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Online recruitment – Code of practice

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Summary of pages

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI and came into effect on 31 September 2011. It was prepared by Technical Committee SVS/9, *Recruitment services*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Use of this document

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

Presentational conventions

The provisions in this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

[1] Data Protection Act, 1998. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

[2] Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

[3] Freedom of Information Act 2000. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

Introduction

This voluntary British Standard codifies best practice for all those operating in the online recruitment sector.

It forms a foundation for an organization's online strategy which aims to benefit the recruiter, candidate and suppliers involved in the process.

Online recruitment, also known as e-recruitment, is the integration of online and offline technologies to support elements of the recruitment cycle. There are many vendors of software solutions (e.g. Applicant Tracking Systems [ATS], Recruitment Management Systems [RMS]) available to help businesses run their end-to-end recruitment processes almost exclusively online.

The internet has enabled the development of new channels for employers and potential employees to make contact with technology available to seek and post vacancies and distribute through third party media for example job boards, mobile technology, social media and for applicants to search for vacancies, be notified about roles by email, and to apply online. Candidates are able to upload their CV speculatively onto searchable databases for potential employers to search.

Online recruitment has grown and continues to do so as employers' and recruiters' awareness of the benefits increases. Advertising and recruitment costs, administration and time to hire can all be reduced as businesses learn to streamline and automate relevant processes. Effective use of the internet can also widen the populations that a recruiter can select from, improving diversity.

Additionally, employers are increasingly aware that poor performance in recruitment markets can affect the company brand, and companies are more alert to the need to align their recruitment processes with their overall branding strategy. Companies are investing in technology and processes to increasingly treat their applicants like consumers.

This British Standard is not intended to detail any of the legal obligations relevant to recruiters and service providers in the recruitment arena. It is assumed that processes and procedures are followed that comply with all relevant legislation including:

Data Protection legislation;

Discrimination legislation, including Accessibility;

Legislation relating to eligibility of employment in the UK;

Employment Agencies Act 1973;

The Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for online recruitment and is applicable to all methods of candidate attraction, screening, storage and selection using internet-based technology up to the point of offer or rejection. This British Standard codifies good practice for delivery of online recruitment (direct or outsourced) and identifies the roles and responsibilities of those involved. This British Standard seeks to encourage increased transparency and improvement of the candidate experience.

Social media is increasingly being used by organizations to build communities with forums, groups and networking opportunities. Whilst one aim of these communities might be communicating with potential employees, by also offering information for jobseekers, it is networking rather than online recruitment and as such social media is not covered in this code of practice.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

BS 8878, *Web accessibility – Code of practice*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1 aggregators

technology that collates vacancies advertised on the internet from multiple online sources which can be presented on a website

3.2 applicant tracking system (ATS)

software application that enables the electronic handling of candidates' CVs, profiles, data and communications, and the tracking of candidates through the recruitment process

3.3 candidate

individual seeking employment

NOTE Sometimes referred to as "applicant" or "job seeker".

3.4 candidate database

storing of candidates' CVs and other personal data

3.5 client

any recruiting organization

3.6 CV

any candidate information which supports an application

3.7 job board

online publisher of job advertisements

NOTE Job boards may also incorporate either in part or fully elements of applicant tracking systems, candidate database (3.4) and online recruitment (3.8).

3.8 online recruitment

processes of advertising vacancies, attracting candidates (filling a vacancy either proactively or reactively) and, where appropriate, screening applicants and progressing applications using online technologies

NOTE Also known as "e-recruitment".

3.9 parsing software

reformats CVs into defined fields

NOTE Parsing software is often used by job boards to match candidates to jobs, and recruiters to match candidates to vacancies.

3.10 psychometric testing

provides psychological assessment of an individual and their applicability for a role based on answers to a series of questions prepared by psychologists

3.11 recruiter

employer, employment agency or employment business using online recruitment services to find candidates

3.12 recruitment agency

recruitment business, including recruitment process outsourcers, supplying permanent or temporary staff acting on behalf of a recruiting organization and/or candidate

NOTE 1 Also known as "employment business" when supplying temporary staff.

NOTE 2 An employment agency introduces candidates or jobseekers to a client who then employs them directly (often referred to as "permanent recruitment") while an employment business engages workers directly and supplies their services to a client who directs or control them in the course of their work (often referred to as "temporary recruitment").

3.13 skills testing

online testing used in the recruitment process tests a persons ability to use, for example, word processing software and provides information based on what a candidate knows and dexterity

4 Recommendations for online recruitment practice and process

4.1 Website owner

The website owner should have a process in place and delegate responsibility within the organization to ensure:

- a) that all vacancies advertised are live and accurate;
- b) that relevant contact information is easily available, up-to-date and details how the enquiry is to be responded to;
- c) that either the employer or the website owner acknowledges receipt of a candidate's CV when applying for a role;
- d) that candidate is informed of how the data provided is used;
- e) candidates are informed of the full process for storing their CV online and, where practicable, notified if their CV or personal details have been viewed or downloaded from or by a third party;
- f) their websites meet the recommendations of BS 8878;

- g) candidates are informed of their application status at each relevant stage of the process;
- h) candidates are informed of any details regarding the storage of their CV, in the event of a unsuccessful application;
- i) common industry jargon and acronyms are avoided in advertisements unless this is absolutely necessary for the role;
- j) where possible, appropriate information is provided in each vacancy posting e.g. corporate recruitment guidelines, application process, application close dates, etc.;

NOTE See also Regulation 27 under the Conduct Regulations [4].

- k) when designing online recruitment strategy, consideration is given to the proper integration with other recruitment methods where appropriate, such as ATS or bespoke/internal recruitment systems so that end to end process works in harmony;
- l) all personal data and CVs are stored in an appropriate manner and there is the ability to remove out-of-date information; and
- m) there is a complaints policy which is communicated to and accessible by candidates.

NOTE See BS ISO/IEC 27001 and BS 10012 for further information on security management systems.

4.2 Candidate database

The candidate should be asked to read and accept the CV database owners' terms and conditions of use before being permitted to upload their personal information.

Candidate database owners should have in place a procedure to obtain the candidate's agreement to continue holding or automatically delete the candidate's details.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Data Protection Act, 1998 [1] and The Freedom of Information Act [2] and [3].

A process should be in place to ensure that the express permission of the CV owner is obtained before the CV is made available for access, downloaded or exported to another country.

If a candidate's data is to be processed or accessible outside of the EU it should be explicitly stated within the terms and conditions that the candidate accepts.

Organizations should have a data security policy which includes virus protection.

NOTE See BS ISO/IEC 27001 and BS 10012 for further information on security management systems.

4.3 Recruitment advertisements placed by third parties

Recruitment adverts should accurately reflect the information provided by the client and align with confirmed instructions from a client.

At the time at which an advert is placed, the vacancy should be live.

Procedures should be in place for the systematic removal of adverts once filled or no longer available.

Clients' instructions should be recorded so, if necessary, it can be demonstrated that an advert is accurate and that authority has been given by the client to advertise the position.

4.4 Selection and screening and other online recruitment services

A recruiter should:

- a) communicate the online application and screening process(es) and relevant data storage information clearly to the candidate; and
- b) ensure that assessment participants have given appropriate informed consent based on a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what then happens.

NOTE Note See also BIS's e-recruitment projects in the public sector [5];

4.5 Monitoring usage and evaluation of service

COMMENTARY ON 4.5

Monitoring and evaluation of services allows providers to assess the effectiveness of those services as well as ensuring compliance with the standard.

Service providers should have a mechanism for collecting feedback from users (candidates, recruiters, clients) of the service. Feedback should be used to improve service provision and communication with users.

Where feedback relates to an element of the service that is under the control of a third party, it should be sent to them for action where appropriate. Users should be informed when this is the case.

A formal complaints procedure should be provided which is clearly explained and easily accessible to users.

The complaints procedure should include:

- a) a description of its purpose and scope;
- b) details of the methodology for making the complaint;
- c) information about how the complaint is dealt with;
- d) a process for keeping the complainant informed of the status of the complaint;
- e) details of who is responsible for handling the complaint;
- f) details of the actions to be taken to resolve the complaint; and
- g) details of any corrective action to be taken.

4.6 Contact

In order to maintain momentum in the recruitment process and to try to ensure that candidates receive timely responses and feedback, there should be triggers built into any recruitment management system (RMS or ATS). These should flag to users of the system, typically recruiters or hiring managers, when candidates have remained at a particular stage for a pre-determined length of time so that action can be taken to reduce the likelihood of bottlenecks occurring.

The recruiter should inform the candidate of their success and the timings of potential next steps, or be declined, within a reasonable time.

A process should be in place to ensure that the candidates' consent has been obtained to send their CV onto 3rd parties.

Organizations responsible for processing candidate information should ensure that all their stages of the online recruitment process, tracked documented and communicated where appropriate.

NOTE Examples include:

- a) *the date the CV was received;*

- b) *details of the companies the candidates' data was sent to;*
- c) *dates and time of communications;*
- d) *acknowledgement of right to hold their personal data; and*
- e) *details of any data retention.*

4.7 Selection tools

When using industry recognised selection tools to enhance and assist in the online recruitment process, the systems should be operated by suitably qualified persons, e.g. psychometric testing should be carried out by qualified practitioners' or managed by an accredited third party.

Bibliography

Standards publications

For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

BS ISO/IEC 27001, *Information technology – Security techniques – Information security management systems – Requirements*

BS 10012, *Data protection – Specification for a personal information management system*

Other publications

- [1] GREAT BRITAIN. Data Protection Act, 1998. HMSO: London.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>
- [2] GREAT BRITAIN. Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. HMSO: London. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>
- [3] GREAT BRITAIN. Freedom of Information Act 2000. HMSO: London.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>
- [4] The Recruitment & Employment Confederation. Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003 (the “Conduct Regulations”). London: The Recruitment & Employment Confederation.
- [5] BIS. *E-recruitment projects in the public sector*. London: BIS

Further reading

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (<http://www.apsco.org/>)

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