



RECRUITING NEW STORE MANAGERS AT SUPERDRUG



Founded in 1964, Superdrug employs more than 13,000 people. It is part of the international retail organization AS Watson, which is wholly owned by the Hong Kong-based company Hutchison Whampoa. Website: www.superdrug.com

Superdrug has been through a period of significant change. The company has invested in a store rebranding and refurbishment program, enhanced its infrastructure and installed new in-store IT systems. Competencies for all staff have been introduced, together with a new performance development review process. Now, the company has embarked on a new store opening program.

"We're aiming to expand from 730 to 1,000 stores in the next five years," said Caroline Shine, Regional HR Manager at Superdrug. "To do this, we need to recruit managers who have the right blend of commercial skills along with the right leadership behaviors and personal and functional effectiveness."

More than 100,000 different product lines are sold at Superdrug. In this environment, it takes a special individual to motivate and manage a team that can exceed customer expectations and achieve financial and commercial targets.

MOVING ONLINE

In the past, store manager recruitment was mainly undertaken through agencies or via in-store or local press advertisements. However, in 2004, Superdrug introduced an online recruitment website. This led to greater efficiency, but it also resulted in a huge influx of direct applications. In 12 months, Superdrug received more than 40,000 applications for store manager positions.

"We've never had any problems attracting people," said Shine. "Our challenge is to sift candidates to find those who are extrovert, with good attention to detail, and passionate about our business. We thought that a psychometric test might be able to help us meet this challenge."

Following a referral, Superdrug approached Kenexa®. "Kenexa has a very good reputation and is experts in all aspects of assessment," said Shine. "Kenexa recommended the use of a personality questionnaire to help us recruit the right store managers for our business."

BESPOKE ASSESSMENT

Kenexa began by researching the qualities and capabilities that make an ideal Superdrug store manager. After interviews and trials with more than 200 store managers, area managers and HR managers, a bespoke questionnaire was created, featuring 108 questions.

Delivered online, the questionnaire comprises nine personality scales, such as openness to change, leadership, influence, people focus, detail/quality focus and resilience. Each of these is aligned to Superdrug's competency framework.

The questionnaire not only benchmarks each candidate against the desired behaviors; it also provides structured questions that area managers can ask each individual at an interview.

"Candidates work through the questionnaire online and we get a four-page report back on each person that really tells us about the individual," said Shine. "It highlights their personality and gives a breakdown for each of our competencies. We get a color-coded interpretation of their scores, i.e., red, amber or green. The report also lists probing questions against each competency that our area managers ask at interview to check the candidate's responses. These questions really help the area managers to conduct more in-depth interviews because they are not questions you'd immediately think to ask—ensuring that they hone in on exactly the right areas."



Kenexa provided training for Superdrug's 44 area managers on how to conduct interviews and give candidates feedback from the personality questionnaire.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Superdrug's six HR managers conduct first interviews with store manager candidates. Those with potential are asked to complete the personality questionnaire online.

The questionnaire is integrated with Superdrug's online recruitment site. This is a seamless experience for candidates, even though they are actually redirected to a secure Kenexa website when they take the assessment.

The short-listed candidates come back for a second interview with an area manager, who asks the candidate competency-based interview questions from the report generated by the personality questionnaire. The candidates also have to analyse a Superdrug store and make a presentation.

The successful candidates join as store managers and undertake an 18-week program that includes an induction and training program with Superdrug's sponsor managers and learning and development managers.

ADDING VALUE

"With our commitment to open so many new stores, we have to ensure we recruit and retain the very best talent in the retail market," said Shine. "The online questionnaire is helping us to do this. It doesn't remove control of the selection decisions from the HR professionals and area managers. They have the skills and experience to identify good performers who will fit well with the culture and environment of the organization. The questionnaire simply streamlines and professionalises the process, which is important as we're aiming to become an employer of choice. It reinforces our company competencies and allows us to make more informed decisions."

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