

PUTTING ENERGY BACK INTO GRADUATE RECRUITMENT FOR AN AUSTRALIAN ENERGY COMPANY

Kenexa, an IBM Company, was commissioned by one of Australia's largest energy companies to manage its 2010 Graduate Recruitment campaign. Kenexa was selected because of its experience and expertise in Recruitment Process Outsourcing combined with its proprietary technology. Together, these enable the tracking and progression of applicants broken down within a range of disciplines, including technical, business/commerce, accounting/finance, OH&S, marketing and communications.

Chosen from a list from nearly 20 competitors, Kenexa was able to meet the organization's requirements for "clearly demonstrating previous delivery of forward-thinking approaches to graduate recruitment and outlining success stories that detailed a new direction in recruitment, both in advertising and recruiting strategies." The stated objective was to "ensure a quick and precise process to identify talented, best-in-class individuals who met a range of selection criteria," and to win the individuals' hearts and minds during the process, resulting in a higher offer-to-start ratio.

KENEXA'S APPROACH

As a cornerstone of its strategy, Kenexa adopted a multiple assessment approach, automated through its technology, which helped fast track some of the key project deliverables described above. This multiple assessment approach was designed to provide immediate, actionable candidate selection data linked to future job fit.

THE PROCESS

The technology supporting the 2010 Graduate Recruitment Campaign went live in March 2009 and ended only four months later. This was a significantly shorter period than the previous year, which went through late September. More than 2,880 applications were received from 2,269 candidates—up from 1,500 applications the previous year, a 192 percent increase. During the process, 223 applications were withdrawn by candidates, six candidates turned down offers and 35 candidates accepted offers.

Kenexa's recruitment process and supporting technology meant that of the 2,880 applications, more than 84 percent could be reasonably screened out as not meeting the basic selection criteria within 24 hours of applying. This left a top performer cohort and allowed for a high touch approach in the next stage of selection.

Anecdotal feedback from hiring managers indicated a much higher quality of candidates and higher regard for the levels of involvement and communication through the process. Feedback from recruiters and HR confirmed that Kenexa's technology provided a much richer level of analytics and reporting for use by stakeholders in the business than previously experienced.

As part of its best practice approach, Kenexa will track the progress of successful graduates through manager ratings and other performance/employee data to refine future selection benchmarks at no cost to the energy company.

VALIDATING KENEXA'S MULTIPLE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

As part of the screening process, Kenexa administered randomized verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning tests, personalized telephone screenings and the Kenexa Occupational Personality Inventory (OPI) assessment—profiled against a small test group of graduates from the previous year. The intention of this process was to recruit those individuals who were likely to have higher levels of engagement, learning agility, mobility and overall job fit.

Of the 456 applicants assessed in full, Kenexa took the results for each assessment and placed them in its statistical package (SPSS) to create specific bands—with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.

Kenexa then calculated an overall score, creating the ability to rank order the Top 150—those most likely to be referred to interview with a Hiring Manager. This represented about five percent of the total population.

To validate the process, Kenexa decided it would be interesting to compare this Top 150 against graduate university gradings. The results showed that this approach was able to screen out lower performing academic graduates to 98 percent, while being able to discern amongst the higher performing academic graduates based on other job fit factors. Only 14.67 percent had high distinctions, 39.33 percent distinctions and 44 percent credit/pass.

TABLE 1: KENEXA ASSESSMENT PROCESS SCREENS IN PROPORTIONATELY HIGHER PERFORMING UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

GRADUATE UNIVERSITY GRADINGS	GRAD RATINGS FOR KENEXA TOP 150 CANDIDATES	PERCENT	GRAD RATINGS FOR TOTAL GROUP	PERCENT	VARIANCE
High Distinction	22	14.67	121	5.33	9.33
Distinction	59	39.33	613	27.02	12.32
Credit/Pass	66	44.00	1,241	54.69	-10.69
Pass	3	2.00	290	12.78	-10.78
Fail	0	0.00	4	0.18	-0.18
Totals	150	100.00	2,269	100.00	-

The Kenexa screening process came up with a list of 150 candidates who scored highest across all four assessment stages (numerical, verbal, telephone and job fit). Kenexa then compared their university results against the total applicant population. Table 1 indicates that the Kenexa assessment process was able to screen in proportionately higher performing university graduates (high distinction and distinction) and screen out lower performing university graduates—nearly 100 percent of university graduates with only a pass attainment were independently excluded. Note: These results were independent of, and did not include, as a measure, actual graduate university gradings.

A further analysis of candidate career disciplines against the OPI shows significant relationships between personality measures and the career they are pursuing. With more research in this area, Kenexa will be able to better explain career interests.

Overall, Kenexa's tailored approach helped the energy company identify the best performers for the organization, improving the quality by approximately 175 percent—representing the ratio of high distinctions in the group versus the high distinctions in the total group (14.67 percent versus 5.33 percent). Similarly, Kenexa's approach helped identify better than average performers, improving the quality by approximately 46 percent—representing the ratio of distinctions in the group versus distinctions in the total group (39.33 percent versus 27.02 percent).

SUMMARY

Kenexa was able to recruit top performing graduates needed for the energy company's 2010 graduate intake in less time and at lower cost than in previous years. As Kenexa continues to tie the recruitment process to employee performance and retention, and to refine the process for future campaigns, it will continue to improve business outcomes and drive high performance for the Australian energy company.

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