

Recruiting Parking Attendants at NCP

NCP is the UK's largest commercial car park operator and provider of on-street parking enforcement. Employing more than 3,500 parking attendants, the company has more than 40 parking enforcement contracts with local authorities including Westminster City Council, the UK's largest contract.

Being a parking attendant is demanding and as a result, staff turnover in the industry is high. NCP has the challenge of identifying parking attendants who have the qualities required to perform the role well while coping with the inevitable challenges they face on the streets. "We would lose a lot of people during their first week," said Jonathan Reed, recruitment manager at NCP. "With a high turnover rate we needed to recruit 1,700 new attendants each year."

The company decided to invest in a process that would identify the most suitable candidates early in the recruitment process.

Designing the Questionnaire

NCP approached Kenexa to analyze the qualities and personality traits that are evident in an effective parking attendant. The objective was to implement a selection process that could identify those applicants who were most likely to succeed, and those who were most likely to fail. This identification would allow NCP to improve its staff retention levels and the quality and accuracy of its parking enforcement.

"We really wanted to find the ideal candidates who would be able to work in what can be an extremely tough environment," said Jonathan Reed. "It can be difficult working on your own with the abuse that sometimes needs to be contended with."

Working with Parking Attendants

Two members of Kenexa's consultancy team spent a total of five days working with NCP parking attendants to gauge an understanding of what the job involved and how attendants

interacted with members of the public. From this research, Kenexa designed an online personality questionnaire that looks at whether applicants possess the attributes necessary for sustained success in the role. The online questionnaire measures a number of personality traits, including social confidence, ability to keep emotions under control and levels of discipline.

Testing the Questionnaire

NCP tested the questionnaire in areas where it experienced the highest turnover of staff. "We trialed the questionnaire in a number of Central London contracts and it worked very well," said Jonathan Reed. "We monitored those that took the questionnaire against those in other contract regions that hadn't and the figures were very encouraging."

The questionnaire has since been integrated successfully into the recruitment process, which also includes numerical and verbal reasoning tests and a competency-based interview. "Since we have introduced Kenexa's expertise, we are finding people are staying with the organization for a lot longer," said Jonathan Reed. "It has certainly helped us dig beneath the surface a lot more than we did previously."

Introducing Self-Selection

Kenexa has also designed a self-selection questionnaire that NCP introduces at the start of the recruitment process. The company currently receives more than 17,000 applications each year, and the self-selection questionnaire helps prospective applicants understand the situations they could face as a parking attendant. Upon completion of the questionnaire, applicants receive feedback on their suitability for the job. Candidates can then decide whether they wish to take their application further.

"These tests from Kenexa will show any prospective employee that we are spending money on recruitment, together with learning and development," said Jonathan Reed.

Business Benefits

NCP believes that improving the selection process for its parking attendants will bring significant benefits to the company. "It costs us in the region of £1,500 to recruit a parking attendant when you include the cost of training, so by identifying the ideal candidate early, we can realize significant cost savings for the business," said Jonathan Reed. "Our new process is bringing more suitable employees into the business, and when we bid for new contracts we can demonstrate that our approach is thorough, professional and more successful than the competition."

NCP has made a considerable investment in ensuring that its new recruits possess the important attributes necessary for lasting success as parking attendants. The new recruitment approach demonstrates NCP's commitment to both the public and the local authorities, and toward its own objective of a stable and experienced workforce. It brings cost savings to the business and ultimately to local authorities and taxpayers.

Looking to the Future

NCP is hoping to encourage applicants from Eastern European countries. "With the EU opening up, we think there will be opportunities to attract some very good candidates from the Eastern European market," said Jonathan Reed. "People from these countries usually head toward hospitality in the UK, and we want to tap into that pool and show them that with NCP, they can enjoy a very good and prosperous career path."

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866.391.9557

About NCP

Founded in 1931, NCP is the UK market leader in parking services. The company employs over 6,000 people and provides a range of services including parking enforcement, buses, coaching, car park management, airport parking, and consultancy for the design, building and maintenance of car parks. Website: www.ncp.co.uk