

Royal Mail

MBA recruitment programmes delivered



The Royal Mail is a complex organisation with 170,000 employees in one division being dedicated to the singular task of delivering letters. Naturally there is a huge focus within the business on the 150,000 frontline staff; however, some would argue that this has been at the expense of development of the management community.

A balanced approach to recruitment and retention

One area in which the Royal Mail has struggled historically is in the recruitment and retention of senior employees. Recruitment at MBA level had seen employees leave very quickly, typically after three years, citing the culture they found on joining the organisation as a reason for leaving.

The challenge presented to the talent function by Royal Mail's executive team was to not only attract the best people, but also to ensure they stayed with the organisation long enough to make a real difference and potentially to become the leaders of the future.

One issue to resolve was that the organisation was using far too many required competencies. Following the appointment of employee assessment company, Talent Q, worked with the Royal Mail management team to reduce this number from twenty seven to seven, a far more realistic and manageable number.

Kirsty Wilson, recruitment adviser at Royal Mail, said: "We didn't always follow best practice in recruitment and hadn't fully woken up to the number of number of MBAs within the organisation either."

“Then once we’d got recruits in post, we quickly came up against issues about their perceived lack of development and progression.”

“We therefore designed this senior talent entry scheme and talent management programme from scratch. Our goal was to successfully manage the recruitment of 20 MBAs from business schools who would go into commercial, sales and marketing roles and putting in place strategies to ensure the very lowest attrition into the future.”

Royal Mail worked alongside Alexander Mann Solutions to sift and interview applicants, with Talent Q providing the online personality and intelligence assessments that were linked to the competencies required for the roles.

“We were attracted to Talent Q’s end-to-end approach, which means that the data collected can be and is used and updated throughout the talent lifecycle. It’s a significantly more effective way of doing things,” says Kirsty Wilson.

There were 5,000 applicants for the 20 roles, with 700 applicants making it through pre-screening. Challenging applicants about whether they were fully prepared to be flexible and willing to work at different UK locations caused a significant proportion of those applying to reconsider.

The next stage involved an online CV screen, a quick biographical CV interview on the phone and then more extensive biographical interviews. “We prepped for these interviews extensively, which paid big dividends down the line,” observed Kirsty Wilson.

This was followed by psychometric assessment, a competency-based interview and an assessment centre after which the merits of each individual were debated extensively.

All candidates received meaningful feedback, whether successful or not and the response from them has been excellent. One went as far as saying “I’ve never had such good service; it’s been really expertly managed.”

The Royal Mail team is now gearing up for the on-boarding of the MBAs in September and is using this senior talent entry scheme as a model for best practice within the organisation.

Kirsty Wilson concludes: “We’re so pleased with what we’ve designed that we’ve now created a development programme for our existing leaders that will ensure they are on the same page as our latest recruits.”



Talent Q provides innovative online psychometric assessments, training and assessment consulting, addressing talent management challenges throughout the employee lifecycle.