

RESEARCH PAPER ON JOHACON ASSOCIATES

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research project was carried out by Bisong, Chidera O. under the supervision of Professor Sean MacDonald of the Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba.

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ABSTRACT

Johacon and Associates is a firm of Civil and Structural consulting engineers involved in the design and construction supervision of civil structures from inception stage down to design, documentation and commissioning of structures. The organization is based in Illorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This paper will speak explicitly on the background and track record of the company also identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Then it will talk about a major task of one of the jobs in the company and then a detailed list of the job specification requirements for the specific job being considered. This will include physical, technical, educational, social and cognitive requirements. The paper will also take into consideration, working condition, risks and work hazard. Then the job standards will be accessed and finally the recruitment, selection and hiring processes involved in the company will be discussed.

SECTION 1

1.0 BACKGROUND OF COMPANY

Johacon Associates is a Firm of Civil/Structural Engineers and Project Management Consultants. It was established in 1996 by a group of fresh Civil Engineers graduates. Since inception the company has grown tremendously while attaining a spotless reputation as an outstanding engineering firm in Nigeria. The company is currently has attained the membership of the Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN) and the Association of Consulting Engineers of Nigeria, (ACEN). The aforementioned bodies are notorious for their above average membership requirements considering the sensitive nature of the certification. Only engineering companies that are members of this bodies can legally practice civil engineering in Nigeria

The Principals and Consultants of the company have over the years accumulated a high wealth of experience in Civil/Structural Engineering consultancy practices and Project Management.

The company is duly incorporated by the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria and registered under the Nigeria Business Act code of 1990.

Johacon Associates seek to provide an Integrated and highly professional services for individual/private entities, corporate bodies and government and its agencies. The company's working philosophy hinges on professional detail and excellence.

Johacon Associates is committed to achieving technical excellence while maintaining strict ethical guidance coupled with in-exhaustible efforts to find a fair balance between cost and functional benefit to the Client and the end user.

SERVICES OFFERED

Johacon Associates provides a complete range of Civil/Structural Engineering Consultancy Services from the initial Investigation through Feasibility Studies, Outline Planning, Documentations, and Evaluation of Tender, Supervision of Construction to Commissioning in the following fields of operations;

Civil Engineering

- Road/Highway design
- Jetties and Bridges

- Dam (rigid or earth) design
- Foreshore Wall Protection
- Dredging and Land reclamation
- Water supply
- Erosion & flood Controls

Structural Engineering

- Reinforced Concrete Structures Design
- Steel Section structures Design
- Composite Structural Design
- Retaining Structures Design

Johacon Associates also provide a multi – disciplinary services by integrating and coordinating the services of other sister companies in the construction industry to ensure an efficient multi – disciplinary project delivery, having experienced professionals with many years in project management, Johacon Associates can effectively manage human, financial and time resources to always ensure timely, efficient and highly professionalized project delivery. Some of the sister company that provide specialised services along with Johacon Associates to ensure qualitative project delivery are.

Tunji Kusa & Partners (TKP) – Architectural services

Quantae consortae – Cost Engineer

Richard Associates & Mahir Consults – Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Services

Savour Engineering – Material tests, Quality assurance/control tests, soil investigation.

Boulema Engineering – Steel structure specialist

1.0.1 COMPANY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

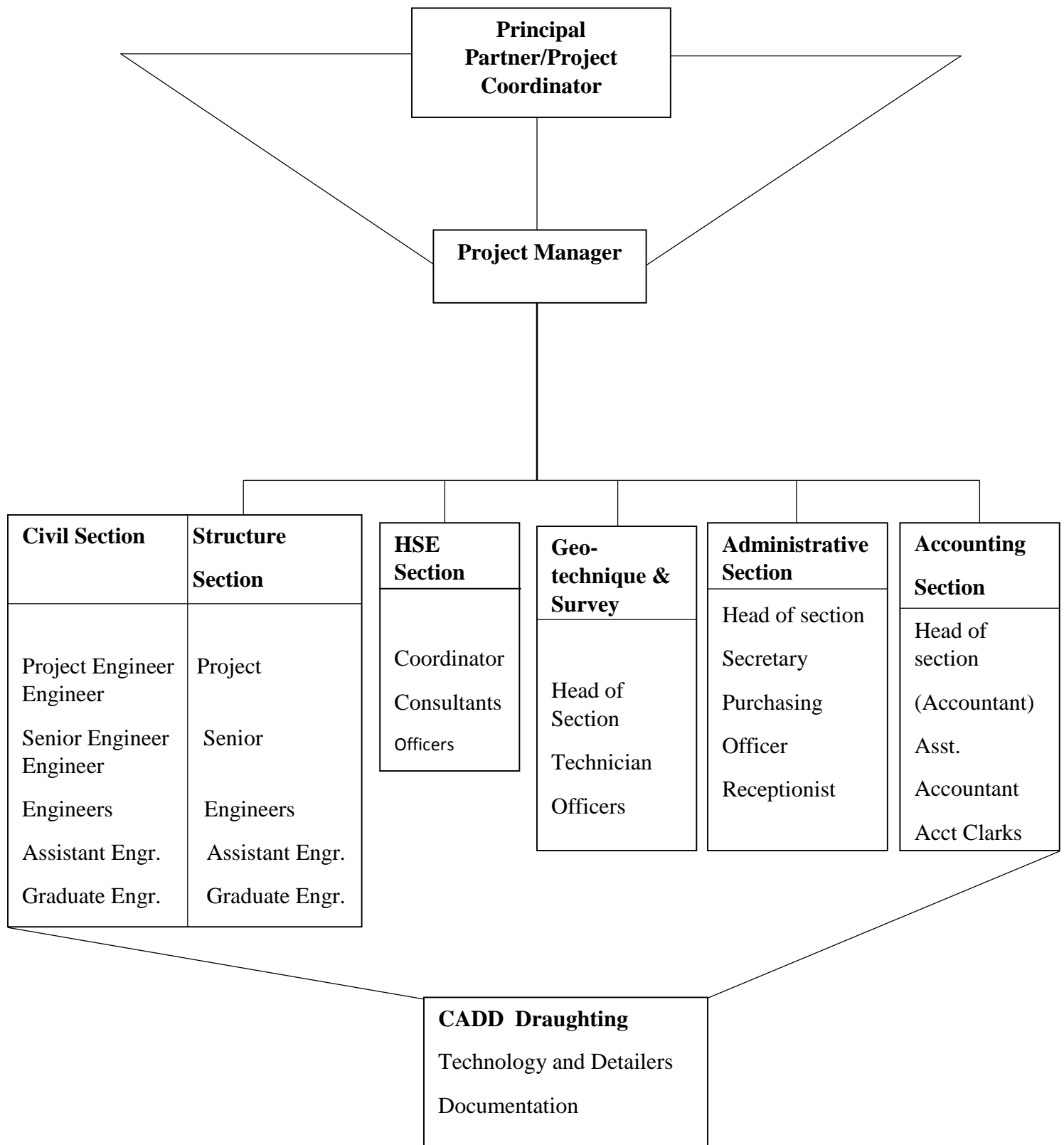


FIG 1: Company Organisation

1.0.2 WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS OF COMPANY

Weaknesses

Johacon Associates finds itself in a quagmire in some areas and therefore need specific improvement strategies. Some of these weaknesses include the following;

- Extending services into the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, the requirement for registration into the sector is very demanding and Johacon Associates have not been able to meet the specific requirement to be qualified to render services in this area.
- Johacon Associates have not been able to render its service on a global scale. The company has not been able to establish a viable branch outside the shores of Nigeria therefore stating itself as a global and international service company. Although ongoing plans are on to establish a branch in Canada.
- Johacon Associates currently do not have an effective and organized Human Resource Department but of recent HR experts are being hired by the board of the company to fill up this lacuna.

Strengths

- **Community Relations Management Policy**, one of the most volatile area to work in Nigeria is the Niger Delta Region, Principal and Staffs of Johacon Associates have worked extensively in the Niger Delta Region. Being familiar and sensitive to the Niger Delta working environment, Johacon Associates pursue mutual and friendly relationship with the host community.

In doing this, the company establishes and maintains cordial relationships with all segments of the host community (Youth and Elders) to better understand their concerns, demands and aspirations.

- i. Interaction with the local community while seeking to build enabling environment and friendly relationship aimed at guaranteeing the proposed project sustainability by ensuring local participation.
- ii. Continuously emphasize the social and economic impact of the proposed project activities and take needed preventive or mitigating measures, such as.
- iii. Adequate consultation with the various leader and community representatives, and establishing a continuous communication line
- iv. Initial communication to inform them of upcoming project work. Key message is the socio-econ benefits of the projects, emphasizing economic benefits.
- v. Introduce the company's Community liaison officer to the leaders of the host community
- vi. Receive & respond to concerns/issues from community members
- vii. Respond to formal community request in an appropriate and timely manner.
- viii. Bring relevant issues affecting host community to the attention of the company and client through the Community Liaison Officer.
- ix. Ensures the engagement of local labor from host community. This measure is geared towards erasing agitations of not inclusion from host community.

- **Health, Safety and Environment Policy,** Johacon Associates is committed to giving priority to Health, Safety and the Environment (HSE) in all of its operations. It also insists that all of the numerous contractors and sub-contractors it supervise exhibit the same determination and commitment.

To achieve this commitment, the Company's business operation is planned and executed in a manner that will:

- i. Protect and promote the health of the workforce.
- ii. All operations are conducted in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.
- iii. Train its personnel with all the relevant procedures for safety and conservation of the environment.
- iv. Supply their services with adequate safety equipment and information.

- v. Develop, with the appropriate authorities and its contractors, emergency or evacuation procedures to minimize the consequence of accidents.
- vi. Implement where possible confirmed processes that improve health, safety and protection of the environment.
- vii. Act on and support staff recommendations for relevant safety equipment, services and procedures for the prevention of accidents.
- viii. Observe their client's HSE rules and regulations and encourage staff to meet or better Client's HSE targets.
- ix. Comply with all federal, state and international regulatory agencies laws, as they concern HSE.

- **Quality Policy**, Johacon Associates is a fully indigenous company providing high quality Engineering services to private, corporate and government establishments, and is committed to ensuring that all its deliverables/services are of high quality that meets stated and agreed clients requirements including all relevant statutory and regulatory guidelines at all times. They also strive at all times to exceed their clients' expectations.

Johacon Associates plans, organises and executes its business in such a manner as to:

- i. Ensure that all equipment, materials & software deployed in their operations are of high quality, and all personnel are competent and trained in their relevant field of operation.
- ii. Ensure that all operations are carried out using documented safe procedures/instructions.
- iii. Not sacrifice quality in order to meet unrealistic time schedules/targets.
- iv. Ensure that all services are done to client's specification and satisfaction.
- v. Ensure operations are reviewed periodically for improved performance and productivity.
- vi. Supply accurate data for audits.
- vii. Adhere to their clients' quality standards in executing all projects.
- viii. Comply with statutory, regulatory requirements and international standards like ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ETC.

SECTION 2

2.0 SPECIFIC JOB TASK

Johacon Associates have a vast array of job positions as seen above, but in this section of the paper I will single out a specific job and give a detailed report on the various tasks involved in the operation of that job.

I will consider the job of the **Project Manager** who plays a key role in the structural functionalism of Johacon Associates. The tasks of the Project Manager in the company involves the following;

- i. **Project Notification;** Upon commencement of each project, the project manager fills out a Project Notification form which then alerts the rest of the company.
- ii. **Auditing;** The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that the quality plan is being followed by all project personnel. The Johacon Associates Manager of projects shall conduct periodic “outside” audits of projects to ascertain that projects are in compliance with the quality plan.
- iii. **Deliverables Lists/Schedule;** upon commencement of each project the Project Manger shall develop a deliverables list and a schedule for completing the deliverables. The schedule and deliverable list shall be submitted to the client by the Project Manager for approval. The client’s approval shall be recorded in the project file via a signed deliverables list.
- iv. **Drawing/Document Distribution;** The Project Manger develops and maintains a distribution matrix for various types of project information (e.g. deliverables, client information etc.). These lists shall be used to make transmittals throughout the course of project. This will ensure that the proper clients, contractors, and vendors receive information and drawings.
- v. **Punch List;** The project Manager maintains a punch list of issues that need to be addressed, items that must be resolved, etc. At each meeting the project manager assigns these task to team members, and he shall review the tasks assigned at the previous meetings.
- vi. **Management Change;** once a project reaches a state of development in which the design has substantially taken shape. The Project Manger institutes management of change procedures. Under these procedures any change in the design must be accompanied by a

Management of change form submitted to the Project Manager and circulated to each affected engineer and designer.

- vii. **Project Benchmarking;** The Project Manager shall hold regularly occurring project meetings (once each week or two weeks) with engineering and design leads. The Project Manager cover the following topics in these meetings:

- **Project Management**

Has a scope of work been defined?

Has a list of engineering deliverables been developed (i.e. drawings, calculations, reports, studies, etc.)?

Has the JOHACON ASSOCIATES Design Quality Plan been reviewed by all project personnel?

Has a Schedule been developed and agreed upon by all design and operations personnel?

Are the methods for correspondence, transmittals, scheduling, and benchmarking being followed?

Has document handling controls been established and familiar by all project personnel?

Has equipment and material availability been considered?

Have field construction personnel been consulted with respect for constructability?

Has the client been provided with the deliverables list, broken up by discipline?

Have tie-ins been identified for each discipline along with a plan for executing the tie-ins?

- **Design Criteria**

Site Data

Has site environmental data been considered such as min & max temperatures, elevation, max rainfall, atmospheric Conditions, humidity, max wind speeds, maximum sea states, etc.?

Is site accessibility a problem? Can the required construction equipment access the site?

Have underground obstructions been identified?

Have utility clearances been considered (Power company, gas lines levee toe, etc.)

- **Codes and Standards**

Have codes and standards that will apply to the project been agreed upon by all major parties?

Will the project be designed per the client's engineering standards or industry standards?

Have the required standards been made available to all design personnel?

- **Civil/Structural**

Are the following civil/structural requirements/information defined?

Structural drawings

Survey information (topographic, bathymetric, geotechnical etc.)

Elevations for grade, paving, and foundations

Construction materials

Seismic

Information regarding existing infrastructures

Storm sewers

Client specifications

Future expansion

Other tasks of a Project Manager includes;

- viii. Direct and manage project development from beginning to end.
- ix. Define project scope, goals and deliverables that support business goals in collaboration with senior management and stakeholders.
- x. Develop full-scale project plans and associated communications documents.
- xi. Effectively communicate project expectations to team members and stakeholders in a timely and clear fashion.
- xii. Liaise with project stakeholders on an ongoing basis.
- xiii. Estimate the resources and participants needed to achieve project goals.
- xiv. Draft and submit budget proposals, and recommend subsequent budget changes where necessary. Where required, negotiate with other department managers for the acquisition of required personnel from within the company.

- xv. Determine and assess need for additional staff and/or consultants and make the appropriate recruitments if necessary during project cycle.
- xvi. Set and continually manage project expectations with team members and other stakeholders.
- xvii. Delegate tasks and responsibilities to appropriate personnel.
- xviii. Identify and resolve issues and conflicts within the project team.
- xix. Identify and manage project dependencies and critical path.
- xx. Plan and schedule project timelines and milestones using appropriate tools.
- xxi. Track project milestones and deliverables.
- xxii. Develop and deliver progress reports, proposals, requirements documentation, and presentations.
- xxiii. Determine the frequency and content of status reports from the project team, analyze results, and troubleshoot problem areas.
- xxiv. Proactively manage changes in project scope, identify potential crises, and devise contingency plans.
- xxv. Define project success criteria and disseminate them to involved parties throughout project life cycle.
- xxvi. Coach, mentor, motivate and supervise project team members and contractors, and influence them to take positive action and accountability for their assigned work.
- xxvii. Build, develop, and grow any business relationships vital to the success of the project.
- xxviii. Conduct project post mortems and create a recommendations report in order to identify successful and unsuccessful project elements.
- xxix. Develop best practices and tools for project execution and management.

2.0.1 SPECIFIC JOB SPECIFICATION

The job specification of the Project Manager in Johacon Associates contains a lot of requirements which includes the following; the Project Manager must have a University or college diploma in the field of engineering or management and must have a minimum of four years of work experience in a project management capacity, including all aspects of process development and execution. She/he must be fully certified in Auto Card usage, a degree from the University or College and other technical management certifications and related software.

She/he must be strongly familiar with project management software, such as Auto Card, Salesforce, Mavenlink, Clarizen, Actionspace, Team Headquarters etc. and must be familiar with programming languages like REXX, Chain (datapoint), CMS EXEC, Windows batch language etc. Also a Project Manager must have database and operating systems experience related to the field. The Project Manager must have competent and proficient understanding of platforms, such as Projecturf, Team box, Apollo etc. Must also have solid working knowledge of current Internet technologies.

The Project Manager must demonstrate experience in personnel management and must be technically competent with various software programs related to the field. She/he must have experience at working both independently and in a team-oriented, collaborative environment is essential. Should also be able to conform to shifting priorities, demands and timelines through analytical and problem-solving capabilities and must be able to react to project adjustments and alterations promptly and efficiently.

The Project Manager must be flexible during times of sudden change in operations and activities and must have the ability to read communication styles of team members and contractors who come from a broad spectrum of disciplines. She/ he must be persuasive, encouraging, and motivating and have the natural ability to elicit cooperation from a wide variety of sources, including upper management, clients, and other departments. The Project Manager must have the ability to defuse tension among project team, should it arise and also the ability to bring project to successful completion through political sensitivity.

She/he must possess strong written and oral communication skills, strong interpersonal skills and adept at conducting research into project-related issues and products. Must be able to learn,

understand, and apply new technologies. If she/he has good customer service skills it proves as a great advantage and the person must have the ability to effectively prioritize and execute tasks in a high-pressure environment.

Working Conditions

- i. Overtime may be required in meet project deadlines.
- ii. Involves sitting for extended periods of time.
- iii. Dexterity of hands and fingers to operate a computer keyboard, mouse, and other devices and objects.
- iv. Physically able to participate in training sessions, presentations, and meetings.
- v. Some travel may be required for the purpose of meeting with clients, stakeholders, or off-site personnel/management.
- vi. Some portfolios/projects may from time to time require extensive relocation away from their home office.

Knowledge

- i. University Degree in a related subject.
- ii. Intermediate knowledge of project planning processes and techniques.
- iii. Elementary knowledge of project methodology.
- iv. Elementary knowledge of potential sources of risk and their impact on project success.
- v. Intermediate knowledge of project constraints.
- vi. Elementary knowledge of project complexity.

Skills

- i. Elementary level stakeholder management skills.
- ii. Elementary negotiation and conflict management skills.
- iii. Elementary level budget control skills.
- iv. Intermediate level monitoring and reporting skills.
- v. Elementary level planning skills.
- vi. Intermediate ability to detect and resolve problems.
- vii. Intermediate level quality management skills.
- viii. Intermediate communication (verbal, written, listening) skills.

Proficiency in the use of computers and computer programs such as;

- ix. Word processing
- x. Simple accounting
- xi. Data base management
- xii. Spreadsheets
- xiii. E-mail
- xiv. Internet

Experience

- i. 3 years' experience working in projects as project team member or leader.
- ii. Personally managed 6+ projects and been involved with a further 2-3 projects.

SECTION 3

3.0 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION & HIRING PROCEDURE

Johacon and Associates carry out quite a number of recruitment methods which will be discussed in detail below.

- **Internal recruitment**

Internal recruitment gives existing employees and volunteers the opportunity to apply for the job opening. It is linked to succession planning and career development. Internal recruitment can include promotions to a higher level position, and also lateral moves to a same level position. To keep the process positive is very important to be fair and consistent in how you go about recruiting internally. Johacon and Associates practice this recruitment method most of the time because of the following advantages;

- Management already has a good idea of the employee's capabilities.
- Rewards the employee/volunteer for past performance.
- Gives the employee/volunteer an opportunity for career development.
- Retains the organization's investment in the employee/volunteer.
- Reduces the amount of time necessary to orient the person to the new position.
- Reduces the time and costs of recruitment.
- Supports positive morale and retention by signaling the possibility of internal progression.

However some of its disadvantages include;

- If used in isolation, provides a limited number of people to select from.
- Reduces the opportunity for increasing diversity within Johacon.
- Employees that apply for the position and are not selected may be disgruntled.

- **Employee referrals**

Johacon practices recruitment through referrals to help encourage employees to recommend potential candidates from their network. This method ensures that the quality of employee referrals is usually high because employees usually only refer people that they are confident would be a good match for the position and organization and the position is

more likely to reach qualified candidates that aren't actively looking, and most of all, it reduces the time and costs of recruitment. However, some cases have arisen in Johacon and Associates where there people tend to recommend others with similar backgrounds - relying solely on employee referrals may not provide a wide enough scope of prospective candidates and the company ended up hiring more of the same type of employees with similar backgrounds and experiences rather than diversifying their workforce.

- **Print advertisements**

Johacon also practices the use of printed advertisements that may appear in national or local newspapers, bulletins, professional journals, or magazines. This way the company has succeeded in reaching a large audience within a specific geographic area and also reached a large audience with specialized skills. However, due to this practice, Johacon Associates has in the past received a significant number of applications from unqualified candidates and has also borne a wide range of costs.

- **Internet recruiting**

Johacon Associates post information of openings on an internet job board like, joblistnigeria.com, and on professional association websites. To the company internet recruiting is cost effective – some sites offer free postings and internet job postings are available to potential candidates 24 hours a day. But sometimes the number of applications are usually overwhelming.

- **Recruitment agencies /Executive search firms**

These private companies will help Johacon Associates find and screen potential candidates for a fee, typically a percentage of the annual salary. The method helps reduce time as the firm will do most of the preparation for the posting and the preliminary screening and can also help reach a broad range of candidates including full-time and temporary job seekers. However, it is a very expensive method of recruitment and the company still needs to invest time in defining the position and making the final selection of candidates.

- **Unsolicited resumes**

Many a time individuals interested in working for Johacon Associates send in resumes to be considered when a suitable opportunity arises. This sometimes leads to having a pool of qualified candidates available can help to reduce time to hire when suitable positions become available. But the downside is that the percentage of resumes with skills appropriate for Johacon may be small.

Selection & Hiring

The normal selection process carried out in Johacon Associates is conducting of interviews where the company prepares a list of questions to ask during the interview, develop key questions to explore past job performance, covering all essential functions and also prepares follow-up questions. Johacon uses a variety of approaches to get different kinds of information, tailoring questions to open up a topic for conversation or to confirm information.

The interviews are conducted in an appropriate environment for the interviews where interruption is highly minimized. And internal candidates interviewing is usually done off-site.

The same interview format and setting is used for every candidate, and the interview appointments are the same length.

Johacon Associates makes a conscious attempt to avoid the following biases that occur during interview processes;

- **Halo Effect** occurs when the interviewer lets one favoured qualification, trait, or experience influence all other factors, resulting in an unduly high overall performance rating.
- **Leniency/ Strictness Bias;** occurs given people differ in how they evaluate people; some interviews are very liberal and lenient, while others are critical and demanding. This bias tends to raise or lower the scores of people who are interviewed.

- **Appraiser Biases;** occurs when an evaluation is based on individual demographic differences. Personal beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and preferences can lead to unfair evaluations of candidates.
- **Horns Effect;** similar to the halo effect, allows one disfavoured qualification, trait, or experience take precedence and result in an unfairly low candidate rating.
- **Similarity Effect;** occurs when an evaluator rates a candidate based on characteristics the appraiser sees in themselves. Interviewers have an unconscious tendency to favor people who are physically and professionally similar to them.
- **Contrast Effect** occurs when one's individual ranking is based on one's position relative to others in the group. If the interview pool consists of a number of outstanding candidates, it is extremely difficult for an average candidate to be picked as number one, but in a substandard pool, the average candidate may inexplicably stand out.
- **Primacy Effect** is associated with "the first impression," interviewers' first impressions of a candidate can often play a powerful role in their subsequent assessment.

SECTION 4

4.0 CONCLUSION

With evidence from the above data presented I can safely affirm that Johacon Associates is a fully functional and all sufficient organization with an excellent track record of jobs done. The company is highly non-biased and functions to treat all her clients with equity. Also, due to the current hire of Human Resource experts to Johacon Associates, the company has improved on its handling of matters that involves managing Human Resources. Just as no organization or entity is perfect, Johacon Associates definitely has its short comings but as can be observed from the above data, the company's good sides overshadows the short comings thus pushing the company a step closer to fulfilling its goal of serving on a global platform. Johacon Associates is a company of the future and will surely thrive under any weather.

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