additional recruitment methods including recruitment agencies, job boards, technical journals, searching internet resources and occasionally newspaper advertising.

The appropriate methods are chosen based on the specific requirements of the role and what methods will most effectively market the job to the appropriate candidates.

The hiring manager plays an important role here in defining the skill set required and using this information to help decide on a recruitment strategy.

Public and private sector employers responding to the survey made use of slightly different recruitment methods as shown in Table 2.2. below. The public sector had made more use of print adverts and their web sites than private sector respondents. By comparison, the private sector reported more use of recruitment agencies, FÁS, employee referrals, speculative applications, and executive search.

TABLE 2.2: Recruitment methods used in previous 12 months by sector (%)

	Private	Public sector
National newspaper	78	100
Professional magazine	22	69
Executive search	34	13
Recruitment agency	83	50
corporate website	51	72
FÁS	51	16
Employee referral	64	19
Speculative applications	56	25

2.2 Who is using e-recruitment

Other surveys of e-recruitment in Europe suggest that usage of online recruitment methods has substantially increased over recent years to the point where they are now a central feature of the recruitment strategy in large organisations. A Cap Gemini survey in 2004 [11] found that the proportion of organisations within a public sector context that were using e-recruitment techniques had risen from just over 40% in 2001 to 70% in 2004.

In the UK specifically, adoption of e-recruitment by companies has seen the same general upward trend [12], with 93% of organisations using their website to advertise jobs in 2005, compared with 72% in 2002. This survey similarly identified a high level of current or intended future use of e-recruitment among Irish organisations. e-Recruitment forms an important part of the recruitment strategy of Irish organisations with:

- Nearly all respondents (91%) stating that they were either using or planning to use the internet for some aspect of the recruitment process.
- Four in ten (39%) indicating that online recruitment is a 'very important' part of their overall recruitment strategy
- 26% indicating that it was 'quite important'
- 33% indicating that it was of 'emerging importance'
- Just one respondent said it was 'of no importance'.

Table 2.3 shows that online recruitment is important to both public and private sector organisations, although private sector employers currently view it to be more important to their recruitment strategy.

TABLE 2.3: Importance of online recruitment strategy by sector (percentages)

	Private	Public sector
Very important	45	27
Quite important	15	47
Emerging importance	36	27
No importance	4	0
Base n=	55	30

2.3 e-Recruitment and job types

In Ireland, as in other countries, employers' use of the internet as a recruitment tool tends to vary according to different job roles and types of vacancy. Table 2.4 summarises employers' responses, in relation to which job types they use e-recruitment for. As might be expected, recruitment into manager/administrator and professional occupations is most likely to be done using online methods. Three quarters of respondents say they are using, or plan to use, the internet for recruitment into clerical and secretarial roles. Respondents were less likely to use e-recruitment methods for occupations like plant and machine operative roles and personal and protective roles.

Information from case study organisations also confirmed that the internet is particularly suitable for handling large volumes of applications – for example, for call centre operatives, temporary posts or graduate vacancies. Bank of Ireland, for example, had initially introduced online recruitment for its graduate recruitment programme, to help deal efficiently with the high level of applications received, before subsequently extending it to other vacancies.

The proportion of respondents to the survey currently using, or planning to use the internet to recruit graduates is low in comparison with some other roles. This is contrary to information on e-recruitment internationally, which suggests this is the group most often targeted by online recruitment methods. It may be possible, however, that some respondents may have included their graduate intakes together with Managers, Professional occupations and Associate and Technical occupations as they may not target graduates specifically.

TABLE 2.4: Current use and plans to use the internet for recruitment (n=84)

	Use now	Plan to use	Do not use /No plans
1. Managers and administrators	71	14	14
2. Professional occupations	68	14	18
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	48	10	43
4. Clerical and secretarial occupations	63	13	24
5. Craft and related occupations	24	7	61
6. Personal and protective occupations	11	3	86
7. Sales occupations	28	5	67
8. Plant and machine operatives	17	3	80
9. Graduates	38	12	50
10. Other occupations	4	1	95

2.4 Why the growth in e-recruitment?

Existing market intelligence [9] suggests that the primary drivers for introducing e-recruitment are cost reduction, speedier processes, access to a wider pool of applicants and better employer branding. Table 2.5 below shows that, among this sample of Irish organisations, the most important drivers in the use of e-recruitment were:

- to reduce recruitment costs
- to target a larger or more diverse pool of applicants.

Other factors like the reduction in administration, (closely related to cost reduction), speed of recruitment and improvement in brand image are also reported as key factors in implementing e-recruitment for a smaller proportion of organisations.

2.4.1 Cost effectiveness

There is much evidence to suggest that online recruitment methods can be much more cost effective than traditional methods. Cappeli [13] calculated that 'it costs only about one-twentieth as much to hire someone online as to hire that same person through ... other traditional methods.' This can be achieved through significantly reducing advertising costs [14, 15], and by reducing recruitment related administration [15; 16, 9]. However, it should be noted that the full cost savings are often only realised if the whole recruitment process is online. Cost effectiveness was the single most important reason given by the survey respondents in relation to implementing e-recruitment approaches, and amongst case study organisations the potential to save on cost and resources was a key factor for all in adopting e-recruitment approaches.

TABLE 2.5: Main drivers of online recruitment (n=85)

	Percentage	Rated top	Rated in top 3
1. Reduce recruitment costs	77	39	63
2. Reduce recruiting cycle	40	6	28
3. Reduce administration	49	13	33
4. Target larger/more diverse pool	74	22	71
5. Improve calibre of candidates	35	12	28
6. Expectations/preference of candidates	19	4	11
7. Better tools for recruitment team	39	4	27
8. Pan Euro/Global requirement	17	0	10
9. Improve employer brand/image	37	0	12
10. More effective skills deployment internally	5	0	1
11. Other	0	0	0

On the whole the key reasons given for the implementation of e-recruitment were fairly similar between the public and private sectors. However the following differences were noted:

- reducing administration was more critical to public sector respondents – 70 per cent of public sector compared with 38 per cent of private sector respondents gave this as a driver. This may reflect the fact that public sector organisations tend to recruit for more general roles, which can attract a much higher number of applicants;
- meeting candidate expectations was also more of a driver in the public sector, with 30% public sector respondents listing it as a reason compared with 13% private sector respondents.

Several of the most important drivers in implementing e-recruitment are elaborated on in more detail below, bringing together information from international research, the survey, and evidence from the case studies.

CASE STUDY 2.2

Online Advertising: HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE

The Health Service Executive (HSE) was formed in January 2005, bringing together the roles of many health organisations, which previously operated as separate entities, into one organisation, which is now the single biggest employer in the State.

Previously, the cost of recruitment press advertising for the broad range of jobs across the organisations that are now part of the HSE was high, and in an effort to reduce this cost an e-recruitment strategy was implemented. Following significant research to ensure online advertising would match the needs of the HSE and its potential candidates, the 'careers in healthcare' website (www.careersinhealthcare.ie) was developed. The titles of all vacancies continue to be advertised in the national press in order to ensure exposure to as wide a pool of candidates as possible, but candidates are now directed to the 'careers in healthcare' website for additional information and in many cases can apply online through the website.

The move to online advertising reduced newspaper advertising costs very significantly while maintaining the same volume and quality of applications. In addition to this, the 'careers in healthcare' website has become a well recognised recruitment brand and has helped to increase the profile/reputation of the HSE as an employer of choice.

2.4.2 Speed and efficiency

The speed at which several steps of the recruitment process are carried out online leads to a shorter recruitment cycle [17]. The recruitment process can be made faster through immediate posting of jobs online and the ease of completing online application forms and e-mailing CVs [14]. The pre-selection process can be accelerated (and tailored to an organisation's needs) by automatically grouping applications according to pre-determined criteria [18]. Applications can be processed within minutes rather than weeks, saving both recruiters and jobseekers valuable time.

This survey clearly showed that a reduction in administrative workload (cited by 49% of respondents), and reduced timescales for hiring (cited by 40% of respondents), were key drivers in the decision to implement

e-recruitment. These factors were also highlighted as key drivers for the case study organisations involved in the research.

CASE STUDY 2.3

Introducing Online Recruitment to Reduce Resource Requirements: PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS SERVICE

A key driver for the Public Appointments Service in adopting an online application process, was to reduce the time and resources being used to handle large numbers of paper based applications. Many recruitment campaigns run by the Public Appointments Service can attract over 10,000 applications, and this brought with it a significant administration burden in terms of processing each application and subsequent correspondence.

An online application system had the potential to greatly reduce the workload, in addition to ensuring a better quality service to candidates by providing them with easy access to detailed job information, a quick and user friendly application method and the ability to store and review previous applications. By eliminating much of the administrative processing the overall timeframe required to run large campaigns could also be greatly reduced.

2.4.3 Employer branding

Another key factor for organisations in adopting e-recruitment is the desire by an employer to promote their image as a progressive organisation, and to increase their profile as an employer of choice amongst potential candidates. As more detailed information can be provided on the company's website than in a newspaper advertisement, e-recruitment can reinforce the employer brand and can improve the corporate image and profile [9], in addition to giving an indication of the organisation's culture [16; 3].

37% of the survey respondents indicated that better employer branding was a key consideration in adopting online recruitment methodology. A large proportion of the case study organisations also felt that there was greater potential to develop a strong employer brand when using online recruitment processes.

Case Study 2.5 (page 22) illustrates how Merrill Lynch have used online recruiting to develop their employer brand.

2.4.4 Better access to a wide candidate pool

Online advertising opens up a wider candidate pool, by providing 24/7 access to job seekers, at local, national and international locations, thus providing a better chance of finding the right candidate [16,3]. As job seekers become increasingly more web literate and the growth of broadband makes web surfing easier and cheaper [10], the potential for e-recruitment to attract wider candidate pools is increasing.

Attracting a larger or more diverse applicant pool was a key driver in implementing online recruitment amongst survey respondents with 74% citing it as a key reason.

2.4.5 Improve the quality of candidates

An overarching goal in moving the recruitment process online is to improve the quality of the candidates being selected. In this survey 35% of respondents felt that recruiting online increased their ability to attract quality candidates.

Research exploring whether online recruitment attracts better quality candidates has shown mixed finding. Online recruitment has been shown to have the potential to attract applications from too many under-qualified and over-qualified candidates [19]. Recent research by the Public Appointments Service found that using online job application systems, instead of more traditional paper-based recruitment methods, led to a greater number of applicants aged over 30, and better quality candidates overall [20]. By widening the pool of potential applicants and reducing the time taken to recruit, online recruitment if used effectively, can help organisations compete for the best quality candidates.

2.4.6 Other factors

Other reasons cited for implementing e-recruitment techniques included improving record management/audit trails in relation to the recruitment process, providing a better service to candidates and facilitating internal recruitment. The case study below illustrates how Diageo introduced an online recruitment system to better manage their internal recruitment process.

CASE STUDY 2.4

Supporting Internal Recruitment: DIAGEO

Diageo has a high employee retention rate and fills most of its vacancies through the internal labour market. While an online recruitment system is now used to fill vacancies both internally and externally, the key driver for Diageo in adopting this approach was primarily to facilitate a more efficient internal recruitment process, and to help achieve the goal of increased internal mobility. Having an online system has helped centralise recruitment and made it easier for all staff to apply for vacancies. The company ensured all staff had access to jobs advertised online by providing kiosks on the 'shop floor' allowing staff who don't ordinarily have access to a PC to access and apply for vacancies online.

SUMMARY:

TRENDS IN RECRUITMENT METHODS BEING USED.

- The increasingly competitive Irish recruitment market is leading organisations to focus more on employer branding and on using a range of advertising methods to attract applicants from as wide a pool as possible.
- Newspapers are still the most commonly used advertising method and are rated as the most effective.
- After newspapers and recruitment agencies, online advertising (corporate and third party websites) is the next most popular method of attracting applicants, and are rated as amongst the most effective methods.
- The vast majority (91%) of organisations surveyed are using or planning to use the internet for some element of the recruitment process, and most consider e-recruitment to be 'quite important' or 'very important' in terms of their overall recruitment strategy.
- The key reasons for implementing e-recruitment amongst Irish organisations surveyed were: to reduce costs, to target a larger/more diverse applicant pool and to reduce administration.

2.5 e-Recruitment Processes: What's used in practice?

Table 3.5 summarises how the survey respondents currently use or plan to use the internet for a range of recruitment activities.

TABLE 2.5: Activities/processes undertaken online (n=83)

	% Use	% Plan to implement	% No plans
1. Describe and advertise vacancies online	88	6	6
2. Post jobs on free internet job boards	43	8	49
3. Have dedicated recruitment website/page	67	17	17
4. Post jobs on recruitment agency sites	44	6	51
5. Respond to requests for further info online	61	11	28
6. Track sources of online applications	35	18	47
7. Build database for future vacancies	28	13	59
8. Applications completed online	34	25	41
9. Offer online self selection exercises	10	12	78
10. Initial screen on qualifications online	24	16	60
11. Initial screen competencies online	13	13	71
12. Use personality tests at initial screen	7	6	87
13. Use online test at assessment stage	3	7	89
14. Invite candidates to interview online	25	13	61
15. Notify non-selected candidates online	27	13	60
16. Make job offers online	10	9	80
17. Give feedback to non-selected candidates online	12	8	80
18 Report on the diversity profile of candidates	9	2	89
19. Seek candidate feedback online	8	0	92

As we can see from the table, the use of online methods is currently more common at the front end of the process, in terms of advertising and providing information to candidates, and there is currently more limited use of online methods at the assessment/selection stage.

There was little variation across the public and private sectors in the responses, with the exception of tracking sources of online applications, which is three times more likely to be done by private sector as public sector organisations. Private sector companies are also twice as likely to have, or be planning to develop, a database of speculative applications.

Below we examine in more detail the various elements of recruitment for which the internet is being used, drawing on both the information from the survey, and the case study discussions, in addition to international research.

2.5.1 Attraction and branding

Section 2.2 showed that survey respondents tended to use a mixed model for recruiting, combining online and more traditional methods. In terms of using online methods to attract candidates, most employers use their corporate website and intranet to promote vacancies, in addition to the use of job boards and other third party websites, in some instances.

It is clear from discussions with Irish employers that in the current competitive labour market, attraction has become the most challenging part of the recruitment process. Employers are now applying to recruitment the type of marketing techniques organisations use to attract customers. Organisations are focussing more on their 'employer branding' to ensure they project an image of the organisation as a desirable place to work, in order to help them attract the best talent out there.

Research has been carried out [4, 21] which supports the benefit of using e-recruitment for brand or corporate profile reasons. This shows that internet-based selection procedures can have a positive impact on perceptions of the organisation amongst potential applicants. Some employers have moved to online recruitment to remain competitive in their industry, to promote themselves as being an 'employer of choice' or to brand themselves as being an 'e-business'.

CASE STUDY 2.5

Employer Branding: MERRILL LYNCH

Competition for talented staff is currently fierce within the Financial Services industry, which has led Merrill Lynch to focus on developing a strong recruitment brand. Merrill Lynch sets high performance standards for their employees and a key part of their recruitment strategy is to create a very strong employee value proposition, positioning the organisation as an employer of choice. Merrill Lynch has focused on developing their employer branding in recent years by providing detailed information on their careers website, not only about specific vacancies but also about the organisational culture which highlights the standards of excellence to which the organisation is committed. Where other advertising methods are used Merrill Lynch is equally conscious of their employer branding and use a small number of carefully selected recruitment agencies who are familiar with and can communicate the Merrill Lynch culture to prospective applicants.

USING THE INTERNET TO SEARCH FOR 'PASSIVE' CANDIDATES

An additional use of the internet at the attraction/applicant generation stage of the recruitment process involves proactively searching internet resources for potential applicants. This 'virtual – headhunting' approach is more developed in the US, and according to the US-based Corporate Leadership Council, [9] generally involves the following basic steps:

- use of search engines and keywords to identify potentially related sites (e.g. an industry site correlating to the position);
- identifying a contact that may lead you to a group of potential applicants (e.g. someone involved in an industry chat group);
- actively targeting individuals identified as qualified in certain areas, which may involve going 'behind the firewall' of other companies.

Interviews with case study organisations confirmed that this more proactive method of attracting applicants online is becoming more prevalent, particularly among high tech firms looking to attract highly specialised applicants. Online searching is also commonly used by recruitment agencies and executive search firms in addition to searching their own databases when sourcing candidates for specialised/senior roles.

Tools and techniques for sourcing potential candidates online have developed rapidly in recent years. Common methods of accessing potential candidates online include carrying out searches using 'web spiders', use of social networking tools and searching sources such as competitor websites and mailing lists to identify passive candidates in the industry.

CASE STUDY 2.6

Targeting Passive Applicants: MICROSOFT

Microsoft recruiters use a range of proactive methods to access and build relationships with potential candidates. Online searches and joining online industry 'chat-groups' enables contact to be made with technical experts in key areas, with a view to raising the profile of Microsoft amongst these professional groups, and building relationships with people who may be potential hires. Although these relationships do not always develop into a recruitment opportunity or hire, the company believes it helps strengthen their employer profile within the relevant technical communities.

SPECULATIVE APPLICATIONS/CANDIDATE DATABASES

Of our survey respondents, 28% had put in place a database of speculative applications which could be searched when vacancies arose. This was more likely to occur in the private than the public sector.

A significant advantage of collecting information from candidates by online application form rather than paper, is that this information can be easily stored and searched. More and more organisations are following the example of recruitment agencies, and are creating their own 'candidate databases' and populating them with the speculative applications they receive. These databases can then be searched when particular vacancies arise and suitable candidates identified and contacted, which can in some instances eliminate the need to advertise and decrease the timeframe within which vacancies can be filled.

2.5.2 The Application process

Following the advertising/attraction phase, the application phase is the next most common part of the recruitment process for which employers are using e-enabled methods.

Online application methods vary greatly in their level of sophistication. The most basic use of the internet to facilitate the application process is simply receiving e-mailed CVs and application forms rather than paper versions. More sophisticated approaches involve specially designed online application forms, which collect and store specific information about candidates and which often have the facility to automatically rate or categorise candidates on the basis of certain criteria/responses to questions.

The findings from this study reveal that a third of the organisations responding have the facility for candidates to submit applications online. This is similar to research carried out by CIPD in 2005 [3] which found that nearly three quarters of organisations surveyed accepted candidates' applications via emailed CVs and/or letters of application; half accepted application forms via email and only a third required application forms to be completed online.

According to IRS, [10] two-thirds of online recruiters in the UK do not use their own application forms, but rather rely on CVs and covering letters. However, with the growing number of applicants, organisations are beginning to recognise the benefit of using application forms to enable a structured format and the use of screening software. Most sites now include verification statements to try to ensure the authenticity of information submitted as part of online application forms [22].

Online application forms are typically more common for campaigns for which there is a high volume of applications e.g. graduate recruitment, where the volume of applicants means it is beneficial to design a specific application form tailored to that job which would allow online sifting/short-listing to be easily carried out.

This study has also established the variation in the use of online applications depending on the role being recruited for. One in four respondents to the survey indicated that there are some roles for which they will only accept online applications and just over a third had moved online for all vacancies. This had the advantage, according to case study employers, of being more efficient, and of eliminating any of the problems associated with a dual system (i.e. accepting both online and

paper-based applications) and improving the ease with which all applications can be tracked and responded to.

CASE STUDY 2.7

Encouraging Candidate Applications Online: PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS SERVICE

The Public Appointments Services' online application facilities have been designed to be very user friendly and to provide an easy method for applicants to apply for a range of jobs in the public sector. Candidates are encouraged to register their details on publicjobs.ie which enables them to receive regular updates on vacancies that match their interests, to save their details and have them automatically entered onto any subsequent online applications and to save and review previous applications. Online hints and tips in relation to the completion of the application form and preparation for other aspects of the selection process, such as tests/interviews are also provided.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to apply online rather than to submit a paper-based application form, as the efficiency of the process is maximised if everyone applies online. To ensure all candidates can use the online application process, helpdesk facilities are provided in addition to telephone application facilities for some campaigns.

Candidates who may have difficulty accessing the internet are encouraged to use the computer facilities provided at the PAS Career Store, located in Dublin city centre or to use other facilities e.g. libraries where the internet can be accessed.

Feedback from candidates in relation to the online application process have been very positive, with 95% of applicants for a large clerical recruitment campaign stating that the online application process was convenient for them, and 84% stating that online was their preferred method of application.

In some instances concern over equality of access has led organisations to offer various application methods besides online, particularly for vacancies for which the target population may have a low level of IT skills. Two-thirds of respondents to the survey made provision for those without internet access, usually involving accepting paper-based applications by post, by fax or via agencies.

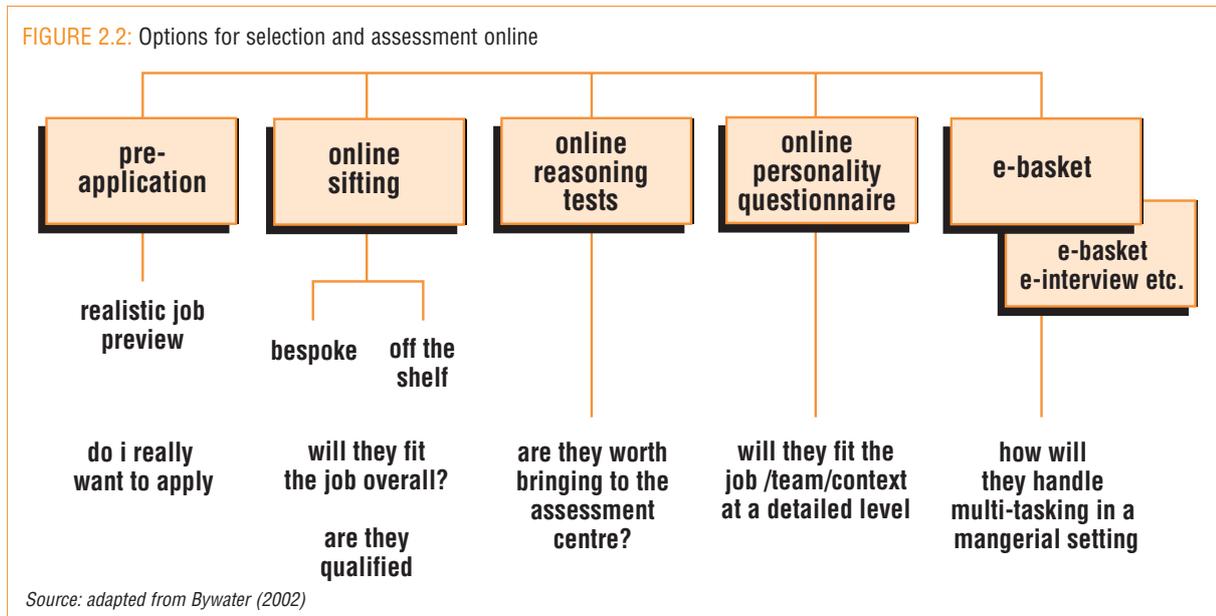
There is also increasing focus on ensuring that websites and application processes are designed to be as accessible as possible to candidates with disabilities, and to provide alternative application methods for

candidates who cannot apply using these methods due to a particular disability. An alternative approach to accepting paper applications as used by PAS for certain competitions and Diageo for their internal candidates, is to provide access to PCs so candidates can apply online, receiving assistance with the process if required.

2.5.3 Screening/Assessment/Selection

Figure 2.2 below illustrates the various options that are open to organisations in terms of using e-recruitment to screen applications and to assess and select candidates at various stages of the recruitment process.

While many organisations are providing detailed information on the website to give candidates more of a feel for what it is like to work in their organisation, only 10% of the survey respondents stated that they are using self-assessment tools at the pre-application stage. A self assessment questionnaire is a tool which requires a potential candidate to rate themselves against the skills/competencies required for a role, as a means of getting them to think about the requirements of the job and realistically estimate their ability to meet these requirements.



CASE STUDY 2.8

Self Assessment Online:

THE PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS SERVICE

The Public Appointments Service has developed a range of self-assessment questionnaires to be used at the pre-application stage of the selection process for a number of roles. Potential applicants for roles such as Garda Trainee, Firefighter, Clerical Officer and some senior management posts must complete an online self assessment questionnaire prior to submitting their application.

The purpose of the self selection questionnaires is to give potential candidates a good insight into the challenges of the role, and the type of skills required, and to help them realistically assess their own suitability for the role. The self selection questionnaires are based on the competencies and activities that have been identified as important to the role and require potential candidates to rate themselves against a number of statements. Based on their responses candidates are given an indication of their suitability for the role.

The introduction of self assessment questionnaires has received very positive feedback from candidates and typically results in approximately 20% of candidates screening themselves out based on their decision that they may not be suited to/interested in the job.

SCREENING AT APPLICATION STAGE

The use of online screening tools appears to be in its infancy at present. Recent research by the IRS [23; 22] of FTSE 100 companies found that only 13 per cent of organisations that use online recruitment include some kind of screening questions. Even among recruitment agencies only 12.5% use computerised screening, although research by Chiumento [24] on effective use of resources found that three quarters were considering such investment.

In response to this survey 24% of organisations stated that they screen candidates online based on their qualifications, 13% screen based on competency related questions, and 7% screen based on personality tests/questions. However it appears that the majority of organisations do not currently use online screening techniques and have no plans to. The automatic screening of applications may be avoided by some organisations due to the current labour market and the difficulty in

attracting the right candidates, making recruiters fearful that an automatic screening process might rule out some potentially good candidates or discourage candidates who may be suitable for other roles from applying again. This is particularly relevant for organisations recruiting for a range of specialised roles rather than more generic roles as specialised roles are likely to attract smaller applicant numbers

Several case study organisations had e-recruitment systems which could rate applicants against the required criteria, but generally the preference was for the recruitment team to physically review all applications in order to ensure that potentially suitable people were not being rejected.

CASE STUDY 2.9

Online Screening 1: VODAFONE IRELAND

Vodafone Ireland use an online application system that collects data from candidates in relation to objective factual criteria such as educational qualifications and relevant experience (e.g. experience of particular software packages). While the system used could facilitate the automatic rejection of candidates who don't meet certain criteria, current policy is for recruiters to review all applications physically, using the ranking given by the online system to enable them to make quick decisions about a person's suitability.

The purpose of the self selection questionnaires is to give potential candidates a good insight into the challenges of the role, and the type of skills required, it is felt that using a computer system to make these decisions could result in suitable people being rejected. Recruiters can also identify if candidates who don't meet the criteria for one role might be highly suited to another role and can highlight this to them.

The company viewed any additional time and costs incurred as a result of reviewing each application as worthwhile, particularly in the current climate where there can be a shortage of highly qualified candidates.

CASE STUDY 2.10

Online Screening 2: DIAGEO

Diageo have an online application form for their graduate recruitment programme which includes questions not only relating to academic qualifications and experience, but also relating to personality and culture fit. Candidates are ranked according to their responses to these questions. All application forms are generally reviewed by the recruitment team, but as the applications have already been scored against the various relevant criteria this allows recruiters to quickly and easily make consistent shortlisting decisions, and to select the appropriate number of applicants to bring forward to the next stage of the assessment process.

On the other hand, some organisations find the use of automatic screening invaluable due to the large number of applications they receive for some roles e.g graduate programmes.

CASE STUDY 2.11

Online Screening 3: BANK OF IRELAND

Bank of Ireland, as a well recognised employer with a highly regarded graduate development programme, receives over 3000 graduate applications a year for approx 50-60 positions.

Previously these applications had to be manually sifted which placed a significant drain on the time of the recruitment team, and presented challenges in ensuring such a large number of applications were scored in a consistent manner. Since adopting an e-recruitment approach, applications are automatically sifted based on the applicants responses to a range of questions relating to educational achievement and the competencies required for the role.

Candidates receive an automatic response telling them if they have been selected to go forward to the next stage, which consists of aptitude testing and an interview. This online sifting has greatly reduced the administrative burden involved in processing such a large number of applications and has meant that the entire graduate recruitment programme can be managed by one person, in comparison to the two to three staff members who were previously involved.

ONLINE TESTING/ASSESSMENT

Following screening, there is potential to further reduce the candidate pool prior to having face to face interaction by administering assessments tests/exercises via the internet. The types of tests most commonly administered online are ability tests (e.g. tests of verbal, numerical or clerical ability) or personality tests/questionnaires. The use of e-enabled techniques as part of the assessment process is not as common amongst Irish organisations as their use at the attraction and application stages, but there is evidence that it is increasing, especially amongst larger organisations.

IRS research looking at developments in online recruitment in the UK in 2005, found that just 5.7% of organisations surveyed used the internet to administer selection tests [10]. The IES's UK survey [9] found that 37% of the sample used e-enabled techniques as part of the selection process. However, only 4% were using psychometric tests online.

Here in Ireland the figure seems to be even smaller with only 3% of the survey respondents indicating that they used online assessment tests. However, interviews with organisations and assessment specialists would suggest that online testing is becoming an increasingly popular option amongst larger organisations in Ireland. A small number of the case study organisations interviewed administered tests online, particularly when testing applicants from abroad. For the most part however, these were independent of the main recruitment system, and hosted by the test supplier rather than being an integrated part of an online application and assessment system.

A key reason why some of the case study organisations were not administering tests online was that they brought relatively small numbers of candidates forward to the testing stage of the process, and felt that the benefits in efficiency of testing online would not warrant the investment required to be able to do this. It is clear that online testing becomes much more attractive where large numbers of candidates are being assessed, e.g. for graduate recruitment programmes or entry level jobs in the Civil Service.

Other organisations had concerns over verification of candidates' identity and cheating when tests were administered online. To deal with this concern, it is common practice where online testing is used to re-test successful candidates. This survey uncovered very little evidence of either public or private sector organisations in Ireland using the Internet to deploy other forms of assessment e.g. e-tray exercises. This is unlike the UK, where the market appears to be significantly more advanced.

The following diagram illustrates the online selection process being used by the Cabinet Office for Graduate Fast Stream recruitment into the Civil Service in the UK, and demonstrates how the use of e-recruitment methods at both the application and assessment stage can maximise the efficiency of the process.

FIGURE 2.3 GRADUTE RECRUITMENT:
Example of online application and assessment process run by the Cabinet Office (UK) on behalf of the UK Civil Service

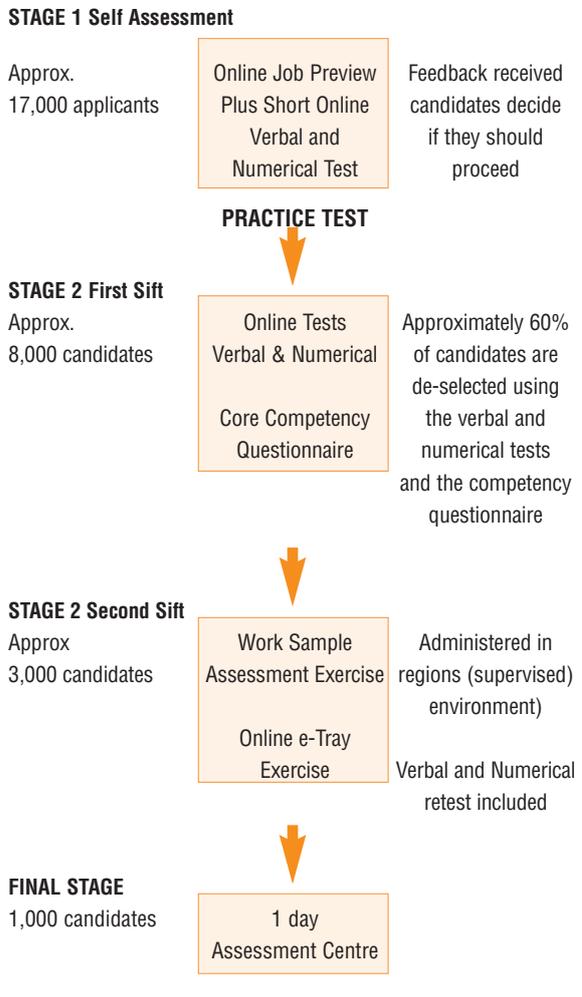


Diagram 2.3 above illustrates the online recruitment system put in place by the Cabinet Office for its Fast Stream graduate recruitment programme. Recruiting the best people from a very large number of applicants in a short time period was essential for the Cabinet Office, and they took the decision to move to an online process to enable them to achieve this goal. During 2004 the Cabinet Office worked with Parity Training and Cubiks (a HR consultancy specialising in online assessment tools) to create a user

friendly online recruitment process, which incorporates online verbal and numerical tests as well as an invigilated e-tray exercise, to assess the required skills in an efficient manner. The Cabinet Office experienced significant benefits from introducing this online process including a dramatic reduction in the recruitment time-cycle, less candidate complaints due to a more transparent process and a greater ability to reduce the adverse impact of verbal and numerical tests by introducing a second sift stage before the assessment centre.

USING THE INTERNET TO TRACK APPLICATIONS AND COMMUNICATE WITH CANDIDATES

Table 3.5 suggests that to date respondents have made much more use of e-recruitment technology to track and communicate with applicants than as an assessment or decision making mechanism. e-Recruitment systems can dramatically reduce the amount of time required to respond to applications by allowing recruiters send the appropriate communication to all candidates at a particular stage of the recruitment process instantaneously. There is the added benefit of ensuring all candidates get a response, and of having an easy to access record of all transactions/communication with a particular candidate.

CASE STUDY 2.12

Managing Candidate Communication Online: MUSGRAVE

Musgrave currently use online recruitment for their graduate recruitment programme. The volume of applicants is typically around 500, and they are required to complete a detailed online application form and to submit a CV. Applicants who do not meet certain educational criteria are automatically rejected and the system progresses other candidates based on the extent to which their applications meet the essential and desirable criteria. The recruiting team reviews applications, and potential candidates can be identified quickly and efficiently.

All communication with candidates at this stage of the process is by e-mail, further reducing the amount of administrative resources required. This online screening system allows more time and resources to be spent on the thorough assessment of a smaller group of candidates who complete psychometric testing, interviews and then a one-day assessment centre to identify the candidates to be hired. Although the testing and interview stage of the process is conducted in the traditional manner (i.e. off-line) the results are recorded on the recruitment system allowing easy communication with candidates regarding their status. Candidate queries can also be answered quickly and easily as candidates progress through the various stages is tracked and this information can be accessed immediately.

SUMMARY:

HOW E-RECRUITMENT IS BEING USED IN PRACTICE

- Within Irish organisations most progress has been made in using online methodologies at the front end of the recruitment process e.g. to advertise positions, receive applications and respond to queries from applicants
- Organisations are making use of dedicated career sites to help with their employer branding and provide detailed information to applicants about the job and the organisation.
- 33% of Irish organisations surveyed receive applications online and a further 25% are planning to introduce this facility within the next 12 months.
- Use of internet based tools to track applications and communicate with candidates are relatively common (used by approximately a third of organisations)
- Most organisations surveyed will accept paper based applications with only a quarter insisting all applications for certain vacancies be made online
- Almost 30% of survey respondents had created a database of speculative applications which they searched when new vacancies arose
- Where online screening of applications is used it is most commonly based on educational qualifications (24%)
- Only 3% of Irish organisations surveyed were using online assessment tests.
- A significant proportion of organisations responding use the internet to track applications (35%) and to communicate with applicants (27%)

2.6 How is e-recruitment being managed?

There are important practical questions regarding the management of e-recruitment, including what technology is available and being used, how well the technology is linked with other HR systems and the role of HR and line managers in the recruitment process. These issues are discussed in more detail in this section.

ROLE OF HR

There is a general trend towards line managers taking more direct responsibility for recruitment, and HR playing more of a co-ordination and facilitation role. It is evident from this research that adopting e-recruitment practices can facilitate this model, by removing much of the HR administrative burden, and enabling HR to operate at a more strategic level.

However, while line managers may have more involvement in terms of reviewing and shortlisting applications/CVs for their particular vacancies, HR continues to play a key role in terms of defining and controlling the overall recruitment strategy, and ensuring that systems are flexible to meet changing recruitment needs, and to develop effective talent management strategies.

Discussions with case study organisations revealed that where e-recruitment systems had been implemented these were introduced and continued to be controlled by the HR function. While e-recruitment systems facilitate the easy transfer of candidate information to line managers, line managers generally had limited access to the e-recruitment systems with HR tending to act as a broker between line manager and candidate. Many HR functions in case study organisations had worked closely with the line managers both at the design and implementation stages of introducing e-recruitment.

2.6.1 E-Recruitment Technology

While this report aims to identify the key trends and pertinent issues in carrying out e-recruitment, rather than examine in detail the types of technology available, the technology available inevitably has some impact on the practices of organisations, and for this reason some attention was directed at identifying what was on offer from technology vendors.

The majority of organisations (with the exception of some large high-tech organisations) are largely dependent on a range of third party suppliers in the form of job boards and suppliers of recruitment systems/applicant tracking software. As this technology develops organisations are being presented with more choice in relation to the range of systems available, how the systems are managed, and the levels of customisation possible.

There are two main categories of products used to support e-enabled recruitment, namely recruitment tools/modules introduced by the large ERP software providers such as SAP and Oracle and products developed by vendors specialising in recruitment software, e.g. applicant tracking, testing etc.

ERP software providers, who have tended to base their core HR systems around managing employee and payroll information have added new recruitment modules. Oracle, for example, have developed 'Talent Acquisition Manager', as part of Peoplesoft. This packages allows candidates to search, view and apply for vacancies online, as well as tracking applications through the various stages of the recruitment process.

Most applicant tracking software providers operate on an ASP (application service provider) model whereby they develop, host and maintain the systems and store all information on their servers, allowing clients to access the systems, and all information on their candidates, via the internet. This makes the use of such systems much more feasible for small to medium size organisation, who do not have to invest significant time and resources in the development and maintenance of a complex applicant tracking system

The table below describes the typical features/capabilities of Recruitment Management/ Applicant Tracking Systems.

TABLE 2.7: Key features/capabilities of Recruitment Management/Applicant Tracking Systems	
Advertisement Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post jobs automatically on Job boards and corporate website • Post tailored application forms for a range of jobs • Receive applications and CVs from applicants
Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store information on each candidate and on each vacancy in a searchable database • Archive old vacancies • Facility to identify duplicate applications or applications for multiple jobs
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatically screen out applicants based on response to particular questions e.g. qualifications, education etc. • Rate and rank candidates based on response to questions re: key criteria
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send automatic acknowledgments to applicants • Send automatic updates when candidates move to another stage in the recruitment process • Send specific messages to targeted groups • Allows a range of people in the organisation access to the relevant information e.g. line managers, HR teams across different regions
Plug in assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to 'plug in' to the system assessment tools such as e-enabled psychometric tests that can be run at screening or assessment stages
Workflow scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and schedule interviews • Automatic reminders if particular timelines e.g. updating candidates are missed
Analysis and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track information and report on key information such as source of candidates, diversity information, time to hire etc. • Creates an audit trail of the process

Recruitment/Applicant tracking systems are becoming increasingly complex with new functionality being added e.g. tools for carrying out internet searches for potential applicants who meet certain criteria. Demands by recruiters for better functionality to match their recruitment process is driving additional changes and developments in this area.

Providers of recruitment systems/ATS technology are also increasingly working with assessment experts such as SHL or PSL to ensure that the assessment tools produced by these providers can be integrated into their tracking system to provide an 'end to end' recruitment solution. Some of the key trends in the development of ATS technology as identified by Electronic Recruiting Exchange in its Applicant Tracking Systems 2006: Industry Analysis and Buyers guide include:

- Continued evolution of assessment options to include online assessment tools for a range of roles (not just high volume), including the development of new assessment tools by ATS providers themselves.
- The addition of improved on-boarding functionality.
- The integration of talent management and training and development modules into ATS software, to enable tracking of the skills and career development of employees once they join the organisation.
- An increased focus on using ATS/recruitment systems to manage internal recruitment thus helping increase internal mobility.

2.6.2 Integration with HR systems

A common concern with e-recruitment systems is the difficulty involved in integrated them with existing HR technology already in use within the organisation. Four in five survey respondents, across both the public and private sector, state that their online recruitment system stands alone and is not integrated with other HR systems.

Few of the organisations who were interviewed had a fully integrated system at present, although several were considering plans to integrate their recruitment/HR systems in the future. For many the difficulty and cost of doing so at present outweighed the benefits, with it being relatively easy to transfer the data for the small proportion of applicants hired from the applicant tracking system onto their HR system.

The benefits in having more integrated systems in terms of better facilitating long terms talent management were however recognised by employers.

2.7 Evaluating the impact of e-recruitment

Nearly four in ten survey respondents (37%) reported that they had evaluated the effectiveness of their online recruitment. Of these:

- most (87%) had evaluated costs
- nearly three-quarters (73%) had evaluated the quality of recruitment outcomes
- just over half (57%) had evaluated the time to hire

In addition, three employers cited other factors they had evaluated, namely the numbers of applications and access to a wider candidate pool.

It is interesting to note that more private sector respondents (49%) than public sector respondents (17%) had evaluated the impact of online recruitment. Reactions by key stakeholders such as line managers and senior management to online recruitment was, while generally not formally measured, perceived to be very positive.

The case study organisations typically evaluated the process in terms of numbers of applications received, response times, and time to hire, and several had evaluated cost savings to demonstrate a positive return on investment.

CASE STUDY 2.13

Evaluating e-Recruitment: BANK OF IRELAND

Bank of Ireland have evaluated their approach to e-recruitment, largely based upon cost effectiveness, speed to hire and consistency of decision making, to demonstrate a business case over a sustained period of time. Following the implementation of the online system an evaluation found the amount of time saved in terms of capturing candidate information was approximately 20 working days, while the time saving of not having to manually score CVs was over 62 working days.

A more diverse group of applicants applied following the move online, and the quality of applicants was considered to be as good if not better. While evaluating the move to online recruitment in comparison to the traditional process to demonstrate a return on investment could be easily done, developing an on-going model of evaluation to ensure the system was delivering the best applicants in the most effective manner, was considered to be more difficult.

2.8 Benefits of e-recruitment

This section focuses on the benefits that organisations have found from implementing e-recruitment. There is some overlap between this section and section 2.4 as obviously many of the benefits achieved by organisations are similar to the drivers for implementing e-recruitment in the first place. Table 2.8 shows there is widespread (over 80%) agreement that:

- there is a 'good business case for online recruitment',
- 'online recruitment attracts applications from a wider pool'
- online recruitment attracts a greater volume of applications'.

In addition:

- 79% believe 'online recruitment allows a faster response to candidates'
- 73% believe 'online recruitment is more cost effective'
- 74% believe 'it provides realistic vacancy information to candidates'.

	Disagree %	Agree%	N=
1. Online recruitment attracts a greater volume of applications	10	82	83
2. Online recruitment attracts a higher quality of applicant	26	20	82
3. Prospective candidates prefer to use online recruitment	5	50	82
4. Online recruitment has significantly reduced the time to recruit	23	44	82
5. Line managers prefer online recruitment	28	20	80
6. Online recruitment does not improve the quality of contact with candidates	23	39	79
7. Online recruitment allows a faster response to candidates	9	79	81
8. Online recruitment makes the process easier to manage	13	57	82
9. Online recruitment is more cost effective	3	73	78
10. Online assessments are more reliable	20	7	76
11. Online recruitment poses a threat to equal opportunities	53	17	82
12. Online recruitment attracts applications from a wider pool	5	83	83
13. Online recruitment allows employers to differentiate their brand	5	60	78
14. Online recruitment does not help increase workforce diversity	43	9	81
15. HR prefer online recruitment	13	46	82
16. Senior managers prefer online recruitment	20	28	79
17. Online recruitment provides realistic vacancy information to candidates	4	74	81
18. Online recruitment loses the personal touch	34	34	80
19. There is a good business case for online recruitment	3	84	81

There were few differences in respondents' views according to sector. However the response to the statement 'online recruitment is more cost effective' varied. 81% of private sector respondents agreed with it compared to 58% of those from the public sector. This could reflect differences in the level of investment and evaluation to date, or that due to different legislation that private sector organisations are free to use e-recruitment technology in different, more cost efficient ways. The most commonly reported benefits of adopting e-recruitment technologies were:

- cost/resource savings
- reducing time to hire
- more efficient management of the process
- reaching a wider candidate pool
- improved employer image/brand.

In addition, some organisations also felt online recruitment had:

- increased their ability to track applications and make the process more transparent
- Increased the ease with which they could report on a range of recruitment metrics
- helped increase internal mobility through the greater visibility of internal vacancies

The earlier section on sifting demonstrated significant savings in resources/costs achieved by Bank of Ireland in adopting an e-recruitment approach for their graduate campaign. Another example of costs savings is demonstrated by Vodafone.

CASE STUDY 2.14

Reducing Costs Through e-Recruitment:

VODAFONE IRELAND

Key drivers for Vodafone Ireland in introducing an e-recruitment strategy were to maximise the value of the strong 'Vodafone' employer brand in attracting quality candidates through the corporate website, in addition to more effectively tracking the success of other methods such as job boards and recruitment agencies. An online application and tracking system allowed Vodafone to greatly reduce their reliance on recruitment agencies due to the volume and quality of candidates applying through the corporate website and other job boards in addition to improving the efficiency and speed with which the internal recruitment team could deal with these applications.

In addition the applicant tracking system ensured that the performance of recruitment agencies, where they were used, could be closely monitored, so that the organisation was only using those agencies that proved themselves successful in delivering a high proportion of good quality candidates. Significant cost savings were made, predominately in terms of agency fees but also in terms of a reduction in advertising and administrative workload. Vodafone Ireland estimated that their cost savings had already exceeded their investment in an e-recruitment systems after two months of the system being up and running.

Increasing the efficiency of the recruitment process and reducing the administrative workload involved, not only benefits the organisation in terms of cost but has also been shown in some cases to be a catalyst to changing the whole HR function within an organisation and helping move the contribution of HR to a higher level by freeing staff from the demands of routine administration and facilitating more involvement/contribution in developmental and strategic areas.

CASE STUDY 2.15

Impact on HR: IARNRÓD ÉIREANN

Following the introduction of an online application and applicant tracking system by Irish Rail, the administrative workload involved for the central HR team in processing applications and responding to candidate queries was reduced greatly. Having a streamlined recruitment process in place enabled the HR function to develop and maximise its capabilities, and allowed greater scope for more value-added activities such as assessment testing, and additional services outside of recruitment such as training and development. HR staff have welcomed online recruitment as it has enabled them to take on broader, more interesting roles, and to develop their skills in new areas.

Some of the organisations interviewed as part of this research felt that adopting e-recruitment has helped them to bring their vacancies to the attention of a wider field of applicants and to recruit a more diverse staff.

CASE STUDY 2.16

Recruiting from a Global Candidate Pool: ORACLE

Oracle hires some 500 multi-lingual, multi-skilled staff each year and has to process around 12,000 applications to fill these vacancies. Use of an online recruitment system ensures that vacancies are visible to both internal and external candidates worldwide, and ensures a diverse pool of applicants, in addition to helping meet equal opportunity requirements. Oracle is developing their e-recruitment systems to more closely integrate the systems used across EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) thereby facilitating greater sharing of candidate information across regions, and increasing the organisations ability to recruit the best people from a broad and diverse candidate pool.

Another benefit of adopting an online approach to recruitment is the ease with which vital information can be collected to enable reporting on key performance indicators. The following example from Diageo illustrates some of the benefits of e-recruitment, in terms of ability to collect and report on information.

CASE STUDY 2.17

Reporting on Key Metrics: DIAGEO

Over the past few years Diageo have introduced an online recruitment system across most of its regional divisions. The capability of the system has been upgraded, so that currently all aspects of internal and external recruitment is now managed online, from the application process through to the completion of all relevant documentation for the new hires.

A huge benefit of moving to an e-recruitment system has been the ability to easily track and record information on a range of relevant factors. Factors which are regularly tracked and reported on include the proportion of successful candidates coming from various sources, diversity profiles of candidates, time to hire for specific roles and cost of hire.

Recruiters also have an accessible record of all transaction with candidates, and so can easily answer any queries which arise.

2.9 Difficulties with e-recruitment?

Research evidence suggests that e-recruitment is not without its problems. This is hardly surprising as the technology is still relatively new and many organisations will have experienced teething problems. There are also problems that arise from its own success, such as the generation of too many applications, as well as areas where organisations have not yet got to grips with all the options available.

Previous research [23] suggests that the principal areas of difficulty are:

- the generation of unsuitable applicants
- the difficulty reconciling online and off line processes
- technical, IT related problems

Concern has also been expressed about whether e-recruitment is biased against certain groups who may not be regular internet users.

HIGHER VOLUME OF UNSUITABLE APPLICATIONS

Several of the case study organisations found that having an online system could encourage a high volume of applications from unsuitable candidates, although for the most part it was felt that these were much easier to deal with when recruitment was online and so didn't create a big drain on resources.

One respondent said 'The difficulty is that the pool can be too wide. We advertise a specific position and get plenty of applicants, often with sparse CVs, who clearly don't have the basic requirements. Because email is hassle free, we find that some applicants will apply to everything they see. We then need to respond in turn, which adds to the administration.'

It is worth noting that although 83% of respondents believes online recruitment reaches a wider candidate pool, almost half (43%) did not believe it helps increase workforce diversity.

RECONCILING ONLINE AND OFF-LINE PROCESSES

Other commonly cited problems relate to the challenges and difficulties in using a dual system, i.e., where both online and offline process are being used.

CASE STUDY 2.18

Difficulties of a dual system: HSE

Through the development of the 'careers in healthcare' website the HSE have significantly reduced advertising costs as well as facilitating easier communication with candidates. The administrative workload involved in processing applications has however, not reduced significantly since going online.

This is due to only part of the recruitment process being e-enabled and the current requirement to operate both an online and off-line process. As an applicant tracking and management system has yet put in place and some paper applications are still accepted, the process after application stage is still conducted in the traditional way, with significant resources being needed to print down application forms. An additional problem for managers/interviewers is the formatting of online application forms, which can cause them to be difficult to read when printed.

The HSE are currently examining the case to extend their use of e-recruitment, which should enhance the benefits being provided, and eliminate the problems inherent in running a dual system.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

The most common difficulties cited by organisations were teething difficulties in terms of getting the technology up and running as illustrated by the examples below.

CASE STUDY 2.19

Potential technical difficulties: MUSGRAVE

Musgrave have successfully applied e-recruitment techniques to better manage recruitment to their graduate development programme. However, their experience also highlights some implementation difficulties and areas for improvement. Initial technical problems were encountered when implementing the system, which had required them to conduct extensive testing before going live. A key lesson learnt was to avoid overly complex technology where possible.

Another potential risk highlighted by the experience within Musgrave concerned communicating solely with candidates via email, and the need in some circumstances to follow up with candidates via the phone as candidate in-boxes, (particularly student hotmail accounts) can become full resulting in information not reaching the candidates in time for attendance at the next stage of the process.

An on-going challenge was not having integrated technology, which required transferring data from the recruitment system to their HRIS, although due to the relatively small number of applicants appointed this was not hugely onerous.

Table 2.8 earlier provides insight into respondents' concerns regarding online recruitment. The most noticeable were their views on the reliability of online assessment. A fifth of respondents did not believe online recruitment to be more reliable compared with traditional methods while just 7% believed it was. There was a large proportion who did not express a view either way. This can perhaps be explained by the limited experience organisations have had in online assessment.

Survey respondents held slightly divided views on the value that line managers place on the use of the internet for recruitment. Slightly less respondents felt that line managers did have a preference for online methods (20%), than those who believed that they did not (28%).

There were also divided views regarding the quality of online applicants, with slightly more respondents disagreeing than agreeing with the statement 'online recruitment attracts a higher quality of applicant' (26% compared with 20%).

2.10 e-Recruitment from a candidates perspective: treating candidates as customers

This study did not gather the views of candidates directly, but did however collect indirect information from employers on how they felt candidates had reacted to the online methods they had introduced. The survey showed that employers in general believe that e-recruitment delivers a fairer and better service to candidates, especially relating to realistic job information, and 95% of respondents felt that 'prospective candidates preferred to use online recruitment methods'

Discussions with the sample of case study organisations revealed similar positive reactions from candidates. Most of the organisations interviewed had candidate preferences very much in mind when designing and delivering an online process, and were very mindful of candidate relations when moving to an online system. Awareness of the needs and perceptions of all candidates has been a factor in the success, and acceptance by candidates of the online approach implemented by many organisations as illustrated by the example below.

CASE STUDY 2.20

Designing Candidate Friendly Online Processes: MERRILL LYNCH

Merrill Lynch require all applications, whether they be internal or external or via a recruitment agency, to be made online. As their target group are highly qualified and computer literate it is felt that this approach should suit all. Candidates are asked to complete a brief online application form in addition to attaching their CV. Research carried out by the organisation indicated that application forms should take less than 2 minutes to complete or risks 'putting off' good quality candidates, and this is reflected in the brevity of the online form candidates are required to submit. Creating favourable candidate perceptions via their online experience at the outset was considered vital, and they made the decision not to introduce automatic screening or 'knock out' questions to reduce volumes of applications, and therefore to avoid the risk of jeopardising long term relationships with candidates.

The Public Appointments Service conducted research in 2005 [20] on applicant perceptions of online recruitment. This study, which surveyed applicants for a large clerical recruitment campaign, shows a large majority of candidates (84%) preferred online to off-line methods. The Public Appointments Service has also collected feedback on online methods from other groups of candidates' e.g. Administrative Officer/Third Secretary which shows similar favourable reactions.

A practical concern expressed by a number of employers and technology vendors was in relation to candidates receiving an immediate rejection after submitting an online application. It was felt that this could create negative reactions from candidates, as it may appear that no 'human consideration' was given to their application.

In order to help counteract this problem some systems allowed a delayed response to be sent along with a clear indication of why the application was unsuccessful.

CASE STUDY 2.21

Creating Positive Candidate Impression: ORACLE

Key drivers and benefits for Oracle in using e-recruitment were to develop their reputation as a leader in best practice in e-recruitment, and to ensure a professional and efficient recruitment process for candidates. As the organisation is looking to recruit highly talented and specialised staff Oracle recruiters are conscious of the need to recruit in an efficient manner that fosters positive relationships with applicants. Online communication with candidates at the early stages of the application process greatly reduces the workload involved, and ensures that all candidates get a response in a timely manner.

However Oracle have adopted a policy of making telephone contact with candidates once they are being brought forward to the interview stage, as it is felt that this approach is more personal and creates a better relationship with potential candidates. The online system is, however used to great advantage to track and record all communications with candidates to ensure that internal service levels are met, for example, the system will automatically prompt recruiters to provide candidates with feedback with three days of an interview.

Employers are clearly aware that candidates' experiences of their recruitment process have real business implications, not only in terms of recruitment, but also in relation to promoting their employer brand. Many consider 'candidate management' a high priority and critical to the recruitment process. For some, an important factor in moving online was to improve their capability to track and respond to all candidates, and to ensure that candidates always received a timely and professional response.

Many organisations felt that implementing online approaches had benefited rather than harmed relationships with applicants, in that it was much easier to ensure that all applicants received information on the status of their application in a timely manner, and to address candidate queries. Some employers had also/were planning to extend their online tracking systems to empower candidates to track their own applications, further adding to the appeal of an online approach for candidates.

Section 2.5.1 illustrates the importance of branding in winning the war for talent. Online recruitment is to some extent not only business led but also demand led from the candidate's perspective, as the above section demonstrates. It was evident from discussions with case study organisations that they are keen to ensure that candidate relationships are well managed, so as to create a positive impression of the organisation.

SUMMARY:

MANAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES OF E-RECRUITMENT

- Organisations are being presented with more choice in terms of the technology available for supporting e-recruitment, and using multiple vendors for an end to end recruitment solution is becoming increasingly common.
- The key benefits of online recruitment as experienced by Irish organisations are reduced costs, reduced administration and access to a wider pool of applicants.
- Difficulties experienced include having too many candidates apply, technical problems, difficulties with integrating e-recruitment systems and a risk of poorer quality communication with applicants.
- Some organisations are being deterred from making greater use of online recruitment due to concern over access of all groups to the internet, and concern of rejecting good candidates using online screening.

CHAPTER 3 IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE TRENDS

3.1 How e-recruitment is being used in Ireland

This research provides significant evidence that the use of e-recruitment in Ireland seems to be in line with what is happening in the UK and North America, and its continued growth seems certain, with a significant number of survey respondents planning to adopt various e-recruitment methods in the coming year.

Many Irish organisations surveyed were using online recruitment as a key element of their recruitment process and strategy. 'High tech' organisation, and those with high volume graduate recruitment schemes appear to be using e-recruitment to the greatest extent. The preference towards using online recruitment for white collar jobs, be they managerial/professional or clerical/administrative, also appears to be evident in Ireland as elsewhere.

In Ireland, as internationally, most progress has been made in using online methodologies at the front end of the recruitment process, e.g. for advertising, the provision of information to candidates and the receipt of applications.

Use of online methods for screening and assessment and for the final stages of the process i.e. 'on-boarding', are less common as is having fully integrated e-recruitment systems.

Candidate tracking systems are becoming increasingly popular amongst medium to large Irish organisations, and are being shown to offer substantial benefits in enabling the recruitment process, and candidate interactions, to be managed in a less costly and more resource efficient manner.

3.1.1 Differences in the use of e-recruitment across sectors

The survey data was analysed to identify differences in the use of e-recruitment across the public and private sector.

In terms of recruitment methods used, it is interesting too see that the public sector made more use of print advertisements and their own web sites than private sector respondents. By comparison, the private sector reported more use of a wider range of options/techniques e.g. recruitment agencies, FÁS, employee referrals, speculative applications, and executive search.

The survey shows that online recruitment is important to both public and private sector organisations, although, it is interesting to note that private sector employers view it to be currently more important to their recruitment strategy. Private sector employers were also more likely to evaluate the impact of their e-recruitment interventions, and were more likely to rate online recruitment as more cost effective.

3.1.2 Drivers, benefits and disadvantages

The drivers for e-recruitment in Ireland are similar to those in other countries but their relative importance seems to vary.

While reduced recruitment costs is identified as a major driver towards e-recruitment both in Ireland and abroad, the objective of targeting a larger/more diverse pool of applicants, which was identified by three quarters of survey respondents, appears to be of greater importance in Ireland than elsewhere.

This could reflect a number of factors such as the dramatic increase in the diversity of the Irish population in recent years, causing employers to be more aware of diversity issues. The current competitive labour market and low unemployment rate in such a small country, is also likely to

force employers to be more aware of the need to attract the required skills from a broader candidate pool or from abroad when required.

The key benefits of e-recruitment are similar to the drivers i.e. greater efficiency and reduced costs, as well as access to a wider pool of applicants. Additional benefits highlighted by many of the case study organisations in this research included, facilitating internal mobility through using online systems to advertise and manage internal, as well as external recruitment and the greater transparency of the online process, leading to better audit trails and better level of service to applicants.

Previous research by the IES on the difficulties with e-recruitment [9] centers on having too many candidates apply, the risk of bias against particular groups and concerns over security and confidentiality.

This survey also identified some concerns with an increased number of applicants, and concerns around not excluding any particular groups were evident from the case study interviews. Interestingly concern over security/confidentiality of information was not commonly expressed by participants in this research. This may reflect the fact that the internet is now more widely used for a range of transactions than it was a number of years ago, and concern over confidentiality of information communicated online has diminished. In fact several case study organisations felt that introducing an e-recruitment system ensured better security of information by allowing better control over who could access certain types of information.

Mixed views were evident in relation to the impact of online processes on the quality of applicants, on candidate diversity and on the quality of contact with candidates. In terms of quality of contact with candidates, the general view appears to be that while both candidates and employers can benefit from the increased convenience of communicating online, this form of communication is perceived as less personal.

LIMITS OF E-RECRUITMENT

The figures on the growth rate of e-recruitment earlier in the report suggest that e-recruitment is in robust health and likely to grow in the future. Many organisations however are currently e-enabling only the front end of the recruitment process and thereby not achieving the full benefits of recruiting online.

One factor which seems to be deterring some employers from making greater use of online recruitment systems is a concern over the level of internet access and levels of comfort with internet technology of their target audiences. While usage of the internet does vary by social group there is evidence to suggest that recruiting online results in at least as diverse an applicant group as those recruited through traditional methods [20, 25].

As the popularity of, and access to the Internet continues to grow and it becomes a more common and accepted medium for a whole range of transactions, this concern/barrier is likely to further diminish, and the concept of a 'digital divide' will be less relevant.

A further concern in relation to access is the suitability of online recruitment methods for candidates with disabilities. Research [26] shows that many employers exclude candidates with disabilities by having poorly designed websites and e-recruitment processes, and there is increasing pressure to address this in order to ensure compliance with equal opportunities legislation. Vendors of e-recruitment technology are increasingly aware of these requirements and are producing products/systems with higher levels of accessibility and that are in line with EU policies and legislation on e-inclusion.

Another possible limitation for organisations may include a lack of knowledge of the available options and difficulties in sourcing/choosing the appropriate technology that will be compatible with their existing HR systems and will serve their needs now and into the future.

This report and others e.g. [3] aim to help raise awareness and highlight the issues for practitioners and decision makers .

3.2 The evolving e-recruitment market

This survey identified a significant proportion of employers who were planning to implement e-recruitment initiatives in the coming year. The findings of this and other research support the conclusion that organisations can achieve significant cost savings, increased efficiency, reduced time to hire, and improve their access to a broad group of applicants through implementing e-recruitment methods.

As the high level of competition and skills shortages in the recruitment market is likely to continue, it seems certain that we will see increased uptake of e-recruitment technologies by Irish organisations, as they attempt to compete in the 'war for talent'. In addition to making better use of the systems/technology that already exist, as technology advances it is also likely that we will see organisations use the internet to support their recruitment activities in more proactive and innovative ways.

3.2.1 Future Developments in e-recruitment

The section below discusses where we might see developments in online recruitment practices in the near future.

CAREER / RECRUITMENT WEBSITES

Organisations are developing increasingly sophisticated career sections of their website in an effort to attract talented candidates. Many organisations now have dedicated 'career sites', which include many of the features present on recruitment agency career sites such as facilities for candidates to register their details, receive updates on opportunities, apply using an online application form, and save and keep track of previous applications. According to research by the IRS [22], two-thirds of the FTSE 100 companies that use their own websites to recruit staff, now ask potential applicants to register with them and create their own candidate profile.

Employers are using their careers websites to brand their organisation as an employer of choice and are presenting candidates with detailed information about the organisation, employee profiles, and 'day in the life' information, in a bid to attract good candidates to apply. Cadbury Schweppes, for example, has asked new graduate entrants to use 'blogs', or online diaries, to give potential recruits an insight into the company [27]. Increasingly, organisations are also including information about their values and policies on diversity to increase the likelihood of best fit in the self-selection stage [28].

PERSONALISING THE PROCESS

A key goal for employers in the current labour market is to benefit from the efficiency of e-recruitment whilst trying to ensure that the process does not lose its 'personal touch', and become off-putting for applicants. Research shows that a more personal approach is beneficial in helping the candidate feel more positively about the process [29]. Automatic rejections can create very negative perceptions if sent too soon or if they are badly worded.

Encouraging candidates to set up personal profiles/accounts on the website, and ensuring all communication uses candidates' names is a good starting point in personalising the process. Other positive initiatives include providing a contact name and telephone number so candidates can follow up if they have any queries in relation to the online communication they receive [10].

Some organisations are also being selective about how they use the internet to communicate with candidates e.g. making personal contact by phone after a certain stage in the process whilst still using their e-recruitment system to track and record the progress of applicants through the recruitment stages.

Employers are also increasingly using alternative technology such as SMS messaging and IVR (Interactive voice response) technology to communicate with candidates.

Ensuring that websites are accessible to candidates with disabilities, and providing alternative application methods where necessary, is also being increasingly recognised as important in terms of ensuring good candidates are not excluded because of the application method, and that organisations are not breaching equal opportunities legislation.

APPLICANT TRACKING

The use of applicant tracking systems, which enable employers to track the source and progress of applicants through the various stages of the recruitment process, is becoming increasingly common. In this survey nearly 20% of respondents were planning to implement applicant tracking systems within the next 12 months.

Applicant tracking will become increasingly important as more of the recruitment and selection process becomes automatic and will enable recruiters to track how candidates have performed on automatically scored screening questionnaires, personality and ability tests, in addition to facilitating easy communication with candidates.

Where traditional/off-line recruitment methods form part of the selection process e.g. telephone interviews, these will increasingly be tracked and managed online with use of online scheduling, and recording of performance information.

The growth in demand for such tracking systems is illustrated by the increased number of specialist ATS vendors in operation in addition to the fact that many of the large ERP software providers such as Oracle and SAP have in recent years added applicant tracking as a module to their existing HR systems. These applicant tracking systems are becoming increasingly sophisticated to facilitate not just the recruitment process but many aspects of the 'on-boarding' stage. Features such as the facility to set up e-mail accounts, complete bank details and medical questionnaires, and to provide information to new hires on their new team etc, are being added to more advanced recruitment/ applicant tracking systems.

SCREENING

With an increasingly global and web literate recruitment market, positions advertised online are likely to attract larger numbers of applicants, not all of whom are suitable.

This scenario is predicted to lead to a greater use of screening tools aimed at narrowing the pool to a smaller number of more suitable applicants. Tools such as self assessment questionnaires, and screening questionnaires based on fit to the organisational culture, are likely to become more prevalent in the future, in addition to automatic scoring of personality, situational, work style and competency questionnaires. Using the internet to administer a greater range of valid, objective assessment techniques to screen large numbers of candidates will greatly maximise its value in the recruitment process.

TESTING

The internet provides the opportunity to deliver assessment tests in a way that is quicker, cheaper, and requires fewer resources, than administering them in paper and pencil format.

In recent years online testing was used only for vacancies likely to attract a high volume of applications, such as graduate programmes, but organisations are now extending online assessment to a broader range of jobs. In addition organisations are using a broader range of tests online including not only standard ability tests but personality tests and situational judgement tests.

In addressing concerns around candidate authentication and maintaining the integrity of testing online, test publishers are increasingly using item generation and test generation programs to protect the security of ability tests and ensure that they do not become compromised through repeated exposure. The administration of a shorter version of the test, under supervised conditions, later in the process is becoming the accepted standard for authenticating the candidate. The UK Fast Stream online selection process mentioned earlier (Figure 2.3), is an excellent example of how this can work successfully with large volumes of candidates, in a challenging environment requiring high levels of transparency and accountability.

The delivery of tests via on-line platforms, but in supervised venues is an alternative model which is also becoming popular and has the advantage of face- to-face authentication by an administrator.

The internet is facilitating the development of new more innovative, dynamic and job realistic assessments e.g. e-tray exercises, stock market trading simulations. The extension of internet technology to the delivery of virtual assessment centres and on-line interviewing is also more likely to become common in the future.

3.2.2 Future trends in managing the e- recruitment process

ON-GOING USE OF A MULTI-METHOD APPROACH

The trend towards using multiple methods to attract suitable candidates i.e. corporate website, job boards, newspaper advertising, agencies and internet searches is likely to continue. Organisations who have adopted an internet based recruitment management system are funnelling applications from all sources through this centralised system which interfaces with their website and intranet as well as with job boards and agencies through an 'agency portal'.

Managing all applicant sources through one centralised system will ensure a speedier process and enable organisations to monitor the effectiveness of each source and make more informed decisions about the best sources of applicants for particular roles.

ROLE OF RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

There are mixed views on the impact of increased use of online recruitment on recruitment agencies. According to an IES study [31] , recruitment agencies remain confident that the growth in e-recruitment

technology will not eliminate their role in the process, as many organisations lack the time and expertise to carry out these tasks. Many organisations, especially smaller ones may also lack the technology to carry out their recruitment online. With the low unemployment that currently exists the task of finding quality candidates will remain challenging and this may prompt organisations to continue to use agencies, in particular, for specialised, senior or difficult to fill positions.

Several case study organisations in this survey however had significantly reduced their reliance on agencies for less specialised jobs as their e-recruitment systems placed them in a better position to directly target candidates and to process large numbers of applications efficiently and quickly. Organisations with a strong and well recognised employer brand appear to be in a strong position to recruit independently as they generally receive adequate numbers of quality candidates coming directly to their corporate website. Organisations with less of a profile may however be more likely to remain somewhat reliant on third party job boards or agencies in helping them attract quality candidates.

INTEGRATION OF SERVICE OFFERINGS

Some online recruitment management systems providers have expanded their capability to offer 'a front to back end' facility. It is becoming more common for system providers to work in partnerships with others, such as those offering assessment exercises. This multi-vendor model is increasingly being used to provide a complete end to end recruitment solution for organisations. Some applicant tracking providers appear to be moving towards developing their own selection tools to enable them to offer more comprehensive recruitment solutions to employers.

FOCUS ON INTERNAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

As sourcing new talented staff is becoming increasingly difficult many organisations are focusing more on retention and are using their e-recruitment systems to try to increase accessibility to opportunities for internal staff, to manage the internal recruitment process more effectively and to help create a higher level of internal mobility in the organisation. Several of the case study organisations in this study have created 'Global Career Networks' to ensure staff are aware of opportunities in other locations and to facilitate internal moves rather than risk losing quality staff to other organisations.

This trend toward focusing on retaining and developing existing staff is reflected by developments in recruitment management/applicant tracking systems which are being expanded to record information beyond the

recruitment and on-boarding stages and to include details on employee development and career progression. Many HR managers interviewed see effective talent management as a key resourcing issue in the years to come. Having better integrated recruitment management and HR systems will help facilitate this, particularly in the case of large multinational organisations. An integrated system will enable HR to keep a comprehensive record of employees' skills, both as assessed during the recruitment process and developed within the organisation, and to use this information in making decisions about staff promotions and transfers.

BETTER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND VALIDATION OF ONLINE RECRUITMENT SYSTEMS

Evidence from this survey and previous research [9] suggests that organisations' evaluation of e-recruitment tends to focus on efficiency (input and output measures), as opposed to measures of effectiveness and quality of output. Number of successful applications, cost per hire and internet/intranet site traffic analysis seem to be the most frequently used measures with measures of quality being less evident. Integrated recruitment and HR systems will facilitate much better retrospective evaluation of recruitment systems in the future, by allowing HR compare performance on assessment exercises as part of the recruitment system with performance evaluation information of employees once they are in the organisation for a certain period.

Employers can also use key metrics collected by their online recruitment system to evaluate and better control the performance of different elements of the recruitment process.

As online systems can eliminate much of the laborious data collection traditionally involved in evaluating and validating selection processes, employers will be in a better position to regularly review and refine their processes to ensure they are recruiting staff with the right skills.

Private sector organisations appear to be more advanced than Public Sector organisations in understanding and maximising the return on investment in e-recruitment.

It is important that public sector organisations, in creating and implementing an e-recruitment strategy, develop a good understanding of the technologies available and the approaches being used by other organisations.

Many public sector organisations have similar application and recruitment processes, and therefore have similar requirements of an online recruitment system. Multi-national companies appear to be reaping significant benefits from implementing common system(s) across a number of / all locations.

Similar advances could be made in different parts of the public sector through utilising and sharing existing developments, technologies and practices to ensure that the public sector has access to the best online technology available to support a best practice recruitment process.

3.3 Conclusion

This report set out to provide a comprehensive overview of how e-recruitment is being used in Ireland, and provide an insight into what organisations see as the benefits and challenges of using e-recruitment technologies.

The report clearly shows that online recruitment has established itself as a significant part of the recruitment strategy and practice of a wide range of organisations operating in Ireland. The developments in Ireland appear to be on a par with what is happening internationally, especially in the UK and North America, although there are some areas where it is less advanced.

The results of the survey would indicate that e-recruitment is in robust health in Ireland and is set to grow significantly in the coming years. The internet is currently being used to greatest effect for advertising and facilitating the application process. Use of internet-based systems to track and manage candidate applications are becoming increasingly popular, particularly amongst larger organisations and are providing significant benefits in terms of efficiency, cost and capability to monitor and report on recruitment activities.

While implementing e-recruitment methods can provide significant benefits to organisations, the investment involved can be significant. The report therefore serves as a key resource to practitioners who are developing or progressing e-recruitment strategies. The findings of this report would suggest that organisations need to examine and challenge their existing processes and strategy in an effort to identify the barriers to attracting and recruiting the best talent in a timely, customer-friendly and resource efficient manner.

The report highlights the range of e-recruitment options that can be implemented to improve the efficiency of the recruitment process. Having a thorough understanding of the options available, and their associated benefits and pitfalls, can help ensure that the investment in e-recruitment technology will meet the longer term needs of an organisation. Acquiring a good knowledge of alternative and emerging approaches, and the functionality of associated technologies, will also help organisations to challenge their own thinking and processes in an effort to identify a solution(s) that can be implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

The report shows that e-recruitment is popular with applicants and that its popularity is increasing as the internet continues to become an accepted and convenient medium for a whole range of transactions. The concerns about access continue to diminish, with evidence presented here that recruiting online is the preferred method for the majority of candidates and that it results in at least as diverse an applicant group as those recruited through traditional methods.

The report does highlight the importance of the concept of treating candidates as customers and highlights the benefits of ensuring that online processes are designed to be as 'candidate-friendly' as possible. Evidence here would suggest that employers in Ireland are trying to accommodate applicants, where possible, though providing alternative channels for applications. Employers also appear to make efforts to ensure that the technology does not dominate the process, with personal contact with the candidate during the process seen as critical.

The report concludes with an assessment of possible future areas for development. It identifies the potential for significant advances to be made in the utilisation of internet based tools as part of the assessment and selection process and, in line with international trends, we are likely to see a much greater proportion of Irish organisations conduct these processes online in the future. It is anticipated that there will be an increased utilisation of management reporting systems and emphasis is on evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of e-recruitment interventions, especially in the public sector.

This report provides a new benchmark on practices and trends in e-recruitment in the Irish market. It provides organisations with an indication of how advanced/ developed their e-recruitment practices are in relation to other organisations and will help identify where their e-recruitment strategy needs to be further developed to enable them to attract and recruit the best candidates in the most efficient manner possible.

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