

Case study

BWB Consulting



BWB Consulting is an integrated environmental and engineering consultancy which offers a multi-disciplinary service to the property, development and construction industry. The services are centred around BWB's core disciplines of environmental (land regeneration), transportation, highways, infrastructure as well as civil and structural engineering.

BWB operates from offices in Birmingham, Derby, Leeds, Leicester, Glasgow and Nottingham, working with national and international projects in the UK as

“The challenge when employing graduates is to ensure we have recruited the right ones. We cannot base our decision on previous work experience so we need something else to validate our impressions. We work in small teams so its essential the people on each team gel, work well together and get on. BWB has a strong culture so for us it was crucial that any graduates we took on fitted into this. We want people who are friendly, very persuasive and good at building relationship with people.”



well as Europe. They recognise the importance of providing their clients with a pragmatic, responsive and commercial contribution so that complex planning and design issues can be resolved quickly, efficiently and economically.

The Challenge

“We are facing a tremendous skills shortage in engineering at the moment. Skilled engineers with three to four years experience are extremely difficult to find and competition to employ them is fierce, especially from the banking and investment sectors,” says Clare Wooler, human resources manager at BWB. “With such a small pool of potential talent we decided to focus on recruiting Graduate Engineers, giving them the training they needed to move forward.”

“We also had to take into account the cost implications of making a bad decision. It costs BWB approximately £15,000 to train a graduate to a technically competent level. We take on three graduates a year, an investment of around £45,000 which would be wasted if they didn't work out.”

“Profiling took the risk out of recruiting, we knew what types of behaviour would be successful in the role of Graduate Engineer. Bad recruitment decisions cost us money: benchmarking means that we are confident we will now make the right ones.”

The Solution

BWB uses systems from Thomas International to ensure that they recruit and retain the right graduates. To identify the right candidates for the role of Graduate Engineer at BWB the company completed a Benchmark on the 35 graduates they already employed. A Benchmark identifies the characteristics of the successful graduates thereby allowing BWB to predict candidates who are likely to succeed in the role of Graduate Engineers.

Each graduate working at BWB was assessed using two tools:

- Personal Profile Analysis (PPA)
- Tests for Selection and Training (TST)

PPA assesses an individual's behaviour in the work environment. It can answer questions such as – What are their strengths and limitations? Are they self starters? How do they communicate? What motivates them? The PPA enables people to become more self aware, which in turn gives them the means to consolidate their working strengths and compensate for their limitations.

The PPA is a series of 24 questions on a forced choice “first impressions” basis, taking no longer than seven minutes to complete. The answers are charted on a graph under the four headings of Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance (DISC).

TST provides a means to measure the fluid intelligence or ‘mental horsepower’ of an individual. Fluid intelligence is the ability to reason on the spot and solve unfamiliar problems where there is no prior experience to call upon. The tests provide a reliable, accurate and valid means of identifying if a person can quickly learn and retain new skills and procedures.

“The Benchmark took the risk out of recruiting, we knew what profiles and types of behaviour would be successful in the role of Graduate Engineer. Bad recruitment decisions cost us money, benchmarking means that we are confident we will now make the right ones. It was clear from the Benchmark report that our top performing Graduate Engineers were motivated by meeting new and interesting people, worked best for a manager that supported their dreams and intentions and wanted time to build relationships in an environment free from data and detail. We now know these are the characteristics we need in the profiles of the graduates we recruit.”

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“We also needed to be able to assess how quickly candidates could think on their feet. Our graduates are given a lot of access to clients very quickly and they need to be up and running and able to talk to confidently to clients as soon as possible.”

“Historically we relied on our gut feel at interview – did we like the person sitting in front of us? Some candidates proved to be very convincing at interview but did not have the behavioural skills we were looking for to be successful in the role. Using the PPA at interview provided qualitative data to back up our impression.

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