

Focusing on competencies for top-level selection

How did an adoption charity evaluate and improve their selection process to recruit the right person for a key senior role?

PACT (Parents And Children Together) is an adoption charity that operates in the south east of England. In 2018, it helped to:

- Place 92 UK children with 66 families
- Approve 63 couples or single people to adopt
- Provide 78 families with family therapy from their Family and Children Therapeutic Support (FACTS) service

Activities and numbers like these, in what is an intense and sensitive process, start to show how pivotal the Head of Adoption role is. And if the role becomes vacant, it's crucial that the selection process minimizes disruption. In the adoption sector, continuity and consistency of service and safeguarding are paramount.

PACT faced this challenge last year when their long-serving Head of Adoption left the organization. However, it would be an expanded role that the new employee would move into, with the main change being this: to help PACT adapt to external changes within the adoption sector.

Business Challenges

- Recruiting for a high-level role in a small sector

Company Profile

Established in 1911 by the then-Bishop of Oxford, Bishop Francis Paget, PACT is one of the UK's leading adoption charities. It builds and strengthens families across London and the South-East of England, and runs community projects too, including the award-winning Alana House project for vulnerable women.

PACT

Adoption in the UK has traditionally been organized by the local authority or a voluntary agency like PACT. But a Government initiative to shorten the time children spent waiting in care has led to regional adoption agencies being created. This is happening now, and PACT needs to position itself so it maintains its prominent position. This means that candidates applying for the Head of Adoption role need:

- Strong business skills and commercial acumen.
- A strong strategic outlook to build on partnerships with external organizations.
- An aptitude for finance.

Sam Ward, Recruitment and Volunteer Manager at PACT, noted another challenge. “There is a national shortage of social workers. Adoption is one of the smaller areas within social care, so the pool of available people is already limited. And within that, the pool of senior people with adoption experience is smaller again.”

Solution

Ward, who is responsible for PACT’s recruitment of both staff and volunteers, had recognized that PACT did not have a standardized approach to their recruitment processes when she ran a selection day the previous year. This made one thing clear: she wanted the process pared down and simplified. She also wanted to be sure of objectivity and consistency throughout.

The recruitment advert had already been sent out when PACT started working with us. We began by addressing all the types of assessment PACT had used in previous selection processes (structured interviews, presentations and work sample tests).

Solution

- Focus on competencies
- Revise and update the selection process and activities

“ Focusing on competencies in this way gave our selection process a more business-oriented approach. It was obviously thorough, and it gave us confidence in our choice. ”

Sam Ward,
Recruitment and
Volunteer Manager,
PACT

PACT

Clarifying objectives

Once we'd helped PACT gain a clearer understanding of what they wanted to assess, we used a competency framework to establish measurable competencies. Together we chose eight competencies (an industry standard number) that were essential, based on their criticality to the role and their frequency of occurrence within the role. The competencies were:

- Client focus
- Innovation and initiative
- Integrity
- Passion, commitment and drive
- Planning and organization
- Self-development
- Managing and leading
- Written communication

These competencies were then cross referenced with the 16pf® tool.

This was to highlight any potential 'red flags' that would be useful to explore during the selection process. The data helped us create specific competency-based questions for each candidate's structured interview. "Some of the competencies supplemented what we asked in the interview," noted Ward, "while others were more holistic and covered in a different way."

The 'different way' was through a one-hour 16pf feedback session between the candidate and our consultant. The competencies not addressed in the interview could then be explored and verified through personal examples.

Finally, each candidate also completed a Saville™ ability test as part of the two-step assessment of the communication competency. Candidates completed the test in a controlled environment on-site and online before entering the interview panel. The online format meant the results were available immediately and could then be used in the decision-making process at the end of the assessment day.

Results

- Practical learning points that improved management and motivation of direct reports
- Better understanding of behavioral change under stress
- Improved leadership competencies leading to better performing teams

PACT



Do we really need this?

Sometimes, tasks are used just because they've been used before. And, when time is short, it's easy to keep things as they are instead of challenging them.

But with external support and expertise available, there's a better chance to be objective – and bold. For example, PACT had planned to include a MAT (Moving Annual Target) graph analysis assessment in this selection process. When challenged on its purpose and value by our consultant, PACT realized it did not assess any of the essential criteria needed for immediate uptake of this role.

So, they cut it from the selection process.

“We decided it was too finance focused,” said Ward. “Having an external viewpoint was a great help. We felt encouraged to actually ask, ‘Is this working? Does it do anything?’ The discussion brought clarity to our thinking.”

Results

First, the recruitment process was successful: PACT found their new Head of Adoption. But what about the changes that came from working with our consultant?

“She helped us to focus on what's needed immediately, and what can be developed once a candidate is in post,” said Ward. “Focusing on competencies in this way gave our selection process a more business-oriented approach,” she added. “It was obviously thorough, and it gave us confidence in our choice. It felt professional, and we are thinking of applying these principles to our assessment of adopters.”

Ward also noted that even for those candidates who were unsuccessful, the feedback session was valuable. “It all adds up to a rewarding recruitment experience for individual candidates, regardless of their outcome. And of course, it enhances PACT's reputation within the sector too.”



ABOUT THE MYERS-BRIGGS COMPANY

In our fast-changing world, your edge lies in harnessing 100 percent of your talent – whether you’re at work, home, college, or anywhere in between. Your success and sense of fulfilment aren’t just about what you know and what you can do, they hinge on your relationships and interactions with others.

The Myers-Briggs Company empowers individuals to be the best versions of themselves by enriching self-awareness and their understanding of others. We help organizations around the world improve teamwork and collaboration, develop inspirational leaders, foster diversity, and solve their most complex people challenges.

As a Certified B Corporation®, The Myers-Briggs Company is a force for good. Our powerfully practical solutions are grounded in a deep understanding of the significant social and technological trends that affect people and organizations.

With over 60 years in assessment development and publishing, and over 30 years of consultancy and training expertise, a global network of offices, partners and certified independent consultants in 115 countries, products in 29 languages, and experience working with 88 of the Fortune 100 companies, we’re ready to help you succeed.

© Copyright 2019 The Myers-Briggs Company and The Myers-Briggs Company Limited. MBTI, Myers-Briggs, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the MBTI logo and The Myers-Briggs Company logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of The Myers & Briggs Foundation in the United States and other countries. 16pf is a trademark of PSI Services LLC. Saville is a trademark of Saville Assessment Limited.