

PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards

The Role of HR in Innovation

AGMA Collaborative Recruitment Project: greater.jobs

The Association of Greater Manchester Councils (AGMA) shared a recruitment portal, www.yourcounciljobs.co.uk (YCJ) since 2010. In December 2016, we decided to replace this with a new careers website and Applicant Tracking System (ATS) as YCJ was out of contract and would be decommissioned on 31 December 2017. Twelve authorities were involved in the website collaboration, and eight in the ATS, with Wigan Council providing the project lead.

The AGMA collaboration consists of Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Trafford, Tameside, Wigan councils and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

Due to the project value, a full OJEU tender was carried out in two lots. After an intense tender review and pitch period, Havas People were successful in the website tender, and their subsidiary company, Engage ATS, was successful as the ATS supplier. The contract awarded on 1 September, with a planned go live date of 1 December. Due to the complexity of both the website and ATS builds, we knew this was a huge challenge, and needed to work 'smarter' to achieve our goals.

www.yourcounciljobs.co.uk had a strong reputation across the North West as *the* place for council jobs. We wanted to keep the best of our history, but develop a careers portal which our potential audience would find an engaging and easy to use experience. Our audience are our candidates, but many will also be our residents. The new platform needed to be innovative and informative, not just about the fantastic jobs and careers that we could offer, but about our towns and services.

The devolution of powers to the Greater Manchester region and the public sector reform agenda makes this an exciting time. Public sector jobs are evolving fast; staff from different organisations are working closer together to provide integrated services to communities across traditional role boundaries. Councils are changing and new employers are emerging in the sector – we needed to share this message far and wide.

We could have replaced YCJ with something similar, just more up-to-date. Instead we chose to take the opportunity to completely review our approach to recruitment and candidate engagement. In developing this platform as a collaboration, we had to work together to explore new ways of working, understanding what each had to offer, and ultimately building a flexible recruitment platform that would allow innovation and creativity to better serve

our audience, and improve our service. Importantly, we decided that we wanted to develop a future-proof, solid platform that candidates would return to time and again.

Our process started by engaging key stakeholders across AGMA. By holding a number of planning and scoping meetings, we analysed the candidate journey and ensured that our destination website had the candidate experience at its heart.

Havas People developed three separate creative routes and through a number of focus groups and meetings, **greater.jobs** was chosen. We loved the creative design and the intelligent, innovative structure would ensure that the site changed on a daily basis and keep candidates interested and engaged.

For us, the sense of 'place' was important in developing the site's identity. We wanted to promote the region whilst reflecting the character of each town on our new website. Therefore, to personalise the site and interpret the uniqueness of each partner, an illustrator was commissioned to bring each location to life. This style of design really sets the site apart from any other jobs board in this sector, or any other sector for that fact! The site has been developed to be content rich, multimedia focused and interactive, to showcase the range of opportunities, careers and unique challenges involved in working in the public sector in the region. Key to this was to attract people who may not have considered the public sector and show them that the sector was dynamic and forward-thinking: greater.jobs does just that.

The design of the site is based on a grid structure; the tiles within the grid are assigned to jobs, blogs, stories or social media feeds. New content is uploaded on a daily basis, so the homepage always changes, keeping the information fresh. The site accepts feeds from four different ATS to provide job information, a technical challenge in itself! Having adopted a mobile first approach to the website, we are building a social media presence through Twitter and Facebook.

Since the launch, the reputation of the new site and an incredible number of unique users has captured the attention of other potential partners. We are now developing the site to incorporate the integrated health and social care agenda, through a partnership with the NHS. We plan to link the site to Transport for Greater Manchester's travel app to help candidates, many of whom are our residents, find their way to their perfect role. This links us to the wider agenda to improve skills, reduce worklessness and drive economic growth for the North West.

What we have achieved with **greater.jobs** not only meets all the tender objectives, but is fresh, innovative and stands out in the recruitment website market. We have built a strategic resourcing tool that enables us to take a massive leap forward to meet the needs of our sector to build our future workforce. We have grown our customer base significantly

from the original YCJ – more public sector employers are paying to advertise with us, which we can then invest back into developing the site in the future.

Eight partners use the new ATS from Engage. We share the high level structure, but need flexibility for our different recruitment needs. For some, redeployment is the priority to meet budget reductions; others want to reshape the workforce to meet changing requirements, recruiting for behaviour and attitude; or be able to handle high volume applications, like firefighter recruitment; whilst delivering an engaging user-friendly candidate experience. Engage ATS is flexible enough to meet everyone's needs and provide a stable and secure platform for candidate data and managers to use. We have moved away from standard, long application forms to use ones appropriate to the role: CVs for director jobs, shorter applications or full, safeguarding ones, as required. Applications have increased by a staggering **82%**, demonstrating the improved application process.

From launch date until 7 March, **greater.jobs** has:

- advertised 2,799 jobs (YCJ same period 2015/6: 2,552 jobs);
- attracted 20,055 submitted applications (not including off-line applications for school and external advertisers). YCJ, 2015/16: 11,040.
- 392,349 users to website
- 4,730,157 page views
- 57% returning visitors
- 43% new visitors

Feedback from recruiting managers at Manchester City Council shows how the system has improved the overall HR service. They found that the number and calibre of candidates had increased, reducing re-advertising. Internally, their redeployment timeframe has dropped dramatically from over eight weeks to 10 days. This has resulted in a significant reduction in time to hire - creating a more efficient recruitment system and overall enhanced candidate experience.

Managers love that they can shortlist as soon as applications drop in, and candidates can book their own interview slots, reducing HR administration and creating a more streamlined service. Having the job approval process online has also worked fantastically well and has significantly reduced approval timeframes.