

OFSTED

Case Study

The Organisation

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) is responsible for inspecting the quality of education in schools. In 2001 it also took over as the regulator for childcare for children up to eight years old from the Local Authorities. This additional responsibility has led to a re-organisation of regional offices in Nottingham and Bristol and the decision in 2005 to open a new National Business Unit (NBU) based in Manchester. The centralisation of staff dealing with childcare enquiries and applications, will make better use of resources with the aim of improving child safety.

The Business Requirement

As a result of these changes there was a need for staff to be recruited to fill approximately 270 posts over a variety of job roles and grades, 150 of these being customer service roles based at the NBU. Ofsted recognised that to recruit the high volume of quality staff required over three sites and to meet the NBU opening dates, a huge strain would be put on their HR department based in London. It was, therefore, decided to bring in a recruitment partner, with the commercial knowledge and expertise to source the ideal candidates for the new jobs. A key requirement was to link the recruitment attraction with publicising the investment in Manchester and launch of the NBU there.

The recruitment partner needed to have the expertise to deliver the process from attraction to assessment/interview and to ensure that the selection processes were tailored for each role. All processes and recruitment methods had to comply with The Civil Service Commissioners Code of Practice (CSCCP) to ensure full, fair and open competition reflecting the diversity of the UK population.

Ofsted were not looking for formal qualifications but for people best able to do the job based on knowledge, attributes and abilities and this needed to be reflected in the assessment and selection process. Ofsted work to a Competency Framework and all assessment/interview material needed to be designed to assess each candidate's match to the relevant competencies.

NRG Connect, NRG Group's managed services division, was selected as single source supplier across all disciplines. Selection was based on experience within the public sector and proven ability to deliver a quality service.

The NRG Solution

Project Management

NRG established a project team of experienced staff to work closely with Ofsted throughout the planning and implementation stage.

The creation of the Manchester NBU required additional staffing of 80 administration staff, 60 contact centre staff and 20 team leader positions. At the same time the three regional offices required 35 middle manager roles and 40 various administration roles. These varied

requirements demanded thorough planning and organisation to meet the operational schedules through to take up duty dates.

Progress reports were regular and informative and effective communication included daily contact at the peak of the work. Campaign reports were also provided giving valuable information on candidate sources, diversity and success statistics, which will inform future campaigns.

Attraction

The recruitment exercise and attraction strategy was timed to coincide with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools; David Bell's announcement of Ofsted's opening of the NBU. He stated that the centralisation of staff to deal with childcare enquiries and applications would not only make better use of resources but would also ensure a high quality service.

NRG designed a media campaign which caught candidate attention in a crowded market. We also provided five Open Day workshops, which took place in Ofsted's Manchester offices to give prospective applicants the opportunity to see the new NBU. Applicants were given a presentation, which outlined the benefits of working for Ofsted together with guidance on how to best evidence their qualities in the competency based application form, assessment and interview. The benefit of these workshops was evidenced by the quality and number of applications received following the Open Days

Selection

NRG Connect delivered:

- initial response handling - both electronic and telephone based
- applicant sift and booking into interview within a maximum of five working days
- design of assessment material to fit the appropriate level of competency for each of the wide range of roles
- assessment centres to enable selection of candidates for final interview with Ofsted

For each recruitment stage, all applicant information is captured and used throughout the recruitment process to provide the client with continuous candidate progress and to keep the communication lines open with the candidate. From this continuous flow of information merit lists were created and all letters and phone calls processed.

Trained, qualified assessors attended all of the individual assessment centres to administer the exercises and data capture each candidate's scores from the assessment/interview. In some cases they were also involved in the interview process, assisting Ofsted's own staff. An average assessment day sees 24 candidates progressing through the assessment centre with outcomes being recorded in merit order. NRG send appropriate letters to all unsuccessful candidates.

In total 4136 application packs were sent out, 1056 returned and 681 applicants progressed to interview. To date NRG have supported the recruitment of 215 candidates to full or part time positions.

Business Benefits

Ofsted's internal HR function were able to concentrate on internal policies and issues in the confidence that NRG would carry out a successful recruitment on their behalf. Working in partnership resulted in a timely, well-structured campaign.

During the recruitment process both internal and external applicants with wide ranges of skills and experiences have been progressed, which has enabled Ofsted to place those best suited to the available roles.

Rachel Street, Head of Human Resources and Corporate Development, Ofsted, said:

As part of the Improving Ofsted change programme in 2005 we contracted NRG to work with us as a recruitment partner to recruit 270 roles across 3 sites. Most recruitment took place in Manchester but we also recruited for roles in Nottingham and Bristol which was quite a challenge.

We chose NRG to work with us as they have a good track record of high quality delivery particularly in the public sector. We have found NRG to be very flexible in their approach as we were initially unsure about timescales and the numbers we required. They have worked closely with us to understand our business needs and to help develop an assessment and selection process which has resulted in high calibre new staff members. The support from the senior team at NRG has been excellent and they have delivered on time and to budget. Without the support of NRG, Ofsted would not have had the resources to deliver this high profile project.