

## **Best value for money recruitment campaign**

### **Introduction**

North Yorkshire is England's largest County covering 3,103 square miles with a population of just over 600,000. North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) directly delivers a wide range of services to its communities across the County.

Due to a budget decrease equating to 33% over the past decade, NYCC has needed to take new approaches to work efficiently, investing to save and also developing SmartSolutions our dedicated commercial arm that generates income for NYCC by trading our services.

This new approach has presented opportunities for different job roles including those that have a commercially astute focus, ensuring that the authority is working efficiently and achieving savings, whilst also taking advantage of every income generating opportunity.

However based on earlier experiences in 2015 we had failed to recruit to some finance related roles and were aware this could present a challenge. Commercial finance roles in the public sector are less appealing to candidates because of the higher pay and outcomes based bonuses offer in the private sector. Furthermore individuals in this industry tend to perceive the public sector as slow paced with little emphasis on target driven performance. In reality this is not the case as following the comprehensive spending review in 2010 the public sector has risen to the challenge of making significant savings and establishing a commercial agenda.

### **Our need**

In November 2016 NYCC's Resourcing Solutions Team were made aware of two vacancies for Senior Finance Leaders; Finance Director/Head of Commercial Finance.

These roles are essential to lead our strategic commercial agenda and ambition for growth, it was necessary for us to recruit individuals that had a strong commercial background and an ability to challenge our traditional ways of working to ensure we adapt to meet financial challenges, whilst also getting ahead of the game for commercial development.

We recognised that to recruit people with the right skills we needed to attract individuals who already had commercial skills, including those working in the private sector.

### **Our approach**

As the vacancies arose at the same time we took the opportunity to promote them within one campaign. Whilst there was actually only two vacancies available we wished to generate interest by marketing the vacancy in a way that gave the perception that there might be multiple opportunities, so we deliberately chose not to advertise an individual job title, instead using; Commercial Finance Leader Opportunities. We also took this approach with the salary details on the advert, detailing the salary range we would be willing to pay dependant on the skills and

experience of the candidates; this aimed to attract experienced candidates from the private sector who may have the skills and expertise we were seeking.

Leading data and research shows that job seekers are attracted to jobs that have benefits packages, with a recent Employee Insight Report concluding that 66% of people surveyed saying that they would be more likely to stay with an employer that offered good benefits\*.

We therefore emphasised the benefits in the job advert including flexible working, pension scheme, generous leave, salary sacrifice and employee discount benefits.

Marketing media used to advertise the vacancy included; adverts on [www.nyccjobs.co.uk](http://www.nyccjobs.co.uk), Total Jobs, and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) website, plus social media platforms including LinkedIn. The vacancy was also shared through professional online networks to target the role to passive job seekers. As a council who strives to be modern and agile the focus was on professional advertising on platforms that commercial candidates visit. The total cost of advertising this Campaign amounted to £675.50. Overall we had 323 views and 39 clicks on the vacancy from the external advertising platforms.

We chose not to use a search agent as we knew that this would attract a fee of approximately 25-30% of the salary, or a minimum of £15k, hence would have been a costly option.

The vacancy was advertised just before Christmas, a time that is known to be difficult for recruitment due to the distraction of seasonal festivities, however we chose to market the vacancy then because we believed the challenging aspect of the new roles would be appealing to people as a New Year opportunity, and it would stand out at a time when there were fewer opportunities.

We were aware that we were targeting passive job seekers in the private sector, many of whom were likely to be members of CIMA, we therefore chose to advertise on the CIMA website which would be seen by their members. Furthermore we are astutely aware that many private sector job seekers apply for jobs using a CV. NYCC's standard method of application is through an online application form which is quite lengthy, however for this vacancy we chose to have the method of submission by a CV to make the candidate experience quicker and easier for them.

### **Our outcome**

The Commercial Finance Leader Opportunities vacancy attracted over 44 applications, many of which were high calibre and included a selection of candidates with both public and private sector backgrounds. We fast tracked the recruitment process, completing telephone interviews to identify talent, those with potential were swiftly interviewed by key decision makers for the various opportunities.

Both the Finance Director and Head of Commercial Finance posts were filled as a result of this campaign.

### **Our bonus!**

\* Employee Insight report 2015 - Capita Employee Benefits

In addition two candidates applied to the vacancy who had strong skills sets that we identified would match a further senior finance opportunities; Interim Head of Finance (Strategic Financial Management) and Head of Finance (Partnership). The candidates accepted these roles. In addition to progressing NYCC's commercial approach, two of the opportunities were for joint partnership roles – enabling us to save partner attraction costs and advance their commercial agenda's too.

We therefore recruited 4 senior Financial Leaders, roles that are critical towards leading our and our partner organisations forward. This resulted in a total advertising recruitment cost per candidate of £168 for roles that each had a salary cost of at least £45K, now that is value! Due to the swift process we avoided the cost of expensive agency interim cover.

### **Our key learns**

Our careful assessment of the skills and experience needed from the successful candidates and our ability to know where we might be able to source such talent drove the way in which we marketed the vacancy. We identified factors that would appeal to the market we were targeting and wrote an advert that emphasised them, we felt that the advert recipe was key to the success of reaching and inspiring those we wanted to apply, rather than mass volume advertising. We changed our usual method of application from a standard online form to CV submission to ease the recruitment process for candidates and align it to the method most familiar with the candidates we were seeking; private sector.

During the campaign we ensured candidate management was at the fore, maintaining contact with candidates to update them on the stage of their application and ensuring shortlisted candidates had everything needed prior to interview including; directions, where to park, agenda for the interview day and a personal welcome on arrival for interview from an individual directly involved in the campaign.