

Amgen

Background

Originally founded in 1980 as Applied Molecular Genetics, Amgen pioneered the development of products based on advances in molecular biology. It introduced the first biologically derived human therapeutics - the biotechnology industry's first blockbusters - treating chronic kidney disease and cancer-related conditions.

Today, Amgen is a Fortune 500 company with 17,500 employees worldwide and revenues approaching \$15bn. The business is truly global and its products support cancer care as well as the treatment of anemia, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases. Amgen was ranked second among large companies by The Scientist in its 2007 "Best Places to Work in Industry" survey.

In the UK, the company found itself needing to respond to changes due to the way in which the healthcare market worked with its pharmaceutical suppliers. Until recently, sales people worked directly with clinicians in the NHS. As health economics have become more sophisticated, bringing tighter fiscal control, large, specialist procurement 'hubs' have developed. These focus buying decisions on price, as well as clinical benefit.

Against this backdrop, Amgen needed their sales people to develop a new, more holistic commercial sales skillset. The UK sales team of 35 had included three different roles which interfaced respectively with doctors, procurement and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). The imperative now was to design a new role that would provide an optimal, single point of engagement with the key decision makers within the local health economy.

The newly established Odyssey competency framework developed by Gary Sagar (Amgen UK and Ireland Human Resources Director) and his team provided the basis for role definition. The key question of how to assess the potential of the existing sales team to step up to these tough but essential new roles was critical to success in managing the change.

Solution

Gary led the development of a one-day intensive assessment experience in which all existing sales people would participate. He believes in the predictive power of personality and behaviour data to sort 'outstanding' from merely 'average' performers and wanted a stretching combination of activities to set expectations of the new role.

Gary had been impressed with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) in his development work, so decided to use a personality assessment from the same

OPP® stable. He chose the 16PF® as one of the world's best validated tools, and also because OPP could map outputs directly to key competencies for the role.

The resultant tailored report (The 16PF Competency Report) gave him a detailed insight into 'fit' between the candidate and success in the job, as well as generating interview questions specific to the gaps between the applicant's profile and that of the role. The instrument enabled accurate measurement of attributes as diverse as creative thinking and organisation and planning skills.

The comprehensive assessment process included data on previous performance and experience, account planning, negotiation role plays, tender preparation, a theory test about the NHS, and a panel interview focusing on behavioural competencies. Gary was keen to involve line management in the process, not least to secure buy-in. The interview guides generated by the 16PF instrument were a strong supporting tool in helping to deploy them effectively.

Business benefits

The whole process moved very speedily from kick-off in October 2007 to the successful candidates taking up new roles in January 2008. Gary says: 'Experience shows that restructures are best done quickly, with a robust, transparent and valid process'.

All of the existing team were immediately appointed to the post. As one key purpose of the assessment day was a training needs analysis, everyone received in-depth feedback and the opportunity to create a development plan in the context of the new career structure.

For the majority, ambitious development plans with clear objectives and strong line manager support meant a positive signal of confidence in them from the organisation. Gary says: 'Some people were not convinced of the need for training at the outset, but the feedback is 'It's been great!'. We took a pulse survey in January around how the change had been handled and directors followed up actions with their teams; morale has improved substantially and people can see it's the right structure and the smart thing to do'.

As further evidence of the success of the project, the process - including the 16PF customised assessment - is now being adopted for all hires new to the organisation. 'We are looking at making the report increasingly bespoke now so that it uses our language and is totally Amgen-specific', says Gary.

Gary says of working with OPP: 'They gave good advice; we derived a lot of benefit from the debrief sessions we ran with OPP's occupational psychologist. OPP were very responsive, with every stage turned around quickly. And of course the 16PF has proved an effective decision support tool; the report narrative is a great

aid for decision makers, whilst the Candidate Report helps candidates clearly understand their strengths and weaknesses’.

And the real test of whether the process ‘worked’? ‘I was so impressed that the results of the behavioural interview and the role-plays bore out the 16PF results so strongly – consistency was excellent. The mix of personality and behavioural assessment along with knowledge and skills assessment is really a uniquely powerful combination’, Gary says.

For more information about using the 16PF instrument in your organisation for selection or for individual, team or leadership development, please contact our Sales team on +44 (0)845 603 9958 or by email at: enquiry@opp.eu.com.

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