

# Assessing HR Capability at HM Treasury

Like other Government departments, HM Treasury reviews its services and activities to ensure it provides the best value for the taxpayer. As part of this program, it undertook a rigorous 'Better Quality Service' review of its HR function.

"The review showed that the HR function was reactive, process-oriented and generally undervalued by line managers," said Mel Madeley, Head of HR at the Treasury. "We decided to implement changes so that we could strategically align our people initiatives with the Treasury's goals and provide a more proactive, forward-thinking service." Kenexa® was appointed to help with this transformation.

"We didn't have the resources available internally and we also felt it was not appropriate for the existing HR function to be involved in assessing itself," said Madeley. "As an external consultancy, Kenexa not only had the relevant expertise, but it also brought an objective and impartial view."

## Transformation Process

Kenexa began by helping the Treasury's transformation project team to develop a strategy that articulated both the HR vision and what HR was expected to deliver.

"This process helped us create a picture of the new role for HR," said Madeley. "It was important that this came from within the Treasury, as the strategy had to be 'owned' by the people involved. Kenexa provided invaluable assistance, based on the latest thinking in organizational design, which helped to put the strategy into a wider context."

Kenexa's consultants then reviewed the existing job profiles in terms of performance expectations. They created a new set of profiles for new or significantly changed roles, using a range of job analysis methods involving job holders, line managers and senior managers.

"When we began the project we had very few role descriptions in place and those that we did have were overly focused on tasks and processes," said Madeley. "These suited the old model of HR in the Treasury, but they did not give us the information we needed to support the transformation. By redefining each role we were able to produce a model of good performance that we could use to assess our current capabilities."

## Multiple Assessment

The next step was to assess the capability of the existing jobholders and to gauge their suitability for the new, more demanding roles. "This stage had to be handled very sensitively," said Madeley. "It involved existing staff applying for the new roles, with the possibility that if they were not suitable, they would be made redundant."

Kenexa, in conjunction with the transformation project team, developed a rigorous process to assess the capability for the new HR roles involving competency-based interviews, psychometric tests and assessment centers. "Our unions said that the multiple-method assessment process used was the most robust and fair that they had seen for such a program," said Madeley.

The Treasury wanted to create 35 new roles from the 56 previous HR roles. Following the assessments, 14 people had the right skills, experience and style of working required. "Many of the existing people had worked for the Treasury for a long time and while they were suited to the older administrative way of working, they did not have the right skills to drive forward the change to the new strategy," said Madeley. "This made the sensitive handling of the assessment process all the more important."

To fill the remaining positions, the Treasury recruited externally. "We brought in new people with new ideas and new perspectives," said Madeley. "The mix of experience and knowledge we now have in the team, together with a willingness to explore new ways of working, is a real asset."

Kenexa facilitated a team development program for all nine of the Treasury's senior HR Team Leaders and Business Partners and has utilized aspects of its 'HR Unplugged' training program, which highlights how to develop strategic HR capability, as a part of that process.

### **Achieving Results**

Since starting, the new HR team has reviewed the HR policies and procedures, revised some of the core HR processes and enhanced the performance appraisal process.

Initial feedback has been very positive from line managers about the capability of the new team and their 'can do' attitude and approach. Madeley says that Kenexa's input was significant and that the project has defined best practice within the Treasury.

"We now manage people-based change in a more cohesive, better planned and well communicated manner," she said. "We manage information and knowledge more effectively and we have more streamlined HR processes which enable us to deliver high quality services."

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