

# Introducing an HR Business Partner Model into the Healthcare Commission

**F**ounded in 2004, the Healthcare Commission is an independent UK body responsible for the assessment and performance regulation of the National Health Service (NHS) trusts and independent healthcare providers such as private hospitals and clinics. Its work benefits millions of people throughout England and Wales.

“The environment of healthcare is ever changing and often complex,” said Maxine Taylor, head of resourcing at the Healthcare Commission. “In working toward our goals, we must understand and interpret how healthcare organizations, and the people who work in them, provide services to their patients.”

Central to the success of the organization is the team of more than 800 people. In 2005, the Commission approached Kenexa to help restructure its HR function to enhance the service and capability it offers to the organization.

“When I joined the organization, we were seen as a reactive and administrative function,” added Sally Smith, head of HR at the Commission. “Our aim was to create a department that would help the organization achieve what it wanted to achieve through strategic innovations, so we needed an HR function that could coordinate, design and implement such solutions.”

## Designing a New Competency Framework

The initial phase of recruiting the HR Business Partners involved Kenexa designing a new competency framework for the recruitment of not just the HR Business Partner role, but for all positions with the Commission.

“It was important that when people were assessed, they were assessed against a competency framework that was aligned to what they were expected to do,” added Smith.

The competency library is now made up of nine competencies: Analytical Rigor, Applying Judgement, Business Linking, Communication, Learning and Improving, Making an Impact,

Managing Relationships, Passion for Results, Team Play and Taking Decisions.

## Assessment and Development Centers

Kenexa then designed and implemented assessment centers for new candidates applying for the Business Partner role and development centers for existing members of the HR team. “The centers consisted of a mini simulation that reflected the day in the life of the new HR Business Partner with presentations, role plays and analysis activity allied to online numerical and verbal ability tests and a personality psychometric assessment,” said Taylor.

The Commission was looking for people who were good negotiators, able to influence people and provide line managers with innovative tools and solutions they could utilize to effectively manage their teams.

“The centers really helped us identify people who could work with the line managers rather than for the line managers,” said Taylor.

## Upskilling the HR Team

With the HR Business Partners recruited, the Commission asked Kenexa to help it raise the function’s capability further by upskilling members of the team so they could be more self-sufficient in a number of areas.

Those who were not British Psychological Society (BPS) Level A and B trained, for example, attended modular designed courses by Kenexa to attain the verification.

To improve the team’s assessment skills further, each member of the team attended a Kenexa Assessor Training course. The workshop trained the HR team in all aspects of assessment and development centers, from designing exercises to providing feedback.

To broaden the team’s capability further, the Commission’s HR team attended a unique development program designed

by Kenexa called "HR Unplugged." This customized program equipped members of the team with the commercial skills and techniques required to demonstrate a commercial contribution to the organization. The program also provided a valuable self analysis of the team.

"We felt to be successful, we needed to work as a team," said Taylor. "It was an important exercise to reflect and appreciate how everyone felt and how we can work together. A lot of positive things came out of it such as identifying areas of possible weakness and where we needed to provide more focus and/or work smarter."

### A Strategic HR Function

As a result of introducing the Business Partner model, the Commission now possesses a strategic HR function that leads and partners the different business areas in creating innovative people strategies and that anticipates emerging and changing organizational needs.

"We've moved a long way," said Smith. "I now feel we have achieved respect and trust from senior managers. They now understand that HR is crucial to the success of the organization and we're much more than just a support service."

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"This meant that at any given time we could call on any member of the team to run the centers," said Taylor.

To further broaden the team's capability, the Commission's HR team attended a unique development program designed by Kenexa called 'HR Unplugged'. This customized program equipped members of the team with the commercial skills and techniques required to demonstrate a commercial contribution to the organization. The program also provided a valuable self analysis of the team.

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### Enhanced Recruitment Processes

The team now runs an effective recruitment process for all positions consisting of psychometric assessments from Kenexa, including the Occupational Personality Inventory and online verbal and numerical reasoning tests, assessment centers, which are now run by the HR team, and competency based interviews. In addition, the HR team now has a broad knowledge base of different models and thinking processes, all of which it is applying when resolving HR and organizational change issues.

"The relationship with Kenexa has been excellent," concluded Smith. "The flexibility and range of products and services is head and shoulders above their main competitors. To me, Kenexa is the leader in its field. The company has supplied us with everything we need, which is important to us because we are a unique organization."

### Looking Forward

Following a review by the Department of Health aimed at establishing a new regulatory framework for health, mental health and social care services, one of the outcomes was the announcement that the Healthcare Commission, the Mental Health Act Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection should merge in 2009 to form the Care Quality Commission.

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## About The Healthcare Commission

Founded in April 2004, The Healthcare Commission was established as an independent regulator to promote improvement in the quality of NHS and independent healthcare. The Commission is committed to making a real difference to the delivery of healthcare and to promote continuous improvement for the benefit of patients and the public. Website: [www.healthcarecommission.org.uk](http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk)