

Senior Leadership campaign of the year

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.

NYCC's Resourcing Solutions Team is responsible for leading on recruitment strategy for a vast spectrum of roles ranging from professionals through to manual workers, full and part-time. The Team specifically focusses upon delivering campaigns for specialist, senior and hard to fill roles.

Due to a budget decrease equating to 33% over the past decade, NYCC has needed to take new approaches to work effectively and efficiently and has restructured services to ensure they are at the forefront of meeting customer needs. Following restructure in the Health and Adult Services Directorate three senior posts arose in 2016 including;

Assistant Director Care and Support (Countywide Services)

Assistant Director Care and Support (Prevention and Assessment)

Assistant Director Health and Integration

At the same time these posts arose the existing Assistant Director (AD) for Education and Skills declared her intention to retire in 2017, leaving NYCC with a need to recruit to four separate Assistant Director (AD) posts simultaneously.

From previous experience of recruiting to AD posts in Health and Adult Services we knew that the roles would not be easy to fill. Historically recruiting an AD Care and Support required 2 or 3 attempts prior to a successful appointment being made. Similarly to appoint the AD for Education and Skills in 2013 we had 4 campaigns before we successfully appointed to the post. School improvement services in many local authorities have significantly diminished, with many senior professionals establishing themselves independently as consultants, or in the private sector roles that are higher paid and offer more security.

Due to the increased emphasis on the Health and Integration agenda there were several local authorities close to the geographic borders of NYCC that were also seeking to recruit to similar senior roles at the same time, a factor we were acutely aware of. Potential candidates for this role would likely have the desired skills for similar senior roles in the NHS, where pay is often higher.

Based on the combination of the factors above we knew that it would take something special to fill these roles.

Approach

As there was multiple Assistant Director Posts we knew that we had to have a large scale, impactful campaign that cast a wide net, using a variety of marketing methods.

The authority had an LGA Peer Review in 2016 that concluded:

“North Yorkshire County Council is a very good Council, its services are highly regarded and the peer review team witnessed areas of excellence.”

We know that to maintain our ambition to continue to perform exceptionally we needed to attract the best to our AD posts by showcasing our successes. The method we chose to do this was to commission the MJ Magazine to produce an eight page feature on North Yorkshire County Council. The MJ is a weekly magazine that provides an overview of news in the UK’s local authorities and also includes vacancies for senior roles in local government.

In the same edition our feature was published we included printed advertorials with the AD vacancies. These adverts included details of the roles and links to dedicated web campaign sites whereby interested candidates could go to find additional information and apply.

AD roles in Health and Adult Services;

http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/recruitment/adhas/about_role.html

AD role in Education and Skills;

http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/recruitment/ad_cyps/index.html

The dedicated web campaign sites were developed in-house and provide a professional, dedicated resource to showcase the vacancies. All information is available in one place, making the process easy for potential applicants to access everything they need. We deliberately chose imagery that is dynamic with a related strapline that captures candidate interest, this aims to illustrate our approach as an innovative authority that is reaching out to individuals who relate to our forward thinking approach.

We didn’t rely on an advert being the only method to yield results; to ensure our campaign reached passive job seekers we also made direct contact with over 400 senior leaders, directing them to the campaign sites which were also promoted through social media platforms. Social media enabled candidates to share details of the roles across their wider networks. To have a broader reach we also researched and identified professional networks through which we shared details of the campaign.

We also advertised the AD Health and Adult Services roles in The Guardian and the AD Education and Skills role in the Times Educational Supplement, both forms of media that are specific to professionals in the relevant sectors.

To further reflect our modern approach we co-ordinated a webinar for candidates interested in the AD Education and Skills post. Candidates who were potentially interested in this position could register confidentially to watch and listen to our Director for Children and Young People’s Service (CYPS), the (then) current post-holder for Assistant Director Education and Skills and Head of Human Resources as they discussed the challenges and future direction of work for the post-holder. What we really wished to achieve through the webinar was candidate engagement, the session enabled the candidate to ask questions anonymously that the panel answered and discussed, creating an engaging two-way dialogue.

During the recruitment application process we provided details of an individual who could provide dedicated support to applicants through the process, this included availability to make contact out of office hours, taking into account the senior roles and busy diaries potential applicants were likely to have.

Outcome

The campaign generated significant interest including views of the web campaign sites, attendees on the webinar and a healthy number of high quality applications for all posts.

Overall there was a combined total of 1316 views of the two web campaign sites.

14 participants attended the webinar for the AD Education and Skills post

Successful appointments were made to all four of the AD posts with a total of 87 applications overall. We also identified a Senior Leader to deliver our Scarborough Pledge project resulting in a bonus fifth appointment.

We could have utilised executive search agents which would have cost approximately £15,000 / role. Overall our advertising fees for the campaign cost £9594 across 5 appointments, each with a salary of circa £89k, resulting in an advertising fee of just £1919 / vacancy.

Candidate feedback

Throughout the process candidates complimented the approach we had taken and particularly favoured the provision of a dedicated contact to ask questions about the roles. They also commented that the process was professional and seamless including the 2 day interview event for shortlisted candidates.

We actively asked candidates for feedback and the most frequently received comments related to the support candidates had received making them feel engaged, informed and at ease during the process.

One candidate advised that they wanted the job 'more and more' as they moved through the recruitment process because they felt the professional but personal approach gave them a feel for what it would be like to work for the organisation.

The only feedback in terms of improvement was that one candidate would have preferred one interview day, rather than two, due to travelling significant distances.