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# OCR LEVEL 2 CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS IN BUSINESS

LEVEL 2 UNIT 4

## Recruitment at Richer Sounds CASE STUDY

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# Case Study: Recruitment at Richer Sounds

## Candidates on trial

Richer Sounds, the electricals retail chain, regards its people as its greatest asset. It has built a reputation for having staff who are not only knowledgeable about the products they sell (TVs, sound systems, home cinema and so on), but also friendly, courteous and approachable. To keep up this reputation, they have to recruit the right people. As a result, they have developed a recruitment process which is more lengthy and searching than is usual for the retail sector.

Richer Sounds' Managing Director and Founder Julian Richer says: "The selection of staff is one of the most important decisions it is possible to make in a company." A business first has to know what kind of people it wants, he says: "Since we are a retailer, you might expect Richer Sounds to be seeking red-hot salespeople. Not at all. The most important quality we look for is friendliness."

### The recruitment process

#### Stage 1

When there is a vacancy for a sales assistant in one of Richer Sounds' 53 stores, the store manager takes the first steps in the recruitment process by placing adverts locally and in the shop window. The company tries to recruit people who are interested in its products and therefore might be customers themselves, or might regularly look in the shop.

The company's website also has a 'Richer Recruits' page, listing all current vacancies and inviting applicants to email a short CV, stating which branch is of interest to them.

The store manager carries out an initial interview with applicants. Managers look for the right personality rather than specific skills, qualifications or experience.

"We hire for personality and train for skills," says Richer Sounds' Operations Director John Clayton, who heads the company's human resources department. "We look for friendly, outgoing people. We want to take on colleagues whom customers will like. We're principally looking for passion and enthusiasm – enthusiasm about the products we sell, about the job, about customer service, and about life in general."

#### Stage 2

Applicants who seem promising at the first interview are invited to spend a 'trial day' working at the store (for which they are paid). Sometimes the trial stretches to two days or even a week.

The trial day is an essential part of the Richer Sounds recruitment process, for both the store and the applicant. The applicant can find out whether he or she is suited to the demands of retail work. They can see whether they would enjoy dealing with customers, whether they would find the job interesting and whether they can take the pace, as they are expected to work hard on the day. At least part of the trial day will involve lifting boxes in the stock room, and not just the more exciting tasks like demonstrating films on a home cinema system.

The trial day enables the manager to make a judgment as to whether the applicant would make a good member of the team. The manager is looking to see if the person is:

- Helpful and courteous with customers
- Keen to work and to pull their weight in the job
- Able to demonstrate common sense and the ability to learn
- A team player who can get on with other colleagues.

After the trial day, the other members of the store team give their opinion on how they thought the candidate performed. No-one is ever hired without having had a trial day.



### Stage 3

If the store manager feels the candidate has done well on the trial day, the person goes for a further interview with Richer Sounds' central Human Resources Department.

At this interview they meet the Operations Director, who assesses their suitability for the job. They are also asked about their long term career plans, as even for junior posts, the company is looking for ambitious people.

We want to build a strong team that lasts," Mr Clayton says. "We are looking for people who want to join us for the long term, who are looking for a career, rather than a job to fill in a few months. We want people who are ambitious, career orientated and who will want to work their way up."

Most of the applicants for a post in one of the shops are young; some are graduates, some are straight from school. But others might apply after several years working for another retailer, or might have worked in another industry and are looking for a change of direction.

"We are willing to look at people with different kinds of experience, as long as their personality seems right for us," Mr Clayton says. "But we like to see evidence of stability in someone's work record – we're not keen on ones who have been flitting from job to job."

While relevant experience and qualifications are helpful for an applicant, Richer Sounds relies more on its own training for new staff. The company takes the view that someone who is enthusiastic about the job will be keen to learn and will respond quickly to training.

If the candidate is approved centrally, references and background checks are followed up carefully. In retail, where large amounts of money flow in and out of a shop, the business has to be confident that its employees are honest.

This three stage recruitment process – local interview, trial day, central office interview – is expensive for the company. But Richer Sounds believes that hiring the wrong people is an even more expensive waste of time in the long term. The company invests time and effort in recruitment and training, with the aim of finding people who not only fit in with the team but also stay with the company. Richer Sounds only promotes from within the organisation – its directors almost all started out working in the shops – so it wants to make sure everyone it takes on has the potential to rise up through the business.

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**Telephone 02476 851509**

**Email [cambridgetechnicals@ocr.org.uk](mailto:cambridgetechnicals@ocr.org.uk)**

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)**