

Test of the psyche

When it came to recruiting Customer Assistants for the New Routemasters, London United opted to bring in psychologists to help identify candidates with good customer skills. OPC Assessment helped with psychometric tests, an approach that could grow

Selecting the right people is a vital deciding factor for the success of any organisation. For many industries, teaming up with psychologists to design a recruitment process is second nature; however, this is not commonplace in the bus industry.

London United Busways has shaken things up by teaming up with a leading provider of psychometric tests, OPC Assessment, to help recruit its Customer Assistants for the New Routemaster buses in London.

The Customer Assistants' role on the New Routemaster is like no other. Their role is not to check tickets, but rather assist tourists around London. A great deal of travel knowledge on tourist sights and transport links around London is necessary, but to make sure it is a pleasant journey for all also requires great customer service skills.

This is where the psychologists come in. OPC Assessment Psychologists helped London United select some off-the-shelf psychometric tests to match the requirements of the new Customer Assistant role, which were then used as part of an 'assessment centre'.

Assessment centre

Great customer service on the New Routemaster would involve the Customer Assistant dealing with novel and unexpected situations every day. To measure how they would respond in such situations, applicants first completed two customer-based psychometric tools, then an in-house group exercise, and finally a competency-based interview.

The two psychometric exercises were developed by OPC Assessment primarily for customer service roles: the Customer Service Situations (CSS) and Customer Service Role Play (CSR) exercise. These exercises allowed London United to gain a



'Those who performed well on the assessment performed well on the job'

practical and reliable measure of how someone would respond and interact when dealing with a range of customer interactions.

The in-house group exercise was used to give applicants a chance to express themselves. This was followed by a competency-based interview designed to give additional insight into particular competencies around customer orientation – essential to the Customer Assistant role. The first series of assessment centres were run by London United in-house, drawing on the expert skills of its own assessors and managers.

From these centres, more than 50 Customer Assistants were recruited in 2013.

It really worked

Once the new recruits were in place, OPC Assessment worked with London United to find out if the

assessment centre was working. The psychologists took a closer look at how applicants performed on each assessment tool at the assessment centre, and how they performed on the job.

The analysis revealed that those who performed really well on the assessment tools equally performed really well on the job, including punctuality and customer service. It became apparent that through this combination of customer-specific psychometric tests, a customer-orientated group exercise and a competency-based interview, London United was able to run an efficient and effective selection process and recruit high-performing employees.

Leading the way forward

London United has been really impressed with its assessment centre. "With so many applicants for the role, it really helped us identify candidates with outstanding customer skills," says the company.

It has also received recognition from Transport for London (TfL) for selecting quality Customer Assistants. The innovative approach has given London United an effective tool for recruiting the right people for the role.

London United was so pleased with the success of its selection process that earlier this year it used the same assessment centre to recruit 48 more Customer Assistants for another New Routemaster route.

Running formal assessment centres for employees in the bus industry is not the norm. However, London United, with support from OPC Assessment has shown that these can work really effectively in the bus industry. This promising move is just the beginning for London United's future recruitment efforts. [R2](#)