Recruitment process optimization: chosen findings from practice in Poland

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Abstract. Recruitment process is a progressive and time-consuming activity for an enterprise, usually connected with high costs. Even multi-stage and complex recruitment processes are connected with the risk of failure, an effect of which is an unfilled vacancy. Every organization aims to achieve the highest possible level of efficiency of the recruitment process in a way that they hire the person who possesses the required competences for a particular position, in the shortest possible time and with the lowest costs. Therefore, a significant element of every recruitment process is both a proper plan for the whole recruitment process, as well as effective check of competences of a potential candidate. The research proves that the costs connected with the replacement of an employee range from 1/3 of the annual earnings even up to the value of the two-year remuneration in the case of a high-level manager, it is dependent on the position for which the recruitment process is conducted. Being aware of costs, it is significant to optimize the whole process within organization. New solutions and requirements of the labour market make candidates change the approach to recruitment process. All the time, lack of preparation for interviews may be observed among candidates, starting from the mistakes made at the level of CV preparation , up to the lack of knowledge concerning the organization and its products. This paper aims to discuss the ways and tools of the recruitment process optimization in the case of organization, indicating the ways of preparing candidates for recruitment so that they could effectively present their own achievements.

INTRODUCTION

In Poland unemployment is the problem for both people looking for a job, as well as for employers themselves. Similar problems can be observed in other European countries, especially in those from the former communist bloc (Kot and Ślusarczyk, 2014). The level of unemployment in Poland in January 2014 was 14.00%, in January 2015 – 12.00%, and in May 2015 – 10.80% (http:www.stat.gov.pl, 2015). Within the previous 17 months a decreasing trend in the quantity of the unemployed in Poland has been observed. Such a tendency brings in new challenges for the enterprises looking for new talents at the labour market. This situation is also challenging for the candidates themselves. Organizations look for more attractive and effective recruitment methods. An example of an innovative approach to recruitment process may be that of a department of the national importer of cars which for selecting the candidates for the position of traders used an online game that the potential candidates played. Going through the consecutive levels of this game, they automatically went through to the next stages in the recruitment process. Direct meeting (face-to-face) with the candidate was the final stage of this process. It may be noted that the candidates have to adjust to the requirements of potential employers. On the other hand, the perspectives are positive, in the last years it is visible that high level of unemployment in Poland is observed in a group of people with higher education (Kot and Pigoń, 2014). In the fourth quarter of 2014 , among the graduates of high schools and universities the unemployment level was 21.10% (http:www.stat.gov.pl, 2015). By increasing spending on education we partly prevent the situation in which unemployment among university graduates is so high . More and more countries in Europe decide to increase their spending on education, not only at the level of higher education but also on primary and secondary one (Ślusarczyk and Golnik, 2014). Important factors affecting the level of employment among graduates are also the way that a potential candidate prepares for the recruitment processes as well as the process itself. While increasing one's knowledge and competence it is essential to prepare well for the presentation of one's skills in the whole process of recruitment.

So, the aim of the research in this article was the analysis of errors made by those involved in the recruitment process. The article proposes solutions that can streamline the process of recruitment for both organizations seeking employees and people involved in the recruitment process. The study shows that at two levels , both organizations and potential employees can develop improvements which will result in better selection for companies and for employees this means more efficiency in getting an attractive job.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to be able to realize its main aims, every organization should recruit, from the job market or from within, people with the proper competences thanks to which it can achieve these aims (Król, 2006 and van den Berg and van der Klaauw, 2006). Therefore the process of allocation of employees, understood especially as recruitment, lay-offs, voluntary redundancies and promotions, is a natural stage in staff development of any organization. Recruiting an employee with the right level of competence is a complex and multi-stage process which is aimed at creating staff that will guarantee the fulfillment of the aims and the mission of any company (Pawlak, 2003, Lajčin et al., 2012).

Methods of recruiting employees with proper competence can be divided into two basic types: external recruitment and recruitment within the organization. Depending on which type of recruitment an organization decides to engage in, there are various tools to choose from. Every organization may carry out a simultaneous process of external and internal recruitment or may decide to carry out only one of those. Some companies in principle choose to recruit from within the company in the initial phase of recruitment. This course of action boosts the employees' engagement in their work, has a positive effect on the motivation of the whole team and accelerates the recruitment process. A lot of tools and recruitment techniques can be used in both external and internal recruitment. The basic recruitment tools used in the internal recruitment include interviews with potential candidates, obtaining references from the candidate's direct superior, and using the results of competence measurement, provided that the organization has implemented human resources management system based on competence (Amstrong, 2011, Baran, Klos, 2014, Sirková, et al. 2016). The advanced recruitment tools used in the internal recruitment include assessment centre (a multidimensional process of competency assessment conducted by a team of judges) which may be carried out either with the support of a third party or by a dedicated unit from inside the organization (Bailly, 2012). An organization which decides to recruit a new employee though the process of external recruitment has at its disposal two basic methods: passive recruitment and active recruitment. Passive recruitment methods include re-examination of the CVs of candidates who participated in earlier recruitment processes. The greatest advantage of using the passive recruitment method over the active recruitment method is time and cost saving. The greatest advantage of the active recruitment method is the possibility to assess the competence of a candidate in different situations and with the use of a variety of techniques and tools. The basic active recruitment methods include advertisements in the press, on the websites of recruitment agencies or in social media. The advertisement includes the employer's expectations that the candidate should meet, which is referred to as the candidate's profile.

In the recruitment of the middle and upper management staff organizations often use the services of head-hunters. It is an example of another active recruitment method. This method involves a precise specification of the employer's expectations regarding the candidate (they are usually discussed with the head-hunter). In the next step, head-hunters interview potential candidates. Within the active recruitment methods organizations can also participate in special events such as local job fairs or university job fairs. Another active recruitment method is close cooperation with universities. Within such cooperation every organization may offer students traineeship or paid internship. During such an internship the future employer has a full image of the potential worker's competence (Szałkowski, 2000). An organization which decides to recruit a new employee though the process of external recruitment has at its disposal the methods described above. Applying these or other methods allows an organization to recruit potential candidates for a given position. Another challenge that an organization is faced with is the proper selection during the recruitment process. The literature on this subject describes at least a few ways of planning recruitment as a process (Breaugh, 2008). Every organization may carry out the recruitment process in a way which is considered most suitable for it. It is essential, however, that the process be carried out fairly and accurately. The care taken during the recruitment process gives higher efficiency in the form of the acquisition of candidates with a higher level of competence.

The recruitment process should consist of the stages presented in fig.1 below.
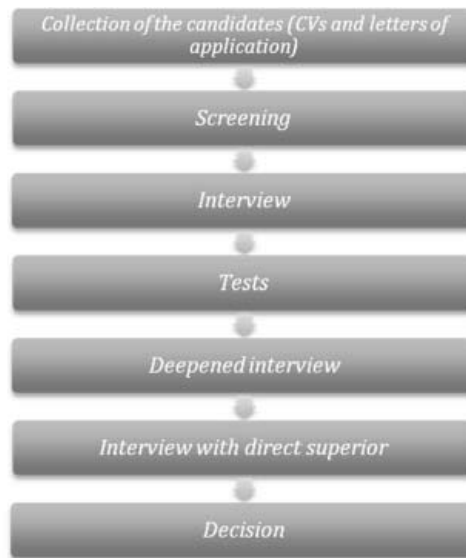
Figure 1. Stages in recruitment process
Source: (Szałkowski, 2000).

However, even the best conducted recruitment process may not give the expected result which is the employment of a suitable candidate. What also has an impact on the effects of recruitment is the unemployment rate in the country. In a situation where the unemployment rate is visibly low, it is more difficult to recruit a candidate with the right qualifications. Organizations are then faced with another challenge: knowingly employ a candidate with inadequate competency or start another recruitment process.

In the year 2014 there was the highest shortage of the „talents" in 7 years, 36% of the employers in a global approach declared a problem with finding the employees. In Poland 33% of the employers declare the problem with finding the employees, and the trend is decreasing now (ManpowerGroup, 2014). It may be noticed then, that both in the World and in Poland there is a problem with finding the candidates with the competences at the proper level. Such a situation causes change in approach of the HR departments for the recruitment techniques. Almost half of the checked enterprises declare implementation of the new HR activities within their organizations that aim to lower the shortage of talents. Research also shows that while looking for the specialists the required competences on particular positions are better precised by the employers (Górniak, 2013). Taking all of these into account, the more significant role in the recruitment process is played by the proper preparation for the job interview and conducting of the interview, also by the candidate. So far, some of the candidates as a process of preparation for the interview understood writing a CV and Motivation Letter, optionally getting acquainted with a portfolio of the products offered by the company, or the history of an organization to which they apply. Below, on the basis of the data of an international organization, the recruitment process from the point of view of an employer will be presented. Further part of the article is an attempt at creating the model of preparing for the recruitment process from the perspective of the candidate as well as from the perspective of an organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey is the case study of international corporation which has been present in Poland since 1992. After acquisition of state-owned enterprises, the organizational structure of the corporation started to be formed in Poland. At present, the corporation has its employees in production, sales and marketing divisions. The organization deals with production and sales of medicines and cleansers.

The survey concerned recruitment staff for the divisions of sales, marketing and support for field divisions. The study was prepared and conducted by The Management Faculty, Czestochowa UT staff between between January 2014 and January 2015

The questionnaire evaluating the level of the individual competence of each candidate who participated in the recruitment process at the Assessment Centre and an interview stage were used. This questionnaire was filled with people leading the recruitment process. There were participated one person from HR department (HR business partner, the future immediate superior of the applicant, Head of Sales Manager Department, Sales Manager and Brand Manager), in all recruitment processes. In the analyzed firm, 5063 candidates were analysed for 61 recruitment processes.

Then the data were introduced to an internal system for operation of the HR department and the data have been quantified. These studies were conducted as a starting point to search for solutions and tools to improve the recruitment process. Finally the search for effective solutions to increase the efficiency of the recruitment of both the organization and the candidate have to be transformed into lower cost of the recruitment process, by increasing the efficiency of the process. The aim was to find a solution that will be implemented into the organization and assess the impact of the implemented tools to increase the efficiency of the recruitment process.

In this study, following methods of effectiveness estimation of the recruitment process were used: Mathematical analysis comparing the amount of recruitment processes needed to fill a particular position, then aggregated data from each of the recruitment process, and summary report that shows percentage of vacant posts during the first recruitment stage or following ones.

STUDY RESULTS

In 2014, the organization carried out sixty-one recruitment processes in sales, marketing and support divisions. There were fifty-four recruitment processes conducted in the sales department. In forty-seven cases related to recruitment process was related to Trade Representative positions, in six cases the process was related to the position of Regional Sales Manager, in one case concerned the recruitment of Sales Manager. In the marketing department two recruitment processes for the position of Brand Manager were conducted.

In the support department, there were recruited assistants departments: legal, two people for the positions of sales assistants, one person for the position of assistant marketing department and one person in the position of HR Assistant.

The figure 2 illustrates the number of recruitment processes completed successfully for the first time, second time and third time and the number of vacancies filled.
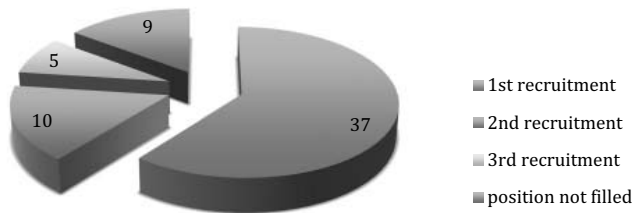
Figure 2. The number of vacancies filled in 2014 in the recruitment process
Source: Authors' own study based on the data from the organization.

The data show that 61% of the vacancies were filled in the recruitment process. In other cases the candidates did not meet the expectations of the prospective employer, which resulted in starting another recruitment processes or returning to the analysis of the documents sent. One of the causes of failure to recruit a person was the level of preparation of the candidate. The data from the documents sent matched the expectations of the organization, whereas the recruitment process showed competency-related deficiencies or, in some cases lack of opportunities for confirming the competencies declared during the recruitment and assessment centre process. The negative implication for the organization is repetition of the recruitment process and for the candidate this might cause losing a potentially good job offer.

During the recruitment process, both at the stage of an interview or the tasks performed within the framework of the assessment centre process (multi-dimensional process of assessment of competencies carried out by a group of judges) with prospective candidates, it turns out that part of them fail to demonstrate the competencies declared in the documents sent. This is caused, to a certain degree, by the lack of opportunities for full communication at the level of the advertisement published in press or an Internet portal. In the job advertisement, the requirement which says "good command of English required" causes that the self-assessment of the candidate's competencies can be excessively high or low. With detailed definition of the requirements, e.g. through specification of the level of language command, however, the people without a certificate specified yet with suitable level might be rejected. The chart below presents the competency deficiencies among the candidates who participated in the recruitment process for the sales division.
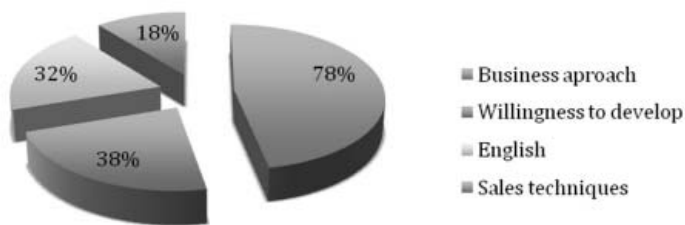

Figure 3. Competency deficiencies in the candidates who participated in the recruitment process
Source: Author's own study based on the data from the organization .

The data above demonstrate that the most of the candidates did not show the competency termed "a business approach". This skill is one of the most important competencies to be met by the candidate for

the sales division. The majority of the candidates think that the highest importance in the process of sales is from development of relationships with customers rather than the ability to sell a particular offer or a product. This approach can have a negative effect on the organization because if a sales person cannot develop the relationship with customers, they are unable to sell products at a particular level. But being focused on developing the relationships only, the employee limits the group of potential customers. Similar situation can be observed for knowledge of sales techniques. Insufficient knowledge and skills in this field cause that the activities of the sales person during dealing with customers are intuitive rather than based on analysis and adaptation of a specific method of working with the customer. There are also candidates that take part in the recruitment process who, due to the insufficient preparation, fail to fully present their competencies although these skills are at a high level.

The Wheels Skills model described by Gavrel (Gavrel, 2001) can be used to develop the differences between the expectations of organizations for the candidates and the actual level of their competence The research carried out in the organization show that the recruitment process can and should improve on two levels: organizational and at the level of the candidate. Organizations that have implemented human resource management system based on competence, achieve better results also within recruitment processes. Competence-based approach differs primarily in emphasis in the process of obtaining potential candidates, but it requires from the organization far more resources in the process of recruitment and selection (Dubois and Rothwell, 2004). The effective attracting candidates and efficient method of processing the application in the organization are also more cost-effective solution in recruitment process (Armstrong, 1977). The direction, which organizations should also consider in the recruitment process, is deliberate and widespread use of RJP (Realistic Job Previews) in the recruitment process (Morse BJ, Popovich PM, 2009). Using this method, the organization should consider what information you want to convey to potential candidates from areas: information about employers, job information, information about people in the organization (Ferris GR, Berkson HM, Harris, MM, 2002) following the proposed means and methods improves the processes of recruitment for both the candidate and the organization.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS
AT THE LEVEL OF THE ORGANIZATION.

The starting point for an effective recruitment process on the part of the organization, is to communicate the organization attractiveness in the market in such a way as to encourage the best candidates to apply (Catanzaro D. Moore, H. Marshall TR, 2010). On the basis of the data of the organization on which the research was conducted it may be noticed that most of the deficiency in competences is discovered during the recruitment process conducted directly with the candidates. It is connected with additional costs for an organization, in a form of involvement of the additional people in recruitment process, who do not realize their operations activities then, as well as costs connected with logistics of the recruitment process. Therefore, it raises a question whether organization is able to do anything in order to check if the candidates coming to the stage of direct recruitment had previously checked the level of their competences, but if yes, the next question is what should be done. The starting point for checking the level of the competence before the face-to-face meeting is to determine in detail the components of particular competences that could be verified. The below presented typology may be used as a reference point for identification of the components of the competence (Sajkiewicz, 2002):

– Abilities – refer to the condition of the human capital and reflect developmental potential of the employees (ability to gain new and develop the already obtained competences);

- Skills – understood as knowledge concerning the particular issues and fluency in doing the tasks connected to them; among them there should be mentioned: mental competence, communicative competence, interpersonal competence, organizational competence, technical competence, business competence, orientation on the customers' needs, approach to work performance, personnel management, leading skills.
- Knowledge – refers to the knowledge of the cases (theories, facts, procedures, etc.) connected with a particular position, or profession.
- Physical condition – refers to the physical requirements connected with works on the particular position; here there may be included: physical condition, sensitivity of the senses and psycho- physical abilities.
- Style of work – refers to the way of realization of the activities allocated to the employee. Here may be distinguished employee's style and management style.
- Personality – a collection of the individual features of a given person;
- Rules and values – believes that determine the behaviour of an individual in a workplace.
- Interests – determine individual preferences of the employees that influence which professional field they choose.

A part of the researchers dealing with the problem of competences do not accept the above mentioned division. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the basic components of the competence are knowledge and skills that should be taken into account in the research before the meeting in person. Remaining components may be checked if the organization claims that any of them is required on the particular post. Having precisely determined which components compose particular competences, there should be determined the ways of checking them before meeting face-to-face. Presently, in the labour market there appears to be more and more companies that possess ready-made tools to be used in the process of the competences evaluation on-line. An example of such a tool may be a model of the behavioural profiling Facet5®, it is a model and system of tools that allows to state the features necessary for reaching the success in a given organization, and helps to analyze and check them. By means of that, making decisions connected with the employees is easier and may be used by the recruitment and selection consultants, workers of the HR departments, specialists for the development of employees, specialists for the development of the leadership competences and line managers at all levels of the organization. An example of the tool for analysis of the behaviours of future employees may be the test Ensize DISC®, which is a test showing what style of behaviours is represented by the candidate at work (adapted) and a natural style of behaviour, preferred by him. An example of the evaluation of very particular skills is the test invented and developed by the Polish company Codility® for the programmers. Potential candidates during the on-line test show their skills and knowledge concerning programming. With the help in the initial selection of the competence level of the candidates there are also psycho-metrical tools as well as personality tests, or tests of skills and intelligence. Organization using remote tools of evaluation of competence, is able to save time of the employees taking part in the recruitment process, reduce the costs connected with recruitment and get better candidates from the labour market. For the candidates this way of verification the competences may be less stressful (the candidate individually fills in the test in the time convenient for him), at the same, the candidate saves the time and money connected even with travels in order to participate in the job interviews. Therefore it may be noticed that using this type of tools is profitable for both sides of the recruitment process. Implementation of this type of tools requires other approach of the candidates to the recruitment process. Participants of the recruitment process in their CVs should describe their level of skills and knowledge more precisely, which would allow more careful selection of the candidate for the particular position. They should attentively prepare themselves for such tests and have the necessary tools available. Tests of behaviours and personalities in most cases are prepared in a way that the candidate could not hide anything and therefore the candidates should answer the questions in accordance with their believes and views.

WAYS OF PREPARING FOR THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS BY THE CANDIDATE

While preparing for the recruitment process there may be used the elaborations available on the market. They include information how successfully prepare for the recruitment process (Hodgson, 2013). The next stage of preparing for the job interview is using of the services of the professional HR advisor, or taking part in the programs realized in the universities that help students to enter the labour market (Stańczyk,2013). The beginning of the recruitment process from the point of view of the candidate is creating of the package of documents that next are sent to the recruitment company or directly to the organization looking for future employees. This package usually consists of two documents: CV and Motivation Letter. In the last few years the expectations of the employers concerning the documents sent by the candidates have increased. Presently, CV should also include professionally taken photo of a candidate. The document should be also characterized by a proper graphic form; there should appear highlighting, grading, thematic blocks, various colours. Apart from the standard information concerning education and the professional experience, the CV should also include information about clearly described scope of duties, facts form the professional life of the candidate, as well as his achievements on the position occupied so far. Motivation letter should include clear reference to the organization and the position the candidate applies. It should include answers to the basic questions: why the candidate applies to that particular organization and for that position, why in his opinion he is the best candidate, how would the organization benefit from hiring him, and to what extent he meets the competence requirements included in the advertisement/offer. Nowadays, access to information is almost unlimited thanks to the availability of the Internet. Using the available information the candidate should obtain knowledge concerning the organization to which he applies and concerning the products offered by the organization, both in the Polish and global markets (if it is an international company). If in the recruitment process there is used the on-line tools for verification of the particular competences, the candidate should update his knowledge that is required in the particular position, and acquire the new knowledge, if the person identifies lack of knowledge in his case. Next, the auto-analysis of the individual behaviours at work should be conducted, which of the behaviours and skills represented by the candidate contribute to the success, and which cause unwanted effects. Such an auto-analysis conducted before the tests makes answering the questions concerning the candidate's knowledge and skills easier. While preparing for the interview, it is worth checking, as much as possible, which techniques are used in the recruitments process in the given organization, and for which technique should the answers be prepared (eg. STAR technique). The example below shows how to present the accomplishments using the STAR method.

A candidate found a high-potential customer for the organization and sold products to this customer at the level of 110% of the personal sales targets.

S (situation): at this point, the candidate should provide detailed specification of the customer they talked to, the difficulties he had during sales and the resources they had during the conversation.

T (task): at this point, the candidate should specify the objectives assumed to be achieved in the sales process with concrete customers. The customer should also relate it to the objectives the organization has.

A (action): at this stage of presentation, the candidate should present the actions they took during the process of sales at the specific customer and measurable effects they achieved. The actions that contributed to the success should be indicated.

R (results): the candidate should demonstrate the effect of the task performed on achievement of their own sales target, how it contributed to the development of the organization, and what benefits they derived after performance of this task (credentials, signing another contract etc.).

MISTAKES MADE BY THE CANDIDATES IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Most of the organizations monitor the mistakes made by the candidates in the recruitment process. Elimination or minimizing of the amount of mistakes in the recruitment process makes the candidate closer to be employed in the company he had applied. In figure 4 there are presented the mistakes made by the candidates, the most often appearing in the recruitment processes. It may be easily noticed that quantitatively the greatest amount of mistakes is made by the candidates in the documents sent. They are mainly based on the formal mistakes such as mistakes in the name of an organization, incorrect name of the position to which the candidate applies, etc. Some organizations as a mistake in the documents consider the use of standard font type that is suggested by the text editor. Invariably, from several years it is common among the candidates that they have not sufficient knowledge concerning the organization, products or competitive environment in which the company operates.
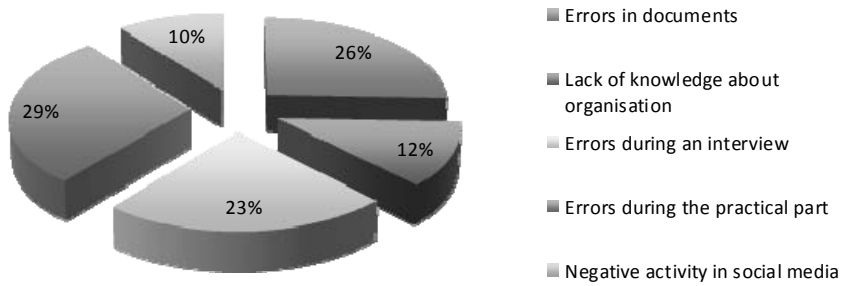

Figure 4 Mistakes made by the candidates in the recruitment process
Source: Authors' own study based on the data from the organization.

The next mistake visible in the recruitment process is lack of knowledge concerning specifics of the post to which the candidates apply. During the direct conversation (face-to-face) some of the candidates make mistake during the interview, or practical activities. In this group of mistakes there may be included: lack of precise answers supported by facts, mistakes in calculations in the practical tasks, in the team activities - attempt to lead the group instead of focusing on resolving the problem in a group. Nowadays it is more common to verify the information presented by the candidate with the information published by him in the social media. There were some cases that the candidate in the internet forum, or other type of media presented different approach to work than declared in the job interview, or in the Motivation Letter.

CONCLUSION

Recruitment processes aimed at finding the most suitable employees are still being evaluated. Nowadays, proper planning and preparing the recruitment process influences its efficiency. Modern and innovative solutions constantly appearing in the labour market, support recruitment process by optimization of costs and time of the conducted recruitment activities. This article shows how to use available tools on the market to lower costs for conducting the recruitment process based on competences in practice, which Dubois described (Dubois DD, WJ Rothwell, 2004). The purpose of this article is also to inspire some organizations to implement RJP as an integral part of the recruitment process. Studies show that in the long run,

this approach is more cost effective for the organization (Thorsteinson TJ Plamer EM Wulff C. Anderson, A., 2004). Additional profit of implementation of modern solutions is the use of more detailed information concerning the level of the competences of the candidate that is in the recruitment process. The use of the on-line tools requires other approach from both organization and the candidate. Organization using such solutions has to describe the competences and their components very precisely in order to select the best possible tools. The candidates who enter the recruitment process without proper preparation and professional approach, in most cases will not find employment. By combining the knowledge and the recruitment process support tools, the organizations increase the efficiency of the recruitment process that is to the benefit of both sides of recruitment activity.

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