



# Umbrella Summary

## Recruitment

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

### What is recruitment?

Recruitment refers to efforts by organizations to make potential job candidates aware of job openings and influence whether they apply, maintain interest in the job until an offer is made, and accept an offer (Breugh, 2008). Note that although applicants may be affected by strategies used to assess their qualifications and potential (e.g., interviews), those activities are not considered part of recruitment and will not be covered in this summary. Further details will be provided in the umbrella summary on employee selection.

### Why is recruitment important?

The most obvious reason that recruitment is important is because vacancies typically need to be filled, which requires getting people to apply for and accept jobs. Given that goal, it is important to use recruitment strategies that are most effective at getting applicants' attention, sustaining their interest, and increasing chances of offer acceptance. Those applicants must also be the right applicants—people who will perform well and stay with the organization. In striving for a large number of high-quality applicants, it is also important for organizations to design recruitment strategies that allow for efficient screening and hiring processes. If the organization's capacity to process applicants is insufficient, it will negatively affect applicants and the organization.

### How can recruitment efforts be improved?

Meta-analytic research on recruitment has focused on several types of outcomes: applicant attraction (i.e., attraction to the job or organization and intentions to apply for or accept a job), job choice (whether the applicant accepts the job), job satisfaction and organizational commitment, tenure and turnover, and performance. The bulk of this research has focused on assessing factors that are merely associated with recruiting outcomes, not on testing strategies for improving them. In addition, the primary focus has been on applicants' perceptions, rather than on organizations' or applicants' behavior.

Factors that are positively associated with applicant attraction include applicants' perceptions of:

- ▶ recruiters (e.g., personableness, competence, trustworthiness, informativeness),
- ▶ the recruitment process (e.g., website aesthetics and navigability, message credibility, employee endorsements, interpersonal treatment, and communication),
- ▶ job characteristics (e.g., challenge, autonomy, compensation and benefits, development and promotion opportunities),
- ▶ organization characteristics (e.g., organizational image and reputation, employee, relations/treatment, coworkers, teamwork, supervision, job security, work-life balance)
- ▶ expectancies about being hired, and
- ▶ their fit with either the job or the organization (Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012).

With the exception of perceived fit, which is the strongest predictor of applicant attraction, all of these factors are also positively related to job choice, although the connection is often much weaker (Uggerslev et al., 2012). Perceptions of the availability of alternative employment opportunities are not associated with applying for a job or accepting an offer, but are negatively associated with maintaining interest, such that having more alternatives is associated with lower likelihood of staying in the hiring process (Uggerslev et al., 2012).

Although they are not factors that an organization can directly influence, there are also individual differences associated with applicant attraction. People who are more naturally inclined to apply for jobs include those that 1) are higher in conscientiousness, extraversion, and/or emotional stability, 2) have greater work experience, or 3) are lower in mental ability (Swider, Zimmerman, Charlier, & Pierotti, 2015). Thus, some desirable qualities (e.g., higher conscientiousness and emotional stability) will require less recruitment effort, whereas others (e.g., higher mental ability) will require more recruitment effort.

There is limited meta-analytic research on the effectiveness of different referral sources and recruiting strategies and on recruitment connections to post-hire outcomes such as turnover and performance. Employees recruited through inside methods (e.g., referrals by employees, rehires of former employees, and internal transfers) have higher tenure, less turnover, and better performance than those recruited through outside methods (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). One potential reason is that those who are recruited through inside methods may have more accurate initial expectations about the job or the organization. When candidates' initial expectations of a job are later fulfilled, employees have higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to stay, retention, and job performance (Rubenstein, Eberly, Lee, & Mitchell, 2017; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992). The most widely tested recruitment strategy is a realistic job preview (RJP), which is a method of presenting applicants with both favorable and unfavorable job-related information (Wanous, 1973). Research shows that RJP can result in small reductions in turnover and higher performance among new hires (Earnest, Allen & Landis, 2011; Phillips, 1998). Further details will be provided in the [umbrella summary on RJP](#)s.

Research is needed to test the effects of various recruitment strategies. Specifically, recruiting efforts should be systematically examined for their effects on the number and type of both applicants and non-applicants (i.e., members of the target population that choose not to apply),

applicants' persistence in the hiring process, their response to job offers, and their perceptions about the process. Although the connections are likely to be weaker, research is also needed to test the effects of recruitment strategies on post-hire job attitudes, performance, tenure, and turnover.

## QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ Applicants' perceptions about recruiters, the recruiting process, the likelihood of being hired, the job, and the organization are all associated with their interest in applying for a job and their willingness to accept an offer.
- ▶ Applicants' perceptions of fit with the job or the organization are the strongest predictors of applicant attraction.
- ▶ Candidates may be predisposed to be naturally more or less attracted to organizations.
- ▶ Employees recruited through inside methods (e.g., referrals by employees, rehires of former employees, and internal transfers) have higher tenure, less turnover, and better performance than those recruited through outside methods.
- ▶ When candidates' initial expectations of a job are later fulfilled, employees have higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to stay, retention, and job performance.
- ▶ Realistic job previews, which present applicants with both favorable and unfavorable job-related information, can result in small reductions in turnover and higher performance among new hires.
- ▶ Research is needed to test the effects of various recruitment strategies to generate applicants, maintain applicant interest, influence applicants' job decisions, and improve subsequent job attitudes and behavior.

## References

- Breaugh, J. A. (2008). Employee recruitment: Current knowledge and important areas for future research. *Human Resource Management Review, 18*, 103–118.
- Earnest, D. R., Allen, D. G., & Landis, R. S. (2011). Mechanisms linking realistic job previews with turnover: A meta-analytic path analysis. *Personnel Psychology, 64*, 865–897.
- Phillips, J. M. (1998). Effects of realistic job previews on multiple organizational outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Academy of Management Journal, 41*, 673–690.
- Rubenstein, A. L., Eberly, M. B., Lee, T. W., & Mitchell, T. R. (2017). Surveying the forest: A meta-analysis, moderator investigation, and future-oriented discussion of the antecedents of voluntary employee turnover. *Personnel Psychology, 71*, 1–43.

Swider, B. W., Zimmerman, R. D., Charlier, S. D., & Pierotti, A. J. (2015). Deep-level and surface-level individual differences and applicant attraction to organizations: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 88*, 73–83.

Uggerslev, K. L., Fassina, N. E., & Kraichy, D. (2012). Recruiting through the stages: A meta-analytic test of predictors of applicant attraction at different stages of the recruiting process. *Personnel Psychology, 65*, 597–660.

Wanous, J. P. (1973). Effects of a realistic job preview on job acceptance, job attitudes, and job survival. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 58*, 327–332.

Wanous, J. P., Poland, T. D., Premack, S. L., & Davis, K. S. (1992). The effects of met expectations on newcomer attitudes and behaviors: A review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 77*, 288–297.

Zottoli, M. A., & Wanous, J. P. (2000). Recruitment source research: Current status and future directions. *Human Resource Management Review, 10*, 53–382.

## Author(s)

Megan Paul, PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## Suggested Citation

Paul, M. (2020, February 12). *Umbrella summary: Recruitment*. Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development. <https://www.qic-wd.org/umbrella/recruitment>

For general information about Umbrella Summaries, visit <https://www.qic-wd.org/umbrella-summaries-faq>

For more information about the QIC-WD, visit [qic-wd.org](http://qic-wd.org) or contact: Michelle Graef, Project Director, at [mgraef1@unl.edu](mailto:mgraef1@unl.edu).

This Summary was developed with funding from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau, Grant #HHS-2016- ACF-ACYF-CT-1178. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the funder, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the US Department of Health and Human Services.