

Improving the Selection Process for Care Workers at MacIntyre

Profiling applicants against the competencies required in a role is an established practice in commercial organizations, yet in the social care sector, it's a radical concept. MacIntyre, a UK charity that provides care for children and adults with learning disabilities, partnered with Kenexa® to enhance its interview and selection process, and improve its ability to select frontline staff who have high performing behaviors and competencies.

Kenexa created the personality profiles and competency frameworks of ideal candidates, and provided training to show how these should be used in the recruitment process. The novel approach that MacIntyre uses from Kenexa has been identified as best practice in the UK's social care sector by the Department of Health. In response, Kenexa is now developing a profile and competency framework for MacIntyre's heads of service.

"If you can understand which candidates are more likely to be successful in the role, it increases your chances of appointing someone who will be a better fit for the organization," said Bill Mumford, Managing Director of MacIntyre. "That's the premise behind this project. We wanted to improve our ability to recruit individuals who will stay with us, who are open to learning and who can provide a great service to the people we support."

MacIntyre employs over 1,400 support workers across 120 sites, each of which undertakes its own recruitment efforts.

"There are different aspects to the services we provide, so there is a situational element that needs to be brought into the interviews," said Bill Mumford. "We approached Kenexa for help because the company has top experts in assessment. They've helped us to shape our strategy and they've partnered with us throughout this project. They've been very supportive and there's a lot of integrity in the relationship."

Kenexa began the process by conducting a job analysis of the support worker role and profiling high performing practitioners to identify the personality traits, behaviors and key competencies of successful support workers.

"The results surprised us," said Mumford. "Of course, we expected to see qualities such as being benevolent, considerate, sympathetic, confident and having a genuine concern for others. However, we didn't expect that our support workers would be low profile, quiet and more introverted than the general population. It makes sense when you start to rationalize it. We knew we had something interesting here and we felt we had to make use of this information."

Kenexa repeated the same process and created a profile and competency framework for senior support workers, who are the next level up in the organization.

"The senior practitioner profile is similar to the profile for support workers, with one or two nuances," commented Mumford. "Senior practitioners are generally more confident, but the core aspects of benevolence and introversion are just as strong."

Piloting a New Approach to Recruitment

MacIntyre undertook four pilots across different parts of the organization using Kenexa's Rapid Personality Questionnaire (RPQ) as part of the interview process for short-listed candidates. The RPQ is a 15-minute questionnaire that provides insight into an individual's personality and compares candidate results against the ideal MacIntyre support worker and senior practitioner profiles.

"There must be dozens of personality tests, but the RPQ is easy-to-use and it met our needs," said Mumford. "Candidates complete it online and it generates both a personalized report that we give to the candidate and a separate report that is used by the interviewer."

Kenexa provided training to MacIntyre's appointing officers in how to use the RPQ to conduct competency-based selection interviews.

One pilot site was MacIntyre Wingrave School in Buckinghamshire, a residential special school that provides education and care for 38 young people with severe learning disabilities.

Maria Tole, the school's Head of Care, commented, "This new, competency-based approach to selection has helped us to recruit the right people and reduce staff turnover. Those we've appointed using this process have performed better, they stay longer and they've had no disciplinary actions taken against them. Essentially, we've become better at not recruiting the wrong people, which makes our lives a lot easier."

She adds that Kenexa's RPQ improves the entire interview process, enabling judgments to be made on more than just intuition. "The RPQ gives you pointers to explore with each candidate. It doesn't rule people out. It just gives you a better insight into the person sitting in front of you. You still have to use your experience and judgment when making a final decision."

Cascading the Program Throughout the Organization

The MacIntyre staff members who were trained in the pilot program are now cascading the same training to 120 area managers and heads of service.

"The pilots received very positive feedback and we're now rolling this out so that all our support worker and senior practitioner recruitment across the organization will be done using this competency-based approach," said Mumford.

"Our frontline staff are obviously very important, but the key people we employ are our heads of service because they recruit, deploy and train the staff," asserted Mumford. "This will help us to be clearer in what we're looking for when we appoint for this role in the future."

Improving Interactions

MacIntyre's mission is to be the best provider of services for children and adults with learning disabilities. Mr. Mumford says that recruiting the right people, and retaining them, takes the organization closer to achieving this objective.

"This has been a very easy and cost effective way of enhancing the quality of care we provide," he said. "With competent and effective staff, we can improve the interactions with the people we support and their families. I'm sure the profiles we've created would be relevant across all caring professions. The people we're appointing have what is known as bedside manner. Fundamentally, it's an ability to care for other people and a desire to treat them with dignity and respect."

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866.391.9557

About MacIntyre

Founded in 1966, MacIntyre is a charity organization that provides residential care, domiciliary care, support, education, training and learning services for over 1,000 children and adults with learning disabilities. Website: www.macintyrecharity.org