

A Case Study

Assessment Centres for Director Recruitment

The Client

The Chief Executive of an inner London Primary Care Trust needed to restructure her Board in order to be in a position to meet the challenges of World Class Commissioning. Only three of her Directors were permanent appointments, so she had the opportunity of recruiting people externally who had the skills to complete her new Board.

The Requirement

At the time, a number of PCTs were recruiting Directors, so there was a requirement to attract suitable candidates as well as to ensure that those appointed would be up to the challenging new jobs. An executive search firm was retained to headhunt and advertise nationally and shortlist for three new Director posts - Director of Resources, Director of Strategic Development and Director of Performance and Commissioning Improvement.

The Solution

Zenon Consulting were commissioned to design assessment centres to test the short listed candidates against the individual World Class Commissioning competencies developed by NHS London. The competency-based behavioural indicators against which

the candidates were measured were also linked to the PCT's core skills and leadership behaviours for Directors and its Behaviour Model.

Within a very tight timetable, Zenon designed a one day assessment centre for each post and ran it the day before the panel interviews took place. The day consisted of bespoke observed exercises, a presentation to stakeholders and feedback to the candidates.

The candidates also completed online "Mental Toughness" tests, the results of which were given to the interviewing panel along with advice on areas to probe at interview.

Mental Toughness was seen to be a key capacity required of all Directors to enable them to deal with the challenges and pressures of a changing environment.

Feedback on the Mental Toughness test was then offered to all applicants.

The Results

The result was that the three Director posts were filled and a fourth Director was recruited to support the commissioning agenda. The assessment centre part of the process

gave insight into how the candidates would actually perform in their post and this, combined with the other aspects of the selection process i.e. Mental Toughness test, Stakeholder presentation and panel interview, gave a very rounded picture of each candidate and reassured the panel that their decisions on offers of employment were based on robust evidence. In addition, the candidates were given feedback on their performance in the assessment centre and they commented on how realistic the scenarios that they worked through were.

Next Steps

The Directors were so impressed by the Mental Toughness Test that they decided to use it as a development tool for the entire board as soon as they had finished recruitment.

Feedback and coaching to increase Mental Toughness was arranged for all Board Members and the Mental Toughness Organisational Development report was used in conjunction with MBTI as the basis of a development day.