

case study

Energis attracts and retains a high-performing workforce

Prior to its acquisition by Cable & Wireless, Energis was a company facing serious market challenges. The shake-out of the bloated technology, media and telecommunications sector effectively led to the collapse of the telecoms market, causing Energis, once ranked amongst the UK's most highly regarded companies, to crash out of the FTSE 100.

At the same time, telecommunications companies were gaining a reputation for providing poor customer service, putting Energis under pressure to review its differentiation in a struggling marketplace.

Critical to successfully re-positioning the company as a telecoms supplier of choice was the drive to deliver exceptional levels of customer service. Energis needed employees to have an energy and enthusiasm for their customers, people who would be proactive, not reactive, always searching to do things differently and better.

Creating a high performing workforce

For Energis to create a workforce made up of the best people, it was essential that the business could agree on what "the best people" looked like. In the past the business had struggled to get clarity, use common language or form agreement on what made one employee better than another. This made decision making for recruitment selection a long, inefficient and difficult process, resulting in different standards to be used across different parts of the organisation.

Getfeedback*, a talent management consultancy with expertise in helping organisations through change, was brought in. Its role was to translate senior management's view of the behaviours and attitudes that would be needed, into a concise and measurable format that could be used to underpin rigorous selection and development.

Working in partnership

From the outset, the programme required real partnership between Getfeedback's consultants, Energis' HR team and the business' leaders. Phil Bishop, HR director at Energis, comments, "Our joint goal was to create a selection process which the business leaders would trust. This meant describing the behaviours that we wanted people to display in plain English."

Assessment centres were designed for each of the different business functions, with the common aim of determining the ability of individuals to act in ways required to effectively support the company. A number of tasks were designed to simulate the most complex scenarios that Energis employees might find themselves faced with and further assessment was also carried out in the form of a very specific cultural fit questionnaire.

Attracting the best people

Getfeedback's role throughout was to ensure that rigorous analysis provided robust data upon which recruitment decisions could be made and provide an objective and professional view on the people being assessed.

Phil Bishop comments, "The benchmark data provided by Getfeedback for us to measure candidates against provides a huge distinguishing gap between that offered by traditional interview processes and psychometric testing. Not only are we now able to bring people of a very high standard into the organisation, but the assessment centres designed are so relevant to our business needs that we're also putting internal people through them to identify how best to develop them."

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The results

In the following two years, Energis added almost 500 people to its existing employee base. In total, 370 applicants, including 94 internal candidates, have passed through the Getfeedback assessment centres developed for Energis over a period of nine months.

Based on their performance in the assessment centre, each new employee also has a meaningful and practical personal development plan created for them. In this way the assessment centres provide the basis for integrating the recruitment, assessment and development processes to give all new Energis employees a flying start.