Research on Personnel Recruitment in SMEs

Shitong Wang

Business School, the University of New South Wales Sydney2052, Australia. 694304579@qq.com

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Abstract: SMEs are an important part of the modern national economy, having an absolute advantage in terms of quantity. Besides, it plays a crucial role in driving GDP growth and dealing with employment problems. And meanwhile, corporate recruiters are the first internal personnel to meet with candidates, their dressing, self-cultivation and professional quality are an advertisement of an enterprise, representing the image of the enterprise and demonstrating its corporate culture; therefore, it is significant for enterprises to strengthen training for its recruiting staff. This paper analyzed personnel recruitment by SWOT Analysis so as to find out the causes of problems involved and offer some suggestions to boost enterprise development.

1. Introduction

According to the 2018 Analysis Report on the Status Quo and Opportunities of SMEs, SMEs are an important part of the modern national economy, having an absolute advantage in terms of quantity. Besides, it plays a crucial role in driving GDP growth and dealing with employment problems. However, due to their inherent drawbacks in raising funds and resisting risks, SMEs are confronted with the problems of short life and fast upgradation. Compared with the 8-12-year life cycle of SMEs in other countries, China's SMEs usually have a life cycle of only three years because of the immature enterprise management and operation system [1]. The key to enterprise management lies in personnel recruitment and the idea of "winning talents is wining everything" has been accepted by many enterprise managers [2]. As the only way for enterprises to get talents, recruitment is an important part of human resources. The essence of enterprise competition is the competition of talents; and appropriate recruitment can continuously deliver excellent talents for enterprises and thus equip enterprises with strong vitality and development momentum [3]. The development of any enterprise is a process from being small, weak to large and strong; and the key to good development lies in whether enterprises can attract and retain talents, match talents with positions and make good use of each talent. Therefore, focusing on SMEs, this paper combines the enterprise life cycle theory and SWOT analysis method to review previous relative studies, analyzing and summarizing the status quo and problems of SMEs in the human recruitment process and the causes. It is aimed to propose some feasible and effective methods for dealing with the problems facing SMEs in the recruitment process, improving the efficiency of recruitment as well as the ability of enterprises using talents well, and finally helping enterprises achieve better development.

2. Literature Review

In order to carry out the present research better, this paper takes "SMEs, recruitment" as keywords, and summarizes the studies made by relevant scholars.

2.1 Definition and Characteristics of SMEs

China's definition of SMEs has kept undergoing a process of alteration, upgradation and improvement. The definition of SMEs in this paper follows the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises* (2002 Revision), which defines SMEs as small and medium enterprises of various forms and forms that are established in China,

conducive to meeting social needs and increasing employment, and in line with national industrial policies. At present, countries around the world adopt either qualitative or quantitative method to classify enterprises. While the qualitative method defines an enterprise based on its economic characteristics and control methods, the quantitative method measures the size of an enterprise based on a number of indicators. China adopts the quantitative method, classifying various enterprises according to the number of employees, the industry they belong to, and the turnover, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, the definition of SMEs in this paper is based on the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises* and the official standards for classifying large, medium and small and micro enterprise promulgated by the National Bureau of Statistics of China.

The development of any enterprise is a process from being small to large, and the development of SMEs is of great significance to promoting China's economic development and creating new economic drivers. The development of SMEs boosts China's economic restructuring because it can ease employment and stimulate innovation. During the development, Chinese SMEs also have their own characteristics. To begin with, they possess strong flexibility and adaptability, which enable them to capture the changes in the market and make adjustments accordingly. Second, while technological innovation is updated rapidly, the founders of many technical enterprises are technical talents. Therefore, these enterprises can better apply new technologies to their production and operation activities, and promote the continuous updating and development of technology. Third, SMEs usually have difficulty in raising funds and managing cash flow, which are thus vulnerable to various risks. Compared with large enterprises, SMEs possess limited capital accumulation, weak market position and influence. So, SMEs have inherent deficiency in some way. In China, SMEs are concentrated in labor-intensive industries, causing a large turnover rate of workers as well as great differences in comprehensive capabilities and qualities. On the one hand, labor surplus appears in some enterprises; on the other hand, some enterprises have difficulty in recruiting workers.

Table 1. Standards for the classification of large, medium and small enterprises

Industry	Indicator	Measuremen t unit	Large Enterprise	Middle Enterprise	Small Enterprise	Micro Enterpris e
Agriculture, Forestry, Animal and Husbandry, and Fishery	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥20,000 0	500≤Y<20,000	50≤Y<500	Y<50
Industry	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥1,000	300≤X<1,000	200≤X<300	X<20
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥40,000	2,000≤Y<40,000	300≤Y<2000	Y<300
Construction	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥80,000	6,000≤Y<80,000	300≤Y<600	Y<300
	Total assets (Z)	CNY10,000	Z≥80,000	5,000\(\leq Z < \text{80,000}\)	300≤Z<5000	Z<300
Wholesaling	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥200	20≤X<200	5≤X<20	X<5
	Operating revenues	CNY10,000	Y≥40,000	5,000≤Y<40,000	1000≤Y<5000	Y<1000

	(Y)					
Retailing	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥300	50≤X<300	10≤X<50	X<10
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥20,000	500≤Y<20,000	100≤Y<500	Y<100
Transportation	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥1000	300≤X<1,000	20≤X<300	X<20
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥30,000	3,000≤Y<30,000	200≤Y<3,000	Y<200
Warehousing	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥200	100≤X<200	20≤X<100	X<20
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥30,000	1,000≤Y<30,000	100≤Y<1,000	Y<100
Post industry	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥1,000	300≤X<1,000	20≤X<300	X<20
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥30,000	2,000≤Y<30,000	100≤Y<2,000	Y<100
Accommodatio n	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥300	100≤X<300	10≤X<100	X<10
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥10,000	2,000≤Y<10,000	100≤Y<2,000	Y<100
Catering industry	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥300	100≤X<300	10≤X<100	X<10
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥10,000	2,000≤Y<10,000	100≤Y<2,000	Y<100
Information transmitting	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥2,000	100≤X<2,000	10≤X<100	X<10
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥100,00 0	1,000≤Y<100,00 0	100≤Y<1,000	Y<100
Software & IT	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥300	100≤X<300	10≤X<100	X<10
	Operating revenues	CNY10,000	Y≥10,000	1,000≤Y<10,000	50≤Y<1,000	Y<50

	(Y)					
Real Estate development & management	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥200,00 0	1,000≤Y<200,00 0	100≤Y<1,000	Y<100
	Total assets (Z)	CNY10,000	Z≥10,000	5,000 <u><</u> Z<10,000	2,000 <u><</u> Z<500	Z<2,000
Property management	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥1,000	300≤X<1,000	100≤X<300	X<100
	Operating revenues (Y)	CNY10,000	Y≥5,000	1,000≤Y<5,000	500≤Y<1,000	Y<500
Leasing & business services	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥300	100≤X<300	10≤X<100	X<10
	Total assets (Z)	CNY10,000	Z≥120,000	8,000≤Z<120,000	100≤Z<8,000	Z<100
Other industries	Number of employee s (X)	Person	X≥300	100≤X<300	10≤X<100	X<10

Source: National Bureau of Statistics.

2.2 Definition, Principles, and Assessment of Recruitment

Recruitment is an important part of human resources, and many scholars have studied its definition, characteristics, principles, processes and connotations from an academic perspective. Wu Xianglan (2018) proposed that recruitment refers to a series of management activities including advertising, selection, employment, and evaluation, the first three of which are the core steps [4]. It can be seen that he defined recruitment based on the steps required for finishing recruitment, showing that recruitment is an interlocking process rather than an instant process of interviews. Liao Quanwen (2002) gave an all-round definition of recruitment by combining enterprise development with human resources. He believes that recruitment is the channel for enterprises to obtain qualified talents so as to meet the needs of organizations for survival and development. It is a process of analyzing the quantity and quality requirements of organizational human resource planning, releasing recruitment information and conducting scientific selection, and finally obtaining the qualified personnel required by the company and arranging them to work in the appropriate positions [4]. This definition emphasizes that the premise of implementing recruitment is human resource planning and job analysis, which stresses that the purpose of recruitment is to match talents with enterprise needs and job requirements. Yao Zhaoxia (2014) proposed four principles of recruitment. First, it should be of fair competition, that is, the vacant positions should be open and the evaluation criteria should be established to ensure the fairness of the talent selection system. Second, it should match the ability of candidates with the vacant positions, thus making the best use of talents recruited. Third, it should be efficient, which means that the recruitment work can be carried out with low cost and various channels. Forth, it should be a two-way process. Recruitment is a process of interaction between enterprises and candidates, so the recruitment needs to be based on the principle of mutual voluntary. Later, with the research on recruitment being continuously deepened, the principles of recruitment have been expanded to complying with laws and regulations and considering the future strategic development of enterprises. In order to help enterprises, improve recruitment efficiency, a lot of research is centered on how to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment, and the factors that affect the success of recruitment. On the whole, managers' satisfaction with new employees, new employees' satisfaction with the enterprise and work, the cost and benefits of

recruitment, new employees' work performance, and the turnover rate can all be used as factors in evaluating the recruitment. With the continuous development of society, young people born in the 90s begin to appear in the contingent of job hunting. The factors affecting the recruitment of an enterprise include the market position of the enterprise, industry prospects, salary and benefits and other working environments of the enterprise, time cost, the comfort level of work, the personal charm of the direct leaders of a position, and some more complicated factors. These factors cause the recruitment work to shift form focusing on hard conditions only to paying more attention to emotional output, cultural attraction, concept communication, and other humanized soft conditions. Therefore, it can be seen that recruitment is a comprehensive system with the features of being matching, forward-looking, complementary, interactive, diverse, versatile, and borderless. Instead of being a simple interviewing process, recruitment is aimed to match talents with positions well.

2.3 Business Life Cycle of Enterprises

The enterprise life cycle theory regards an enterprise as a living body with life characteristics, and divides the development of an enterprise into different stages. Luo Lan (2019) summarized the development of the life cycle theory at home and abroad (see Figure 2), revealing the development, revision and expansion of the life cycle theory. The academic community has put forward many ideas on how to divide the life cycle of an enterprise and the factors for reference when making division, as shown in Figure 3. This paper agrees that, based on sales volume and profits, the business life cycle can be divided into four stages: initial stage, growth stage, maturity stage and recession stage. The survival and development of SMEs also follow this life cycle. Therefore, when discussing the issue of manpower recruitment, it is also necessary to consider which stage an enterprise has reached, which helps ensure that recruitment can better serve the development of the enterprise.

Enterprises can divide the business life cycle into four stages based on changes in sales and profits.

Table 2. Development of research on the life cycle theory

Research stage	Period	Research focus	Relevant scholars
Beginning	1950s-1960s	Features of enterprise life cycle	
Describing the model	1970s-1980s	Introducing the enterprise growth model by combining the theory of business of life cycle, and using the model to analyze the development route of enterprises	Haire, Gardner, Adizes
Correcting & Improving	1990s	Conducting empirical research on enterprise life cycle and dividing the cycles	Anthony, Ramesh, Chen Jiagui
Expanding	2000-	Using the life cycle theory to explain the actual problems facing enterprises' development	Balkin, Montemayer, Guo Bin

Table 3. Standards for dividing the stages of life cycle proposed by scholars at home and abroad

Scholar	Publishing year	Division standards	Divided stages	
Gort, Klepper	1980	Cost composition, core competiveness	Entry, survival, development, take-off, and maturity	
Quim	1983	Management style, Organization structure	initial stage, collective stage, formal control stage, and structure segmentation stage	
Sun Jianqiang	2003	Growth rate of operating revenues, dropping cost rate, scale expansion	start-up, growth, maturity, and decline	
Gu Ligang	2006	Enterprise system	incubation, infancy, toddler, puberty, heyday, stability, nobility, early bureaucracy, bureaucracy and death	
Fang Li	2008	enterprise operating years, main business income, total assets at the end of the year	start-up, growth, maturity, and decline	
Sun Zhenglin, Wang Yaowu, Liu Hongna,	2009	Enterprise scale	incubation, growth, maturity, and decline	
Liu Sihui	2001	The sum of sales growth rate and capital expenditure growth	growth, maturity, and decline	

2.4 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is a research method based on the combination of the characteristics of the research object and its internal and external environments.

The four capital letters in SWOT analysis stand for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats respectively, which are used in areas such as human resource management and enterprise management. Based on the SWOT analysis method, this paper analyzes the causes of problems involved in the human recruitment process of SMEs, with the aim to help improve the recruitment efficiency of SMEs.

3. Analysis of the Causes of Problems Involved in SMEs' Recruitment

3.1 Problems Facing the Recruitment of SMEs

The academic community has studied and summarized the problems existing in SMEs' recruitment. Liu Hongjuan (2019) studied the current situation of SMEs' recruitment, summarized the problems involved in recruitment concept, thinking, and recruitment process, and proposed relative solutions (8). Starting with the recruitment interview, Li Liang (2019) analyzed the problems of SMEs in the interview operation with the job matching model (9). From the perspective of corporate strategy, Li Songdan (2019) put forward the problems of SMEs' recruitment in terms of recruiting team and quality (10). Hu Haohuan (2018) deeply analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of various recruitment channels, and proposed solutions to relative problems of combining the channel selection with manpower planning in SME recruitment (11). This paper analyzes the problems of SMEs' recruitment and the related causes. The problems existing in the recruitment of SMEs are summarized as follows. First, the recruitment efficiency is low; second, the

recruitment channel is single; third, personnel and positions don't match well. From the perspective of business life cycle theory, the cognition of SMEs' leaders, enterprise manpower planning, and the overall quality of human resources team, this paper analyzes the causes of the problems.

3.1.1 Low Recruitment Efficiency

Recruitment efficiency is a complex variable that refers to the time spent by recruiters, the money cost, and the level of satisfaction of a department with employees recruited. For most labor-intensive SMEs, "labor shortage" is an urgent problem to be solved, especially for some jobs with relatively high mobility. A challenge facing manpower recruiters is to recruit employees in a short time. In addition, it is more difficult for recruiters to ensure the recruited personnel can better fit the positions and are satisfied by the department. Therefore, how to improve the efficiency of recruitment has become an urgent problem for SMEs.

3.1.2 Single Recruitment Channel

There are various channels of recruitment, including on-site recruiting, online recruiting, traditional media advertising, campus recruiting, acquaintance recommendation, social network recruiting, headhunting and so on. Each recruitment channel has its own strengths and weaknesses, and is applicable to different positions and business scope. SMEs generally adopt online recruiting, on-site recruiting, and campus recruiting, mainly because of the low cost of these methods. However, a single recruitment channel is likely to lead an enterprise to recruit personnel for different departments through the same channel, which is not conducive to the recruitment of the most suitable employees and indirectly increases the workload of recruiters. Preferring certain recruitment channels and ignoring other recruitment channels can cause enterprises to lose many potential job seekers. Under a single channel, new employees recruited usually have little difference in education level, which limits the ability of job seekers to a certain level and thus reduces the range for enterprises to select talents.

3.1.3 Low Level of Matching between Personnel and Positions

Many SMEs have encountered various difficulties in their development, so they are eager to have high-level talents to join them. Therefore, job seekers with high education degree and work experience in large enterprises have been highly favored. The purpose of recruiting top talents is to show the "strengths" of an enterprise. However, candidates with high education degree and experience in large enterprises may not be able to well integrate into SMEs, because SMEs have their own unique corporate culture. Therefore, whether the new employees can integrate well into an SME decides whether they can adapt to the living environment of the enterprise and help promote its development. On the one hand, blindly pursuing candidates with high academic qualifications and work skills but neglecting the real needs of the vacant positions will block the talents really needed by an enterprise. On the other hand, if the new employees with high standards are put into positions involving simple and repetitive tasks, they will be psychologically imbalanced, thus resulting in instability and high turnover rate.

3.2 Analysis of Related Reasons

The academic community has rarely analyzed the causes of problems involved in the recruitment of SMEs. However, effective solutions to those problems can be found only through in-depth analysis of the causes of the problems. Therefore, starting from the business life cycle theory, this paper reveals that the problems arising in the recruitment process are inevitable during the development of an enterprise. This is because the development of each enterprise is affected by the laws of life cycle, especially for SMEs.

3.2.1 Impact of Different Development Stages on SMEs

The business life cycle theory has been elaborated in detail above, which proves that enterprises have their different characteristics in different stages of development. And SMEs are in a disadvantage position in terms of social influence and market share due to their inherent deficiency in scale, capital, and brand influence. Vulnerability to risks as well as high pressure from

performance are the two inevitable problems facing SMES in their survival and development. Therefore, when recruiting new employees, it is necessary for these enterprises to consider their development stages and characteristics, and adopt different recruitment channels and methods in different stages. Sometimes, a single channel is required, while sometimes a combination of different channels is required, which means that the recruitment work is not static. Instead, it needs to be flexible in different ways at different stages of SME development.

3.2.2 Enterprise Leaders' Inadequate Understanding of Recruitment

Survival and performance pressure are the primary issues facing managers. Meanwhile, SMEs' managers do not necessarily have management concepts and many family businesses still ignore the importance of recruiting talents. In the early stage of the development, many SMEs reduce the demand for talents in order to save costs. Therefore, the management of SMEs in China often rushes in the recruitment process without considering whether the new employees fit the vacant positions. In addition, the departments with recruiting demand also lack a certain professional cognition for recruitment, do not understand the vacancy needs, and cannot explain the content of the work well. They often hold some unprofessional attitudes such as "as long as we can recruit people that can work", "cheating candidate into joining us with high standards at first is more important", or "as long as the candidates have high education degree". These unprofessional attitudes usually mislead recruiters and thus result in mismatch between the positions and new employees. Therefore, the neglect of talents recruitment by the SMEs' managers and departments with vacancies, and the lack of expertise in human resources are also an important cause leading to the difficulty of recruitment.

3.2.3 Lack of Strategic Human Resource Planning and Professional Teams

For SMEs, the lack of professional human resource planning is an important reason why they have difficulty in carrying out recruitment work effectively. Limited to their development stages, SMEs have great trouble in developing a systematic, sustainable and scientific human resource planning that is rational and coordinated with their development strategies. The recruitment work of many SMEs is temporary; and they will release recruitment information only when an employee suddenly quits and leaves a vacancy. Therefore, they have no recruitment planning, complete talent reserve and development plans, or clear job analysis, just regarding recruitment as a temporary work. As a result, the recruitment work is usually blind and fragmented due to incomplete and short-term considerations, which may even lead to the imbalance of personnel structure in a certain period and thus restrict the healthy development of an enterprise. Seemingly, recruitment is a simple process of collecting employment needs, releasing recruitment information, and conducting interviews. Instead, every link requires strong professionalism. How to develop a human resource plan that is in line with the development of the enterprise, to write a job recruitment plan that meets the needs of the employer, to grasp the key needs of the position, and to conduct effective interviews involve a lot of professional knowledge and require practice and experience. However, it is difficult for SMEs to recruit people with professional knowledge and experience in human resources in the early stage of its development, thus making their personnel recruitment difficult.

4. Suggestions on Improving the Efficiency of SMEs' Recruitment

The academic community has been concerned about how to improve the efficiency of SMEs' recruitment for long and many scholars have conducted research on this issue. This paper puts forward specific measures for improving the efficiency of SMEs' recruitment from four aspects: the attention enterprise managers pay to recruitment, the diversity of recruitment channels, the professionalism of recruiters, and a comprehensive and systematic human resources planning.

To begin with, corporate leaders and department heads should attach importance to human resource management. The survival and development of enterprises boil down to the recruitment of talents. Therefore, business managers or departments with vacancies should pay more attention to the role of the human resources department. Meanwhile, they should keep learning about human resources management and abandon the idea that "recruitment is a matter of the human resources

department and has nothing to do with us". Departments with vacancies should deeply analyze the requirements of vacant positions and express them clearly to job seekers, which can help the recruitment department better make the recruitment plan and reduce the mismatch between personnel and positions.

Second, it is advisable to use SWOT analysis of enterprises to improve the overall planning of enterprise human resources. The future development of an enterprise can be well grasped only when the management has an in-depth understanding of its current development, including the analysis of its current environment, and advantages and disadvantages. An in-depth understanding of the enterprise can help clarify the concept of recruitment and make human resources plans with guiding and practical significance. Therefore, human resources planning and recruitment planning cannot be separated from the development of an enterprise. Instead, they should be based on the comprehensive understanding of the enterprise and then scientific deployment. Therefore, forward-looking human resource planning can help enterprises reserve talents in advance and reduce turnover of staff.

Third, it is worthwhile to improve the recruitment process, enrich the recruitment channels, and summarize and reflect on recruitment work timely. In addition to being a part of the interview, recruitment also requires full preparation. In other words, recruiters should understand the needs of each position, the core skills required by a position, and carefully consider the selection of recruitment channels. At different development stages, an enterprise has corresponding personnel demand; and the way to obtain qualified personnel should be determined according to the content of the job and technological requirements. Besides being diverse, recruitment channels should also be targeted. It is necessary to establish a talent information database and improve the talent reserve mechanism. In order to save the recruitment cost and provide relative opportunities for applicants, an enterprise should carry out standardized management on the information of potential candidates. The summary of recruitment work is also an important part of SMEs' recruitment. The end of the recruitment process does not mean the completion of the recruitment work. Instead, SMEs should analyze and summarize the recruitment work in time. For instance, they should reflect that whether the recruitment work is implemented as planned, that whether the recruitment budget is overrun, that whether the recruitment channels are effective, that whether the interview method is appropriate, and that whether the recruitment criteria can meet the job requirements. They can learn from the success and failure of the recruitment through the summary and induction afterwards. When necessary, it is advisable to record the recruitment in the form of words, which can help an enterprise develop strengths and avoid weaknesses in the follow-up recruitment work and thus gradually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the recruitment work. Besides, the recruitment strategies that are consistent with the characteristics of the enterprise can also be summarized to gradually standardize future recruitment work.

Fourth, the human resources department had better ensure good coordination and communication with the departments with vacancies and provide timely feedback. While different managers demonstrate different management and recruitment style in the process of team formation and management, different individuals exert different influences on the team because of their own personality and experience. Therefore, the recruitment department needs to accurately grasp the situation of internal team in the enterprise through observation, communication and continuous summary. When there is recruitment demand, recruiters should be clear about what character is more suitable for the team. It is necessary to strengthen communication with the departments with vacancies, grasp the most important job requirements for the vacant position, and finally select the best candidates after making sure that the candidates meet all the key requirements of the departments with vacancies.

Finally, enterprises should strengthen training for its recruiting staff. Since corporate recruiters are the first internal personnel to meet with candidates, their dressing, self-cultivation and professional quality are an advertisement of an enterprise, representing the image of the enterprise and demonstrating its corporate culture. Their way of speaking, personal cultivation, and professionalism will affect the determination of excellent candidates, thus influencing the quality and success of

recruitment. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of SMEs' recruitment activities, it is necessary to improve the quality of recruiters, deepen their understanding of corporate culture, strengthen the communication between the recruitment department and the departments with vacancies, and finally make the recruitment department a booster for enterprise development.

5. Conclusion

As an important part of China's economic development, SMEs are confronted with many difficulties in their own development, especially in the recruitment and selection of talents. Focusing on the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of SMEs' recruitment process, this paper analyzes the causes of these problems from the enterprise itself and its internal and external environments, and then proposes specific solutions to the problems. It is hoped that these suggestions can help SMEs deal with the problems in the recruitment process and drive their further development. However, since the recruitment problems facing each SME in its development are unique, enterprises should consider their real situation when using these methods instead of indiscriminately adopt them.

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