Full Impact Assessment -

Northamptonshire Recruitment Portal

Introduction

The challenge was to develop a single public sector recruitment website for the county that would create an identity for Northamptonshire, provide an improved experience for potential applicants, save money for all partners on advertising and back office efficiencies and become self financing. It was also aiming to develop a sign posting service to voluntary work within the county, tying in with the government's worklessness agenda and big society approach.

With funding cuts being an inevitable problem for all Councils over the next few years, saving money while improving customer experience is a key priority.

The members are:

➢ East Northamptonshire District Council;
➢ Daventry District Council;
➢ South Northamptonshire District Council,
➢ Northampton Borough Council
➢ Corby Borough Council
➢ Kettering Borough Council
➢ Wellingborough Borough Council
➢ Northamptonshire Police
➢ Northamptonshire Voluntary Centre

Background

All of the partners involved in the project were looking to achieve key business objectives. The key business objectives for the project were:

▪ Creation of a single web portal to host all public sector and voluntary sector opportunities that are created by the partners

▪ Creation of a revenue arm to this portal to help maintain the development and profile of the site. Looking to sell advertising space to Northamptonshire based businesses, etc

▪ Reduction in advertising costs by each authority

- Develop links with Twitter, Facebook and other social networking technologies.

- Shared service back office system for recruitment systems

- Creation of shared redeployment and secondment system and agreement used by all partners. This element will be completely unique to this part of the country.

- Moving away from paper based applications with a move toward electronic applications

The project also had key objectives that related to the development of links with external agencies across the county through:

- Creation of a volunteer advertisement board as a focal point for voluntary opportunities within the region – potential to widen scope of opportunities to those using the job centre or leaving education.

- Develop links with external agencies in order to support the worklessness agenda.

The partners also wanted to attempt to change the traditional impression of council workers and attract people who would not have worked for the authority before. In the first stance this would be making developed links with the university and youth groups. Currently there is a huge disparity in the age demographic within the authorities.

Baseline data and research

Initially we looked at the service users within the authority who would actually manage the recruitment process. We went to managers and asked them how we could improve the service. The feedback that we received clearly stated that the managers wanted greater control of the process as they felt that is was often held up due to slow circulation of paper-based documents and other internal processes. Also this would improve the customer experience.

To combat this an electronic recruitment system was developed in such a way that it would allow managers to be able to complete current forms online and receive the required authorisation electronically in a much faster timeframe. This electronic system also allowed for the protection of applicants through the removal of possible breaches of confidentiality of biased through personal details and equal opportunity information being held apart from the main application form. This allows an applicant to apply for a role knowing they will only be scored on their response to questions and maintaining their anonymity until being requested to attend interview.

Analysis of applicants recruited to the authorities utilising the previous methods of recruiting and advertising tended to be drawn form a narrow geographical pool within

the county. It also focused primarily on those who were available during the day to contact the authorities or brought the local paper. In order to widen our applicant pool and encourage individuals from varied backgrounds and locations to apply, it was vital that we considered other methods of recruiting to and advertising posts. It was also highlighted that the old process was cumbersome and required intense focus from prolonged periods and was not customer friendly.

Statistics had shown that within a fixed 6 month period at the start of the project only 15% of applications had been made to the authority through paper based applications. This figure was substantially made up of applications for roles within our refuse, grounds maintenance and streetcare departments who have been recently transferred out of the organisation to an external company, EMS. Also the authority has, and is in the process of moving to electronic appraisal and e-learning systems which will form the basis for new training courses and potential incremental increases.
There are currently three times as many people within the authority that are over sixty compared to those under twenty-one and the same number of people over the national retirement age as there are under twenty.

Therefore work has been done to create a graduate page within the portal with the intention to look to bring in more interns and work experience students on a "Shadow a Servant" initiative to open up the Council as a potential employer when they leave education.

Secondly the ethnic make up of the authority was distorted with at the last survey sixty percent of the work force stating their ethnicity as White British, thirty three percent decline to state leaving only seven percent claiming to be from a different ethnic background. All of the partners wanted to look at how the website can be developed in future to become more attractive to the different ethnic groups to re-diversify our workforce.

Finally we looked at the actual software that was being developed to ensure that it fell in line with Web Accessibility guidelines that would allow for the use of the site by those with a disability or who have an accessibility issue. The partners looked at other recruitment portals such as East Midlands Jobs, Southeast jobs and NHS jobs to view their accessibility statements and the software that they required. Following this we ensured that as part of the specification the portal would be developed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA standard. This would allow for screen reader technology to be compatible with the software and ensure the portal was easy to navigate, users could perceive the information, understandable and robust enough robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

Going forward the goal of the partners involved in the site will be to make sure that all pages within the site are kept to this standard and where possible look to achieve the highest rating (AAA) for content accessibility.

Consultation

As part of the consultation process the partners met with local groups across the county to test the site and collate feedback to be considered as part of the development and also to look at future developments of the system.

The partners held three key consultation workshops where a diverse cross-section of the community were invited to test the system and suggest improvements. The make up and feedback from the session are as follows:

South Northamptonshire – our colleagues from South Northamptonshire met with representatives from the Towcester Jobs Club who tested the application process and provided feedback on the information within the site. This group was made up of job seekers who were on the whole over the age of 35 from varied working backgrounds, which included former manual workers as well as office based staff. Initially they raised concerns before testing the system regarding the sole use of an electronic application form. However after trialling the system and running through the process, these candidates felt that as long as there were locations that supported applying electronically and there were contact details to go to with queries, that using an electronic medium for applications was both sensible and viable, The members of the group felt that the process itself was intuitive and particularly commented on the level of feedback that could be achieved through an improved communication process.

Northampton Borough Council - brought together a group of students and teenagers to look at the site, test the process and look at the impact it would have on the group. This workshop included members of varied ethnic societies that were in operation at the university and the LGBTQ community. The feedback from this group was positive when compared to the previous application process. They felt the old process was too bureaucratic, not applicant friendly and potentiality biased. It was their opinion that the application process and namely the personal statement required prior internal local government experience and knowledge of the application process to be shortlisted. They felt that the new application process was more applicant friendly and in line with other large-scale recruitment websites such as "Monster". They raised concerns regarding the risk of the old website and process appearing to "council like" putting off those leaving education from applying for roles and hindering students and teenagers from applying. Comments from this group also included the lack of interaction with social media at present and that it could look "bare" and "stagnant" if not reviewed on a regular basis. It was also raised that the old process did not take into account the specific needs of those with learning difficulties. It was suggested that links be made to the "We can work it out" group to support the development of a different application process for adults with learning difficulties.

Daventry – colleagues from Daventry held a workshop with the Disability Access Group to look at the system and application process. During this session the users looked at the content of the site and navigation in particular. The feedback from the group included:

- Impartially sighted members of the group found the site easy to navigate around and free of jargon. They also were also encouraged by the fact that the site had met AA standard web access protocols and would be compatible to use with screen reader technology.
- Those whose mobility was impaired questioned the access issues to the portal for those without a home PC. Candidates were asked how they would feel about utilising local libraries across the county and also the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall where they could to receive support on the process from members of staff and have access to PC's. Feedback from this query indicated that this group felt that this suggestion would be worthy of an initial trial. Although those with impairments requested if a review could be considered if the electronic medium caused difficulties in applying for roles.
- Concerns were raised from those who wanted to apply for voluntary work through the website as most of the opportunities were situated in Northampton itself. Work therefore has been started to engage the other voluntary agencies across the county to advertise opportunities and also local community groups.

Overall themes from consultation process was positive in regards to the improved the likelihood of a more equitable application process by using the electronic system. The positive feedback suggested that the system would allow for all personal information to be hidden away from HR and recruiting managers until the point of interview. Alleviating the chances of anyone being unsuccessful at short listing due to equality information. This would ensure that all applicants were taken through to the interview stage based on their ability to the roles and responses to questions. The groups highlighted the opportunity for people living across the country to gain access to opportunities by utilising an electronic method. The portal will allow the advertisement of opportunities to those who have diverse needs such as part time and evening workers. Resulting in a wider pool of applicants.

Assessment of impact on particular groups and actions to address the issues

As mentioned above there is a risk that the recruitment portal could potentiality have an adverse effect on some applicants. The impact and actions to address these issues are noted below:

Adults with learning difficulties – Partners of the recruitment portal have met with the "We can work it out" group to look currently at possibilities surrounding the creation of a different applicant process for adults with learning disabilities. A form has been created by the Learning Disabilities team at Northamptonshire County Council, which could potentially be used by the partners to reduce the impact on applicants with learning difficulties.

Access to computers – PC's are provided to applicants at One Stop Shop and libraries across the county. Individual support can also be given to candidates who require this if they attend the One Stop Shop. Partners will also work with agencies to advertise training opportunities to develop their skill set in terms of PC literacy,

CV writing and interview training and regularly liaise with the job centre. The partners will monitor the number of paper applications that they receive and review how the application may need to be amended or other developments that need to be considered to support those with access issues.

To alleviate issues regarding potential applicants not using the internet for searching for opportunities recruiting managers will send all details of roles to the Job Centre to be advertised. In addition to this we will advertise the recruitment portal within all of the main reception areas of the partner authorities, display posters in the local libraries and place posters in bus shelters. We will also place adverts in the local paper directing people to the website to look for public sector opportunities within the county.

Visually impaired – the partners have succeeded in achieving AA standard in terms of Web Access Guidelines for the information that is loaded on the site. However the partners will work to ensure that the level is reviewed and wherever possible improved to AAA standard.

Diverse Groups – as part of the project the requirement was not only to develop an improved recruitment platform but also to increase the diversity within the workforce. The partners will continue to arrange workshops with diverse groups across the county. Focus will be particularly put upon ethnic groups within the county and engagement with long-term unemployed and those in the 16 – 24 age bracket.

Voluntary work – the electronic recruitment system will also be able to advertise unpaid voluntary opportunities to those seeking work.

Performance and monitoring arrangements

To ensure that the both the objectives of the project and the effect on the applicants are being measured, the partners will undertake period reviews of the portal and its application process.

As part of the development of the specification a request was made to be able to reporting and monitor access to the site and equality information of applicants and registered users.

In the first instance Ashley Longhurst (Northampton Borough Council) receives weekly reporting analytics on, complaints regarding the site, access issues the site, password resets for the site, data storage queries, the visits to the site, nature of the visit, time spent on the site and the location of those viewing the site. These are then circulated to the partners for analysis.

Secondly within the actual administration area of the site the partners have a reporting tool, which allows them to extract information on the make up of applicants. This information includes all equality strands time spent in the process or success rates of particular groups. All this can be achieved whilst keeping the results completely anonymous.

Finally the partners meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues with the site and look to resolve problems including access or technical concerns. Six months after the launch of the site the partners will review information from the site and look at the possibility of making changes to the processes where adverse impacts have occurred.

The monthly review meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month and the first main review of applicant information will be held on Wednesday 1st February 2012.

When making any decision on the changes to the site all partners will consider fully the impact on the stakeholder of making or not making the changes and also the financial impact that the changes may have on the authorities involvement in-terms of not only finances but also reputation. During the review meeting in February 2012 discussions will be held regarding the preparation for an EIA to be completed in August 2012 to ensure that there had been no adverse impact on stakeholders.

However there is an agreed continuation of the assessment of impact, as partners will continues to engage with external groups, which are already scheduled to assess the impact on such diverse groups such as Dyslexia groups in Daventry, Mental Health Groups in Corby and Students at the University of Northampton.

Equality impact assessment Action & Improvement Plan

The table below should be completed using the information from the equality impact assessment to produce an action plan for the implementation of proposals to:

1. Lower the negative impact? **And/Or**
2. Ensure that the negative impact is legal under anti-discriminatory law? **And/Or**
3. Provide an opportunity to promote equality, equal opportunity and improve relations within equality target groups? i.e. increase the positive impact

Please ensure that you update your service/business plan with the equality objectives/targets and actions identified below:

Area of concern/ negative impact	Changes proposed	Measure of success/ Performance Indicatior	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource implication	Comments
Access to computers/no hard copy applications	Free access to county libraries and the one stop shop with support at one stop shop	Weekly reporting tool with RAG indicators	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns
Those who do not use the internet for job searches	Bus Shelter campaign, posters/displays in one stop shop, job centre adverts and adverts in the local paper	Weekly reporting tool with RAG indicators	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns

PC literacy	Partners working to signpost links they have established	Weekly reporting tool with RAG indicators	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns
Disengagement with visually impaired	Working toward AAA standard	Maintain Web Access Guidelines	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns
Application process for adults with learning disabilities	Partnership meetings with "We can work it out"	Suitable application process implemented				Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns
Disengagement with long term unemployed	Arrange workshops and monitoring performance reporting from systems	Weekly reporting tool with RAG indicators	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns
Disengagement with ethnic groups	Arrange workshops and monitoring performance reporting from systems	Weekly reporting tool with RAG indicators	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns
Disengagement with 16-24 age group	Arrange workshops and monitoring performance reporting from systems	Weekly reporting tool with RAG indicators	A Longhurst	Reviewed in Feb 2012 then Aug 2012		Monthly meetings with partners to highlight concerns