CASE STUDY

Civil Service

psi

Sector:
Public Sector

Industry:
Government

Population:
41 departments across the Civil Service

Technology solution:
Multimedia situational judgement tests (SJTs)

Award winning:
Won Excellence in Assessment at ABP Awards 2018

The UK Civil Service helps the government of the day develop and implement its policies as effectively as possible.

BUSINESS NEEDS

▶ Improve the quality of selection decisions and become the most inclusive employer in the UK by 2020

▶ Improve the efficiency of job application sifting across the Civil Service

▶ Deliver a new engaging assessment and online platform in short timescales.

> "PSI have been really great to work with; really flexible, really responsive, really high quality content and when we've put them under pressure on timescales they have responded well and we're really pleased with the product we have got."
>
> **Paul Weldon**
> Prinicipal Occupational Psychologist, Government Recruitment Service

OUTCOME

▶ Adopted by 50+ departments across the Civil Service

▶ Reduced the number of requests for adjustments by disabled test takers by 80% because the test is accessible without further adjustment

▶ Between January 2017 and October 2018, the assessment has saved £3.5M in resources no longer needed to manually sift applications

▶ Won the award for 'Excellence in Assessment' at the Association for Business Psychology (ABP) Awards 2018.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2016, the Government Recruitment Service (GRS) made the decision to improve the quality of selection decisions across the Civil Service through more efficient sifting of applications and support the Civil Service's diversity ambition to become the most inclusive employer in the UK by 2020.

The project had the following goals:

1 DELIVER A NEW ENGAGING ASSESSMENT AND ONLINE PLATFORM IN A SHORT TIMESCALE
A completely bespoke item banked multimedia assessment that is realistic, accurate and relevant. The test needed to function dynamically to focus only on the key competencies for the job.

2 INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CANDIDATES
The assessment platform required a mobile-first design, a practice site to help reduce candidate anxiety and to be completely fair to all candidates. The Civil Service formally committed to the Disability Confident Scheme, with the aim of leading the way in creating a disability-inclusive culture, therefore it was critical that the platform met best practice accessibility standards.

3 ENHANCE EFFICIENCIES AND REDUCE COSTS
A key goal and challenge of the project was to enhance existing processes to make them more efficient and cost effective.

SOLUTION

Due to the ambitious scope of the project, every activity was defined in detail and timescales were assigned to each of the key stakeholders from GRS and PSI.

For the test to be realistic across departments and levels of seniority, 61 deep-dive interviews with internal experts were carried out and over 200 job descriptions were reviewed. A team of 9 psychologists from PSI generated 3,078 questions for the assessment and the content was reviewed by 74 internal experts, 42% of which were from diversity networks or units. They were asked to assess and comment on the fairness, inclusivity and relevance of the test.

The test also needed to be engaging and relevant. Therefore, a series of 6 workshops were carried out with 22 experts to review the scripts for the multimedia elements of the assessment. Significant effort was invested in identifying diverse and talented actors to make the test immersive and realistic. Over 1,300 applications were received, from which 57 of the best actors were cast covering 77 roles. To ensure the production was as cost effective as possible, it was filmed at a studio specialising in green screen. 67 videos were produced in just 6 days, which would have been significantly longer and more expensive if filmed on location.

The project involved significant stakeholder involvement with contributors from 27 professions, 98 departments/agencies, staff networks, Civil Service Commissioners office and...

...Trade Unions representation. GRS made a significant effort throughout the project to include disabled people in the scoping, implementation and early testing phases. In February 2017, the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC) was commissioned to test the software to ensure it met best practice accessibility standards and legislation. This testing involved 10 QAs all of whom had disabilities and experienced first-hand the barriers an inaccessible website can create.

Ultimately the goal was to design an item banked assessment that comprised of 44 tests. Over 16,000 test completions were used to analyse the adverse impact and validity of the assessments before implementation and create accurate norms.

RESULTS

The mobile-first multimedia assessment was launched in February 2017. Since the launch it has been completed by **over a quarter of a million applicants** and the practice site over 100,000 times. The test has helped to **fill thousands of jobs** from administrative to leadership roles.

1   DELIVER A NEW ENGAGING ASSESSMENT AND ONLINE PLATFORM IN A SHORT TIMESCALE
The test is an innovative step forward in assessment, providing an engaging applicant experience. Every activity was delivered in a short timescale and the success is reflected in the significant adoption of the assessment by 50+ departments across the Civil Service.

2   INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CANDIDATES
Based on the analysis of a sample of 58,295 candidates, the tests have been deemed fair at the organisation wide minimum pass mark level and does not cause adverse impact based on gender,disability, ethnicity or LGBT status. Since the test is accessible by default, the number of requests for adjustments by disabled test takers has reduced by an incredible 80%.

3   ENHANCE EFFICIENCIES AND REDUCE COSTS
The Civil Service has estimated that the implementation of the test, as part of a trio of psychometric tests used in recruitment, since going live in January 2017 to October 2018, has saved £3.5M in resources no longer needed to manually sift job applications.