



Turning Heads

Taking a marketing approach to leadership recruitment

LOCAL AUTHORITIES/
GOVERNORS

Resource

Turning Heads is part of a suite of materials produced by NCSL to support the development of school leaders. Other titles in the series include:

Leadership succession: an overview

Career Moves - practical guidance to support aspirant heads succeed in the headship application process

Greenhouse schools - practitioner research reports into developing leaders

Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders

What's good about leading schools in challenging circumstances

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Authors: Peter Addison-Child and Jo Fish, Navigate

Section 1:

Who is this booklet for?

This guide is designed to support collaborative approaches to school leadership succession. It is aimed primarily at people working in local authorities, dioceses, networks and other partnerships who are addressing the challenge of retaining and recruiting talented leaders to our schools. While some of the information will be useful to people working at the level of the individual school, ideas such as employer branding can only be implemented effectively on a collaborative basis.

Introduction

In 2005/06, over 2,600 primary and secondary schools advertised for a new headteacher. Around a quarter of secondary schools and a third of primary schools failed to make an appointment. This guide is about helping more schools to make a successful appointment first time. The information it contains applies to all schools, but its focus is on schools that seem to face particular recruitment challenges.

The guide complements NCSL's leadership succession: A framework for action by approaching school leadership recruitment from a marketing perspective. It concentrates exclusively on the first part of the recruitment process – attracting candidates to the headship market. It looks at how school leadership posts are designed so that the roles being advertised are the jobs that potential candidates want, and it explores the mechanics of recruitment marketing tools.

While some of the content could be useful to an individual governing body setting out to recruit a new head, for the most part, this document is about the interventions that might be made at a system level (ie across groups of schools).

This information also complements the NCSL guide to Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders, which is targeted at local governing bodies and sets out comprehensive guidance on how to run a recruitment process.

This document does not claim to be a comprehensive review of recruitment marketing. Different organisations need different solutions. It does try to cover as many options as possible, providing signposts to further information for those that want to pursue a particular idea in greater depth.

What's in this document

This document is organised into five sections:

- **Section 1** is an introduction, looking at national trends in the school leadership recruitment market.
- **Section 2** looks at product design, ie whether schools offering the kind of jobs that potential candidates want, or that the recruitment market can support. In order to recruit successfully, does some degree of remodelling need to take place?
- Having defined a leadership role to take to market, **Section 3** explores options for positioning jobs to reflect the aspirations of potential candidates.
- **Section 4** looks at attraction strategies – how to promote headteacher roles effectively, including the development of employer brands if appropriate.
- **Section 5** is the conclusion.

What makes some jobs difficult to fill?

Clearly, the specific characteristics and context of each school determine its attractiveness to the recruitment market and therefore whether it will find it easy or difficult to recruit a new headteacher.

Local factors will always play a role, peculiar to a particular school or locality, not replicated in similar schools elsewhere. Obvious examples of local factors that can block effective recruitment are:

- a school budget deficit running out of control.
- a governing body with a reputation for poor relationships with previous headteachers.
- sudden and unexpected removal of a headteacher.
- threatened closure at a future date, causing planning blight.

Generally, these are short-term difficulties, not necessarily linked with underlying failure of the recruitment market.

Factors such as these can deter potential candidates, making a role difficult to fill, but they are not specific to particular types of school. If taken head-on before going to market, issues such as these can be minimised as deterrents to effective recruitment. In these cases, fully transparent, comprehensive marketing communications tools can go a long way towards meeting the concerns of potential candidates.

A school with a large deficit, for example, needs to show that it has put a robust recovery plan in place that is supported by key stakeholders. Candidates want reassurance that such a school recognises (and is ready to address) difficult problems.

More challenging are those schools aiming to recruit in areas where there are signs of market imbalance – where demand from specific types of schools for specific types of leadership roles is outstripping supply.

Surveys of headteacher recruitment activity nationally identify those areas where the likelihood of a recruitment process ending in failure is highest.

Table 1 is drawn from the annual survey commissioned by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), which was carried out for 2005/06 by Education Data Surveys.

Table 1: Recruitment of headteachers

Schools that had most difficulty
Primary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London • North West • South West • Larger schools (ie in groups 5 and 6) • Roman Catholic schools
Secondary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roman Catholic (not in the North West or West Midlands) • North East • Selective and secondary modern schools
Schools that had most success
Primary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yorkshire and the Humber • East Midlands • Schools in groups 1 and 2
Secondary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of England schools • Comprehensive and foundation schools • North West

Source: Education Data Surveys, 2006

Note: School “group” is determined (for the purpose of pay and conditions arrangements) according to the number and age range of students served by a school. Generally, the larger the school, the higher the group number.

These findings are unlikely to be a surprise, but they can be a useful confirmation of the challenge to help governors set realistic expectations against national benchmarks.

The findings can also help determine the level of preparation and possible intervention that are likely to be required before a school leadership role is put to the recruitment market, ideally before the current incumbent retires and it falls vacant.

Retention is easier than recruitment

Often, of course, it is not possible to control the timing of the departure of a serving headteacher and the need to recruit a new one. However, with some forward planning, it is possible to influence events. Mindful that it is almost always easier (and cheaper) to retain an existing head than recruit a new one, investment in measures to retain school leaders for longer can delay the need to enter the recruitment market, or even head it off altogether.

In part, good employment practice should support retention of key staff, by

- ensuring school leaders have good personal and professional support to help them manage an effective work/life balance
- a commitment to continuing professional development, so that school leaders do not feel the need to move on as the only way to develop their experience
- access to coaches/mentors
- creating chances for school leaders to broaden their existing role, through “acting up” opportunities.

For heads coming towards the end of their careers, changes to pension arrangements now include a “phased retirement” option which allow them to access pension benefits whilst still working in a reduced capacity. This can help keep experienced heads in the school system for longer and smooth the process of succession planning.

Section 2:

New approaches to headship

Introduction

Rising standards across the education system are evidence of a quality of professional leadership in our schools which stretches right across senior and middle management levels. Furthermore, the number of candidates coming forward for the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) demonstrates an ambition for headship among the extended leadership community.

It is important to keep these factors to the fore. They keep current recruitment challenges in context. Difficulties in recruitment demonstrate a mismatch in the aspirations of the supply-side of the recruitment market (ie potential candidates) and the demand-side (ie governing bodies). They do not signal an underlying crisis in school leadership.

Like many jobs, headship is constantly changing, and the aspirations and expectations of the headteachers of the future are changing too. Future leaders place great emphasis on wanting to lead learning (and are wary of losing their connection with the classroom); they want flexibility and to be treated as a professional by a governing body that understands how headship has changed; and they are also mindful of retaining an appropriate balance between work and their personal life.

An effective succession plan is responsive to the changing needs of both current and future school leaders. This may mean, for example, looking at the support that is provided for school leaders – professionally and personally – to help them maximise their effectiveness. This, and wider issues around the school leaders' terms and conditions are addressed in section three.

In other cases, the need to create different kinds of leadership opportunities may involve consideration of more radical measures such as examination of alternative leadership models such as federations and collaboratives.

Such alternative school leadership structures are explored in greater detail in this section.

This underlines two important characteristics of the succession planning framework on which these resource materials are based: first, that planning should always be seen as a positive opportunity to think about what is needed for future success; and second, it must start long before actual vacancies arise, in order to engage governing bodies, especially if complex issues such as federation are to be considered.

Of course this is not always possible. Vacancies arise unexpectedly and the natural reaction of governing bodies is to move swiftly to place an advert and attempt to recruit.

The NCSL guidance Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders provides useful advice in these circumstances. It encourages governing bodies to reflect before rushing to advertise, to assess their school's future needs and the type of leadership they are likely to need.

Such a breathing space may also be an opportunity to consider the appointment of an acting head. As well as holding the school on a stable footing, such arrangements can support wider succession planning by enabling a deputy to gain more experience and be better prepared for headship themselves.

Alternative leadership structures

Some schools have developed alternative leadership structures in response to the changing nature of headship and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Such structures can help address recruitment challenges by creating more attractive leadership roles.

In the right circumstances, new structures are a positive strategy to build leadership capacity and improve the experience of students. They are not a deficit model to overcome headteacher recruitment difficulties alone.

Of course, no two schools are the same. The complexity of the environments in which schools operate means that different schools may need to apply different leadership styles and models to meet their needs. It follows that the traditional single headteacher for each school may no longer be the most appropriate response to the need for good leadership.

The decision to apply specific solutions to meet local needs rests (rightly) with those who know the schools best, but there is growing evidence of the suitability of different leadership models for a range of environments. They provide new options for schools, their governing bodies and local authorities.

These models not only provide possible solutions to the specific leadership capabilities and capacities desired for the school(s) involved but may present attractive responses to the concerns of existing and potential headteachers about workload, stress and lack of support; issues identified in 2005 by the STRB as major deterrents for aspiring leaders.

Source: Fifteenth Report – 2005, STRB, Cm 6663.

In some circumstances, then, alternative structures can help create headship roles that match the aspirations of the profession, enhancing not only the performance of school leaders but also their supply.

Further information online:

NCSL research into new models of headship.

Of course, every model of school leadership has its own advantages and disadvantages. What is right for one school (or one individual) may not be right for another. The purpose of this document is not to analyse the relative merits of different leadership structures, but simply to describe some of the options that exist and provide signposts to further information. You can find a more detailed exploration of the research into new models of headship at:

www.ncsl.org.uk/modelsofheadship

Independent Study into School Leadership, DfES/PwC, January 2007
www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR818A.pdf

Federated schools

Federations provide a particular model that can aid recruitment in certain circumstances. They provide a system rearrangement, ongoing support and also opportunities for personal and professional development. Both are factors in stimulating interest among potential candidates.

The DfES' definition of federations is 'a group of two or more schools with a formal agreement to work together to raise standards'. This is from the Education Act 2002 and is often referred to as a 'hard federation'. Hard federations are legal entities, with a single governing body. However there are looser arrangements that give individual schools greater autonomy, known as 'soft federations'. The DfES Innovation Unit sees the forms of federations as a continuum, with a significant range of variation responding to specific local needs and direction.

Federations have worked particularly well where:

- schools are in challenging circumstances.
- schools have falling numbers of students, particularly small and/or rural schools.
- there is a longstanding difficulty with headteacher recruitment.

The headteacher role could be an executive principal with responsibility over several institutions. This may attract a more high-profile candidate. In certain formal federations with shared governance, individual schools within the federation may not need a headteacher at all, and the deputy headteacher could be a director of learning which would be the top job in the individual school. In either situation, the exact accountabilities will vary, and changes to these accountabilities may make the post more attractive.

There is a growing amount of data and evidence of the benefits and disadvantages of federated schools. This flags up their particular relevance to the issue of recruiting and developing leadership in schools. NCSL's work in The Netherlands (where more than 80 per cent of primary schools are in federations) highlighted that:

- heads have more time to lead.
- heads are more prepared and therefore less tired and more relaxed.
- there is greater transferability of skills, leading to a reduced workload.
- there are detachment benefits, making it easier to deal with potential staffing problems.
- there can be benefits to other staff through distributed leadership.

Kate Nash, Headteacher at Egginton Primary School in Derbyshire, was part of the team that studied the Dutch system.

“Those heads who’d been teaching heads but moved up to be more-school heads [ie, heads of federations] said they were far more organised, had more time for reflection, were better prepared, less pressured and stressed.”

Federations exist across many types of schools and in all phases. Indeed, it would be wrong to suppose that falling rolls or recruitment challenges are the only reasons for considering federation. It can also be a means to concentrate effort on common challenges. The DfES Innovation Unit has identified examples of federations that have come together in order to provide a focus for:

- behaviour and inclusion.
- community development and whole-town regeneration.
- seamless transition between phases.
- 14–19 developments and sharing knowledge and resources across organisations.

Examples of different federations demonstrate their perceived applicability to varied school configurations:

- South Devon/Totnes – a secondary, a primary and a special school.
- Northampton Church of England Schools Foundation – one secondary and several primary schools.

- Shrewsbury Partnership for Education and Training – seven secondary and one special school.
- Serlby Park – a 3–18 Business and Enterprise Learning Community.
- Davent (Dartford) – five secondary schools.
- St Thomas More/St Edmund Campion – two secondary schools with an executive head.

Federations require sufficient time to be planned and established. They are not a response to a short-term recruitment issue. Federating is not a deficit model but one that allows a planned approach to creating an attractive and effective leadership solution for particular circumstances. The growing interest in it has led DfES to produce a guide (An Introduction to School Federations, 2005) that examines the considerations, criteria and processes that are part of their successful creation.

There's no doubt that this is a major and sensitive change-management process and can only be delivered where it is led and managed successfully. Additionally, soft and hard federations need to produce specific contractual documents as a consequence of joint working or joint governance. There are several issues to consider, including accountability to Ofsted. In addition to the above publication, other sources of information and advice are available.

Further information online:

- NCSL research on new models of headship.
www.ncsl.org.uk/modelsofheadship
- DfES Innovation Unit information on federations.
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit/collaboration/federations/?version=1
- Serlby Park website.
www.school-portal.co.uk/Grouphomepage.asp?GroupId=21527
- Governornet guidance on school collaboration regulations.
www.governornet.co.uk/linkAttachments/Collaboration%20Guidance.pdf
- Northampton Church of England Schools Educational Foundation website.
www.peterborough-education.org.uk/Ncsef/

Executive headship

Heads who lead more than one school are known as “executive headteachers”. Whilst they are sometimes associated with federations, executive heads can be responsible for schools that are not in a federation, and not all federations have executive heads.

As with other models of headship, executive heads have been introduced in a range of situations and contexts. They operate in all phases, and sometimes across phases. The definition of the concept is, according to NCSL, ‘leadership of one school (the partner school) by a headteacher who is also substantive head of their own school (the host school) outside of a formal, hard federation’.

Source: New Models of Headship: Primary Executive Heads, NCSL, 2006.

This model is often used in schools where performance is low, and it can offer much to schools facing challenges. However, it is possible that there are other situations where it can deliver benefits, for example alleviating pressures on small schools or enabling two heads to tackle barriers to change simultaneously. In all circumstances, the executive head can bring a new dynamic to the situation and two NCSL studies (one looking at secondary and special schools, the other at primary schools) indicate a range of positive impacts:

- improved management structures.
- improved behaviour and attendance.
- improved leadership development.
- development of a can-do culture.
- removal of schools from serious weaknesses and special measures (in primary schools).

All the executive heads viewed the purpose of their involvement to be a capacity-building role with prime responsibility for developing a leadership team capable of transforming practice and outcomes within the partner school. While problem-solving was a significant part of their role, their responsibilities extended to developing, through coaching, the capacity of key staff to problem-solve for themselves, within a distributed model. There was a clear statement from those interviewed that executive headship, for them, was not about superheadship.

Those interviewed favoured a team-based approach ensuring an appropriate distribution of roles and a model in which each team member could operate effectively and be buffered from matters that would otherwise divert their attention from their core purpose.

Winning hearts and minds was a key theme identified by most executive heads. This was achieved through a variety of means, including celebrating success, investing in staff, coaching, making things happen, and connecting through positive but focused relationships. The executive heads frequently accessed practical support offered by the local authority. Indeed, many of these individuals clearly articulated their needs and were happy to draw upon the advice of those more knowledgeable in these areas.

Further information online:

- NCSL Executive headship: A study of heads who are leading two or more secondary or special schools.

www.ncsl.org.uk/modelsofheadship

- ASCL The future of school leadership.

www.ascl.org.uk/datafiles/hostFiles/host239/PP25%20PWC%20school%20leadership%20FINAL%20.pdf

Co-headship

There are more than 30 schools in England with two headteachers. As with federations, there are varied arrangements but there are two broad categories:

- job-share headships – where two people work part time as part of a single headteacher post.
- joint headships – both work full time and share responsibility for the school.

Co-headship can be helpful in several recruitment situations.

- It can attract more new headteachers – co-headship attracts those who may not previously have considered headship through an enhanced work–life balance, supporting the demands of looking after a young family or dependants, sharing the accountabilities and responsibilities of the role, and mitigating the job’s complex demands.
- It can reduce the risk of appointing new or temporary heads: where a headteacher is nearing retirement, co-headship can offer a smooth transition. Governors can see an aspiring head in action while sharing headship with the outgoing head. It can also support a more gradual departure of a retiring head.
- It can help build capacity whilst retaining continuity. The more experienced co-head can assist in leading the wider school system, and the less experienced or new one can gain valuable experience under the wing of the first. The school benefits from continuity and from the stimulus of new ideas.
- It retains experienced headteachers. Co-headship offers potential for refreshing the careers of experienced heads who will gain new experiences in roles that go beyond their own schools, for example offering support across the school system as a school improvement partner or consultant leader, while remaining at the helm of their own school.

A governor at a school with co-heads said:

“There was some unease ... about job-share – this has passed in the course of time ... parents realised that issues raised with one will be picked up by the other. The excellent Ofsted report did away with any remnants of doubt. They are doing an excellent job.”

Again, both secondary and primary phases use this approach. It is also a model that operates in urban authorities (eg Manchester, Nottingham and Leicester) as well as shire counties (eg Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Surrey).

Further information:

- NCSL research into new models of headship.

www.ncsl.org.uk/modelsofheadship

- NAHT Guidance on Job-Share and Flexible Working (hard copy only).

www.naht.org.uk

Looking forward: extended schools

There are now more than 3,000 extended schools. As their roll-out continues, and boundaries between organisations become blurred, new structures and recruitment options become possible.

The mix of services and agencies on one site may not require a headteacher but a chief executive or operational manager. Whilst teaching and learning within the school can still be headed by a qualified teacher, this may be a very different role from that of the traditional headteacher.





South Hunsley Comprehensive School in Yorkshire offers a wide range of extended services to its community and the cluster of eight primary schools that it leads. As it rolled out extended services over the last two years, the school has completely reorganised its management and staffing structures, with non-teaching staff taking on many roles – including senior management positions – to ensure that teachers could concentrate on teaching and learning.

Further information online:

- Teachernet: Advice on setting up extended schools.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools/

The following table summarises the key characteristics of various school models, on a continuum from hard federation to soft collaboration.

	Hard Governance Federation	Soft Governance Federation	Soft Federation	Informal, Loose Collaboration
	STATUTORY		NON-STATUTORY	
Diagram				
Governing Body?	Single governing body shared by all schools.	Each school has its own governing body, but the federation has joint governance / strategic committee with delegated power .	Each school has its own governing body; the federation, however, has joint governance / strategic committee without delegated powers .	Each school has its own governing body and the group of schools meet informally on ad-hoc basis .
Statutory?	Yes. Hard governance federations are established using Federations Regulations made under Section 24 Education Act 2002.	Yes. Soft governance federations established using Collaboration Regulations , made under Section 26 Education Act 2002.	No. Schools can set up soft federations without having to follow regulations.	No. Schools can form informal collaborations without having to follow regulations.
Common goals?	All schools share common goals through SLA and protocol ; having single governing body allows for efficient, streamlined decision making in all areas .	All schools share common goals through SLA and protocol ; joint committee can make joint decisions in some areas, but not all .	All schools share common goals through protocol ; joint committee can make joint recommendations , but it is up to individual governing body to authorise plans.	All schools share common goals and can work together on ad-hoc issues and informal agreements .
Common budget?	No, but having a single governing body allows for prompt budgetary decisions on behalf of the group of schools.	No, but if JSC has budgetary powers delegated to it, they can make prompt budgetary decisions for the group of schools	No, but it could make budgetary recommendations for the group, which in turn would have to be approved by individual governing body.	No, however, if group of schools wish to commit budget, they would need to go back to their individual governing bodies to approve.
Shared staff?	Common management and appointments are agreed in a simple, effective manner. Sometimes choose to have single headteacher across group of schools.	Common management positions and appointments , but need to have protocol / contract to underpin commitment to shared posts.	Common management positions and appointments , but need to have protocol / contract to underpin commitment to shared posts.	Unlikely to have common management positions, but if they exist, they have to be agreed in a protocol / contract.

Source: DfES Innovation Unit

Section 3:

Responding to the market

Introduction

Section 2 looked at how some organisations are creating a new landscape of leadership to enhance not only the performance of headteachers but also their supply. This section takes that process a step further to consider how individual roles can be positioned (whatever the leadership structure) to respond to the demands of the leadership market. Put simply, what do aspirant school leaders want from headship in terms of reward, working conditions and career development?

What matters to potential candidates?

There is consistent evidence from several sources that suggests that non-pay issues are the key determinants that deter candidates from applying for headship roles. Potential candidates have strongly negative perceptions about:

- the workload pressures of headship in general.
- increasing pressures as responsibility and accountability are devolved further to schools.
- the impact of headship on personal work–life balance.

In addition, some of those consulted by the School Teachers' Review Body claimed an increase in the number of dismissals of headteachers added a heightened sense of career risk associated with the top leadership role.

This is not to say, of course, that salary level is unimportant, but it does confirm that the attractiveness or otherwise of a particular role is a complex issue in which non-pay issues are at least as important as questions of cash. This suggests, too, that where salary differentials are low, non-pay issues might be especially important in making a positive proposition to the recruitment market. Highlighting a positive attitude towards, say, continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and work-life balance issues, through recruitment advertising and/or job marketing materials, is likely to resonate with target markets.

Indeed, when headteachers and senior school leaders were surveyed in 2006 about their reward package, many expressed a desire for greater flexibility to help them manage the stresses of the role. Asked which flexible incentives they would find most attractive, their responses focused on those rewards which could be most useful in helping them to avoid “burn out”. The following table summarises the responses from current headteachers and senior school leaders.

Potential incentives	Headteachers		
	Primary	Secondary	Senior School Leaders (all phases)
Car	11%	19%	12%
Gym Membership	2%	2%	2%
Private Health Insurance	21%	16%	21%
Season tickets/travel costs	2%	1%	2%
Secondments/sabbaticals	31%	36%	26%
Support in external roles	2%	2%	1%
Work some school hours at home	19%	15%	25%
None	8%	6%	5%
Other	3%	3%	2%

Source: Independent Study Into School Leadership, DfES/PwC, January 2007

Providing incentives such as sabbaticals, private health insurance or flexible working may, therefore, offer strong inducements to attract candidates into ‘hard to fill’ roles.

Support for new heads

Many schools and local authorities have developed positive practice to support new headteachers, addressing many of the negative perceptions of headship held by potential candidates. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the prospect of support for newly appointed heads might be an important factor in helping turn potential candidates into real ones.

To be a positive recruitment tool, support for new heads must be part of the initial recruitment offer and flagged up in recruitment marketing material. Deputies and others need to be able to see that their succession to a headship is recognised as a step-change in their career and that there is planned support to help them to make a success of it.

Support for headship takes many different forms according to local circumstances, but the theme of peer-to-peer advice and support is generally consistent.

Pastoral and professional support is provided in many local authorities through mentoring. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) suggests that mentoring of new headteachers can result in a wide range of benefits, particularly for the mentee, but also for the mentor, schools and the education system in general. The potential benefits for new headteachers are reported to include:

- reduced feelings of isolation.
- reduced stress and frustration.
- therapeutic benefits.
- increased confidence and self-esteem.
- the opportunity to reflect on the new role.
- an accelerated rate of learning.
- improved personal skills, including communication and political skills.
- improved technical expertise and problem analysis.
- friendship.

Benefits reported to be experienced by mentors include:

- benefits to own professional development.
- improved performance and problem analysis.
- insights into current practice.
- awareness of different approaches to headship.
- increased reflectiveness.
- improved self-esteem.

NCSL has also evidenced the highly positive impact that mentoring can have on the sense of well-being in newly appointed heads, particularly regarding the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and develop self-confidence. It was clear from the responses that many mentees had found the experience of being mentored very motivating.

There are different models of mentoring but effective schemes have trained and experienced heads in the role, and match mentor and mentee carefully. Lancashire, for example, has a bank of 160 accredited mentors for newly appointed heads, covering all phases. They are partnered carefully so that they share knowledge of the type of environment with the new head, and are all current headteachers themselves.

Devon County Council has a Headteacher Support Service, set up in 1999. As well as looking after existing heads, the service helps to make the post of headteacher an attractive one to potential recruits. The service provides a confidential service to heads, responsive within 24 hours during the working week, and also develops, maintains and promotes networks for heads within the county. The service recognises that stress can be debilitating, both personally and professionally. This support provides a very visible demonstration of the local authority's understanding of the pressures of headship. The service maximises the effectiveness of existing heads and helps to assuage concerns of potential heads too. The cost per school is just £290 – a small investment if it gives significant support to the head.

Further information online:

- “Mentoring and Coaching for new Leaders,” NCSL, 2003

These publications can be found at www.ncsl.org.uk/publications

- “It’s good to talk: an enquiry into the value of mentoring as an aspect of professional development for new headteachers,” Chris Luck (for NCSL), 2003

<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/1D6/13/its-good-to-talk.pdf>

- “Innovation in Headteacher Induction,” Weindling (for NCSL), 2004

<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/1D1/DE/innovation-in-headteacher-induction.pdf>

Elsewhere, experienced headteachers are used to provide more direct, hands-on, support for those new to the position, particularly where the circumstances are more challenging.

NCSL’s Early Headship Provision offers a range of personalised support and development opportunities for heads in their first three years of headship that includes coaching, collaborative learning groups and local modules.

In Wigan, three headteachers from successful schools worked together to support the (then) new headteacher of Kingsdown High School, Ros McMullen, take on a challenging first headship. Whilst she led the school, the consultant heads provided practical support, offering their expertise in finance and operational issues to support improvement in the school. This led to deeper collaboration, with some subject areas being outsourced to staff from two of the partner schools. Ros has said that the project enabled her school to plan strategically without losing sight of day-to-day issues such as improving behaviour around the school. HMI reports that this approach enhanced the school’s capacity for improvement. Ros now leads an academy.

A commitment to ongoing professional development – beyond the transitional period of adjustment to a new headship – can also be useful tool, aiding longer term retention as well as initial recruitment. This could take the form of a commitment to ongoing CPD, for example a promise of supported in-school research time to enable space for reflection and development in preparation for a future career step. Surveys of heads and senior school leaders suggest, secondment and sabbatical opportunities are likely to be seen as highly attractive. Some employers have considered making a commitment to a sabbatical after a defined period of service, for example by employer and employee agreeing to bank 20 per cent of a head's gross salary costs each year to meet the costs of a funded sabbatical in the fifth year of service.

Further information online:

- Phase 3 of the national agreement provides for dedicated headship time to support a positive approach to workload issues.

www.tda.gov.uk

Financial incentives

As wider evidence suggests, rewards other than pay can be extremely important to attract potential candidates for headship. However, that does not mean that salary level is unimportant to framing an effective recruitment campaign. On the assumption that most candidates are unlikely to take up a headship for less money than they currently earn, the salary level set for a post defines the section of the recruitment market which might apply for that role. However, more money does not necessarily mean more candidates. Evidence from Education Data Surveys suggests that it does not necessarily follow that the larger the salary, the greater number of candidates attracted and/or the greater the chance of a successful recruitment.

The follow table indicates the current range and distribution of headteacher salaries.

	Primary Headteachers	Secondary Headteachers
Less than £40k	5%	-
£40k- £50k	56%	7%
£50k-£60k	31%	11%
£60k-£70k	6%	30%
£70k-£80k	1%	26%
£80k-£90k	-	16%
£90k-£100k	-	5%
£100k +	-	4%

Source: Independent Study Into School Leadership, DfES/PwC, January 2007

The relevant body should determine the pay range for headteachers when they propose to make a new appointment or at any time if they consider it necessary to retain a headteacher. In limited circumstances (school causing concern, and substantial difficulties in recruiting or retaining a headteacher) the relevant body has discretion to move the pay range for a headteacher up by up to two school groups, and the possibility of exceeding the maximum of the spine.

Source: School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, DfES, 2006

Survey data is available for the starting salaries of headteachers appointed during 2005/06 (see Table 2). For obvious reasons relating to current pay scale structures, starting salaries are related to the size of school.

The survey showed that both primary and secondary schools in London generally paid a high point on the leadership scale to new heads, despite having London weighting to compensate for additional costs.

The survey also found that schools advertising a second time paid more on average than when the post was first advertised, with this effect more pronounced in secondary schools.

Table 2: Appointment of headteachers 2005/06

Primary schools	
School type	Average starting salary (salary point)
Group 1	Point 9
Group 2	Point 13
Group 3	Point 17–18
Group 4	Point 21
Community school	13.4
Foundation schools	14.1
C of E schools	11.2
RC schools	14.4
Secondary schools	
School type	Average starting salary (salary point)
Groups 3 and 4	20
Group 5	25
Group 6	32
Group 7	31
Group 8	36
Community schools	28.0
Foundation schools	29.8
C of E schools	26.0
RC schools	29.0

Source: Education Data Surveys, 2006

Schools and local authorities have experimented with a variety of pay flexibilities for school leaders to aid both retention and recruitment. In fact, governing bodies have considerable flexibility in how they set the pay ranges of school leaders, though surveys suggest that the flexibilities are not widely used.

Bonus payments have been linked to the achievement of specific outcomes, for example, student attainment targets or inspection results (such as to secure emergence from special measures).

Headteacher salaries have contained a performance-related component, again linked to specific outcomes and evaluated as part of the performance management process.

Targeted relocation packages have been offered in some instances, either as a one-off cash payment against costs or provided through a brokered relocation service.

Further information online:

- Teachernet for information on STRB and headteacher pay.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/payandperformance/

- Independent Study into School Leadership, DfES/PwC, January 2007

www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR818A.pdf

Golden hellos

At graduate entry level, golden hellos are already a well-established practice, both in teaching and elsewhere, and in the public and private sectors. In those instances, they are a response to different market pressures. They are also being used in recruitment markets where the dynamics are very different from those for school leadership.

Some local authority housing services, for example, have used incentives of between £1,500 and £7,000 to attract specialist professionals into the sector. In the health service, incentive payments of up to £5,000 have been used to attract newly qualified GPs into areas of social deprivation where health need is greatest, and so-called golden goodbye payments have been used to delay retirement by GPs at the end of their careers. In Scotland, payments of up to £3,000 have been made to newly qualified dentists who take up posts in rural areas. These schemes have not yet been fully evaluated.

Examples of golden hellos at a senior level also exist within education, though not on any systematic basis. Where they have been used, it has been part of locally determined initiatives. In Oldham, for example, incentive payments of around £2,000 were used to encourage candidates to apply for primary headships in schools linked with the borough's wider regeneration plan. Incentive payments have also been used in Cambridgeshire to help retain new recruits in post. As with the NHS examples, there has not been any evaluation of the effectiveness of these programmes at a national level.

Research evidence reveals that headship is perceived by many who are not yet in that role to be stressful, highly accountable, bureaucratic and consequently a step too far for their career. Yet research also shows that it is a job that is regarded by those in it as enormously exciting and worthwhile – “the best job there is”. Effective recruitment marketing seeks to close that gap, helping to create an appetite for headship as well as responding to the aspirations of potential candidates.

Section 4:

Candidate attraction

Introduction

This section is about the final stage of preparation to take a headteacher role to the recruitment market. Having designed a role that both meets the needs of the school and the aspirations of potential headteachers, this is about attracting candidates to the role. It looks at the characteristics of effective recruitment marketing at a senior level, and options for building a longer term strategy using techniques such as employer branding.

This section is aimed primarily at those who work with governing bodies across several schools, helping governors make robust and evidence-based decisions. However, much of the information in this part may also be useful to individual schools.

Background: dynamics of the school leadership market

To market school leadership roles effectively, it helps to understand how the current recruitment market operates. It can also help governors set realistic expectations.

Detailed data on movements in the school leadership recruitment market are published each year by Education Data Surveys in a report commissioned jointly by NAHT and ASCL.

As might be expected, school leadership recruitment is highly seasonal. In fact, in recent years, there has been some evidence that recruitment activity for new headteachers is becoming increasingly concentrated into a few months each year. The peak season for headteacher recruitment is the first half of the spring term. Of all the headteacher posts advertised during 2005/06, over a third went to first advert in just two months, January and February.

The seasonality of the market raises questions about when it is best to advertise. Often schools have few options, but when it is possible to exercise a choice, is it better to advertise during the peak months along with everyone else, or to try to avoid the competition during this period? Every school is different, of course, but the evidence suggests that secondary schools advertising during January and February attracted more applications than those that advertised at other times of the year.

Response rates

To judge the effectiveness of your recruitment campaign, it can be useful to have some benchmarks of recruitment effectiveness.

Effective recruitment involves attracting initial interest from potential candidates, converting that interest to an application, and then sustaining candidates' commitment to the recruitment process through to interview stage.

Tables 3 and 4 show, for 2004–2006, average response rates to headteacher advertisements and the success rate in making an appointment.

Table 3: Primary schools: response to advertising campaigns

	Average number of requests for application forms	Average number of applications submitted	Average number of candidates short-listed	Average number of candidates interviewed
2004	13.4	6.0	3.1	3.1
2005	12.3	5.4	3.2	2.8
2006	11.2	4.8	3.1	2.8

Source: Education Data Surveys, 2004–2006

Table 4: Secondary schools: response to advertising campaigns

	Average number of requests for application forms	Average number of applications submitted	Average number of candidates short-listed	Average number of candidates interviewed
2004	42	15.3	5.6	4.8
2005	40	12.8	5.0	4.4
2006	40	16.0	5.6	4.9

Source: Education Data Surveys, 2004–2006

Tables 3 and 4 provide an indication of the current conversion rates from initial expressions of interest through the application process to a shortlist of candidates attending for interview.

Of course, these headline figures mask variations between schools according to their location, size and governance.

Further information online:

Howson, J, 2006, Twelfth Annual Report: The state of the labour market for senior staff in schools in England and Wales, NAHT/ASCL.

www.educationdatasurveys.org.uk/NAHT_2006.pdf

Table 5: Conversion rates from requesting an application form to submitting an application

Primaries – higher conversion in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groups 2 and 5 • community schools • all-age primary
Lower conversion in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infant and junior schools • Church of England and Roman Catholic schools • London
Secondaries – higher conversion in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community and foundation schools • South West • specialist humanities schools
Lower conversion in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of England and Roman Catholic schools • middle schools • North-East and London • specialist language and engineering schools

Source: Education Data Surveys, 2006

Planning effective recruitment marketing

Getting into the right mindset

The headteacher recruitment market is highly competitive – particularly in the first few months of the calendar year – and recruiters face a challenge to hold the attention of potential candidates in order to convert initial interest in a role into a firm application and ongoing engagement.

Those who succeed in this market often turn the traditional recruitment proposition on its head. Instead of seeing recruitment as a process of buying talent from the available pool, they approach it as a process of selling their headship opportunity to those candidates they would like to apply.

This sounds straightforward, but if the sell principle is applied consistently, it can result in a complete reappraisal of the way in which recruitment campaigns are planned and executed. It is as much about the mindset of the recruitment panel as it is about specific behaviour. At the heart of positive recruitment campaigns is a commitment to candidate care.

Examples of old style 'buy' behaviour	Examples of new style 'sell' behaviour
Job information packs consist of a collection of existing documents, none specifically targeted at potential candidates.	Job information is tailored to the specific recruitment process, with a fluent explanation of the school's current agenda and the challenges an incoming head will face.
The tone of job ads and information packs focuses solely on what candidates must bring to the school.	Job information highlights career benefits to the candidate in return for taking on a challenging role.
The process of fixing an informal visit to the school is difficult and inconvenient.	Candidates' first contact with the school is positive and (within reason) visits are accommodated at times convenient for candidates.
It is difficult to get further information about the school. Requests get added to general office to-do lists.	Requests for further information are met promptly and efficiently by a named person.
When candidates phone for an informal chat about the role, the person taking the calls is so swamped and/or busy that it is impossible to call everyone back promptly.	Candidates get ready access to a named person who is able to prioritise requests for an informal conversation or to make return calls quickly.
Candidates have to wait for information to arrive by post.	Information is available instantly online.
The only means of application is a form which must be completed by hand.	All documents are available online and applications can be submitted electronically.
Candidates are told to assume their application has been unsuccessful if they do not hear anything within a specified timeframe.	All applications are acknowledged and every candidate receives a letter or email about the success or failure of their application.

Defining target markets

Effective recruitment campaigns – like any good marketing campaign – are well targeted.

This means developing a clear view of the kind of candidates an organisation wishes to attract, based on its own definition of its needs from a future leader, and then reality-checking those aspirations against current market conditions.

The NCSL guidance for recruiting headteachers (see Section 1) provides a comprehensive framework to help governing bodies and others define their requirements of their future headteacher. That specification must be translated into a brief that connects a school's requirements with the reality of the recruitment market, and helps determine how best to frame recruitment advertising and other marketing information.

Every situation is different, but in general, a brief might be framed around three broad question areas.

- **First:** Think about the person you are hoping to recruit, what kind of job are they likely to be doing now? What kind of school are they likely to be working in currently?
- **Second:** Following on from the first question, what kind of salary are they likely to be paid currently? Is your proposed salary sufficient to attract them? If there is a mismatch, either the specification or the salary level must change.
- **Third:** What are their motivations likely to be to apply for your headship? What are you offering that will appeal to the career aspirations of your target market?

This should help build up a picture of the kind of person you are looking for, the level at which they currently operate and why they should consider applying. This forms the basis of your advertising brief.

Principles of advertising effectiveness

Where to advertise

Identifying where to place your vacancy is obviously crucial. Whilst the internet has seen many professions make the switch to e-recruitment advertising, print-based media appears to remain the primary source for all levels of teaching positions. This is partly due to the culture of a profession that places a high value on editorial content as well as advertising volume, hence the dominance of publications such as the Times Educational Supplement (TES) and the Education Guardian.

The emergence of online media has created other advertising opportunities, and of course, most local authorities also produce their own in-house bulletins for schools in their area which carry details of job vacancies.

Table 6 provides the latest statistics for key media to support decision-making.

Table 6: Key advertising media

Media title	Publisher description	Audience reach
Times Educational Supplement	The TES remains Britain's foremost education publication, covering the world of primary, secondary and further education. Read by over half a million educational professionals every week, it aims to give teachers, college lecturers, school governors and administrators a readable and reliable update on what is happening in education. Our news and reviews are unbiased and authoritative, reflecting our understanding of what classroom teachers need to know. The TES is also the market leader for job advertising, carrying up to 388 pages of advertising.	Circulation and certification: 69,448
EducationGuardian	EducationGuardian, published every Tuesday with the Guardian, carries weekly news and analysis on the whole of the education sector. The supplement offers comprehensive recruitment sections schools and further education and more higher education posts than any other national quality or trade title*. This makes EducationGuardian an invaluable resource for all recruiters within the education sector. Source: *Nielsen Media Research March 04–Feb 05.	Circulation and certification: 381,188
Eteach.com	Mission statement: 'To create the ultimate, single source education recruitment service, utilising technology to make the user experience more efficient.' Eteach.com is a teaching 'gateway', which provides schools and teachers with improved recruitment systems, together with a range of additional benefits and services. While recruitment forms the cornerstone of eteach.com, the site is so much more than just an advertising notice board for teachers. Eteach.com offers teachers new opportunities online that will improve their job finding, their professional development and their social life. Target market: The site offers a strong non-political community of teachers for the mutual benefit of its members, namely teachers and schools.	Monthly visitors: 680,697 (Publisher's statement March 2006)
www.education-jobs.co.uk	Publisher statement: Education-jobs.co.uk was one of the first educational recruitment websites on the Internet and has remained one of the most popular sites used by teachers and educational establishments. Target market: The website is targeted to anyone already working in Education or looking for a job in Education in the following institutes: Colleges/Further Education, Independent Education, Independent Preparatory Education, Nursery & Primary Education, Secondary Education, Special Education and also advertising Non-Teaching/Administrative Positions.	Monthly visitors: Data not available

What makes good advertising?

There is nothing mysterious about the principles of effective recruitment advertising. The theory is straightforward – applying it can be more difficult, as the job advert pages of the TES demonstrate.

A survey of schools which had recently recruited a headteacher showed that 81 per cent of governing bodies designed their own advert. Whilst some will have been able to draw on the expertise of governors with relevant professional backgrounds, most will not. A majority of governing bodies (65 per cent) felt the advert for their headteacher post was of average quality, and generally governors felt that the attraction phase of the recruitment process was the least satisfying. Candidates were more critical. The same survey asked applicants for headteacher posts what they thought of adverts. Less than a third – just 31 per cent – thought they were good.

Because the first rule of effective recruitment advertising is that it is always specific to the context of the recruiting organisation and the role being recruited, generic advice (such as this) will always have limitations.

Getting the right starting point is key. Job advertisements are marketing tools, not public notices. There is a limit to what they can achieve. The purpose of a job advertisement is not to recruit a headteacher in one step; it is to capture attention and create initial interest in a role, encouraging potential candidates to find out more. No more, no less.

The principles of effective recruitment advertising described below are deceptively simple. Applying them properly can be an extremely challenging process.

Of course, recruitment advertising must also comply with specific legal requirements to prevent discrimination etc. That is not the focus of this section. Specific guidance on those issues is available from your local HR department. See also the discussion of diversity below which provides some useful web links.

What do prospective candidates look for?

With such a wide range of variables (ie different jobs, different challenges etc) it is difficult to draw any overriding conclusions about the behaviour of consumers of job advertisements.

Research conducted for NCSL into the attitudes of individuals applying for headship found that:

- the single most important factor in whether people decided to apply for a role was location, ie whether the role was within commuting distance or convenient in another way.

- location could also be important in determining whether candidates were attracted to live and work in a particular area, given its profile.
- a local authority reputation could also be influential (in both a positive and negative way).
- issues such as a school specialism were neutral factors.

This confirms the importance of getting the basics right.
Effective advertising always includes:

- location.
- the name of the employing organisation.
- job title.
- salary.

Effective recruitment advertising ...	
... tries to differentiate what you are offering from others	<i>What makes your job different from the others on the page? Why is it a better career opportunity than the next job?</i>
... is relevant to the target audience, highlighting ideas that are important to them, not you	<i>Think like a candidate. What would you want to know? Why would you want this job? And what don't you need to read here?</i>
... communicates directly and concisely	<i>Words are money – use the budget to market the job, not to reproduce the job description. Less is more.</i>
... is never boastful	<i>Organisations that have 'done it all' can appear daunting to candidates – and can appear to be poor career choices because of lack of challenge.</i>
... includes a clear call to action	<i>Tells potential candidates how to get more information, preferably by going online or making a phone call.</i>

These principles are deceptively simple. Applying them properly can be an extremely challenging process.

Recruitment marketing materials

Recruitment advertising is simply a hook to encourage a potential candidate to find out more. Effective adverts have an explicit call to action, giving candidates a clear route to more information, usually by calling a phone number or (preferably) by going to online information.

The request for further information leads to what has traditionally been called the job information pack. Too often these are collections of documents, of highly variable quality from one school to another and predominantly still produced in hard copy, despite a wholesale switch across other senior recruitment sectors to move almost exclusively to electronic media.

Applying a new recruitment mindset to old style job information packs, they become active marketing tools to tell the story behind the recruitment process and engage candidates in a school's journey. This kind of job marketing takes up where an advert leaves off, giving an honest appraisal of the challenges involved and access to the information that good candidates will want in order to make a decision about application.

New style information is delivered electronically. Whilst online information involves time and (potentially) cost in terms of set up, it eliminates subsequent transaction costs (for example taking phone calls, postage) and also ensures potential candidates have instant access to information at a time and place of their choosing.

This is a case where the medium is part of the message. Well-constructed, thoughtful job marketing materials send a signal of professionalism to potential candidates, enhancing a school's reputation and increasing the likelihood of engagement.

In terms of content, good marketing material is always open and truthful. It never seeks to hide or omit difficult challenges involved in a role. It is upbeat and optimistic, but it never tries to spin. Candidates are often looking for a challenge where they can make a difference. They want to know the downsides as well as the upsides.

E-media

The drive towards e-media and channels is just as strong in recruitment markets as it is in other aspects of modern life.

- Around half of all UK households are online and increasingly using broadband rather than dial-up connections. Among the socio-economic groups that include headteacher applicants, the proportions are even higher.
- According to one survey, almost 80 per cent of people will look for their next job online (Source: Personnel Today). This is driving increased spending on online recruitment advertising across the economy as a whole.
- Trends appear consistent across the public–private sector divide. Up to 70 per cent of visits to local authority websites are recruitment related.

The reality of many schools' approaches to job marketing tells a different story. NCSL research into headteacher recruitment provided a useful insight into the material that potential candidates most want to see in job marketing material – and what they actually received as part of so-called job information. The mismatch between what candidates want and what schools actually provide is striking. Overall, the survey found that three-quarters of applicants did not feel that the job information supplied provided an accurate representation of the school. This is a marketing opportunity lost.

NCSL survey of candidates

What candidates most wanted to see as part of job packs	per cent of packs containing what candidates wanted
School improvement plan	30 per cent
Self-evaluation data	4 per cent
Financial information	22 per cent

Source: NCSL, Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders, 2006.

Other routes to market

Governing bodies are required to advertise headteacher posts openly, but the placement of an advert is not the only way to find candidates. Job adverts only find active job seekers. Sometimes the candidates that schools are looking for are not looking for them.

Other routes to the recruitment market are:

- use of local networks, either through local authorities or dioceses or less formal connections. This can work especially well where job information is being provided online so that networking can be done electronically via emails with inclusion of the relevant web link.
- commissioning formal executive search (headhunting) from a private sector consultancy. A small number specialise in the education leadership sector. Based on a school's brief, head-hunters will seek out potential candidates who fit the specification and discuss the role with them to encourage an application. To use this route successfully, a school must find the right consultancy partner who demonstrates understanding of governors' needs.

Consultancy can be expensive. To investigate that route, governors must produce a clear brief and base their selection of consultancy on clear criteria. Cost will be one. Other important considerations include the following.

- What is the consultancy's track record in education recruitment?
- How do consultants demonstrate their knowledge of the challenges and situation of the particular school?
- Can they show knowledge of the issues facing schools?
- Who are their referees? Who else have they worked for?
- Which particular consultants will be working with the school? What's their background? Will they commit to being the contact from start to finish?
- How are fees structured – a flat fee or a percentage of salary? Are advertising and other costs included?

Encouraging candidate diversity

Of course, as a matter of legal requirement, recruitment practices must not involve any unfair discrimination.

Ensuring basic compliance with legal requirements, however, is not the same as adopting a positive approach to diversity.

To attract candidates from the widest possible pool of talent, headship must be seen as an attractive option by all potential candidates, whatever their personal profile.

A recruitment culture that overlooks potential candidate pools is missing out on available talent.

Data for school leadership appointments in 2005/06 reveals interesting gender differences, for example. Whilst women dominate primary headship (around 70 per cent of heads appointed were women), in the secondary phase, women seem to have hit a glass ceiling at around 40 per cent of appointments. It is not clear whether this is as a result of fewer women putting themselves forward for secondary headship, or through a reluctance on the part of selection panels to appoint them. Nonetheless, it suggests that there is a pool of potential talent that is not being exploited.

Data also demonstrates that the appointment of heads from minority ethnic backgrounds accounts for a tiny proportion of all appointments made. In the primary phase, just over 1 per cent of recorded appointments came from any ethnic group other than White. In secondary schools, the same measure increased slightly in 2005/06 to account for about 3 per cent of appointments.

A diversity-positive approach affects every stage of the recruitment process and helps balance unconscious stereotyping of roles (especially by gender) and so-called hyper-valuation of personal chemistry with candidates.

At the role design stage (before a post is advertised), consideration of different models of headship – and the way in which the role is described – may have an impact on the types of candidates that are attracted to the post.

At the candidate attraction stage, schools must present themselves as serious about attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds in order to appeal to the widest possible audience.

That means more than adding an equal opportunities statement to the bottom of an advertisement. The imagery and language of adverts and wider job marketing materials should reflect a school's own diversity, as should its own web presence or any other school materials to which candidates may have access.

In terms of the media placement of advertisements, there are specialist publications that are targeted at specific audience groups, for example within minority ethnic communities. Whilst the use of these media can send a positive message more generally, there is no evidence that they result in a greater diversity of candidates. Active jobseekers for headship – whatever their background – focus on the main media that contain adverts for headship, for example the TES.

It may be that – alongside open advertisement of posts – an active search for candidates is commissioned, with the specific target of drawing in the widest possible talent. Some potential candidates – perhaps with skills as strong as the next person – may be self-selecting themselves out of recruitment processes through lack of confidence. Active search activity can help draw them back into the pool.

At the candidate selection stage, assessment processes must provide an equal opportunity for every candidate to demonstrate their abilities. Beware, especially, of the overuse of selection techniques which simply select for (say) extrovert characteristics, overlooking more subtle forms of leadership. Selection panels themselves must reflect the diversity of interests within a school.

The NCSL guidance on headteacher recruitment provides helpful advice on the basic requirements for a positive approach to diversity.

- Schools should have an equal opportunities policy and statement that covers recruitment and selection.
- The application process should involve (separate) collection of equal opportunities monitoring data.
- The appointments panel should be trained in recruitment and selection and aware of the equal opportunities policy and guidelines.

At a system level – for example across a local authority or defined group of schools – the reputation of an area may be a factor in attracting (or deterring) candidates. The next part of this section looks at how organisations can manage their reputation as an employer, seeking to engage actively with potential candidates. Such employer branding techniques can be an important component of a diversity-positive approach. They enable a partnership of schools to project a positive attitude towards the diversity agenda, ideally by being able to use the current cadre of school leaders as role models.

Further information online:

- Equal opportunities overview for school governors.

www.governor.net.co.uk/publishArticle.cfm?topicAreaId=3&contentId=289&pageStart=1&sortOrder=c.title

For information about legislation and further guidance go to:

- Disability Rights Commission.

www.drc.org.uk/

- Equal Opportunities Commission.

www.eoc.org.uk/

- Commission for Racial Equality.

www.cre.gov.uk/

- Note: the above three organisations are due to be replaced by a new body, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

www.cehr.org.uk/

- NCSL Report Black and Minority Ethnic Leaders.

www.ncsl.org.uk/publications

Developing a system-wide approach: employer branding

The concept of employer branding is a huge subject in itself, with a wealth of research and literature behind it. This part provides an initial overview of this concept, examining it primarily from a recruitment perspective. Signposts to further information are provided at the end.

What is employer branding?

All candidates – successful and unsuccessful – form an impression of the recruiting organisation based on their experience during the recruitment process. These impressions contribute to that organisation's reputation as an employer, both positively and negatively. That reputation is what many private sector organisations define as their employer brand. It is important to them because it can affect their ability to recruit good-quality staff in the future, and they manage their employer brand carefully.

In terms of senior recruitment, individual schools advertise too infrequently to be able to build an effective employer brand in the marketplace. However, groups of schools – linked by geography, governance arrangements or some other identifiable network – can develop an employer brand. Ideas for potential school partnerships that could work in this way are discussed in greater detail earlier in this section.

In fact, recent NCSL research acknowledged the existence of passive employer brands by suggesting that the reputation of some local authorities could influence candidates' decision to apply for school leadership roles, both positively and negatively.

This research finding underlines an important point. Employer branding is not about logos; it is about the reputation an employer enjoys (or not) in the recruitment market. Reputations are formed in many different ways and, crucially, an organisation cannot choose not to have one. The choice is whether or not an organisation takes steps to manage its reputation. That's where employer branding comes in.

Why do organisations develop employer brands?

Organisations invest time and effort in employer brands to improve their ability to recruit and retain staff at all levels.

Evidence of the impact of employer brand is well charted in business. Of course, for large businesses, their reputation as an employer can also affect their reputation with consumers and therefore their commercial success. However, businesses also work hard to sustain strong employer brands because they know that the recruitment experience can be strongly influential in determining whether good candidates reapply for roles, and what those candidates say to friends and colleagues about the organisation.

Survey of job applicants (all sectors):

Likelihood of re-applying to the same organisation after a positive recruitment experience:

Unlikely	2 per cent
Indifferent	11 per cent
Somewhat likely	56 per cent
Very likely	31 per cent

Source: Euro RSCG Riley, 2006.

Research confirms that a bad experience in the recruitment process has an impact beyond the immediate. A survey of private sector job seekers showed that as a result of a bad recruitment experience, 76 per cent of people were less likely to accept a role with that organisation in the future, and 82 per cent were less likely to recommend that company to a friend (Source: Total Jobs).

Research from the private sector also demonstrates that brands – or reputations – are heavily influenced by personal experience.

**What most affects your impression of an organisation as an employer?
(Top five responses)**

Personal experience	57 per cent
Word of mouth	45 per cent
Corporate website	32 per cent
Commercial success	17 per cent
Newspaper or magazine articles	10 per cent
(all other responses under 10 per cent)	

Source: The Intelligence Revolution, Engage, 2006.

The same research showed that those parts of the recruitment experience involving personal interaction most affected an individual's perception of an organisation. The top five recruitment factors impacting on candidates' perception of the recruiting organisation were identified as:

- the recruitment process.
- the interviewer.
- quality of written correspondence.
- key liaison during the process.
- recruitment advert.

What do employer brands look like in practice?

Almost by definition, there is no common template for what an employer brand looks like. That is because brands are developed to help employers differentiate themselves; how they develop and express their brand is specific to their own circumstances and context and the requirements of the recruitment markets that they target.

However, employer brands are familiar concepts in any sector with large employers which require a steady supply of skills. And great examples of employer brands are just as likely to be found in the public sector as the private sector.

Employer branding case study (private sector): AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. It employs almost 12,000 people in the UK, spread across a number of sites. The company has a continuing demand for skills at all levels – from new graduate to highly qualified specialists in research and development fields.

AstraZeneca's employer brand is an extension of the company's core values and brand essence as a whole. Company values are strongly people focused, valuing staff as individuals as well as team members. In the context of recruitment, the company sets out to attract talent by reflecting the aspirations of candidates (eg to work more flexibly) and demonstrating the values that the company has in common.

In practical terms, the company projects its employer brand consistently across a wide range of communication channels – e-media, advertising, PR, events, informal networking and word of mouth. The company even has an in-house talent search team. All activity is driven by core brand values, with a consistent communications style. At the heart of activity lies an online recruitment centre, providing a common gateway for candidates.

www.careers.astrazeneca.co.uk

Employer branding case study (public sector): NOWpeople

NOWpeople is a consortium of nine local authorities in the North West which have joined together to create a single recruitment brand to promote careers in the public sector and facilitate online recruitment. The initiative is focused on an online gateway at www.nowpeople.co.uk

Whilst the initiative is too broad to exploit all the potential of full employer branding, it delivers significant benefits nonetheless. Crucially, the initiative looks beyond a narrow recruitment brief to set public sector careers in a wider context. It reaches out to a wide audience which may not have previously considered roles in the public service, challenging misconceptions about working for local authorities and setting jobs in the context of making a difference in the community. In addition, the NOWpeople brand raises the profile of working in the North West to people outside the region.

A single recruitment brand has enabled significant economies of scale, reducing traditional press recruitment advertising spend across all nine authorities. At the same time, the combined effort of the authorities has enabled NOWpeople to be promoted on a far larger scale than any one authority could sustain, with a marketing and PR campaign that has kick-started new awareness about working in local government.

The benefits have been both tangible – authorities have reporting filling jobs more quickly – as well as intangible. The project has raised the profile of local government careers across the whole region.

Employer branding in succession planning

Successful development and management of accelerated development pools requires the use of many employer branding techniques. Indeed, for some organisations, development of such a pool may be a starting point to develop a wider employer brand over time.

This is how employer branding theory and practice might apply to the development of accelerated development pools.

- Pools (or development programmes) need a reputation for high quality. Assessment must be rigorous and thorough – and be seen to be so – so that entrants to the pool feel that it means something to be there and (just as importantly) schools place an additional value on candidates emerging from the pool and feel confident to employ them. Everyone who comes into contact with the organisation of the pool must have a high-quality brand experience – from the communications they receive to the organisation of events.
- Candidates within the pool must experience a service personalised to their needs. They should receive regular communications; they should have a personal point of contact; and they should expect that the people supporting their development are tailoring their approach to meet the candidate's circumstances.
- The purpose of the pool should be clear to all, both the people within it and the wider professional community. All communication about the pool should set clear and accurate expectations so that the reality matches (or exceeds) the experience. Too often, such programmes over-promise but under-deliver, gaining a negative reputation as a result.

Further information:

- CIPD, 2004, Branding and People Management: What's in a Name? (hard copy only).

www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/corpstrtgty/general/empbrand.htm

10 characteristics of successful employer brands

1. They reflect reality. Brands are reputations that are built up over long periods – they can't be faked. Superficial marketing that does not reflect candidates' actual experience of an organisation or area will be quickly found out and rejected.
2. They are communicated consistently. Employer branding is not just logos and design although these can be important tools to ensure that a brand is communicated consistently. Consistent visual communication, on- and off-line, are important mechanisms to convey a sense of employer brand.
3. They are modelled through behaviour. Research shows that the most influential factor on employer reputation with job seekers is the personal experience they receive. Those people interacting with candidates must model the values of the employer brand in their behaviour. Everyone.
4. They are relevant to the target market. In recruitment, an effective employer brand reflects the aspirations of the potential candidate and matches the opportunities offered by the employer those aims.
5. They operate across several levels. Successful employer brands reflect the organisation as a whole, and are used to enhance recruitment and retention at all levels, not just leadership posts. The means of engagement is differentiated to meet the needs and aspirations of different groups. Although based on the same values, the style of communication for graduate recruits, for example, is very different from that developed for a senior leader.
6. They are recognised internally as well as externally. Employer brands are just as important internally – to create pride in work and commitment to an organisation – as they are externally. They can also be used to create a recruiting culture, where current leaders become talent scouts to help bring talented people into the organisation.
7. They are constantly measured and evaluated. Employer brands are shaped by the people already in the organisation, as well needing to be responsive to the needs of the external market. In terms of recruitment, feedback from the market (ie candidates) is used consistently to shape the brand.
8. They owe as much to marketing theory as they do to HR practice. Employer branding brings together skills and outlooks from different professional disciplines. In a recruitment context, they bring together robust HR process with imaginative marketing – on equal terms. Successful brands are managed by multi-disciplinary teams.

9. They promote access and personalisation. Processes are designed to ensure convenient access to information (such as through online resources) and to provide a personal experience, for example enquiries are not passed around, candidates are kept informed and basic courtesies are observed.
10. They are backed by a managed infrastructure. Strong brands rely on good management, mindful that a reputation that has taken years to build can be brought down in an instant.

Section 5:

Conclusion

There are real challenges in recruiting to some headships. Market surveys highlight the key pressure points.

Equally, there is evidence to suggest that the leadership talent is out there.

The key themes of effective recruitment planning and marketing set out in this document are as follows.

1. Plan ahead

Potential solutions that involve redesign of the headteacher roles presented to the market require long lead-in times. Options involving, say, federations and collaboratives need careful preparation long before vacancies arise.

2. Position roles for their market

Think about what potential candidates want from a headteacher post as well as what governing bodies are hoping to achieve.

3. Recruitment is marketing

Effective recruitment is about selling, not buying. Every part of the recruitment process must offer candidates a positive experience.

The goal is a more dynamic recruitment market, where more potential school leaders are encouraged to put themselves forward to take on what serving headteachers describe as ‘a deeply rewarding job’.

Finding, developing and keeping great headteachers

**National College for
School Leadership**
Triumph Road
Nottingham NG8 1DH

T: 0845 609 0009
F: 0115 872 2001
E: enquiries@ncsl.org.uk
W: www.ncsl.org.uk