

Skills alone not enough in current jobs climate

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Employers are becoming more demanding in choosing candidates, writes **Caroline Madden**

FEW PEOPLE understand the importance of getting the right person for the job better than Longford woman Anne Heraty. Heraty has built her award-winning recruitment business, CPL Resources, on an ability and determination to find the best candidate for her clients.

In this week's visual case study, (which can be viewed on www.eoy.tv), Heraty reveals the secret to successful recruitment.

"We get close to our clients, we get to understand the culture of their company and the type of individual they're looking for," she explains.

"It's not just about skills," she emphasises. "It's also about attitude, it's about cultural fit and how the individual feels and what they want to bring to the company."

Robert Mac Giolla Phádraig, associate director of Sigmar Recruitment, says that, traditionally, successful candidates had three key ingredients: ability, attitude and experience. However, the recruitment industry is in a state of flux at the moment. Employees are nervous about moving jobs and employers are more cautious about increasing their headcount, and Mac Giolla Phádraig has noticed that the requirements of companies who are recruiting have shifted.

They're still looking for the right mix of ability, attitude and experience, but their exact requirements are changing. For example, in order to get a sales position now, candidates must have a proactive attitude and show plenty of initiative. Sales, he explains, has changed "from farming to hunting".

Over the last four years, many people in sales simply took orders, he says, but now they have to go after business more aggressively and so they must be up for a challenge.

In general, candidates need to be highly commercially aware now and must understand what their contribution to the business will be. "So attitude is fundamental," he says.

Successful candidates are likely to have experience relevant to the job, but many companies are now placing greater value on having a steady hand on the tiller. This means they are becoming more willing to hire people whose experience may lie in a different industry.

Recruiting the right people is critical to the success of any business. "The advantage of hiring well is the value that a person with a good attitude, who's talented and competent, can bring to a company," Heraty says. "You can see very quickly the value that . . . they add to your bottom line."

Choosing the wrong candidate can affect morale in the company.

However, finding top-calibre candidates has become a lot tougher of late. "They're not out there," Mac Giolla Phádraig says. "There are a lot of people looking [for jobs], but the people who are doing a great job are too busy being successful, and stability is very important to them."

In recruitment-speak, there are a number of "push-pull" factors that prompt people to move jobs. "Push" factors include things like a lack of opportunity in their current role, an unpleasant boss or an awkward location, while "pull" factors might be a higher salary or better career progression.

"Those reasons haven't gone away but the difference between now and, say, six months ago is that people are willing to put up with these push factors a lot more now for security," he says. The upshot of this is that the "pull" factors must be a lot stronger in order to entice someone to leave their job. The new company must be able to promise stability in addition to the usual pull factors.

All of this presents a challenge to those operating in the recruitment space. Mac Giolla Phádraig says the way in which recruiters source candidates has adjusted. For example, in addition to advertising, Sigmar relies quite heavily on making direct contact with individuals who have been identified as suitable for a particular role. "If you want the best in the market you need to be proactive in terms of approaching these people," he explains.

Students pondering their own future at the moment, and wondering how to pursue their dream career, should pay close attention to Heraty's words of encouragement in this week's case study: "Even if you don't get your first choice in the CAO, focus on your bigger goal, focus on where you want to be . . . there are many different ways to get on that ladder."