opc assessment

Digital remedies for recruitment headaches

The Occupational Psychology Centre (OPC) share digital pre-screening techniques that save time on large volume applicant recruitment and news about the launch of their redesigned, user-friendly, online assessment platform

As we emerge from the pandemic, with a return to work whether a 'normal' or a hybrid version of it, the Occupational Psychology Centre (OPC) clients are indicating there may be a need to ramp up recruitment drives to fill gaps in their teams. In addition, commuter return to work volumes, timing and passenger loadings still remain uncertain. It is, therefore likely that talent acquisition teams will need to adopt a responsive and speedy, but flexible approach to recruitment needs in the near future.

The OPC has been working alongside UK and international rail and transport clients for nearly 30 years, supporting HR teams with specialist psychological and safety critical recruitment expertise. Having listened closely to what key contacts are saying, there are some themes that are recurring headaches for recruiters currently. These are typically: Managing large volume candidate talent acquisition projects; overseeing online assessments, and evaluating the success of recruitment projects once completed.

Supporting teams managing large volume recruitment projects

The OPC has a great deal of experience in supporting, overseeing or fully-managing talent recruitment projects for a wide variety of roles in the industry. Their expertise isn't inhibited by the size of a project, having managed very high-volume driver role recruitment projects with thousands of candidates as well as high profile director level posts with just a handful of applicants.

A particular challenge that talent managers shared is how to effectively and efficiently pre-screen applicants, especially digitally. With the pandemic there has been a significant rise in the use of digital support to help select a shortlist of candidates for onward progression.

The OPC can design bespoke and tailored pre-screening questionnaires, for any role, to help select a shortlist of candidates that meet specific organisational and role requirements. Using specialist psychologist support an online pre-screening questionnaire might include some or all of the following sections:
• Non-negotiable 'Killer' questions – These are likely to be the absolute essentials to the role and can quickly reduce candidates that just can't fit the role profile. They

tend to be either single answer choices or 'Yes/No' answers. For example, this may include questions about work routines, such as 'Are you able to work shifts?' or about the functionality of the role like 'Are you happy to wear a uniform?'.
• Job preference questions – This includes questions that are about the applicants' job preferences to see if they match the job requirements. Candidates are asked to select what type of job tasks they might like to undertake within a role. So, for example, if the project was for track worker recruitment it may be useful to explore a candidate's preferences about rules adherence, concentration, team working or their approach to safety and risk. These preference questions will help indicate if a person is more or less likely to be suited to the role and deliver to the standards required of the organisation. These preference questions can be bespoke to the organisation's requirements as well as different for each and every role.
• Role specific questions – Another section can explore a candidate's understanding of the role in more detail. This section is tailored to contain a list of c. 15 questions about the job. The candidate has to choose what they believe are the top three most important factors and the bottom three least important factors. So, for example taking a signaller's role the candidate may have to choose from statements such as: 'Working quickly', 'Being safe', or 'Following rules and procedures' or 'Multi-tasking'.
• Mini Situational Judgement questions – Situational Judgement questions ask

section might include multiple choice questions about the organisation with right or wrong answers.

Jo Lawrence, Business Support Manager at OPC Assessment said: 'We are always looking for ways to support our clients, and help remove as many headaches as possible in their recruitment projects. Online pre-screening questionnaires are an excellent inclusion for any talent acquisition process whether big or small – for five or thousands of applicants! They really take away the time-consuming job of sifting through candidate applications for any HR team – saving time and money! A candidate shortlist of 'good fit' applicants can be arrived upon at the touch of a button. Tailoring these questionnaires to our client's needs, we can quickly and easily set them up.'

Online Psychological Assessment tools
With a smaller pool of talent, looking to identify the best fit applicants who are more likely to perform the role successfully and at the required performance standard, can be easily undertaken using psychometric assessment tools. OPC Assessment has over 60 Assessment tools available – either digitally or in paper and pencil format. Many of the assessment tools most suitable for use when recruiting safety critical roles are rail specific and have been researched and developed over many years, with the majority available digitally.
There is a wide variety of different types of assessment tools and exercises. Typically, online testing may include:

want to understand an applicants' level of cautiousness and conscientiousness which they could assess using a test such as the Safe Personality Questionnaire (SAFEPQ).This asks candidates to select ranked statements using an agree/disagree scale. Personality questionnaires should ideally be combined with an exploratory interview with the candidate. Interview prompt forms are available with many OPC Assessment personality questionnaires.
• Thirdly, we might want to include a Situational Judgement Test such as the Railway Situational Judgement Test (RSJT) that the OPC specifically designed for the railway or the Magnificent 7 Situational Judgment test (M7SJT) that assesses seven key competencies e.g., conscientiousness, motivation, risk or responsibility, that employers may require in the very best safety-critical employees.

Not a trained assessor? A bureau service is available
It's necessary to be a trained assessor in order to select, administer and use psychometric tools yourself during a selection process. If, however recruiters don't have this certification, the OPC can either provide the relevant training or there is an in-house bureau service option where an OPC team of psychologists and assessors will oversee the project on behalf of a client. They'll agree with the client appropriate assessment tools; administer the tests; provide reports and a quality short-list of candidates for the final stage. Another remedy for stretched recruiters!

candidates how they might respond in a role-specific scenario. There may be 3 or 4 questions in this section. Situational Judgement questions can be good predictors of future job performance; candidates can see them as more relevant because they are based on actual job function examples.
• Knowledge of the organisation – Some clients like to test an applicants' understanding of the organisation they are applying to; indicating how much 'homework' they may have done. This

• Ability tests that assess for one or more role-specific competencies e.g., concentration, verbal ability or checking. For example, an HR manager may choose to use a Core Skills Diagrammatic Reasoning Test (CoreD) when recruiting an engineer track worker to explore their visual problem-solving ability.
• Personality questionnaires can help to guide recruiters on an applicants' personality traits, behaviours, attitudes, or emotions. For example, when selecting control room operatives, a recruiter might

New launch – a redesigned assessment platform with user-friendly features
To support with online growth and success of online assessments OPC Assessment is launching a redesigned assessment platform later this year, with top-notch, user friendly features built-in to ease the headaches and demanding nature of any sized talent acquisition project.
When logging in users will be greeted with an easy and functional 'Dashboard' home page where they can see all the crucial projects, specific to their own work of the
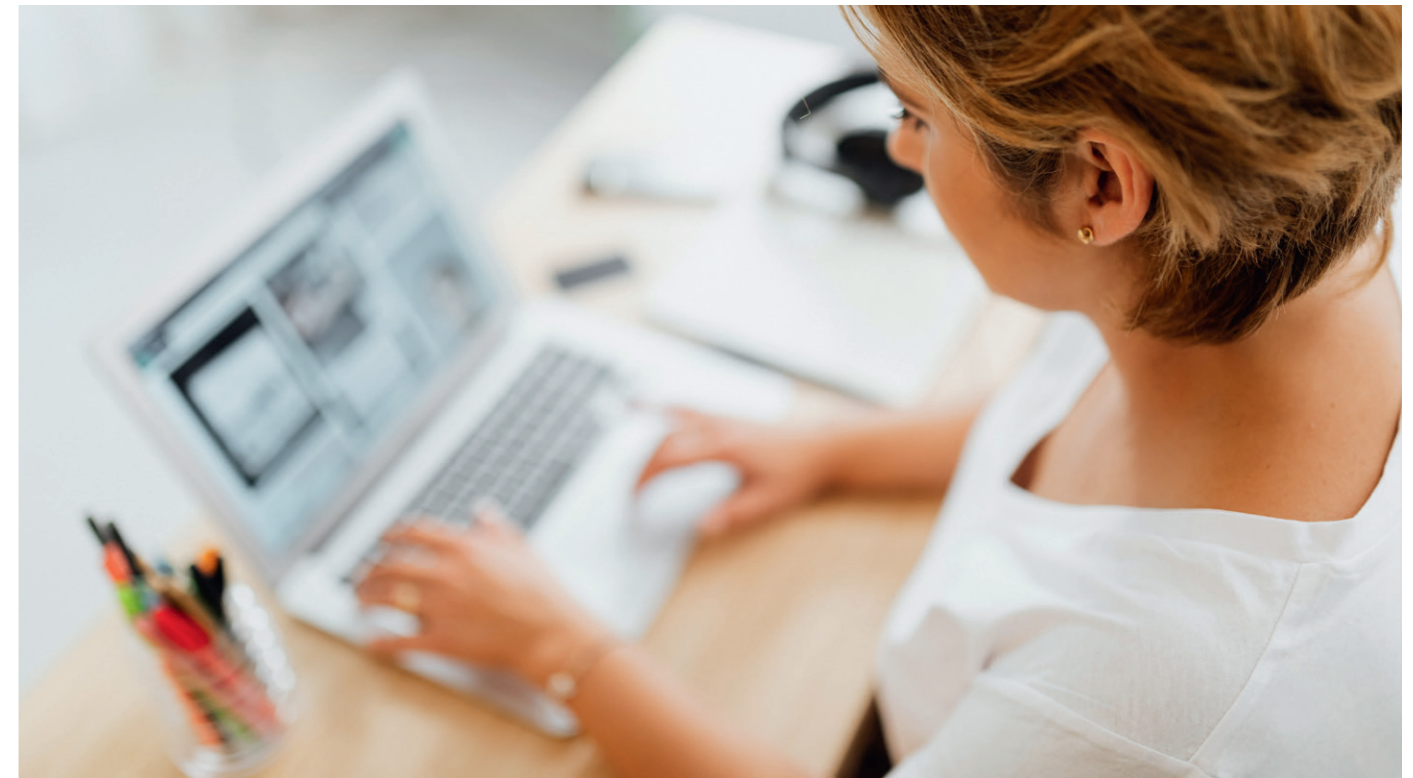
day. There is a handy 'Bookmark' feature for placing these important projects onto the dashboard – making them immediately visible for tracking and quick access. From the dashboard it's easy to navigate into all areas of the platform, and there are clearly identifiable tabs that highlight each section e.g., 'Projects', 'Talent Pool', etc.
David Holloway, System's Development Manager at OPC Assessment, responsible for the development of the new testing platform shared 'Clients have given us lots of valuable feedback on how we can build improvements into the redesigned system. One such area is an intuitive project set up page called the 'Assessment Journey', which covers steps from emailing an invitation to a candidate, individual assessment tool selection and inclusion; all the way through to final scoring and reporting for an entire project. It's a great visual representation of the journey candidates will need to take, and a big help to recruiters too.'
Setting performance levels for individual assessment tools is essential. On the redesigned platform, there is a prompt early on in the assessment tool selection set-up, to choose a 'norm' group for applicant comparison against other similar candidates. For the majority of tests and exercises there are norm groups available for many key railway roles. Additionally, there is also an option to allocate a 'cut-off' score during set-up i.e., the pass level requirement for candidates.
Another really beneficial feature is tracking the status of candidates for a project and completion of the assessment journey. The platform has a specific 'Candidates' tab within each project to help do this, listing all candidates and their status for each

assessment tool assigned. The status updates in real-time, helping users monitor their candidates' progress more easily. Powerful candidate management functions can be found here too and are helpful admin tools for a project. For example, there is the ability to re-send an invitation for an assessment tool as well as the ability to change the completion date for individual candidates, should they need an extension for some reason. There are also quick to view real-time status totals for any bookmarked projects on the dashboard, such as the number of candidate completions and passes.
Other noteworthy features include a 'Notice board' that shares news such as new assessment tool launches, so those using the platform get them first hand, as well as test or systems updates. Recruiters will also appreciate the visually more appealing and fresher look and feel to the platform with a layout and screen design more appropriate for multiple device usage – great for when catching up on a mobile or tablet.

Evaluating the success of a recruitment process once completed
Using digital recruitment processes including online assessment tools is hugely beneficial from a review perspective too. It provides recruiters with opportunities to analyse and interrogate information to help make future recruitment improvements or aid decision making. Reports or large volume data exports can be delivered quickly and easily at the touch of a button.
Recruiters may choose to review success rates through each tool in an assessment journey and tweak or adapt it for the future. They may consider moving a 'cut off' score to help improve the quality of applicants

recruited. Candidate drop-out rates for a test or whole assessment journey could be evaluated. This can be really beneficial when making judgements about the number of candidates to invite to meet a recruitment requirement.
Assessment tool data can be used to make comparisons too. So, for example a rail company may want to interrogate the quality of their applicants assessed vs a national sample of rail applicants. Alternatively, it can be really beneficial to review the performance of employees on a particular assessment tool with their subsequent training achievement and on the job performance. e.g., analysing their performance on the Safe Concentration and Attention Test (SCAAT) at selection may be useful to predict those employees who might have a subsequent safety incident.
As a final reflection, Jo Lawrence said: 'Investment in digital recruitment solutions pays dividends on many levels – time, efficiencies and cost, as well as evaluation. At the OPC, we aspire to innovate and continue supporting HR teams who oversee recruitment to make their jobs easier and smoother. As a smaller organisation, we 'punch above our weight' by responding quickly to client needs as well as matching industry technology, adding to our digital offering and launching innovative new tests using our specialist rail and safety critical expertise. We are delighted that the re-design of our testing platform will be another way we can support the rail operator talent acquisition teams.'

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