

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 entire County. The County is predominantly rural and this creates a number of challenges for service delivery, not least when recruiting staff to deliver a diverse range of services. Public transport is limited reducing labour market mobility.

NYCC directly delivers the majority of its services, out-sourcing is limited, meaning that we recruit to a vast spectrum of roles ranging from professionals through to manual workers, full and part-time.

Unemployment for North Yorkshire is stated at 2.1%, as at last released figure on ONS, compared with 4.9% national average. (Latest figures Sept 16). There were 308,800 North Yorkshire residents in employment, with 1849 job seekers – the majority of which are long term claimers over 6 months. Our Counties population includes 130,000 people aged over 65, the majority of which are economically inactive.

Due to these demographics NYCC has particularly struggled to recruit to Catering and Cleaning roles. These positions tend to be based in rural primary schools within affluent areas with a highly aspirational population not aligned to these part time low paid roles. In addition the limited public transport links make it extremely challenging for candidates outside the area to travel there if they do not drive. Traditionally the roles have been advertised on the Councils website and locally by placing a poster in the village shop or school, however these means were not reaching potential applicants and many roles remained unfilled and in many instances didn't receive any applications.

New approach; Social Media Campaign

Following a review of the statistics and poor recruitment fill rates NYCC's Resourcing Solutions Team decided to take a different approach to try to reach new audiences with the aim of increasing applications and ultimately to successfully fill posts.

In November 2016 a Social Media Campaign was planned and launched using just one channel of social media; Facebook.

The United Kingdom has a population of 64.1 million and 89% of this population is an active internet user. 38 million people actively use social media and a further 50% of total population actively use their mobiles to access their social media.

Facebook is the leading social network with over 31 million users in the UK alone. Their demographic in the UK is fairly even with 49% male users and 51% female and 60% of the UK population having an account.*

We recognised that the users of Facebook are generally scrolling quickly through their newsfeed and therefore the campaign had to have an eye catching image with a strapline that was not too text heavy.

Various quirky characters were developed, each with a strapline, to capture people's attention and encourage responsive action. Each character was linked to a particular vacancy that was available at the time. The characters were derived from the nature of the vacancy to form a link with the type of role, for example a Mop character was developed for one of the Cleaning Assistant posts and a Key Character was created for one of the Caretaker roles as well as adopting a school mascot to ensure continued engagement by the readers. The accompanying strapline with the image was essential to bring the character to life and cleverly link to the emotions of the reader.

The roles that the Social Media Campaign focussed on were for posts that had each been out to advert through standard advertising routes and failed to recruit at least two times previously. One of the posts had been out to advert 4 times previously and had failed to recruit due to failing to attract even a single applicant. The Social Media Campaign ran during the winter months of 2016/17 including over the Christmas period, a time which is difficult to attract applicants due to seasonal festivities.

What a difference a change makes...

The change of approach by using Facebook has made an outstanding difference, improving recruitment to these hard to fill roles by 85.7%. **6 out of 7 of the roles that were promoted through the Facebook campaign have been filled first time.**

Evidence shows that the campaign has captured the hearts and imagination of the communities of North Yorkshire, encouraging people to share the posts on Facebook, it is clear that the new approach has been appreciated by the comments made:

“Love this. A vast improvement on the usual jargon filled ads. Well done for having a sense of humour.”

“Good ad, someone at NYCC has an original mind, there's hope yet.”

The Campaign attracted a total of;

- 19 applications
- 63,080 people reached
- 72 Facebook shares
- 141 likes

Furthermore at a time when Local Authority budgets have significantly decreased, finances for recruitment advertising are limited, however this Campaign had minimal outlay for advertising with the whole Campaign delivered for less than £30.00. In addition we have successfully managed to convince the initially sceptical Cleaning and Catering Managers that Social Media has a large role to play in their successful recruitment.

What next?

Resourcing Solutions wholly appreciate that the quirky character theme of this Facebook campaign would become tired and lose impact if it was used continuously. However following the success of this project we are now planning our next social media campaign for Catering and Cleaning posts using a different theme and images. That's not to say the mop and bucket will stay in the cupboard forever, they might well make a return in a time of need but will be 'rested' for the time of being to ensure they have maximum impact upon their return.

- **Data from Think Digital First, UK Social Media Demographics: General Statistics 2016, Facebook Demographics 2016.**