



Derbyshire County Council has invested in web-based recruitment, designed to extend the range and quality of job applicants. As a result, Derbyshire has saved more than £100,000 in direct costs, and achieved a significant e-government priority outcome.

"The most direct benefit from an HR perspective is that we are widening our pool of applicants," says James Luckraft, Personnel Manager at Derbyshire County Council, "and the number of applications that we are receiving online has exceeded expectations."

## Putting people first

Derbyshire County Council, whose headquarters are in Matlock, is one of the largest local authorities in the country with 37,000 employees. The Council, assessed as excellent under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment has chosen to keep much of its workforce directly employed.

This means that recruitment and retention of employees is a major issue with around 5,000 vacancies every year. The Council's Change Management Programme places the focus on "Putting

People First", enabling the delivery of high quality services and assisting the Authority in providing value to Council tax payers.

"We knew that 40% of all hits on the Council's website were recruitment based which brought it to the fore as an area for improvement," says David Hickman, Head of the Council's Change Management Team. "We identified significant administrative cost and staff efficiency savings that could be made if we were to centralise recruitment processes. After a procurement tendering exercise, Derbyshire chose Abacus e-Media to help meet its objectives."

## Counting on Abacus for the best solution

Previously, there had been an inconsistent experience and no single point of contact for potential applicants to the Council. Given the previous process



involved over 500 different contact points for potential applicants, one standard approach was difficult to achieve. The Authority also experienced problems in satisfying its legal obligations to assist displaced employees in finding alternative employment, which resulted in some vacancies being withdrawn after initial advertisement. The new system has enabled the Authority to address both of these issues and improve the associated processes.

Derbyshire County Council was looking for guidance on how to design, build and implement an effective centralised electronic recruitment process that would provide greater choice for potential applicants. This would involve establishing a system of electronic recruitment to run parallel with the traditional method. Its design needed to enable applicants to have the opportunity to learn about the Council and specific posts in detail, reducing the time and expense involved in sending out an applicant pack, and enhance the choice for candidates by providing the opportunity to apply online. Abacus was able to demonstrate the process and the Council was comfortable that it would deliver to requirements. In particular the system had to reflect Derbyshire County Council's values and processes. Abacus showed that they could deliver what was wanted and this was confirmed by a visit to Leicester City Council, whose site was also hosted by Abacus.

## Meeting e-Government demands

With such a large workforce, even a modest turnover rate creates a constant demand for new employees. The Council's six departments each advertise vacancies and the Council was sending out more than 60,000 applicant packs a year - each costing an average of over £2 to produce and send.

The expectation was that there would be a relatively small take up of the new Abacus designed recruitment system. However, the numbers of online applications have exceeded all expectations with in excess of half of the Council's applications now being received electronically.

Additionally, the number of paper-based information packs being requested has been more than halved with an improved ratio of return and the number of actual applicants has increased, too. Jon Rogers, Project Manager of the e-recruitment system, considers that applicants will have made a more informed decision using the web, prior to requesting a pack.

## Widening the Pool

Applicants can search the current vacancies database by job type and keywords, and register to have notification of selected vacancies forwarded by e-mail. On-line applications allow the Council to automate collection of recruitment analysis and attain improved management information that will facilitate more informed decision making.

The Abacus recruitment site has enabled the Council to widen its pool of applicants and is sufficiently flexible to allow posts to be held for three days. This enables the Council to meet its statutory obligation to seek to redeploy employees where their position is at risk of redundancy.

Quality checks are in place to ensure that each job includes all the relevant information and the same data is used to create media advertisements. The success of the



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The Abacus recruitment system and the introduction of electronic recruitment has been very well received and is regarded as a very positive development for the Council. Abacus has certainly played its part in reflecting the Council's processes and objectives. The system fits comfortably with the Council's commitment to the modernisation agenda and e-government targets and Abacus has played an essential role in helping Derbyshire County Council to achieve its objectives of better brand presentation, more effective recruitment and providing better value for the Council tax payer.

chosen media can now be monitored, which enables more informed decisions around which media should be used.

## Faster Service, Lower Costs

Applicants using the site now receive a more consistent, faster response from the Council, and are self-selecting more appropriate vacancies. The ability to apply online and register for related vacancies has enabled the Council to build up a bank of interested candidates as well as providing a comprehensive profile of its applicants and those appointed.

Integration of the system with the Authority's Website and Call Derbyshire Contact Centre has also provided improved access at times convenient to the potential applicant. Links with the Authority's Geographic Information

System (GIS) also provides opportunity for potential applicants to view the location of the vacancy within a map of the local area.

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