



# keep it simple

by Robyn Twemlow

**M**ind mapping, speed reading and memory techniques may be the latest buzz words when it comes to encouraging staff to work smarter, but at the end of the day they are only tools, not solutions to increasing productivity, says NZIM Southern CEO, Reg Garters.

"Businesses are always striving to increase productivity and there are many fantastic tools out there to help employees achieve this – speed reading, mind mapping and the likes," he says. "But, at the end of the day, it is still the simple, basic principles that are the most effective to help companies perform and perform well."

Garters believes that too many businesses are struggling because there are not enough clear goals set along the journey of a business's growth.

All businesses have a clear goal – but not all businesses goals are clear.

"Make sure everyone knows what the corporate goal is, what the departmental goal is, and that every individual knows what his or her goal is," Garter advises.

"It was the late Peter Drucker who said that people need to be doing the right thing, not doing something right. We all know that staff are our greatest asset, so make sure your human resources are working effectively for you."

Taking time to plan our time is also something that Garters says less of us are doing, to the detriment of ourselves and our businesses.

He says the effectiveness of individuals relies on planning and prioritising.

"Don't lose sight of your goals and your adjectives. This means putting things in priority and one of the best ways to do this is simply by making lists. Prioritise according to how much time you have, not by the task. Actually reaching goals is the objective, not attempting to reach them."

After 17 years of research and witnessing major downsizing in all fields of industry and business, Garters says people are planning less and this results in poor time management, more stress and ultimately, not reaching productivity goals.

"People spend too much time on the minor stuff or not enough time on the major stuff," he says. "The surveys I have conducted over the years show that time-management effectiveness has halved, and there are various causes for this, like the downsizing of staff levels and bad planning. This is a global problem as American time-management guru Dr Alec Mackenzie discovered when he conducted a survey of over 6000 people in 35 different countries. He found that people don't work effectively because of many different factors, from interruptions to poor planning, poor self-discipline and poor communication."

**Mackenzie's research showed the following top five factors that disrupted people's time-management schedules:**

1. Telephone interruptions
2. Crisis situations
3. Inadequate planning and goal setting
4. Drop-in visitors – both internal and external
5. Ineffective delegation

Number six on the list was meetings, both informal and formal. An astounding 80 per cent of people believe meetings are dysfunctional.

Garters knows that time management is an ongoing challenge, but simple things like making lists can help.

"Remember that activity bears no relationship to productivity; one is simply input while the other is output," he says.

Planning, prioritising and making lists are simple solutions to helping your business achieve and best of all, they don't cost anything except a little bit of time. **bmt**

# differentiating recruitment firms:



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**T**he fast-growing recruitment industry has primarily developed as a transactional service, swiftly placing people in jobs, rather than a strategic business partnership between recruitment providers and their clients. To assist people in the selection of a recruitment provider an eight-point checklist is provided below.

**1. How well does your recruitment provider know your industry, your organisation and the job you are selecting for?**

Robust selection requires a thorough analysis of the job being selected for, together with a clear and explicit understanding of the wider organisation and industry in which a person is to work. Well developed, structured job analysis will provide a very detailed understanding of the role with regards to such categories as: internal and external contacts, decision making, work context, knowledge areas, equipment use and supervision given and received, allowing a thorough and accurate job description to be developed.

**2. Does your recruitment provider use psychometric testing?**

As not all test users are adequately trained in the use of psychometric tests, it is important for an organisation to ensure that the recruiters are adequately trained in strategic psychometric testing. The interpretation of psychometric tools is important in predicting productivity and therefore should be seen as a cost-effective mandatory part of a selection process, not an over-priced "nice to have" addition.

**3. Does your recruitment provider collate your candidate data in order to enhance future selection decisions?**

Candidate assessment and bio-data can be used to model trends in your organisation, build in-house norm groups, and assess any recruitment biases with respect to gender or ethnicity. Numerous agencies do collect selection data about candidates they have tested, but do not separate it out by organisation. This is because they do not have the technology in place, nor do they use this data to support targeted role profiling and benchmarking activity.

**4. Is your recruitment provider trained in the area of structured interviewing?**

Research indicates that the more structured the interview, the more likely it is to elicit the information required to make a robust selection decision. As a minimum, a recruitment firm which takes structured interviewing seriously should have a list of

competency-based questions that reflect the job under review, an objective scoring for grading responses and a means of determining reliability between interviews and reducing interviewer biases.

**5. Does your recruitment provider use structured application forms or have a structured methodology for reviewing CVs?**

Unlike the traditional CV, standardised job-relevant application forms seek the same information from all candidates, therefore allowing a client to more objectively compare one candidate to another and better assess the relative strengths of each applicant against critical role requirements. In certain circumstances the application form may be deemed inappropriate due to the amount of work that is required for its completion. Therefore a structured methodology is recommended in the review of CVs so as to endorse a more standardised procedure.

**6. Does your recruitment provider have the capacity to run practical work simulations if required?**

There are times when a practical job simulation may help determine the suitability of one candidate over another. From a candidate's perspective, job simulations are often seen to be more fair and equitable than other forms of testing due to their high face validity and obvious relationship to job.

**7. How does your recruitment provider integrate selection data to make a final recruitment decision?**

A recruitment firm may meet the six criteria specified above yet still select a candidate on the basis of "gut instinct". In contrast, the use of a more systematic and scientific selection methodology is recommended, one that combines all available selection data and evaluates it against competency standards.

**8. How do you determine the performance of your recruitment provider?**

Do you really know the extent to which your ability to select the right person has been improved by your recruitment firm? The answer to this question lies in the quality of candidate data that is collected over time. A recruitment firm that keeps data on placements and monitors its success will be able to learn from their mistakes and become an effective strategic business partner worth paying for.

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