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ACTIVITY 6: ANSWER

Part-time working has been adopted by organisations for a number of reasons. It is a more flexible use of the hours, and organisations, particularly those in the service sector, can cover all hours to match fluctuating trading patterns. Organisations employing solely full-time staff have encountered times when they are overstaffed and others where staff levels have not been sufficient to meet customer demand.

Part-time hours might be convenient to both the member of staff and the organisation. Some potential leavers could be retained if offered work on a part-time basis. Part-time staff are able to cover a wider range of hours particularly the 'unsociable' hours, such as evenings and weekends. Some organisations are now using part-time staff specifically to retain particular skilled labour.

One problem with part-time staff concerns the continuity in the workplace. If a job is split between two or three staff, it can be more difficult to manage. However, many organisations, particularly in the retail and service sector have successfully developed this work practice. There are some drawbacks: by employing part-time staff, organisations employ larger numbers of staff which increases their administration and training costs.

There are many different ways in which staff can be employed by organisations in addition to the standard weekly hours contracts. Examples include annual hours contracts (where the hours worked are averaged over the year), no hours contracts (staff do not have set hours but are on call to work as and when required), and home working (staff work from their homes). These are all being used by a variety of organisations as a means of obtaining the most flexible use of the resource.

DEFINING THE POST

Job descriptions and person specifications are vital to the recruitment process. **Job descriptions** define the job to be carried out. Job descriptions are the output from the job analysis. They are the basis for the design of the person specification. **Person specifications** outline the skills and attributes needed by the postholder to carry out the job efficiently. Well-constructed descriptions and specifications form profiles of the job and of the person best suited to fill the position. They enable the recruiter to find the best match between the applicants with the job.

There are a number of different formats used to set out job descriptions. But, typically, they include information on:

- **the job title** – as used by the organisation
- **location** – the base for day-to-day work
- **responsible to** – who the post holder reports to
- **responsible for** – which people the post holder takes responsibility for
- **aim** – a statement as to why the job exists and its purpose
- **duties and responsibilities** – a description of all the tasks that the post holder must perform; this may be divided up into topic areas covering, for example, staff, production, health and safety, customers, sales and administration.

The duties and responsibilities can be classified under any range of headings, depending upon the actual job involved. A simple example of a job description is shown in Figure 1.

The job description is not only useful in the recruitment process, but it is also used when staff are being assessed in the workplace to determine the standard of work being produced, to discuss promotion and careers prospects and to identify and agree a programme of staff development for the employee. This process is known as **staff appraisal** and we discuss it later in the course.

Job descriptions alone do not provide sufficient information for interviewers involved in staff selection. A statement about the skills and attributes needed by the post holder has to be designed – the person specification. This can be done in a number of ways, from an in-depth profile identifying the knowledge, skills and attitude required for every task on the job description to a simple overall profile specifying the general needs for the job and the organisation.

JOB TITLE	Store Manager
Responsible to:	Trading Director
Responsible for:	All department staff
Aim:	To operate the department to optimum profitability, according to the organisation's rules and regulations
Duties:	
Staff:	To recruit staff within the wage budgets To train, appraise and manage all staff To ensure effective workforce planning To ensure effective discipline is maintained To communicate all relevant information to staff and ensure that instructions are carried out
Health and safety	To ensure safe working practices and hygiene standards within area of control
Security	To carry out procedures necessary to protect stock and equipment
Administration	To ensure accurate completion of all stock, orders, delivery, price and credit administration To maintain a level of administration so that stock can be accurately calculated, and to assist with stock take To ensure returns are made out correctly as requested
Communication	To organise unit meetings To communicate all relevant information to staff To communicate with outside agencies in the promotion of company image and reputation
Stock	To ensure that stock is ordered, warehoused and sold according to turnover levels and organisation instructions To ensure that stock levels maintained to produce optimum profitability.
Customer relations	To ensure the highest standard of customer relations at all times and to ensure that the store contributes positively to company image
Legislation	To ensure that store adheres to relevant legal requirements
General	To carry out any other duties as designated by the Trading Director

Figure 1: Job description for a store manager

Although both over 30 years old, the best known and most widely used schemes developed as guidance in this process are the seven-point plan (Table 1) and the five-fold grading system (Table 2). Both systems are designed to assist in the recruitment process and, when used effectively, they help to identify the type of person required, together with the traits, skills and abilities that are expected by that organisation for any job.

Attribute	Indicators
Physical make-up	Health, physique, appearance, bearing, speech
Attainments	Education, qualifications, experience
General intelligence	Fundamental intellectual capacity, problem solving ability, initiative
Special aptitudes	Mechanical and/or manual dexterity, facility in use of words and figures
Interests	Intellectual, practical, constructional, physically active, social, artistic
Disposition	Acceptability, influence over others, steadiness, dependability, self-reliance
Circumstances	Domestic, occupations of family

Table 1: Seven point plan (Rodger, 1952)

Attribute	Indicators
Impact on others	Physical make-up, appearance, speech and manner
Acquired qualifications	Education, vocational training, work experience
Innate abilities	Quickness of comprehension, aptitude for learning
Motivation	Individual goals, consistency and determination, success in achieving goals
Adjustment	Emotional stability, ability to deal with stress, ability to get on with people

Table 2: Five-fold grading system (Fraser, 1966)

Although these two systems are still widely used, they have some problems and they should be used with care. It is discriminatory, unethical and unacceptable to refer to an individual's personal circumstances. The use of age as a descriptor is currently under enormous criticism and efforts are being made to bring in legislation which will prevent 'ageism'.

Q ACTIVITY 7: QUESTION

The do-it-yourself chains, Do It All and B&Q, have policies to recruit older staff in some of their stores. Give some reasons that they might give for this recruitment policy? Remember the concept of competitive advantage.

A ACTIVITY 7: ANSWER

The new policy has proved to be successful, not only in terms of acquiring the staff, but also in terms of profitability and, in the case of Do it All, on labour turnover. For Do It All, the policy stemmed from the strategic decision to recruit 1,000 customer service staff. New recruits had to possess good communication skills. It recruited a large number of people for the posts who had previous professional management experience and the proportion of people the company employed in the 40–65 age group grew from 17 per cent to 21.6 per cent.

Do It All based this decision on the identified need for added value in its product offer and felt that older workers possessed the desired skills for the organisation. Labour turnover decreased as older workers tend to stay in jobs longer and this has reduced employment costs. For example, W H Smith found that the older employees (late 40s to early 50s) stayed in employment five times as long as those in their twenties. For B&Q, the decision was made to employ older staff on the premise that people who shopped at its stores needed advice on the products it sold and the company felt that this could be done more effectively by people who have carried out DIY themselves.

Profiles

Profiles are also useful in the recruitment process. A profile is an outline description of the job or of the individual who would be suitable for the job. Consider the following position:

- **job title:** receptionist
- **responsible to:** customer services manager
- **responsibilities:** to deal effectively with all guests and visitors.

If you think about what the job entails, you can draw a profile of suitable post holders. To do the job, applicants would need to possess the attributes of politeness, courtesy, good communication skills, a good working knowledge of the systems and procedures that exist in the organisation, and knowledge of the organisational structure and who is responsible for different areas of the business. Recruiters would therefore be seeking evidence of these qualities during the selection process.

Some qualities are essential on appointment, so, for example, Do It All would expect applicants for customer service posts to possess communication skills. On the other hand, some qualities may simply be desirable; the organisation would be pleased if the applicant possessed them, but training could be given to develop them at a later stage.

The use of profiles can assist in the prevention of discriminatory practices on the grounds of gender, racial background, disability and age. The design of both the job description and the person specification must take relevant legislation into account such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Once the job profile has been created, a general statement of the terms and conditions of employment for the post need to be agreed. The terms and conditions should be realistic, while also meeting the organisation's objectives in terms of profitability. They should be of an appropriate level to attract the type of candidate that the organisation requires, taking into account labour market conditions.

The stages of recruitment considered so far have been concerned with the authorisation of the vacancy, how (if at all) it is to be filled, the design of the job description and the personnel specification and consideration of reward for the post.