



## Whole Person Hiring

### Overview

Co-op Group in the UK can trace its roots to the co-operative consumer societies established by the Rochdale Pioneers. The Co-operative Insurance Company was launched in 1867 to provide fire insurance for co-operative societies. Now, as part of the Co-op Group, it is a consumer co-operative owned by millions of members.

Like many organisations, they faced challenges in optimising their Sales Advisor recruitment process. Their filtering criteria appeared to be costing them some good candidates, and yet the time and effort required to improve their approach seemed unsustainable.

In this case study, Business Psychologists at TMP (a PeopleScout Company) worked with Co-op Insurance to re-design their assessment process for Sales Advisors. They applied the TMP 'whole person' model which suggests that assessing capability, passion, purpose, mindset, balance and results, in context, offers the power to predict performance.

### Challenge

Co-op Insurance identified challenges in their recruitment process for Sales Advisors, including:

- Manual sifting was proving resource-intensive, consuming significant amounts of the Resourcing team's time required to review hundreds of Curricula Vitae (CVs)
- CV sifting appeared to be suboptimal
  - Candidates may report contact centre or insurance experience, and thus be progressed in the process, but then not necessarily demonstrate the right behaviours
  - Candidates were being excluded due to a lack of relevant experience which meant overlooking some who may have had potential to succeed in these roles
- Telephone interviews were not optimised, focused largely on eligibility to work in the UK
- Quality of hire issues were being experienced, with performance issues observed amongst previous cohorts
- Time to hire, from application to appointment, was longer than desired
- Early attrition figures were higher than desired, as some incumbents demonstrated a lack of understanding of what the day-to-day role involved

The Consultants explored and uncovered what the root issues were, and summarised the two requirements as follows:

- Greater clarity in what good looked like, and therefore what was being measured
- Greater efficiency in terms of how candidates were assessed

The TMP team took a consultative approach to their work with Co-op. They ran engagement workshops with Human Resources (HR), Resourcing, Learning and Development team and

operational business managers. The workshops allowed TMP to understand the challenges each stakeholder group faced, what they felt was missing from the existing process and what they wanted to see in future. They also conducted job analysis activity with incumbents, managers, and visionary stakeholders.

Through this process they understood the improvements the stakeholders would like to see. And they refined the assessment criteria to be applied. For example, they identified that candidate experience was not at all important, although it was what the existing process was predominantly based on. Further, they gained an accurate understanding of qualities which did contribute to success.

## Approach

The Practitioners worked with Resourcing to understand how technology could provide an easier, quicker and more effective way of assessing the qualities required in the role. They selected to use a Tazio solution to provide candidates with an engaging experience. (See [www.tazio.co.uk](http://www.tazio.co.uk) for details of this supplier's services.)

TMP then proposed designing a bespoke, cost-effective sifting tool, which would save Resourcing team time and help them identify candidates with the potential to develop and excel, whilst providing the candidates with a realistic preview of the role.

## Applying Science

They proposed building this solution using their “whole person” approach to assessment. This approach assesses the ‘whole person’ by capturing Capability (i.e. ability), Results (i.e. experience), Behaviours, Mindset, Passion, and Purpose, thereby aiming to improve the overall predictive power of selection.

The Practitioners found that standard assessments focus solely on Capability, Results and Behaviour; predictors of performance. General mental ability (i.e. capability) is one of the most valid predictors of future performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004); previous experience (i.e. results) predicts job performance (Weisner & Cronshaw, 1988); and observed behaviours predict job performance ratings (Schmitt, et al, 1984).

However, in today's often unpredictable environments, they believed that assessing Purpose, Passion and Mindset provided a more comprehensive, incrementally beneficial assessment, leading to a greater predictive power in ever-changing organisations. This holistic model was influenced by the work of Carol Dweck (Dweck, 2015), Daniel Pink (Pink, 2009) and Simon Sinek (Sinek, 2016).

The Co-op's existing assessment process assessed candidates' Capability and Results (i.e. their existing experience), but did not assess Passion, Purpose or Mindset.

The TMP team applied their model to the new end-to-end process for the Co-op, designing the assessment tools from their collaborative engagement activities with stakeholders. The outputs included a realistic job preview, “one experience” sifting tool and face to face Assessment Centre.

## “One Experience”

The “one experience” sifting tool replaced the initial CV sifting stage. This was an automated seamless candidate experience, combining a Situational Judgement Test (SJT), error checking test and video interview. CV sifting was removed so there was less reliance on experience only, rather assessing the whole person and progressing candidates who had great potential to succeed in these roles. Video interviews were also included in the tool, assessing passion and motivation for the business.

The SJT elements measured individuals with the right behaviours and mindset, whilst also providing a realistic job preview, in turn reducing attrition. SJTs are also found to be a valid predictor of job performance, hence improving performance once in the role (McDaniel, et al, 2001).

All elements of the “one experience” tool were designed to be completed by candidates in one sitting, reducing time to hire.

The tool consisted of:

- Image-based SJT items, realistic to the role, designed to assess Behaviour and Mindset (Dweck, 2015)
- Audio-based error-checking items, giving candidates an understanding of the situations they might face, assessing Capability
- Video interview questions assessed Purpose (Sinek, 2016), Passion (Pink, 2009) and Mindset (Dweck, 2015)

## Project Management

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 resource was needed from them. Clear milestones were also identified, such as key review and sign-off points, as well as what resource was needed for the design of the SJT and error checking test.

The Consultants worked with the client to explore the best way to trial the SJT and error checking test (in which a high volume of incumbents would be needed to validate the tool in its development). Weekly project calls were conducted to engage with the client and keep them up to date on key deliverables, risks and assumptions. The high-level project plan was shared with the client, to emphasise when key deliverables would be completed.

A flexible approach to project management was applied throughout the project. For example, there were difficulties in obtaining enough incumbent completions for the tool validation, so they worked openly with the client to resolve.

## Outcome

An ongoing evaluation was built into the project plan following go-live, to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, focusing on the following measurement criteria:

- Candidate feedback
- Assessor feedback
- Quality of candidates at Assessment Centre

Following the implementation of the tool, another stakeholder engagement meeting was conducted to obtain an evaluation of the assessment tool. Qualitative client feedback was extremely positive:

- The Resourcing team were delighted with the automation and ease of the system; they expressed that the system was easy to use and it freed up their valuable time to dedicate resource to other projects, rather than constant assessing of CVs
- The candidate feedback was positive, with candidates saying how useful it was to obtain a realistic preview of the role prior to Assessment Centre; this allowed a two-

way informative process meaning candidates could self-select out of the process if they didn't feel it was right for them

- Quality at Assessment Centres increased significantly
- Time to hire was significantly reduced as candidates completed all elements of the test in one sitting
- Candidates who would previously have been overlooked due to their lack of experience progressed through to subsequent stages, some of them becoming top performers in the department

Predictive validity data for the assessment will be delivered to the client. Early indications however demonstrated that the tool was significantly impacting the recruitment process:

- Completion rate of the online assessment was 65%, suggesting less motivated candidates may not persist to completion of the assessment
- The benchmark set for the assessment progressed 50% of candidates in the process
- The success rate at Assessment Centre stage increased to 73%, from the previous pass rate which was 41%
- Anecdotally, stakeholders reported new hires from the revised process were motivated to succeed in their roles, with a propensity for learning and a growth mindset, genuinely enjoying their day to day role

Altogether, the three elements of the “one experience” sifting tool combined meant that the tool was not only able to reduce resource consumption, time consumption for employees and applicants, but also identify talent regardless of experience, enabling a wider range of people to find a career they enjoyed and were motivated to succeed at.

## Acknowledgements

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TMP