WorkWise Guide to Recruitment

Recruitment in the Screen Sector isn't just about filling roles - it's about finding the right people who can bring energy, originality, and reliability to fast-paced projects. The stakes are high: one wrong hire can cost you tens of thousands of pounds and might also mean missed deadlines and compromised creativity. Done well, recruitment builds a culture that people want to be part of, keeps your projects running smoothly, and protects your reputation in the industry.

1. Why Recruitment Matters

Getting it wrong is expensive. Research shows it can cost [around 30% of a person's salary](#) to replace them, not to mention the impact on morale and delivery. In the Screen Sector, a wrong hire can delay production, reduce quality, or even lose you future commissions.

But when you get it right? The payoff is huge. The right people lift your culture, add creativity, make clients happy, and stick around for future projects. It's about more than just skills - it's about the energy, behaviours, and ideas they bring. Recruitment done well gives you confidence that your team will not just deliver but thrive.

2. Planning the Process

Recruitment shouldn't be a last-minute scramble. Map out your process in advance:

- Set a clear timeline so you don't lose momentum.

- Decide who will be involved at each stage. Which managers will shortlist and interview, will HR support, who signs off the final decision?

- Decide where you will hold the interviews, is there somewhere private where people will feel comfortable speaking openly?

- Think about how you'll communicate with candidates - quick, friendly updates make a huge difference.

The biggest mistake is panic hiring. When you're under pressure, it's tempting to grab the first "OK" person rather than the right person. That might solve today's stress but may create bigger problems later. Build time in, even when the project feels urgent.

3. Do You Really Need to Recruit?

Before you jump in, ask yourself: do you actually need someone new? Could your current team be upskilled? Could a freelancer cover a gap instead of a permanent hire?

Timing is key. Bring someone in too early and you'll struggle to keep them engaged while you wait for the project to ramp up. Hire too late and you won't have time to prep, leading to a stressful start for everyone. Recruitment is an investment, don't spend it unless you're sure.

4. Who Do You Need?

Imagine your ideal hire. Not just their skills, but how they'll behave under pressure, what values they'll bring, how they'll represent you with clients or contributors. Think about what responsibilities you can pass to them so you can focus on what only you can do.

Link the role back to your bigger goals. Are you aiming to grow your unscripted slate? Then maybe you need someone with strong casting experience. Expanding branded content? You might want someone commercial-minded who's comfortable liaising with agencies. Capture this in a job description; it'll guide the advert, interviews, and eventually, performance management.

5. Brand & Culture

Your reputation is everything. Your job advert isn't just selling a role, it's selling your business. Why should someone choose to work with you over another? What's different about how you work?

Be authentic. If your culture is fast-paced and scrappy, say so. If you pride yourself on looking after wellbeing even under deadlines, shout about it. Candidates want the truth, oversell and they'll leave fast when the reality doesn't match. The more real you are, the more you'll attract people who'll thrive in your environment.

6. The Job Description

This is your anchor document. It sets out what's expected, what success looks like, and how the role fits in. It also protects you if things go wrong, because you can measure performance against it.

Keep it fair and inclusive. Avoid jargon like "digital native" or discriminatory comments like "must be young and dynamic". Stick to what actually matters for the role. In the Screen Sector, that might include being willing to travel, working long production days, night shoots or handling sensitive contributor stories. But if it's not essential, don't list it.

7. The Job Advert

Think of your advert as your shop window. The job description holds the detail, the advert sells the dream. Write it in human language that sparks curiosity and excitement. Highlight what you offer, not just salary, but culture, projects, flexibility, and benefits.

That could mean mentioning high-profile projects, opportunities for career growth, or the chance to work with respected creatives. Benefits don't have to be corporate. Flexible working, early finishes after big deliveries, or investment in training all matter.

8. Where to Advertise

Posting on LinkedIn or Indeed is fine, but creative talent often hangs out elsewhere. Use The Talent Manager, Mandy, Broadcast Jobs, or Screenskills. Reach out to film schools, colleges, and underrepresented talent schemes.

Referrals are powerful too. 50% of people hear about jobs through word of mouth. Offer a referral fee to your team, or simply encourage them to share ads with their networks. And don't forget passive talent: use LinkedIn searches to find people who aren't actively looking but might be tempted by your role.

9. Applications – CV, Portfolio, or Video?

In the Screen Sector, a CV rarely tells the whole story. For some roles, you'll want portfolios, showreels, or maybe a short video introduction. That doesn't mean setting huge tasks upfront, keep it proportionate and fair.

Be mindful of accessibility. Not everyone has the time or tools to create a slick video. Offer alternatives and make it clear you'll consider different formats equally. And only ask for what's relevant. Do you really need a 10-minute showreel for a junior role?

10. Managing Applications

Applications can flood in, so stay organised. Use a spreadsheet or software to track progress. Record who's applied, what stage they're at, and any notes.

Most importantly, respect data. GDPR means you need a Recruitment Privacy Notice explaining what info you hold and why.

And communicate. Even a quick "thanks for applying, we'll update you by X date" makes you stand out. Silence damages your brand.

11. Shortlisting

When the applications land, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Go back to your job description and pick out approximately four key "must-haves" - skills, values, or experience that really matter. Use these as your filter.

Act fast. The best people don't hang around. If you wait too long, they'll already be booked elsewhere.

Remember: don't just tick boxes. Someone with less formal experience but the right attitude, resilience, and creativity can be a far better hire than someone with the perfect CV but the wrong energy. Look at values and behaviours as much as qualifications.

12. What Kind of Interview?

Interviews shouldn't be stiff or scary. Think about what format will actually help you see the best of your candidates:

- **Phone/Zoom screen**: Great for narrowing down the longlist. A short, friendly call helps you gauge interest and availability.

- **Face-to-face (or video call)**: Essential for building rapport, especially in the Screen Sector where personality and collaboration matter.

- **Competency-based**: Ask about what they've *actually done*, not what they'd hypothetically do. "Tell me about a time you handled last-minute script changes" is far stronger than "What would you do if..."

- **Practical tests**: For some roles, a short task can be gold. A quick edit test, writing a short casting brief, or mocking up a pitch slide gives you insight into real ability. Keep it reasonable and respectful of their time.

- **Assessment days**: Useful if you're hiring multiple runners, researchers, or junior staff. They let you see how people interact, solve problems, and keep energy up in a group.

Whatever you choose, keep it human. An interview should feel like a conversation, not an interrogation.

13. What Questions to Ask

The best questions uncover *how* someone works, not just what they've done. Focus on 4-5 areas that matter most for the role; creativity, collaboration, organisation, resilience, or client handling, for example.

Ask for real examples: "Tell me about a time you had to deliver under intense pressure" or "How have you handled a difficult contributor?" The details reveal more than theory ever could.

Consistency matters too; if every candidate gets the same set of core questions, you can compare fairly. But don't be afraid to follow up naturally if someone says something interesting. This is about people, not tick-boxes.

14. Building Confidence as an Interviewer

Not everyone enjoys interviewing. If you feel awkward, so will your candidate. Preparation is your friend: write out your questions, practise them out loud, and know what you're really looking for.

Score answers straight after each interview. Don't leave it until the end of the day when everyone blurs together. If possible, have a co-interviewer to share the load. One can lead, the other can take notes and jump in with follow-up questions.

And remember, the candidate is probably more nervous than you. A warm welcome, a smile, and a bit of small talk can make all the difference.

15. Making the Decision

This is where gut instinct and evidence collide. Trust your instincts, but check them against your scoring grid. Did you like someone because they genuinely nailed the answers, or just because they reminded you of yourself?

Beware "shiny object syndrome", it's easy to be dazzled by charisma or confidence, but make sure they also meet the role's core needs. Sometimes the quieter candidate is the one who'll thrive in the role.

Bring the decision back to your goals: will this person add value, bring fresh thinking, and help you deliver great work?

16. Diversity & Inclusion

The industry is working hard to diversify, but progress only happens if we recruit differently. Challenge yourself at every stage:

- **Job ads**: Use inclusive language. Avoid phrases that imply a certain age, gender, or background.

- **Shortlisting**: Don't just recruit in your own likeness. New perspectives are your growth engine.

- **Interviews**: Watch out for bias. Ask yourself if you're judging their actual answers or just relating to them personally.

- **Culture add, not culture fit**: Don't look for people who'll blend in perfectly. Look for people who'll bring something new, whether that's lived experience, different creative influences, or alternative ways of working.

Consider removing names/schools from CVs or at least ensure more than one person is involved in decision-making. The more intentional you are, the more representative and innovative your teams will be.

17. Freelancers & Short-Term Hires

Freelancers are the lifeblood of the screen industry. The trick is to balance speed with fairness. Build and maintain a trusted pool of people you can call quickly, but don't just recycle the same names, that limits diversity and fresh thinking.

Understand the difference between employees, workers and freelancers Get it wrong and you could face employment law claims and tax issues.

And nurture your freelance community. Pay on time, treat them with respect, provide feedback and keep in touch between gigs. A good reputation travels fast in this world, and the best freelancers will want to work with you again.

18. Candidate Experience

Every interaction with a candidate shapes your reputation. The Screen Sector is tight-knit and word spreads.

- Respond quickly, even if it's just a holding message.

- Give feedback when you can, especially for people who've done tasks or interviews.

- Close the loop with those you don't hire. A kind, respectful "no" leaves the door open for future opportunities.

Candidates remember how you made them feel. Even if they don't get the job, they should walk away thinking "that's someone I'd work with again."

19. Time & Communication

Nothing puts candidates off faster than silence. Respect the effort they've put in by communicating clearly and often. Let them know the process and timelines upfront, and stick to them as best you can.

Even if the news isn't good, tell them. Ghosting damages your brand and reduces your chances of attracting top talent next time. In an industry built on relationships, your reputation for fairness and respect is everything.

20. The Offer & Beyond

When you've found your person, move fast. In-demand candidates won't wait weeks. Make the offer clear, confirm it in writing, and get the contract to them *before* they start. Legally, it has to be by day one, but sending it earlier builds trust and excitement.

Keep in touch before their first day. A welcome pack, a friendly check-in, or even just a "we can't wait for you to join" message makes people feel valued.

Plan their induction. That might mean introducing them to production systems, sharing editorial guidelines, or setting up coffee chats with the team. The first three months are crucial for embedding them so invest in it.

21. Learning From Each Hire

Recruitment isn't just about filling today's role, it's about improving for the future. After each hire, review:

- What worked well?

- Where did you lose good candidates

- Did the process reflect your values and brand?

Capture the lessons and feed them into next time. Over time, you'll build a recruitment process that's smoother, sharper, and more effective.

In the Screen Sector especially, where projects shift and teams flex, having a long-term talent strategy makes all the difference. Keep learning, keep refining, and your hiring will only get stronger.