

# Enhancing the Recruitment Process at Ethiopian Airlines

**F**ounded over 60 years ago, Ethiopian Airlines has grown to become one of the largest airlines in Africa providing seamless connections to 46 destinations around the globe.

Following a major restructuring of the management team, the airline created 'Vision 2010' with the aim of achieving one billion dollars in annual revenue and to become Africa's World Class airline by 2010.

As part of this growth program, Ethiopian Airlines undertook a review of its current recruitment procedures. "We are all working towards the 2010 vision," said Lia Belai, Assessment and Development Manager at Ethiopian Airlines. "Recruiting the best people is an integral part of achieving that vision."

The airline receives up to 1,000 applications each year for its trainee positions. The previous assessment process consisted of a written examination and a standard interview. "Our interviews were not structured, meaning we had a lot of fall out from our trainee schemes," said Belai.

Following a review of providers, Ethiopian Airlines approached Kenexa® and asked it to use its expertise to review current recruitment processes and train the assessment team in enhanced and more innovative assessment practices.

## Training the Assessment Team

Kenexa sent an experienced consultant to Ethiopian Airlines' headquarters in Addis Ababa. He spent two weeks with all members of the airline's assessment team training them in job analysis, competency frameworks and assessment center design and administration, allowing them to become self sufficient in the future.

"Assessment centers are new to our country," said Belai. "Kenexa opened up our eyes to the different ways of assessing people. We

now keep people and assess them for a whole day against a range of job relevant criteria, rather than just 15 minutes, as we did previously. We are now able to assess capabilities and behaviors that previously were not possible."

## Introducing the Assessment Process

Ethiopian Airlines has now rolled out these new processes across all areas of recruitment.

"We look to recruit 75 trainee pilots a year, of which 50 percent graduate to become full pilots," said Belai. "Previously, they just had an aptitude test and then an interview. Thanks to Kenexa, we have now designed a full assessment center that provides a much more rigorous and job-relevant evaluation of capability."

Candidates now have to do presentations, participate in group activities and tasks that assess listening comprehension. The one-to-one interviews are now fully structured, meaning candidates who reach the simulator stage of the assessment process are of the highest quality.

## Significant Cost Savings

"This has improved the quality of trainees we have on our pilot programs by 100 percent, and will mean our fall-out rate will reduce significantly in the future," Belai.

This will bring significant cost savings to the airline. Each trainee pilot has to undergo 25 hours of flight training before a decision is made whether he/she continues training or not. This costs the airline US \$5,000 per recruit. With approximately 50 percent failed recruits per year, this gives Ethiopian Airlines a loss of US \$187,500 on failed recruits. "Through our new assessment process, we believe we will be able to virtually eliminate these costs," said Belai.

Previously, the same recruitment process was used no matter which role was being recruited for. "We had the exact same measurement

for pilots, technicians, cabin crew, sales and marketing staff. We now look at the competencies required for the specific job so we can focus on the right areas for that role when designing the process," Belai.

An example of this is in the recruitment process for cabin crew, of which they look to appoint 150 trainees per year. "We have now introduced a 10 minute film into the assessment center where candidates are asked to comment on the physical appearance and behavior of the passengers so we can observe just how alert candidates are to passengers' needs. During flights, you don't have to wait for a passenger to talk or request something. Cabin crew must be able to recognize the need from the facial expression," said Belai.

### The Future

The airline's recruitment process and thinking has come a long way since the initial call was made to Kenexa.

The training has enabled Ethiopian Airlines to become completely self-sufficient in job analysis, competency modeling and in the design of interviews and assessment centers, giving the airline the ability to rapidly—and economically—implement new selection methods throughout the organization.

The company now believes that only the very best people will be joining their team. "Previously, there were always difficult selection decisions to be made. Now we are 100 percent sure we can say someone is a perfect fit for Ethiopian Airlines as we have based the decision upon the assessment process we have prepared. We are recruiting the best people, we believe our 2010 vision to become Africa's World Class airline will be realized," said Belai.

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## About Ethiopian Airlines

Ethiopian Airlines is one of the largest airlines in Africa employing over 4,700 people. The airline has grown its international route network to 46 international destinations across four continents and 28 domestic destinations. Website: [www.flyethiopian.com](http://www.flyethiopian.com)