



Evidence-Based Innovation

Overview

Maintaining rigour in any scientific endeavour, while pursuing innovation, can be challenging. There is a requirement to evidence the effectiveness of an approach, which can limit opportunities to benefit from new approaches. The answer to this dilemma lies in evidence-based innovation. Research and evidence can contribute to successful innovation and new ways of working.

This is what the largest employer in the United Kingdom, the National Health Service (NHS), elected to do. They wanted to introduce a new approach in their assessment process for the NHS Graduate Management Trainee Scheme. So, they partnered with Business Psychologists from TMP (a PeopleScout Company), who helped them ensure evidence-based rigour as they replaced first stage telephone interviews with video interviews.

Challenge

The recruitment team, for the NHS Graduate Management Trainee Scheme, take candidate experience very seriously. They recognise that they represent an organisation that the UK public is deeply and emotionally connected to. As the UK's largest employer, their scheme typically receives over 16,000 applications each year. And, since its launch in 2003, the NHS has maintained a top ten position in the Times Top 100 Graduate Employers list.

The NHS wanted to replace the telephone interview with a video interview to support their organisational objectives. Both TMP and the NHS were mindful that video interviews were still a relatively new assessment methodology and several stakeholders had concerns about the candidate reactions to the method. Therefore, as part of the objectives of introducing the video interview into the process, providing a positive candidate experience was a priority.

Setting Standards

TMP had already partnered with the NHS for the previous four years to design and deliver their graduate selection process. TMP had previously been involved in designing and implementing the telephone interview assessment at the first stage of the process. So, they were a natural choice of partner for the NHS as they decided to explore the introduction of video interviews in the context of high-volume Graduate Selection.

The existing relationship offered the Business Psychologists an opportunity to utilise multiple sources of data during this project, taking an evidence-based approach (Briner & Rousseau, 2011), to ensure a defensible result. They also fully understood the project challenges, stakeholders' values and concerns, scientific literature, organisational data and practitioner experience to consider.

Setting Objectives

The business objectives and outcomes they were aiming to achieve were:

- To provide a positive candidate experience of the video interview:

There were concerns from stakeholders and practitioners about candidate perceptions of and satisfaction with the process. This is in line with the literature, in which candidates experience an impersonal feeling and preference for other assessment methods (Guchait, et al., 2014). As such, it was critical to design a video interview process that would mitigate these concerns and provide a positive candidate experience

- To design a video interview to predict effective performance against the NHS leadership framework:

The assessment needed to predict future potential to perform and differentiate the highest performers as measured against the leadership behaviours

- To ensure the video Interview maintains a fair assessment approach:

NHS were committed to ensuring that social status or other characteristics were no barrier to the best career opportunities. TMP practitioner perceptions were that the structured and flexible method would support a diverse pool of candidates and reduce bias in the process (Guchait, et al., 2014)

- For the video interview to enable recruitment process efficiencies to be made:

NHS were looking to reduce the resource involved with scheduling and conducting telephone interviews

Approach

Applying Theory to Practice

The Consultants believed it was important to provide a positive candidate experience of the video interview. They relied on scientific literature to inform them.

- Candidate attitudes towards new technology have been found to be significantly more positive when it is easy to use and follow, as well as when it is perceived as useful (Brenner, et al., 2016)
- Building on Social Identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), candidates are also likely to be more engaged in the selection process for organisations with whom they feel a sense of belonging
- An awareness of, and alignment with, the values and goals of the organisation will likely increase effectiveness of selection methods (Chapman & Mayers, 2015)
- Following social exchange theory, perceptions of trust will impact candidate commitment to the process and ultimately employee commitment to the organisation (Torres & Mejia, 2017)

Influenced by the above, the following features were included in the design of the video interview, and related candidate materials, to allow candidates to perform their best and engage with the process:

- Emphasis on what the video interview had been designed to assess
- Link to and recommendation to review 'our story' video on NHS careers site, explaining the values and purpose of the organisation, introducing a more personal component
- Detailed tips and guidance on what to expect and how to prepare

Predicting Performance

The Consultants needed to design a video interview to predict effective performance against the NHS leadership framework. They found that taking a multi-method assessment approach can increase predictive validity over a single measure and interview question validity. Past behaviour can also be used as a predictor of future performance (Torres & Mejia, 2017, Anderson & Cunningham-Senell, 2000, Arnold, 2005).

Informed by the above, the video interview was designed as part of a wider multi-method assessment approach to assess each area of the NHS leadership framework multiple times. The video interview included motivational and competency-based questions. Prompts were included as part of the question design to help the candidates focus their responses against the assessment criteria as, due to the nature of the interview, there would be no opportunity for probing questions.

To ensure the video interview was fair, a structured interview design was chosen. Structured interviews show increased validity in selecting individuals over semi-structured and more informal methods of assessment. Consistency across interviews and objective evaluation criteria support fairness in the process and help reduce Adverse Impact (Arnold & Randall, 2010, Blackman, 2017). In addition to the structured nature of the questions themselves, robust and objective rating criteria was included.

Regarding improved recruitment efficiencies, this method could bring a faster pace to the process, offering more control of the process, becoming easier to manage with higher flexibility in scheduling, and Interviewers spending less time assessing, which saves expense (Guchait, et al., 2014, Seans, et al., 2013, Stone, et al., 2013, Torres and Mejia, 2017, Toldi, 2011).

Project Execution

The project was carefully managed to ensure the timescales were adhered to.

An initial kick-off meeting was conducted to clearly highlight to the client what input and resources would be needed from them. Clear milestones were also identified, such as key review and sign-off points. The Consultants worked with the client to explore the best way to introduce the recommended features of the video interview design and evaluate its success in comparison with previous years when a telephone interview was used. This involved ensuring the candidate survey questions would allow for comparison with data from previous years. Comparing year-on-year data would highlight changes which could be attributed specifically to the video interview design features introduced.

The team adopted a fully consultative approach which involved regular face-to-face and telephone meetings with HR and Resourcing stakeholders to understand the challenges and to collaboratively develop the solution. As part of this, they worked with the client to understand what “good” looked like in the role, as well as whether there were any changes in requirements for the graduate role, compared to their understanding of the role from previous years. This allowed them to understand the qualities that would contribute to successful performance in the role, and a greater understanding of the improvement stakeholders wanted to see.

Weekly project calls were conducted to engage with the client and keep them up to date on key deliverables, risks and assumptions. A flexible approach to project management was applied throughout the project.

Outcome

Evaluation was built into the project plan, to evaluate the effectiveness of the solution against the four primary project objectives. This allowed the team to continue their evidence-based practice approach to the project through to the evaluation stage, by collecting large quantities of data from the four different sources of evidence (i.e. scientific literature, stakeholders, organisation and specialists/practitioners).

Evidence Collection

TMP supported the client's requirement to ensure a defensible, robust outcome. So, evidence-based evaluation approaches were outlined for the four project objectives.

- Objective 1: Positive Experience
 - Scientific literature used for comparison of video interview (VIV) Candidate Feedback to Candidate Feedback on other Assessment Methodology
 - Stakeholder impressions were collected via a Candidate Feedback Survey
- Objective 2: VIV as a Predictor of Performance
 - Scientific literature used for comparison of VIV method to alternative assessment methodology
 - Stakeholder feedback collected from Interviewers, on efficacy of VIV, and Assessor feedback was collected on candidate quality at Assessment Centre
 - At an organisational level, analysis was done to understand the spread of scores and conversion rates at Assessment Centre
 - Specialist input was collected via VIV benchmarking and quality checking exercise, as well as Lead Assessor and Senior Consultant experience feedback at Assessment Centre
- Objective 3: VIV to provide Fair Method
 - Scientific literature used for comparison of Adverse Impact (AI) results to best practice standards (such as AI of alternative assessment methods)
 - At an organisational level, analysis was done to understand AI data of VIV assessment stage, with comparison of VIV AI data to previous year's telephone interview (TIV) data
 - Specialist input was collected in VIV benchmarking and quality checking exercise
- Objective 4: VIV to offer efficiencies to the process
 - Scientific literature used review recruitment process data against anticipated efficiency benefits reported in the literature
 - Client feedback collected
 - At an organisational level, analysis was done to understand recruitment process data for 2019 in comparison to recruitment process data from 2018 (TIV process)

Particularly, concerning the third objective, "fair method," evaluation of the solution was extremely positive. Group differences in average scores for performance during the video interview stage were minimal. Candidates from minority and majority groups performed at a similar level, indicating reduced Adverse Impact and supporting a fair assessment process.

With the significant amount of investment that the NHS placed into the Graduate Management Training Scheme, this project formed an essential part of a wider initiative to simplify the selection process for trainees, maintain the quality of those trainees, and



ultimately ensure that the pipeline of potential leaders within the NHS remained strong for the years ahead.

Acknowledgements

NHS Graduate Management Trainee Scheme

Kate Bradley

Susana Laranjeiro, University of the West of England