

## Assessment Centres

### We were asked to...

....help a local authority set up a robust recruitment process for senior staff, the brief being to assess candidates across a number of competency areas improving upon traditional interview based recruitment methods.

### What we did...

After meeting with the recruiting manager we developed a competency assessment matrix which captured the competencies for the job and identified the most effective method of assessing each of these competencies.

In this example, the assessment process included tests to assess candidates' ability in numerical analysis and verbal comprehension. The organisation was not looking for experts in statistical analysis or media communicators, they just needed to be confident that once in post candidates would be able to analyse organisational data and be competent report writers.

Another important skill was the ability to influence others and articulate views clearly whilst demonstrating good team working skills. Candidates also needed to be resilient and self motivated. In partnership with our client, we designed a group exercise to test these skills based on a real work scenario. The benefit of this approach was to give candidates an insight into the type of work they may encounter in the role and to allow the recruiting manager to observe candidates tackling relevant issues within a team. The group had to present their findings to the 'Chief Executive' in the form of a prioritised list of recommendations, in this case a list of recommendations for the introduction of shared services within the organisation. Using a structured assessment grid we assessed candidates' performance across the areas of Teamworking, Influencing, Resilience, Innovation and Strategic approach. In-house HR staff were trained as group exercise assessors to create a sense of ownership of the assessment process and its outcomes and helped to keep costs down.

Another important skill was the ability to prioritise and delegate work effectively. Again, working closely with our client, we designed an `in-tray` exercise to reflect the real issues that the post holder would face in the role, the result being a virtual in-tray of tasks that candidates needed to assimilate, prioritise and act upon.

The interview is always an essential element of any assessment centre. To help structure the interview we arranged for candidates to complete an online personality test in advance of the interview. From this questionnaire, we

produced tailored interview questions to probe candidates' ability across a range of competency areas.

## Benefits

- We have since delivered further assessment centres with this client using this approach. Costs of subsequent assessment centres reduce where tailored exercises can be re-used or just updated.
- A range of stakeholders get the opportunity to meet candidates and to take part in the assessment process
- All the design work, materials, candidate feedback is managed by Blue Star Human Resources taking away the administrative burden that can appear daunting.
- Candidate feedback, whether individual's are successful or not, has been very positive with one quote being "Thanks for the development opportunity. Your feedback has been invaluable and I got a real sense of the role and the organisation I will be joining"
- You gain a clear picture of the successful candidate's strengths & weaknesses and this can form the basis of their personal development plan and help structure their induction focusing time and resources in the right areas.
- Assessment centres may cost less than you think, depending on the complexity and volume of candidates being assessed, costs can start from as little as £500 per candidate.

## Why use a Blue Star Human Resources assessment centre?

- You have an important role in the organisation that impacts a number of departments and want to involve a range of stakeholders
- You have a senior role that requires candidates to be assessed across a range of competencies
- You have a trainee/development role that requires you to assess the potential of candidates
- You are going through an internal restructure and want to select people for new roles in the organisation and need to demonstrate objectivity and fairness in selection decisions and identify personal development.
- You are Sir Alan Sugar looking for an Apprentice!