



HR Broadcast –

“Name blind” recruitment

What is “name blind” recruiting? It is an attempt to resolve a problem where employers and recruiters reject job applicants based purely on their names. Apparently, those with ethnic-sounding names are twice as likely to be rejected for a job role as those individuals with white-sounding names.

This is a practice that has no place in the work place.

When I am undertaking recruitment I ensure a robust Job Description and Person Specification has been drafted by the Line Manager then I examine the CV or Application form and then simply tick off all the matched criteria on the CV that I find. I wouldn't even look at the name or search for ways to find out the person's age as these have no relevance in the recruitment process.

The Prime Minister has announced that the government is supporting an initiative aimed at ending a “disgraceful practice which has no place in 21st century Britain”. The government says it is backing “name blind” recruitment as too many job applicants are rejected on their names alone.

The Civil Service is leading the way and will in future be recruiting on a “name blind” basis only; i.e. names will be blanked out on its application forms before they are handed over to decision makers. The BBC, NHS, KPMG and HSBC have also pledged to follow suit.

However, smaller employers should not panic, you are not being asked to select from an anonymous pool of job applicants. That would be unreasonable and I have no idea how it could work in practice as there is often too much data on the CV to hide such information; graduation dates, places of learning, places of work and email addresses for example can all give clues.

My method is to ignore the top half of the first page of the CV – that is where the name, address, upbringing information is held. I usually start reading the CV from the end first, a bit like when I read a newspaper, I always go to the sports pages first. With starting at the end of the CV, by the time I get to the front page I have already ticked off a great number of matches. Does this method work? Well, last year I was working on a recruitment process with an HR Manager and we examined 350 CV's with the aim of drawing up a short list of 20 applicants. The result of the process was that we had 19 matches. This is what should be expected when two experienced HR professionals are using the same process with the same JD, Person Specification and CV. Incidentally the one mis-match was down to a slight misinterpretation of the JD.