

Post-Secondary Recruitment at Transport Canada

- Survey of Hiring Managers -

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Background

- In August 2002, the Director General of Human Resources (HR), requested that the Departmental Evaluation Services conduct a study to examine the use of various post-secondary recruitment programs, and to survey Transport Canada (TC) managers to assess their opinions with respect to these programs.
- The recruitment mechanisms that were reviewed include the Post-Secondary Recruitment Program (PSR), the Management Trainee Program (MTP), and the bridging mechanism for CO-OP students and interns.
- The study assessed management experience regarding the following program characteristics: timeliness, ease of use, quality of hired recruits, and management intentions for future use of the programs.

General Findings

- Those managers who use the various recruitment programs are satisfied with them, as they assist them with addressing their staffing needs. However, the recruitment programs are not being used to their full potential by TC managers.
- The study findings revealed that managers are generally unaware of the full range of existing recruitment options available. There is a demand from managers for more information on the recruitment programs.
- Information on the programs is currently available through the TC HR website, however, managers are not accessing this information to address their recruitment needs.

Post-Secondary Recruitment Program

- Those managers who use the PSR program are satisfied, as the program fulfills their staffing requirements.
- Other managers have misperceptions about the program. They are not aware of the improvements that were made to the program in 2001. These changes specifically address some of the perceived problems.

Management Trainee Program

- Managers who have hired management trainees to fill a short-term position are highly satisfied with the program. Managers hiring on a long-term basis expressed disappointment, as employees recruited through the program have a tendency to leave the original hiring group.

Bridging mechanism for CO-OP students and interns

- The bridging mechanism for students on co-op internship programs has the highest level of satisfaction among managers who use it. It was also the least used of the hiring mechanisms.

Recommendations

- TC should develop a strategy to increase the level of awareness of hiring managers of the mechanisms that are available to recruit entry-level employees. Some possible solutions include:
 - Developing a website specific to post-secondary hiring at TC. The website would cater specifically to TC managers and provide a “manager friendly” overview of the recruitment options available in the department.
 - Enhancing the ability of administrative assistants to provide information to managers on the recruitment options available by providing administrative staff with information sessions.
 - Providing students hired temporarily with information on available recruitment options to help them inform hiring managers of the recruitment mechanisms available (i.e. through student orientation or welcome sessions).
- TC should encourage greater support for the various recruitment mechanisms among the department’s senior management.
- TC should encourage expanded use of the bridging mechanism for co-op students and interns.

Background

Study rationale

In August 2002, the Director General of HR requested that the Program Evaluation Directorate undertake a review of management perceptions concerning TC's programs for recruiting post-secondary graduates and management trainees.

The results of this study are intended to assist the department in improving recruitment programs directed at entry-level positions. These programs are important to address the unprecedented level of anticipated retirements at all levels, and to ensure the adequate transfer of corporate knowledge.

Study objectives

The study examined hiring managers' experiences and perceptions concerning the Department's programs for recruiting both post-secondary graduates and management trainees.

In particular, the study sought answers to the following questions:

- Do the recruitment mechanisms provide candidates in a timely manner?
- Are they easy to use?
- What is the quality of the hired employee?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the recruitment mechanisms?
- Will the programs be used in the future?
- If the programs are not used, why?

Scope

The study examined the following recruitment programs:

- Management Trainee Program (MTP)
- Post -Secondary Recruitment Program (PSR)
- Bridging mechanism for CO-OP students and interns

For further information on each of the recruitment programs, please refer to Annex 1.

Approach

The following methodologies were used to assess the recruitment programs:

- Telephone interviews with hiring managers
- Literature review of relevant documents

Respondents were asked an initial screening question to determine which survey(s) they would fill out. There were separate surveys for the PSR, MTP, and the bridging mechanism, as well as one for managers who did not use any of the recruitment programs. In some instances, managers used more than one recruitment mechanism.

An email was sent to all of TC's directors, requesting that they identify hiring managers within their directorates. In response to this email and follow-up telephone calls, 90 managers were identified as possible interview candidates. In total, 57 managers completed a survey, 29 did not respond to our request, and four declined participation. The survey response rate was 63.3%.

Overall Findings and Recommendations

Key overall findings

Through the course of conducting the interviews, several key findings were noted concerning managers' experiences with the respective recruitment programs:

- **Satisfaction:** Overall, most managers who use the recruitment programs are satisfied with the process involved (i.e. ease of use), the quality of the candidates, and the ability of the programs to address their recruitment needs.
- **Awareness:** A large majority of managers interviewed are unaware of the full range of existing recruitment options available to them. Accordingly, there is a demand among hiring managers for more information. Many respondents indicate that they would like more information on the various recruitment programs. Additional information would make them more comfortable with using the recruitment mechanisms.
- **Access to information:** It is noted that information on the various recruitment programs are currently available through the HR website. Most managers interviewed, however, note that accessing this information is difficult and time consuming. In their view, gaining easier access to information on the various recruitment programs would enhance their ability to use the programs.
- **Support:** Interview results suggest that increased support from senior managers would enhance participation levels in the recruitment programs. This is particularly apparent from some respondents regarding their use of the PSR program. They indicate that their use of the program is due primarily to senior management commitment and encouragement to use the program.
- **Levels of use of the recruitment programs:** Respondents were divided on whether the programs are being used to their potential. For some, the recruitment programs are not applicable to the types of candidates they generally recruit (i.e. those requiring specialized skills, knowledge, or experience). For other hiring managers not using the recruitment programs, they note that with further information they would consider using the recruitment programs.

Recommendations

Transport Canada should:

- *Develop a strategy to build a greater awareness of the various recruitment options available to managers.*

Part of this strategy might include a promotional campaign consisting of presentations or information sessions. The campaign might also include highlighting success stories from other hiring managers who have used the programs.

- *Conduct an awareness campaign directed towards the Department's administrative officers. This will allow the administrative officers to have the capacity to provide information to managers on the existing recruitment mechanisms available to recruit entry-level employees and management trainees.*
- *Repackage existing information specific to TC managers' needs for the recruitment initiatives. This would respond to the request of hiring managers for more information. For example, create a website that is exclusive to TC managers, containing information that can be easily accessed—informing managers of all the recruitment programs available to them.*

The study found that despite the existence of information on the recruitment programs (i.e. information available on the website and from HR staff), managers are not accessing these resources. While this can be addressed by developing a more proactive information strategy (first recommendation above), another option would be to enhance the existing HR website by including a unique page or interface for TC's recruitment programs.

- *Develop a strategy to foster greater support for the various recruitment mechanisms among the department's Senior Management.*
- *Encourage further use of the bridging mechanism for co-op students and interns. A possibility for promoting this mechanism is through the student welcome session. During these sessions students are informed of various mechanisms available for their recruitment. They are encouraged to inform their managers of the various recruitment options.*

The bridging mechanism for students on co-op internship program has the highest level of satisfaction among managers who use it. Interestingly, it was also the least used of the hiring mechanisms (only 4 out of 57 hiring managers interviewed use it). Currently, HR, through TC student welcome sessions, informs new recruits of the various recruitments programs available at TC. Students are encouraged to inform their respective managers of the various recruitment methods available for managers to hire them.

Recruitment Mechanism Specific Findings

Post-Secondary Recruitment Program

Of the 57 managers interviewed in the survey, 18 have used the PSR in the past three years. Overall, these 18 managers are satisfied with the program. Furthermore, 17 of these 18 managers expect to use the program again in the future and would recommend it to other managers.

Analysis of the survey responses reveals four major benefits of the program:

- *The quality of the candidates.* The candidates selected through the PSR process meet the managers' expectations. Candidates that are selected possess the desired skills and qualifications for the position.
- *The ease of the process.* Several managers state that the program offers them an easy recruitment process. The program provides managers with a shortlist of pre-qualified candidates from which to choose. In their view, this makes the task of recruitment very efficient.
- *The program targets managers' needs.* PSR targets recent university graduates with little job experience. Managers state that the program provides them with candidates who possess excellent development potential and good learning ability. This gives them the opportunity to train and develop the individual to meet their existing and anticipated staffing needs.
- *Employee stability.* Survey findings reveal that employees hired through the PSR have a tendency to remain with the original hiring group. Several managers noted this fact, especially when comparing the PSR with the MTP. Furthermore, 16 of the 18 managers interviewed said that employees recruited under this program continue to work for them.

The interviews also elicited some negative aspects of the PSR:

- *Inadequate information about the recruitment process and time frames.* Some managers would like to have more information about the PSR to allow better planning of their recruitment needs and work. Managers are interested in knowing such things as important dates, waiting periods, and the procedures to be followed.
- *The selection process does not allow specification of some position requirements.* Some managers are not satisfied with the selection process

because they feel that it does not adequately target the requirements and job specifications of the position and they are not able to limit the list of candidates particular to their requirements. These managers would like the PSR recruitment process to better address their special position requirements.

- *Low frequency of recruiting.* Some managers felt that the PSR was not frequent enough at only once a year. They would like the program to be more flexible and allow more frequent entry of candidates into the recruitment process.
- *Recruitment process too slow.* Some managers found the process too slow. This includes the recruitment process itself and the time between when the new employee is hired and when he or she actually begins work (e.g. the need for administrative process, clearances, relocation).

Responses from the majority of interviewed managers suggest that they are not current on the changes that were made to the PSR program since it was significantly altered in 2001. Interestingly, in November 2001, all National Human Resources Management Committee members were provided with a briefing note on the changes to the PSR, with instructions to inform their respective management committees. As well, over the course of the year, e-mails are sent from the HR branch to all employees informing them of these recruitment programs. In spite of these efforts to inform, it appears that managers are not accessing the information.

It is noteworthy that three of the above-noted points against the PSR program have in fact been addressed in the changes made to the program in 2001. First, managers may now advertise positions at any time of the year. Second, the process allows for the inclusion of tailor-made questions for specialized positions, thereby simplifying the screening process. Finally, the process is faster. For example, for positions that do not require written examinations, managers can obtain their referral within 48 hours.

Management Trainee Program

Of the 57 managers interviewed, seven used the MTP in the past three years. Four of the seven managers may use it again in the future, and five would recommend it to other managers.

The survey reveals that:

- *Managers who hired trainees to fill a short-term position are highly satisfied with the program.* Managers consider this to be the most convenient, easiest, and fastest way to meet short-term project needs, especially as the trainees are considered to be of excellent quality.

- *Managers who use the program expressed disappointment with the program's ability to assist in meeting their long-term hiring needs.* Managers felt that they had wasted training resources and time, because after a period of a year the trainee normally moves on to another assignment.
- *The employees hired through the program have a tendency to not remain with the original group.* The trainees hired by the seven managers interviewed no longer work for the initial group. Three of the seven trainees still work for TC, and the other four work elsewhere in the Public Service.

Bridging mechanism for CO-OP students and interns

Of the 57 managers interviewed, four used the bridging mechanism in the past three years. They express a high level of satisfaction with the bridging process and will consider using it again in the future. They would also recommend it to other managers.

The managers did not relate any negative aspects about the bridging mechanism, and reported four advantages:

- *Opportunity to get to know and assess the abilities of the candidate.* Managers feel that the bridging mechanism affords them the opportunity to assess the candidate's abilities, skills, ability to integrate into the working team, and professional potential prior to hiring.
- *Easy hiring process with good benefits.* Managers consider the bridging mechanism to be an easy way to recruit new employees. They state that the mechanism is fast and requires few resources compared with other hiring processes.
- *Recruits young candidates.* The managers indicate that the bridging mechanism gives them the opportunity to access young employees with a great deal of development potential.
- *Employee stability.* The survey results reveal that candidates who are hired through the bridging mechanism have a tendency to stay with the initial group.

From these observations, the bridging mechanism seems to be the best way to recruit entry-level employees at the university level.

Managers who do not use any of the three recruitment mechanisms

More than half of the managers interviewed in the survey did not use any of the three recruitment initiatives in the past three years (31 of the 57 managers interviewed).

Managers note the following reasons for not using them:

- *The requirement for experience and a specific skill set.* Most of the managers report that they use open and closed competitions because they are looking for candidates with experience, or those who possess a specific skill set. This is particularly relevant for managers in the Safety and Security Group. In this context, the PSR, the MTP and the bridging mechanism are not seen to be recruitment programs that are geared to meet their needs.
- *Managers identify a need for more information.* Managers who have not used the recruitment programs require greater information in order to fully use the various recruitment programs.

Interview responses indicate that the sharing of success stories among hiring managers can foster expanded use of the program. Most of the managers indicate that they would use them on the recommendation of their colleagues, or if they heard success stories from other hiring managers.

As an additional comment, the majority of responding managers also express dissatisfaction with open and closed competition processes. Several of the managers who use open and closed competitions complained about the slowness of the process and the excessive effort required.

Annex 1 – Background on Recruitment Programs

Management Trainee Program

- The departmental MTP champion for TC is Kristine Burr, the Assistant Deputy Minister Policy.
- The MTP is a four-year learning program that is designed to recruit and develop individuals with strong management potential in order to prepare them for middle management positions in the Federal Public Service.
- The program includes a variety of teaching methods and stretch assignments to help Management Trainees acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies.
- The Management trainees will gain practical experience and develop their skills through varied assignments, each lasting approximately 12 months.

For additional information: http://jobs.gc.ca/mtp-psg/index_e.htm

Post-Secondary Recruitment

- The Public Service Commission created the PSR program in 1973 to help departments address their needs for candidates to fill entry-level positions.
- The PSR program is a national year round recruiting program, open to new and recent university graduates across Canada.
- The PSR program has proven itself to be innovative and flexible as the program has been revisited and re-designed several times to respond to environmental and demographic challenges

For additional information: http://publiservice.gc.ca/hr/psr-rp/advantages_e.htm

Bridging mechanism for CO-OP students and interns

- Through the Co-op / Internship programs, the Government of Canada hires more than 5, 000 students per year, from more than 150 universities and colleges across Canada
- The Co-op / Internship programs provide students with learning experiences and opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge
- The Public Service Commission approved two merit based bridging mechanisms in August 1998 and further enhancements were made to the student bridging mechanisms in June 2002.

For more information: http://jobs.gc.ca/coop/guidelines_e.htm