A CASE STUDY ON THE PRACTICE OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION IN SMES IN PUERTO RICO

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Abstract: This qualitative case study explores recruitment and selection practices in small businesses (SMEs) in Puerto Rico. The recruitment and selection process are one of the first activities within the human resources area that companies carry out to attract and integrate qualified and talented people. Recruiting and selecting the best talent, makes a distinctive difference between successful companies and therefore, improving recruitment and selection strategy proves to be an excellent vehicle for promoting productivity (Kumari, 2012). SMEs experience great difficulties due to their small size and limited knowledge about human resource management (Martínez, 2013). In general, they lack a formal strategy that allows them to recruit and select those resources that support the performance of their company (Torres, 2014). The literature review emphasizes recruitment and selection as the main drivers of business performance (Haruna & Hippolyte, 2017). To collect data, staff directly involved in the recruitment and selection process representing three SMEs in the service sector were interviewed. The interviews were based on a semi-structured question guide. The responses provided information about their recruitment and selection processes, which allowed the researcher to understand each participant's perspective. As a result of this research, participating companies lack a formal recruitment and selection strategy and policy. Its processes are traditional, using technological elements. They present challenges in the process that are common within Puerto Rican organizations.

Keywords: Strategy, SMEs, recruitment, human resources, selection.

UN ESTUDIO DE CASO SOBRE LA PRÁCTICA DE RECLUTAMIENTO Y SELECCIÓN EN LAS PYMES EN PUERTO RICO

Resumen: Este estudio de caso cualitativo explora las prácticas de reclutamiento y selección en las pequeñas empresas (pymes) en Puerto Rico. El proceso de reclutamiento y selección es una de las primeras actividades dentro del área de recursos humanos que realizan las empresas para atraer e integrar personas cualificadas y talentosas. Reclutar y seleccionar al mejor talento marca una diferencia distintiva entre las empresas exitosas, y por consiguiente, mejorar

la estrategia de reclutamiento y selección resulta ser un excelente vehículo para promover la productividad (Kumari, 2012). Las pymes experimentan grandes dificultades debido a su tamaño reducido y escasos conocimientos sobre la gestión del recurso humano (Martínez, 2013). Por lo general, carecen de una estrategia formal que les permita reclutar y seleccionar aquellos recursos que apoyen el desempeño de su empresa (Torres, 2014). La revisión de literatura enfatiza el reclutamiento y la selección como los principales impulsores del desempeño empresarial (Haruna & Hippolyte, 2017). Para recopilar datos, se entrevistó al personal directamente involucrado en el proceso de reclutamiento y selección que representa tres pymes en el sector de servicios. Las entrevistas se basaron en una guía de preguntas semiestructuradas. Las respuestas proporcionaron información sobre sus procesos de reclutamiento y selección, lo cual permitió al investigador comprender la perspectiva de cada participante. Como resultado de esta investigación, las empresas participantes carecen de una estrategia y política formal de reclutamiento y selección. Sus procesos son tradicionales, utilizando elementos tecnológicos. Presentan retos en el proceso que son comunes dentro de las organizaciones puertorriqueñas.

Palabras claves: Estrategia, pymes, reclutamiento, recursos humanos, selección.

Introduction

The success of an organization is based on implementing effective recruitment and selection practices (Ekwoaba, Ikeije, & Ufoma, 2015), as they enable companies to work with high-performing employees who are also satisfied with their work, which according to Oaya, Ogbu, and Remileken (2017) positively affects the company's bottom line, ensuring a competitive advantage over competitors.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a key part of Puerto Rico's economy, and the human factor is an asset related to the success and competitiveness of this type of organization (Ley de Incentivos para la Generación y retención de empleos en PyMEs (2014). Effective recruitment and selection practices are critical to human resource management activities, especially for SMEs, to promote sustainable performance in order to retain top talent (Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001).

Based on the above assumptions, a case study was conducted to explore the recruitment and selection practices in three SMEs in the service sector in Puerto Rico, based on the central question of the study: what are the practices and activities implemented by the personnel involved in the recruitment and selection processes? The study investigates the perceptions and experiences of the recruitment and selection processes carried out by the people responsible for this process.

In order to better understand the recruitment and selection practices of SMEs, we reviewed the literature on the topic of study, which focuses on the perspective of large companies, and comes largely from other countries, since the Puerto Rican literature is scarce.

In turn, it emphasizes recruitment and selection as the main drivers of business performance, with an emphasis on recruiting the best talent to maximize efficiency (Haruna & Hippolyte, 2017). Similarly, the theories presented are mainly related to human resources strategy and processes, emphasizing the contribution of human resources as the main unit of business success.

Method

The scope of the case study is exploratory. The main objective is to listen, explain and understand the experiences of those responsible for the recruitment and selection process in their natural environment and thus describe common elements from different experiences.

The data collection instrument is the researcher. According to Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández Collado and Baptista-Lucio, 2014, it is one of the fundamental characteristics of the qualitative process. Personnel directly involved in the recruitment and selection process were contacted directly through the interview technique. The interviews were based on a guide of semi-structured questions with some additional questions to clarify concepts and obtain additional information. The responses provided information about their recruitment and selection processes, which allowed the researcher to understand each participant's perspective.

The research design is phenomenological, since experiences were collected directly from the participants, allowing the researcher to obtain their statements about their knowledge, experiences and experiences on the topic studied. The unit of analysis object of the study are three service sector companies classified as SMEs. The study sample is non-probabilistic because they are cases that fit particular criteria. The analysis of the data is assisted by the MAXQDA program to segment, code, relate concepts, categories and research themes, allowing to analyze the research data qualitatively.

During the data analysis process, the variables related to the research were identified. Finally, inductive reasoning is used to infer about the phenomenon in a broader and more general way in the analysis of the data.

Results

The results of this case study reveal informative insights into recruitment and selection practices in SMEs in Puerto Rico. The participating companies follow fairly similar recruitment and selection processes to attract, evaluate and integrate qualified and talented people. They are constantly on the lookout to identify and integrate people who are potentially suitable to fill a vacancy, using a combination of traditional and modern techniques.

The role in the recruitment and selection process in the participating companies is shared between the human resources (HR) representative, manager and/or director. According to Arthur (2019) and Chiavenato, (2009), such collaboration is important to face the different challenges of carrying out the recruitment and selection process.

Contrary to the position of Martínez (2013) on the scarce professionalization in small and medium-sized companies, the interviewees and their managers responsible for the recruitment and selection process possess professionalism in this field despite their scarce formal training on the subject.

Respondents mentioned having legal knowledge about recruitment and selection from the point of view of employment law, diversity, fairness, fair processes and common sense practices. This explains their understanding of the importance of anti-discrimination laws. While they are no strangers to the legal aspect of recruitment and selection, both Arthur (2019) and Breaugh (2016)

emphasize the importance that a better understanding of the law will help them prevent unintentional violations or breaches that may lead to litigation.

Having a written recruitment and selection policy and procedure allows for better planning in identifying the human resources that are critical to the achievement of the organization's goals in a given period of time to achieve an efficient and productive process (Chiavenato, 2017; Arthur, 2019). It is also a communication and training tool to carry out the process in a congruent manner with all those responsible for recruitment and selection. An interviewee has a written policy for an equitable process among job applicants. Another interviewee has a policy that standardizes recruitment processes; however, it lacks a selection policy. Finally, the third interviewee is guided by a formal recruitment and selection process and makes decisions by consensus for the selection of the final candidate.

In general, the guidelines and policies used by the companies participating in this study cover two stages of the employment process: the search for candidates to fill a vacant position, how to identify and attract them and; secondly, the evaluation of the steps to select the most appropriate resource (Oaya et al., 2017).

The interviews conducted showed that the recruitment and selection practices of the participating companies are similar, a process that is illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1

Recruitment and selection process flow for participating companies
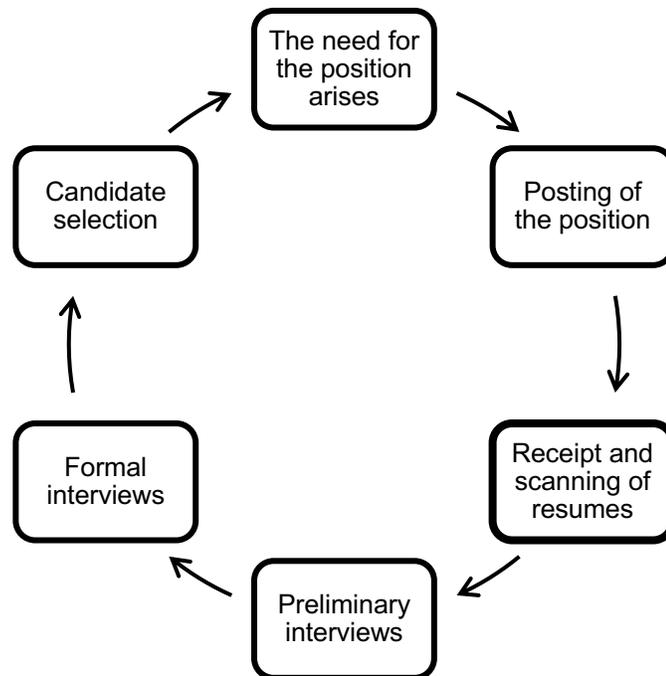
The process starts with the need to hire employees, when the company manager informs his HR representative about the need to start the hiring process. The first step is to create or review

the job description or vacancy with the department manager and the owner of the company to obtain the information for approval. Once approved, they proceed to publish it. Another interviewee mentions that as soon as the need arises, they consider how to handle the vacancy. The next interviewee mentions that they first identify the need; discuss it with the company's vice president to determine the need for the position, review or create the job description, and define the person's role in the business, and then proceed to approve the position.

According to the expressions of Mitchel and Gamlem (2017), interviewees stop to evaluate and point out the steps to follow as soon as the position became available or vacant before starting the recruitment process. The authors mention that this is the best opportunity to update the requirements and responsibilities of the position by analyzing the changes occurring inside and outside the organization.

In Mitchel and Gamlem's (2017) recommendations, all interviewees mentioned the need to create and/or modify the job description before starting the recruitment process. However, as part of the authors' recommendations, one of the interviewees stated that in addition to assessing the need for the position, they examine the budget available to fill it, whether it should be filled, and whether it helps the company achieve its objectives.

Once a position has been approved for posting, HR representatives use the external recruitment method: they conduct the search outside the organization by activating recruitment techniques to attract potential candidates (Society for Human Resource Management, n.d.). The interviewees refer that they use various media, mainly, social networks, to publicize the existence of employment opportunities (Chiavenato, 2017).

The internal recruitment method of the participating companies is virtually non-existent: they have no established process to encourage employees to apply for positions of interest that represent opportunities for career growth (Society for Human Resource Management, n.d.). One of these companies promotes employees on the recommendation of the manager; the second company creates development plans to take employees to the next career level; and the third company advertises the position only if there are employees interested in the position. However, none of the three companies are faithful in the internal publication of their posts.

As mentioned by Breaugh (2016), each recruitment method has its own advantages and disadvantages. None is better than the other. Each organization should develop its own combination of methods based on its nature and experience.

In this regard, the participating companies use various recruitment techniques to attract candidates and to advertise their vacancies. The most frequent are through social networks and job portals (Facebook, Indeed, LinkedIn). Respondents mentioned that they use them depending on the job classification. In the opinion of Arthur (2019), the use of these techniques is mainly in the employment decision-making process, and is the means mostly used by individuals seeking employment, and by employers to gather information about the employees they want to hire.

The least used techniques reported by interviewees were employee referrals, universities and job fairs. It should be noted that one of the companies only uses the company's website to receive resumes, while another reported that their company's referral program is very slow to generate candidates.

Respondents mentioned two hiring techniques that were not reflected in the Society for Human Resource Management (2017) survey. One of the participating companies advertises its

vacancies using an e-mail database of potential candidates. What is called in technical jargon *e-blast*: sending a copy of the same email to many people at once. One of the participating companies employs students as university interns and then hires them.

Below, Table 1 presents a list of the recruitment techniques reflected in the survey conducted by the *Society for Human Resource Management* (2017) and those used by the participating companies:

Table 1
Recruitment techniques used by participating companies

Recruitment Techniques	Percentage	P3	P2	P1
Employee referrals	90%	X	X	
Company website	85%		X	X
Free jobs website	71%	X		
Paid jobs website	68%			
Social networking website	67%	X	X	X
Informal networking	53%			
Employment agencies: temporary or regular	40%	X		
University field recruitment	39%			
On-site job fairs	39%	X	X	
Employment agencies: direct recruitment	36%			
Networking event	32%			
Printed publication	31%			
Online University Recruitment	30%			X
Commercial publications	11%			
Virtual job fairs	9%			
Radio advertising	8%	X		
Others	3%		X	X
TV advertising	2%			

Note. Adapted from Society for Human Resource Management (2017).

The companies participating in this study mainly use social networks and job portals compared to the results of the Society for Human Resource Management (2017) survey, where employee referrals are shown to be the most used. While respondents found a combination of these techniques to be the most effective method, one respondent mentioned that employee referrals were the most successful method of lead generation.

A survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2016) on the use of social media reflects that there has been an increase in the use of technology to attract job candidates who are smartphone users. However, participating companies do not use this technology as a recruiting technique.

One of the recruitment techniques used by the participating companies consists of receiving resumes from candidates interested in the vacancies posted. HR reads and scrutinizes the resumes received to select those who meet the job requirements. As part of this initiative, they begin by contacting selected candidates for preliminary interviews to first identify their interests and

determine whether or not they meet the job requirements (Arthur, 2019; Chiavenato, 2017; Mitchell & Gamlem, 2017).

In agreement with Chiavenato (2017), HR uses the preliminary interview as a first filter to separate the candidates who will continue the selection process from those who do not present the desired conditions to, then, proceed with a more in-depth interview conducted by the managers who need the position.

The formal interviews conducted by the managers of the participating companies are departmental and panel type (Arthur (2019). Sometimes they include HR. As Arthur (2019) mentions, an interview is an encounter between the candidate and one or more representatives during the selection process, and panel interviews allow interviewers to compare candidates' impressions when answering questions. Some interviewees stated that, depending on the situation and availability of the manager, one-on-one interviews could be arranged.

According to Restrepo, Ladino and Orozco (2008), the competency model is one of the most important in the recruitment and selection process. It should be noted that the competency method was not presented as one of the recruitment and selection techniques used by two of the participating companies. On the other hand, two of these companies use situational questions as a selection technique, while the third uses simulation questions.

Respondents mentioned that they use knowledge, technical and psychometric tests in their selection process. The knowledge and/or technical tests are prepared internally by the manager and sometimes in conjunction with HR, while the psychometric tests used by one of the companies are acquired through a supplier and validated by them.

Although two of the interviewees indicated the use of tests prepared and validated by them, it should be noted that any tests used in the selection process for employment decision making must be empirical or data that can be accurately inferred from scores on a given job selection objective (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Validation of the tests will minimize any discriminatory employment claims.

All participating companies use employment references and background checks as part of their selection process. However, it is important to consider that the information obtained may exclude any applicant on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 years or older), and genetic information (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.).

Participating companies have adopted virtual employment interviews due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has transformed their recruitment processes by circumventing on-site candidate visits and their partial use in the candidate selection process (Klahre, 2020; Maurer, 2021). According to interviewees, in the last two years, Covid-19 has revolutionized the use of technology in the recruitment and selection process by facilitating interaction between potential candidates and the company, allowing instant and fast communication without them having to leave their homes (Chiavenato, 2009).

Recruitment and selection are activities related to the strategy of companies, adding value to both the organization and the people (Chiavenato, 2009). It is essential to measure the results and their impact on the organization's goals and the participants' satisfaction with the process. Interviewees acknowledge that they do not measure the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process.

In contrast to the recruitment process model presented by Breaugh (2016), it can be inferred that the participating companies do not have specific objectives related to the strategic objectives of the organization; therefore, measurement and evaluation of the results of the efforts to determine their impact on the organization's goals and objectives is limited. This is despite the fact that one of the interviewees mentioned the use of metrics in their recruitment and selection process, such as return on investment, employee retention time, time and cost to hire, departmental effectiveness, and surveys of hired employees to learn about the effectiveness of their company's recruitment and selection process.

This does not negate the fact that recruitment and selection strategy plays an important role in the company's goals and objectives, as stated by Hay Group Pte Ltd (2004) and Cejas and Chirinos (2013). These indicate that a recruitment and selection process that is not aligned with the organization's philosophies and objectives can harm production, customer satisfaction, supplier relationships and overall quality of work.

Breaugh (2016) and Chiavenato (2017) show that outcome measurement and evaluation of recruitment efforts is a key activity in determining whether recruitment objectives have been met. However, they mention that many organizations informally evaluate their recruitment efforts.

Regarding the common challenges they face in the recruitment and selection processes, the interviewees in this study expressed difficulty in finding candidates who meet the minimum requirements of the position they are advertising, who are committed to the position, and who accept the job offer. They agreed that the situation worsened when the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020, which represents one of the challenges that has affected their recruitment process to some extent. They cite government financial aid, salary and remote work instead of face-to-face work as reasons for attracting candidates.

Another challenge for the company is the lack of commitment from candidates: they do not return phone calls, do not prepare for interviews and are careless in the selection process. According to the interviewee, this situation adds time to the recruitment and selection process.

Similarly, the participating companies present additional challenges in attracting personnel involved in the use of technology in its different modalities. Also align the candidate's salary expectations with the market reality of your company.

An interesting finding during the interview process is that interviewees consider as an important characteristic in their selection process that the candidate must integrate well with their organizational culture, which encompasses their values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and behavior. This ties in with the words of Armstrong (2009) and Arthur (2019) when they mention that it is not necessary to merely identify the most qualified candidates, but also to identify the right person for the organization's culture.

It should be noted that, despite considering the characteristics of organizational culture in recruiting and selecting candidates, Chiavenato (2017), Mitchell and Gamlem (2017), and Fisher, Schoenfeldt, and Shaw. (2006) mention two disadvantages to consider: first, new employees need more time to integrate and learn the culture of the organization and, second, there is not much information about the candidate except what was said in the interview and information from employment references.

Discussion and conclusions

The results of this case study are based on the exploration of recruitment and selection practices through interviews with human resources personnel from three service industry companies representing SMEs in Puerto Rico. As part of the overall objective of the research, the participating companies were able to describe the practices and activities they perform in the recruitment and selection process by answering guiding questions from the researcher.

The answers provided by the participating companies showed that they carry out their recruitment and selection processes in collaboration with HR and managers, which leads to the conclusion that they manage to do it successfully because of this joint work. Failure to do so can prolong the hiring process or lead to poor selection decisions that often lead to morale and performance issues and ultimately turnover (Arthur, 2019).

The case study shows that in order to function effectively in the recruitment and selection process, skills, abilities, knowledge and experience are necessary to hire the best talent for the organization and minimize the legal labor risks that limit their development. While human resources representatives have demonstrated skills, knowledge, and experience in this field, it is important for the organization's managers to have first-hand knowledge of the labor laws related to the recruitment and selection process (Arthur, 2019).

According to HR, managers' expertise is derived from their experience in implementing the recruitment and selection process (Rodriguez-Moreno, 2012). However, HR, as well as managers, do not have formal training on this topic, especially as it relates to labor laws applicable to the recruitment and selection process.

Consistent with Arthur (2019), HR is responsible for ensuring full compliance with state and federal labor laws and regulations, as well as raising awareness of how they affect job applicants and employees. He adds that managers should familiarize themselves with basic information related to equal employment opportunity legislation, understand which employment questions are off limits, and be responsible for ensuring that the entire process is free of bias.

It should be noted that the success of any organization, regardless of its size, is strongly linked to the quality of the recruitment process (Breaugh, 2016), leading to the conclusion that attracting the best talent will bring a competitive advantage to any business (Chiavenato, 2017). From that perspective, participating companies join efforts with the objective of recruiting the best talent for their organization using traditional recruitment and selection techniques and procedures despite the evolution in that field, which is driven by strategic issues, social pressures and technological developments (Derous & Fruyt, 2016).

Arthur (2019) emphasizes that the way a company recruits affects the people it hires, as well as their expected performance or output. He adds that to achieve this objective, it is necessary to balance those recruitment initiatives carried out in the past, learned mostly by tradition, or custom and usage, by objectively assessing whether established recruitment policies and practices will help or hinder recruitment efforts.

Thus, it is concluded that the participating companies base their recruitment and selection efforts on their experience of the process and communicate their method of implementation without formal policies and procedures to support them in better recruitment, selection and retention of employees, which is consistent with the findings of Rodriguez-Moreno (2012).

Regarding the recruitment and selection practices carried out by the participating companies, it was concluded that they are closer to the best fit theory although they do not have a formal recruitment and selection strategy to help them direct their efforts more effectively. HR explained that their recruitment and selection practice aims to select the best talent to fit their company's position. They seek compatibility of the person with the job and the organization (Sekiguchi, 2004), which leads to the rejection of the resources and capabilities theory as the basis of this study, as it emphasizes the importance of strategic human resource management in order to engender organizational success by enhancing the firm's ability to acquire, develop, utilize, and retain employees with high levels of competence relevant to the firm's activities (Fisher et al., 2006).

According to Restrepo, Ladino and Orozco (2008), the competency model is one of the most important changes in the recruitment and selection processes. In contrast to traditional recruitment, these authors argue that the competency-based model does not simply look for candidates, but directs its efforts towards the search for competencies through different sources of talent acquisition. Alles (2009) defines the competency model as the set of processes related to the people who make up the organization and whose purpose is to align them with the company's objectives.

One of the objectives of this research was to explore how to implement the competency model in the participating companies. Although HR used the term competencies when explaining their recruitment and selection process, the use of such a model in their recruitment and selection practices could not be corroborated.

Although the recruitment and selection process of the participating companies is traditional, they have resorted to technology, combining virtual and face-to-face recruitment processes (Maurer, 2021). However, they have the opportunity to modify their hiring processes to adapt to the labor market, economic realities, and technological advances in order to attract and retain the quality of talent they require (Arthur, 2019; Derous & Fruyt, 2016; Maurer, 2021).

Two of the participating companies do not use the organization's website as a recruiting technique to market open positions, thus missing the opportunity to attract candidates and raise awareness of the company's brand. Galanaki (2002) and Owusu-Ansah and Nyarko (2014) note that a strong website and corporate brand image are beneficial in attracting higher quality candidates.

One of the techniques for recruiting candidates is mobile recruiting. According to a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2016), 66% of companies surveyed use measures to recruit candidates via smartphones, also known as mobile and cellular devices. The participating companies do not use means that allow them to recruit candidates through mobile devices, which is a disadvantage when it comes to attracting talent to their organizations. As Headworth (2015) noted, candidates have constant access to cell phones, what changes is how they act when looking for jobs. Mobile devices must become an integral part of the recruitment and selection strategy, not only to reach candidates and attract them to the organization, but also to showcase a strong corporate brand. Therefore, participating companies should inquire different channels for talent sourcing (Deloitte Insight, 2019).

Measuring and evaluating recruitment results is critical to determine whether recruitment and selection objectives have been met (Breaugh, 2016). Only one of the participating companies measures and evaluates some aspects of its recruitment and selection process and shares the results with the leaders of its organization. Participating companies need reliable information to make

good decisions and help them strengthen the recruitment and selection process (Mitchell & Gamlem, 2017). As Dessler (2013) mentions, being able to measure what you do is an integral part of the HR strategy process.

Agreeing with Mitchell and Gamlem (2017), it is inferred that the trend of using metrics and analysis of the recruitment and selection process has been difficult for two of the participating companies. It is important that they understand that the use of data helps them to make better decisions, which can be better valued by the organization. In conclusion, to complete the recruitment and selection process, it is crucial to measure its effectiveness and success: the use of metrics helps to promote continuous improvement (Hay Group Pte Ltd, 2004; Dessler, 2013)

To add real value to the organization, it is imperative that HR professionals engage in strategic conversations within the organization to demonstrate how the recruitment and selection process can contribute to the company's bottom line (Mitchell & Gamlem, 2017; Dessler, 2013). Creating a strategy means formulating and implementing human resource policies and procedures that provide the necessary employee competencies and behaviors to achieve the organization's strategy (Dessler, 2013).

While there is an absence of a strategic recruitment and selection plan in line with the goals and objectives of the participating companies (Torres, 2014), what is certain is that the experience of the participating companies has led to changes in their recruitment and selection processes in the last five years due to environmental factors such as Hurricane Maria in 2017, the Covid-19 outbreak from 2020, as well as generational and technological demographic changes in the population. Therefore, the particular economic circumstances of recent years have posed great challenges for participating companies (Ley de Incentivos para la Generación y Retención de Empleos en PyMEs, 2014).

According to the information provided by interviewees, these changes have resulted in variations and challenges in their recruitment and selection process. Therefore, it can be argued that the companies that participated in this case study have an excellent opportunity to implement a recruitment and selection strategy that is consistent with other industry insights and economic realities, markets, social pressures, and technological developments, among other aspects (Breaugh, 2016; Derous & Fruyt, 2016; Maurer, 2021). The recruitment and selection function is necessary to combat the economic challenges presented by these companies and promote a competitive advantage in order to achieve sustainability goals and objectives (Oaya et al., 2017).

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis brought peculiar challenges to the participating companies in their recruitment and selection process, among other things, attracting candidates with the necessary competencies for the positions to be hired, especially those in the technology sector; competing for the same positions with other companies; offering salaries in line with candidates' expectations; specialized jobs due to the nature of service they offer to their customers; and finally, telecommuting versus face-to-face work (Maurer, 2021).

All of these challenges faced by the participating companies are common within organizations in Puerto Rico, regardless of their size. In addition to Covid-19, Technical Studies, Inc. (2021) argue that one of the serious long-term complications affecting the availability of talent with the necessary skills is the decline in the number of young people and the aging of the population which can have a significant impact on employment by causing a slowdown in the growth of the labor force. Consequently, these trends require participating companies to adopt

strategies and policies aimed at mitigating these changes that affect their recruitment and selection process.

In short, it can be stated that the practice of recruitment and selection cannot be limited to traditional forms. As the battle for talent increases, a changing economy and labor market, slowing workforce growth, and the intensifying use of technology, it is imperative that participating companies utilize innovative recruitment and selection channels. Static contracting is no longer sufficient in the current situation of profitability and efficiency (Hay Group Pte Ltd, 2004).

The key message here is that the area of recruitment and selection is rapidly evolving, affecting many aspects of finding, attracting, and selecting talented employees, requiring close monitoring and examination of the process by HR (Derous & Fruyt, 2016). The success of any organization depends on the quality of the workforce that the organization has recruited through the recruitment and selection process (Ekwoaba et al., 2015). Therefore, recruitment and selection practices are predictors or determinants of SME performance (Omolo Oginda & Otengah, 2013).

One of the limitations in the development of this study was the scarcity of literature and research on the recruitment and selection practices of SMEs, especially in Puerto Rico.

Another limitation of the study was the nature of the sample, which included a limited number of industries involved in recruitment and selection practices. It should be noted that one of the constraints to reaching a larger number of participants was gaining access to various resources during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It should be emphasized that the degree of similarity among the participants limits the generalizability of the study to other types of SMEs in Puerto Rico. However, the results are still significant.

The HR of each participating company was interviewed as the main responsible for the recruitment and selection process. Interviewing other members of the company involved in the recruitment and selection process would have provided a better understanding of their recruitment and selection practices. Either way, the important thing about both methods is to project the findings by providing information as close to reality as possible.

Official documents of the recruitment and selection process are valuable sources of information that support the analysis of qualitative data and the understanding of the central phenomenon of study (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista-Lucio, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). As part of the research process, participants were asked for documentation related to the recruitment and selection process; however, HR needed the company's permission to provide them. Therefore, the requested documents, which would support the analysis of the data collected, were not received.

Conducting qualitative research in an organizational setting is certainly valuable. In particular, when working a case study one hopes to capture and study the complexity and particularity that occurs in a natural setting; that is, in the real world (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In such an environment, challenges arise due to the nature of the environment, such as accessing organizational members, assessing and interacting with them virtually and in person (avoiding the halo), and at the same time being neutral and reliable in collecting objective data.

The results of the case study are intended to contribute to the knowledge base to be applied to the design and implementation of recruitment and selection policies and procedures aimed at

promoting innovations that benefit HR and the SME sector and, ultimately, the economy of Puerto Rico.

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