

Top 10 tips when selecting a recruitment agency to find staff from the EU Accession Countries

By Daniel Taylor, Dunross Czech Republic

So you are a British or Irish company and you have heard about the opportunities of recruiting labour from the new EU Accession Countries in Central Europe. So what should you look for when looking for a recruitment agency to recruit staff for you?

We at Dunross have been out here in Central Europe a long time and know a lot about the business and recruitment environment across the EU Accession countries. So whoever you select here are our golden rules for selecting a recruitment agency.

1. Do they have expertise in your area

Remember that recruiting people to the UK from this region is a new industry that didn't really exist before May 2004 and a lot of agencies are simply trying to get as many bodies on EasyJet as possible. Every market sector has its nuances and it takes time to learn them.

Does the agency have expertise in finding the type of worker you require? Do they know about the local qualifications, including which ones are genuine? Do they know about the registration process for any professional bodies in the UK for your profession or trade?

2. Go and meet them

If I had to give only one recommendation this would be it. You can look around their offices, see their systems and processes and most importantly of all meet their people. Are they all locals? Are there a mix of British/Irish people there who understand the work environment in Western Europe?

Also see their offices, a lot of recruitment agencies are really some guy working out of his bedroom. Fine if things go well but no back up when problems arise.

The main reason I say this is a lot of agencies set up a web-site and claim to be experts in recruiting from Central Europe but the reality is its one guy working out of his bedroom!

3. Who will be working on your account

While your there having a nosey round ask directly who will be dealing with your account. Here's some news from the inside: What agencies normally do is to roll out the 'big hitters' to meet the client then pass the work off to a new and possibly in-experienced consultant.

When using a recruitment agency I would say you are paying 50% for the systems, processes and support of the company, and 50% for the actual resourcer who will be working on your account so you need to meet them and have confidence in them

4. Get references from existing clients

We can say what we like but it's what clients say that matters! If you're seriously interested in doing business with an agency and they want your business they should be tripping over themselves to give you a reference!

Here's a tip as well. Don't just call the contact they gave you, that mobile number they gave you could be anyone! Find the company on the web and call up the main switchboard to ask for the contact. Then you know for sure the contact is who they say they are.

5. Speak to a candidate who has already been placed with a company

Happy candidates are what you want! Ask if you can speak to someone they have sent to the UK. Are they happy with how the agency treated them? This will show you (a) Are they confident enough of what their candidates will say about them and (b) It will show you how well they are staying in touch with them once they are placed!

6. Ask to see their press coverage

So they're a great company. Well someone must be writing about them! There's a lot of interest in the UK at the moment about recruitment from accession countries so any company genuinely active in this area will be covered in the press.

Ask to see their press clippings, website links, TV interviews. This is also a good way to see if they've been around a while

7. Are they members of their national recruitment organisation, and do they have all the relevant licences

In most of the countries we operate in you need a licence to operate a recruitment company and dealing with an unlicensed company could open you up to a whole world of bureaucratic legal hassles. In a lot of countries (e.g. Czech Republic or Poland) you also need a licence to collect personal data.

If you are dealing with a company that recruits from the Czech Republic they have to be registered with the Czech Government. Just go to www.Justice.cz and enter the company name to check they are bone-fide.

8. Do they charge the candidates fees

This is the million dollar question. The problem is they will always give you a resounding "NO" when you ask it. Unfortunately it is an easy one to cover up. The most typical ways are listed below:

1. Overcharge flights (£1000 for a Ryanair ticket??!??)
2. Forcing candidates to stay in agency accommodation which is priced above market rate
3. Often to be honest they are just up front and demand it from the candidates. They then tell them that if they tell the client they will use their jobs!

All in all you probably won't know straight away. If you've followed the advice above and gone to visit the agency you will get a good feel for how respectable they are. If the guys are wearing leather jackets and counting piles of £50 notes then stay well away!

9. Do they have offices in the EU accession countries

As an agency based in Czech Republic and Poland we're constantly called up by UK agencies who themselves are selling themselves as experts in the new EU! Are they just subcontracting your work or do they have a presence out here in Central Europe?

10. What support services do they provide

Being realistic there will always be issues that need resolving when the candidates have started working with you. What is the agencies system for resolving this? Do they still give you a dedicated point of contact at the recruitment agency with a mobile phone you can call any time?

What do they do to make sure your workers are happy, productive and want to stay with you? Do they give candidates a UK mobile phone SIM card? Do they give them an emergency contact card in case they get into trouble?

Or do they just pack them on the plane!

I hope this was informative. We will be adding more articles on recruitment in the coming months so please syndicate the blog to get our updates.

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