



Public Sector Recruitment – The Present & The Future

in-house
RECRUITMENT
network

Official Partner:

jobsgo**public**

Introduction

'[Public Sector Recruitment – The Present & The Future](#)' was a round-table networking breakfast for 30 In-house recruitment & HR professionals, devoted to the topic of public sector recruitment, how it's currently managed and how it's set to change in the future. As with all of our events, this breakfast meeting was an opportunity for in-house recruiters from various household name, public sector businesses to discuss shared challenges and successes, in a sector that is more often than not, riddled in red tape.

Our speakers:



[Charlotte Johns](#)
Head of Recruitment Operations
[TfL](#)



[Miles Skelton](#)
Managing Director
[Jobsgopublic](#)

Our first special guest speaker, Charlotte Johns, Head of Recruitment Operations at Transport for London, kicked off the morning's discussions with an interesting presentation that highlighted how she created a strategy for recruitment at TfL, despite the challenges involved in working for a public sector organisation.

Charlotte joined TfL at a time where the recruitment function needed structure. What it required was a complete overhaul. Contending with hiring managers, the red tape of a public sector business and candidate perceptions, she describes how she managed to change the face of recruitment in TfL and how she still continues to evolve and adjust the way recruitment operates within the organisation.

Our second special guest speaker of the morning was Miles Skelton, Managing Director of Jobsgopublic. Jobsgopublic are primarily known for their highly successful job site, but their business has grown with the market and they are now the go to for any public sector recruitment need. With an intense passion for the public and not-for-profit sectors, there was no better person than Miles to round off the morning's events. Miles delivered an incredibly informative presentation, which divulged some very interesting statistics on candidate perceptions of the public sector, as well as key target audiences for social channels.

Jobsgopublic

We partnered with Jobsgopublic for our breakfast event, 'Public Sector Recruitment – The Present & The Future' for their unrivalled expertise on the subject of public sector recruitment and how to make the most out of job advertising and recruitment data.

Jobsgopublic have developed a range of services to suit any recruitment need. This ranges from getting your vacancy a bit more exposure to complex multi-platform attraction campaigns that will drive large amounts of highly relevant traffic to your advert or site.

'Over the last 16 years, Jobsgopublic have established themselves as a leading digital recruitment brand providing advertising, marketing and software solutions for public and not for profit sector employers.

Beginning life as a jobs board, Jobsgopublic have developed significantly to place themselves at the forefront of recruitment innovation.

'We understand how fast recruitment is evolving so for each individual campaign we find out where the candidates are hanging out, what message they want to see and what method they want to use to apply. We then use this to help you promote your organisation, your brand and your sector.'

The In-house Recruitment Network

This breakfast event was attended by around 30 members of the In-house Recruitment Network. The In-house Recruitment network is the fastest growing community for In-house Recruiters and HR professionals in the industry. Members benefit from helpful and informative online forums, specialist breakfast events, high value conferences and of course the official In-house Recruitment Awards. With almost 10,000 members, the In-house Recruitment Network is the largest, most active professional network of In-house Recruiters in the industry, hosting over 25 high calibre events and meetups a year, the In-house Recruitment Network is the perfect place for intimate peer-to-peer networking and knowledge sharing.

In this guide, you'll find collected research from our conferences, plus tried and tested pointers from Jobsgopublic that will help you discover how to maximise your job advertising and recruitment data to be first in class.

What Are The Key Challenges In Public Sector Recruitment?

We spoke to our network of in-house recruitment professionals who currently operate within public sector businesses and discovered that the main challenges they face from a new talent perspective are the following:

Future Cuts in Government Funding

One of the biggest difficulties for in-house recruiters in the public sector is the pressure of finances and the constant threat of government funding cuts. It's problematic enough constructing a team in a private sector business with the continuous focus on cost-savings, but the public sector is tested by funding cuts which are out of their control, making it extremely tough to recruit the high level of talent that's required to help public sector businesses and bodies thrive. Cuts in the public sector mean that every job role is under scrutiny and all new appointments have to be justified which makes harsh work for in-house recruiters in the space.

Brand Awareness

As markets become more competitive in the commercial sector, it is imperative for public sector organisations to work harder on their brand offering as an emotional tool for their recruitment needs. Long-serving employees of public sector organisations in particular, tend to be hesitant to recognise the stiff competition posed by the private sector and ignore the need to put emphasis on branding as an attraction tool. However, over the past few years this opinion has gradually changed as public sector leaders begin to realise that their businesses are operating in a highly competitive market with limited funding.

For high profile public sector institutions, brand awareness isn't overly problematic, as a result of regular media coverage for instance. The NHS is a good example of this. However, some smaller organisations suffer huge struggles where brand awareness is concerned, and this occurs for a number of reasons.

For example, housing and social care organisations tend to be less well-known because, until people require a need for their services, they aren't necessarily aware of them. [Anchor](#) is a prime example of a business which struggles with their brand awareness due to conflicting brand names. Anchor is England's largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care for older people, but they share their brand name with Arla's butter brand, Anchor, which trumps them in terms of brand familiarity. A business like Anchor are likely to struggle to recruit people based on their brand name because FMCG businesses are considered a much 'sexier' prospect than housing and social care. Organisations like this need to work even harder where brand is concerned.

Bad press is another issue facing public sector organisations. We are constantly barraged with government cuts and negative press on public sector organisations which is likely to deter good candidates from seeking involvement.

Introducing Commercial Thinking Into The Organisation

A lot of public sector businesses are challenged with long-serving, traditional senior management and staff, who don't necessarily think commercially where recruitment and indeed business operations are concerned. The rise of the millennial population into the professional market is a movement which is not to be underestimated by public sector institutions. Fresh, experienced, highly innovative talent is what the public sector needs, but gaining buy-in from old-fashioned senior management poses a great challenge in most of these organisations. The next generation of talent won't be interested in working for a business that's outdated with no commercial understanding.

Transition From Private Sector To Public Sector

An interesting prospect for in-house recruitment teams in the public sector is the transition of candidates from the private to the public sector. Private sector businesses are highly competitive and often have much more flexibility in terms of budget – salary in particular – whereas the public sector is limited to organised salary banding which can put a lot of candidates off, particularly if they are earning a higher salary for doing the same/lower level job in the private sector.

As well as budgets, private sector candidates are likely to have experienced more flexibility in the work place, and depending on the size/culture of the company, a lot less red tape. These are all things which can cause problems for public sector recruiters.

According to HR Magazine, the most difficult elements of the transition include:

- A move away from being profit driven - the focus shifts to one of service maximisation and cost savings, not profit maximisation. More services for less money, not fewer services for greater profits.
- Political awareness - understanding the political context and the fact that 'all publicity is not always good publicity' when working in the public eye.
- Stakeholder engagement - less autonomy and the requirement for more consultation to a larger customer base is the challenge that commercial candidates encounter most frequently.

Resistance To Change From Long-serving Senior Management

Similarly to our point above about introducing commercial thinking into public sector organisations, recruiters are often up against a huge wall of resistance from senior management where change and innovation is concerned. This kind of resistance can cause a lot of issues for in-house recruiters in the public sector who have big ideas for the development and modernisation of their recruitment strategies. Whether it be the need for a new ATS or the creation of a careers page, in-house recruiters are often met by challenges from the wider business.

Salary & Benefits

With salaries and benefits as competitive as they are in the commercial world, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract fresh, top talent from the private sector into public sector organisations based on salary and benefits packages. The public sector tends to have well-publicised pay bands for different levels and disciplines of jobs, while salary negotiations in the private sector are more secretive, often determined by trends within the labour market and competitor offerings. A candidate who is experienced in a role from a commercial background might be deterred by salary banding restrictions in the public sector, requiring more creative ways to attract candidates with less focus on finances and more focus on work/life perks.

Data In The Business

Data is one of those headache topics that most people who aren't familiar with it dread. Data doesn't need to be a nightmare if you've got a grip on it, and it's not as complicated as it might sound. The problem with data in most public sector businesses, is the lack of it. With outdated systems and a reluctance to invest tight budgets, public sector institutions are stalling whilst the private sector thrives. The truth is, without a grasp on data, businesses can't wish to have any good understanding of where they are currently failing and succeeding in their recruitment efforts.

Organisations such as Jobsgopublic have developed their software with the collection of data specifically in mind. Comprehensive reporting functions then makes this data easy to analyse, allowing informed decisions to be made. This not only allows for more effective recruitment but also for smarter decisions to be made in terms of budget allocation. This can then lead to significant savings to be made.

Candidate Attraction

All of the above points illustrate why candidate attraction is a challenge for public sector recruiters. Without sufficient resources, budget and time, it is difficult to develop and execute a robust candidate attraction strategy in the same way that the private sector can. Of course there are obvious pros to working in the public sector such as flexible working hours and job security (for the most part), but if these points aren't outlined, candidates simply won't know about them.

Miles Skelton, from Jobsgopublic, identifies the importance of a multi-platform approach to candidate attraction, "we have observed a significant rise in the number of sources used by candidates to find opportunities. We have identified up to 18. This makes a multi-platform attraction strategy essential in order to reach the widest possible audience and ensure that you are reaching the right candidates".



What Are Public Sector Recruiters Doing To Overcome These Challenges?

Referral Schemes

Employee referral schemes are effectively an outsourcing strategy whereby you pay existing staff to help you fill challenging vacancies by utilising their existing professional, and at times, personal networks. Initiating some form of employee referral scheme within a public sector business can be extremely effective in terms of attracting talent because existing employees can personally sell the sometimes, undersold benefits, of working within the space. If you're worried about budget and cost surrounding this, remember how much you may spend on agency hires. Agency hires can cost thousands of pounds, especially from middle management positions upwards. An employee referral will cost you much less depending how much you decide to reward staff, and you will end up with a much better hire as a result. Why?

- Employee referred hires are already familiar with the business, role and environment and therefore more likely to settle quickly
- They have the added bonus of already knowing someone, making it easier to immerse themselves into the culture
- You're more likely to end up with passive, highly talented individuals who trust the judgement of the employees who approached them

Data

What Are The Benefits Of Getting Recruitment Data Right?

- To accurately analyse ROI on job boards, agencies and websites
- To form the foundations of decision making; data enables recruiters to leverage internal propositions in order to gain senior level buy-in and swifter decision-making
- To help make improvements to the customer journey by identifying key issues throughout the process which may be invisible to the naked eye
- To improve internal and external communications; the variety of data recruiters can obtain can significantly improve candidate experience, as well as help to manage hiring manager expectations
- To reduce costs; every department in every business is trying to keep costs down, that's no secret. Data gives recruiters the opportunity to analyse problem areas and gaps in their process in order to edit their process and, indeed, budget
- To improve the candidate experience

In a public sector business where red tape is rife and senior buy-in is a challenge data can really help you to win your case where your recruitment strategy is concerned. If you haven't harnessed it yet, you need to start!

Advert Improvements

Adverts are a great way to improve your chances of generating applications and hires if you're struggling. As a public sector recruiter, you are likely to advertise jobs online, but what does the copy look like? If you aren't getting the response you expect to get from your adverts, maybe it's time to adjust them. Your organisation won't look attractive to prospective candidates if you are publishing job copy that is outdated, boring and off-putting. This is a chance to sell the very real benefits that working within the public sector can bring to a candidate and these benefits should be listed on your ads loud and clear.

A little gentle tweaking where your adverts are concerned will make a huge difference when a candidate is making a decision on whether to click the apply button or not.

The advantages of well-written, edited adverts:

- They attract higher quality candidates
- They discourage weaker, irrelevant candidates
- Reduce total time to hire
- Increase recruitment efficiency for your team
- They shape and promote your employer brand and reputation; good for a public sector organisation who is looking to reverse ugly perceptions

This is another aspect of recruitment that Miles Skelton highlights as not only crucial but something that is too often overlooked "Studies we have carried out have really highlighted the importance of an effective job advert. 81% of candidates that we have spoken to claim that they would be put off applying for a position if the advert was badly written. That is a huge percentage. If you are not making the effort to ensure that your job adverts genuinely communicate the right message then you could literally be limiting yourself to 19% of the pool. Are you going to find the right candidate amongst such a small percentage?"

Candidate Experience

"46% of candidates rate their candidate experience applying for jobs as poor to very poor. And worse, 64% said that they share information about their candidate experience via social media. With this in mind, you definitely want your company to be perceived as candidate-friendly"- iCIMS

Modern candidates are more connected and a million times better informed than ever before. Candidates are fully aware of what a good online candidate experience is, and won't hesitate to share their bad experiences with friends and colleagues through word of mouth and through social media.

What are the benefits of getting candidate experience right for public sector recruiters?

- To help eliminate competition from the private sector
- Widening your talent pool and creating a strong following of passive, as well as active, candidates
- Decreasing your ATS drop off rate and retaining more top talent previously lost through outdated, lengthy systems
- Earning yourself healthier candidate experience/institutional reviews and a better reputation as an employer overall
- To encourage candidates to talk about your business positively, generating more interest through word-of-mouth

A Jobsgopublic study identified the extent to which candidates often find themselves dissatisfied with their experiences of recruitment processes. With over 500 job seekers surveyed, less than half could identify a single organisation that had provided a positive experience. This reaches extremes in professions such as teaching, Jobsgopublic asked 500 teachers the same question and only five could think of one.

Recruitment Surgeries

Why not hold regular recruitment surgeries? These are not only great for reviewing and editing roles and how you recruit for them, but they are also a great way to get both in-house recruitment teams and departmental managers working together and understanding the importance of this function – particularly vital for public sector recruiters in businesses that pose cross-functional difficulties at times.

If you do decide to set up recruitment surgeries as a way of combatting some of your public sector recruitment challenges, here are some ideas to get you going:

- **Review role profiles;** alongside hiring managers within the organisation, go through the roles you're recruiting for and see where you can edit points and make the role look as attractive as possible. Dowdy, boring role profiles are not going to attract candidates. Every job has good and bad points. Focus on the great ones but be realistic about the challenges.
- **Get senior management involved;** although in some businesses, management can be reluctant to change, they will most definitely respond better if you go to the effort of organising an event like this in-house. Sometimes it's just about getting in front of people rather than battling over emails.
- **Mind-map new ideas;** this is a great morale booster for the team, as well as a step in the right direction for some real changes to be made to the recruitment strategy. Although only small steps, sometimes it's small steps that help you leap to bigger things, so don't underestimate this.

Promote Success

Any business can promote its successes, whether it be on their website or across their social media channels and this is vital to help reverse some of the sometimes negative perceptions that the public sector gets unfairly tarnished with. Promoting success can be as great or as small as you like, whether it's the odd tweet about something great that's happened within the business or a news page on the website, you need to get the good points out there.

Engage On Social Media



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is, without a doubt the world's largest talent pool, so if you aren't using it as a key component within your recruitment process, you should be. The site by itself, before you even consider recruiter add-ons and business solutions products, offers professionals a unique opportunity to connect and network with relevant peers and, for in-house recruiters, prospective employees. It goes without saying that LinkedIn should already be a tool that you're using on a daily basis as an in-house recruiter in any kind of organisation whether it be private or public sector.



Facebook

Facebook might not sound like the most intellectual starting point where sourcing is concerned, particularly for a public sector organisation, what with the plethora of viral videos and outrageous political statements, but it can actually be a great platform to include in your recruitment efforts particularly from a brand awareness perspective. Facebook's reputation may have suffered a bit of a dip, but the fact is, over 1.5 billion people are still using it! That's a huge breeding ground for talent and a great place to help generate a positive image of your organisation. A Facebook careers page can be a huge asset to your recruitment strategy, with 81% of jobseekers saying they want to see vacancies on these pages.



Twitter

Twitter as a recruiting tool is extremely valuable and a fantastic platform on which to develop and represent your brands tone of voice. If you're looking to run a successful recruitment campaign and tell the story of your business, establishing your brand presence on a site like Twitter can propel you into a whole new realm of candidates and it goes a long way in terms of your institutions reputation.

Setting up a simple career-centric Twitter account as an extension of all the other great things you're doing as a business brand, gives you the opportunity to build a relevant network of candidates, either for current roles or as a talent-pooling exercise. Creating and sharing engaging, applicable content is huge on Twitter at the moment and if you're not involved, it's time to get started! You'll find over time that you'll gain a strong following of prospective candidates.

What's Working Well Within Public Sector Recruitment Teams Right Now?

Reorganisation of Team – TfL Case Study



To back up this crucial point, we have a fantastic case study from Charlotte Johns, Head of Recruitment Operations at TfL on her first-hand experience on reorganising and building the recruitment team within the business on joining.

Charlotte joined TfL at a time where the recruitment function needed structure. What it required was a complete overhaul. Contending with hiring managers, the red tape of a public sector business and candidate perceptions, she describes how she managed to change the face of recruitment in TfL and how she still continues to evolve and adjust the way recruitment operates within the organisation.

Click below for Charlotte's full presentation:



Charlotte's Top 3 Talent Sources:

- Graduate and Apprentice Schemes
- Talent Schemes Internal to Transport for London
- Partnering with Public Sector Organisations – Secondments

Communication Internally

Plenty of internal communication is key to successfully recruiting within the public sector. Building strong working relationships with hiring managers and senior stakeholders within your business will help hugely in redeveloping and successfully executing your recruitment strategy.

Careers Pages

A strong careers site can be a huge asset to your recruitment strategy, especially in terms of building a positive picture of your organisation. The best pages we've seen are delicately curated, tell the company story well and are easy to navigate. A careers website is an unquestionable must. A valuable careers site isn't just about the current vacancies you have which lead to a long and painful ATS. In the public sector, particularly where government bodies are concerned, careers pages don't tend to be the most inspiring places. This is your chance to sell the benefits of working within your business. It should scream your voice to candidates and detail the core values your organisation represents.

These questions should be answered for candidates on a successful careers site:

- Why should I work for you over your competitors?
- Why do your current employees like working for you?
- What are the benefits of working for you?
- What makes you different?
- What opportunities do you have on offer right now?

In terms of content for your careers site to help maximise your recruitment efforts as far as possible, we would recommend some of these crucial things:

About us; what you do, how you do it, your history, your future, your values, your locations and notable accolades.

Benefits; additional perks and remuneration options available to employees of your business.

Roles; categorise these by department. It is important make browsing as easy and simple as possible for candidates. It's all about delivering an exceptional user experience.

A search bar; candidates will most likely know exactly what they are looking for, so the addition of a search bar is incredibly advantageous. A search bar can also yield some interesting internal data. It is a good indication as to the kind of candidates who are seeking employment with you.

Additional content; you can include videos, photos, information about the team and employee profiles. The possibilities in terms of site content are endless!

To benefit even further, make sure your site is mobile-friendly; candidates are just as busy as you are. Your roles need to be accessible on multiple devices so that they can be viewed on the go.

Land Registry Case Study

If you're looking for evidence of how well a careers site can work, this case study on Land Registry by Jobsgopublic can show you just how effective this kind of campaign can be for a public sector business and their recruitment efforts.

Managed Recruitment Land Registry Case Study

Briefing

Following a period of significant downsizing arising from the property crash of 2007, Land Registry had not recruited in to their operations function for 7 years. With a workforce demographic which included 42% of their staff entering, or nearing retirement age and the launch of an organisation wide digitisation programme on the horizon, the organisation found themselves with an urgent need to refresh its workforce and plan for the future.

In May 2014 they decided to launch a new apprenticeship scheme, the first in its 150 year history to begin to address these issues, and rejuvenate the workforce.

The high quality scheme is designed to prepare young people for the world of work, allowing them to study for a BTEC in business administration, alongside paid work. It also provided additional benefits by creating, supervisory and assessor opportunities for existing

staff and introducing fresh new ideas to help shape the future.

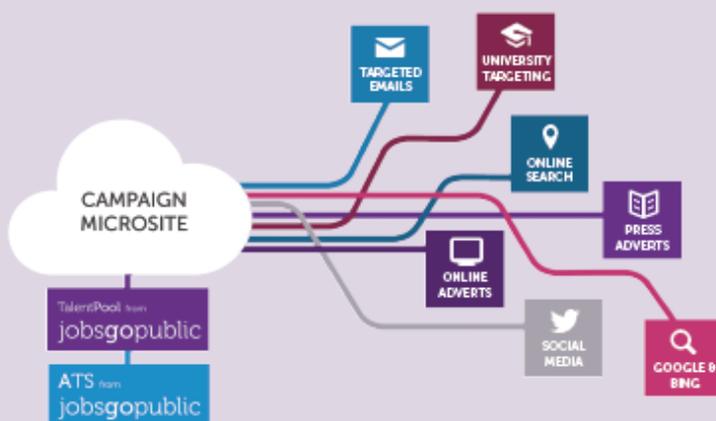
The time table was challenging as the decision was made in May to create 60 new apprentice roles that would be based across sites in Telford, Leicester and Nottingham to start in September.

The large volumes of candidates required within such a short time period presented a significant challenge and would require a dynamic and innovative approach.

As a Government Agency, Land Registry selected Jobsgopublic for this project based on their established reputation for providing innovative recruitment and resourcing solutions, within the public and not-for-profit sectors.

60 Apprentices Wanted **3** Locations (Telford, Nottingham & Leicester)

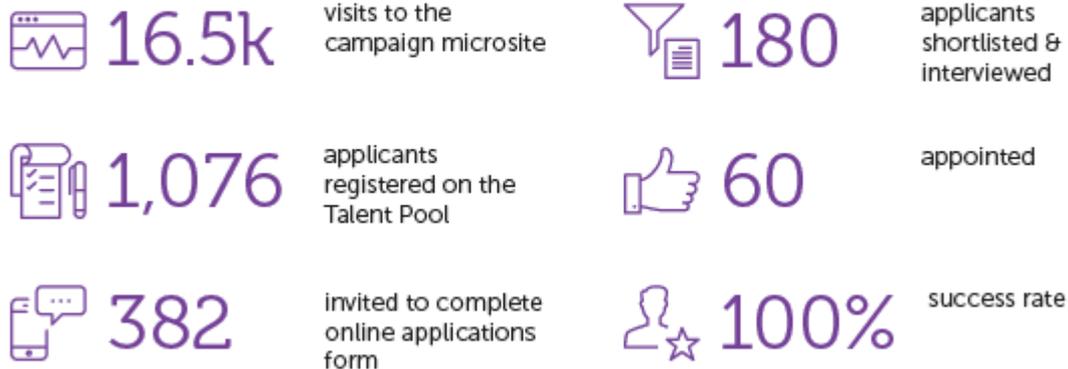
Solution



Jobsgopublic drove relevant traffic to a dedicated campaign microsite using an array of digital advertising, social media attraction and search and sourcing techniques.

Candidates were then asked to register their interest onto a talent pool. Applicants were sorted and filtered, and relevant candidates matching key criteria were sent to a secure application form. Following further evaluation a highly targeted shortlist was then presented to Land Registry.

Results



Testimonial

"We have been extremely impressed with Jobsgopublic, the 100% success rate is a testament to the professionalism and expertise they brought to the process. We were fully aware of the extent of the challenges presented, as most young people would not have heard of Land Registry, we needed something which was creative, and engaging but would also not misrepresent the business.

As an added bonus, we have saved a significant amount of time and money by outsourcing this campaign and couldn't be happier with the results. The attraction methods used were innovative and highly targeted, the use of the talent pool as a filtering tool was extremely effective and the shortlist presented to us was made up of high-calibre candidates who precisely fitted the brief we gave. There is no better proof of the standard of applicant, than the fact that we used the reserve list to recruit to a further 20 positions 4 weeks later.

I would have no hesitation in recommending Jobsgopublic's managed recruitment services to other organisations. They listened to us, understood our needs and kept us fully informed throughout... But more than that, they demonstrated flexibility and flair and a real commitment to working with us to deliver the outcome we required. "



Caroline Anderson

HR Director
Land Registry

Top Tips From Public Sector Recruitment Teams For Their Peers

- Involve Your Hiring Managers In The Process
- Empower Your People
- One Size Doesn't Fit All – Think About Who You're Looking For And Where You'll Find Them
- Ramp Up Your Candidate Experience – It's The Little Things That Make All The Difference
- Understand Your Business
- Exploit Your Data Capabilities
- Listen To Your Employees
- Conduct A Pay Exercise
- Induction Is Key
- Invest In A Quality ATS

What Will The Public Sector Recruitment Landscape Look Like In 2017 According To Professionals Within This Space?



Increase In
Graduates &
Apprenticeships



Grow Your Own



More Generalist &
Diverse Skillsets



Social Media The
King



Culture Changes
Within
Organisations



Proactive Rather
Than Reactive

Resources

<http://www.inhouserecruitment.co.uk/public-sector-recruitment-the-present-and-future-a-round-up/>

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/recruiters/resources/the-ultimate-guide-to-online-recruitment-advertising.pdf>

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2015/09/23/the-public-sector-faces-terrifying-challenges.aspx>

<http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/the-key-challenges-facing-public-sector-recruitment>

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/management-and-business/317041-public-sector-security-or-private-sector-salary-which-should-you-opt-for-when->

Conclusion

It isn't old news that recruitment within the public sector is a challenge for a plethora of sometimes, uncontrollable circumstances. One of the most humbling things that we experienced before and during the creation of this whitepaper, was the comradery displayed by in-house recruiters in this sector towards their peers. It seems that everyone is faced with the same difficulties, but they aren't going unnoticed. The solutions and tips delivered in this whitepaper have come directly from the mouths of experienced public sector recruiters, and it goes to show that great things continue to happen in recruitment within this sector.

We hope you found this whitepaper useful and that the tips and case studies have inspired you to make small changes to your process in order to make a real difference to your recruitment strategy. The professional landscape is constantly evolving, and new generations are emerging into the marketplace making it imperative for public sector organisations to evolve along with this change.
