



## Top Dog for Seasonal Christmas Temps

Christmas is typically the busiest time of the year for retailers and many organisations generate a high percentage of annual profits in this crucial period. For the majority of retailers, key to the success over the festive period is hiring additional staff into stores to deliver great customer service.

HMV, the UK's leading music and entertainment retailer with over 160 stores, routinely require up to 2000 additional staff during the Christmas period. With their strong brand and high street presence the internet was already proving to be a successful source for potential seasonal employees. There were no shortage of candidates emailing their CV's which were screened by the recruitment team and then sent through to stores.

Although the internet was generating sufficient numbers of candidates there were several issues and problems that needed addressing:

- The high volume of applications received meant significantly more work for the recruitment team and store managers
- All applications needed to be manually screened and printed out
- A high number of applications received were unsuitable
- Time to fill vacancies was slow due to large volumes

Tony Varchione, Recruitment and Retention Manager at HMV explains, "We needed to develop a more streamlined and efficient process and find ways to eliminate the time consuming manual elements of the process. We needed to provide our store managers with good quality applicants in a timely and cost effective way".

The decision was made to introduce an interactive criteria based application process for seasonal temporary employees which would provide immediate feedback to candidates on their suitability for the temporary post. Candidates would be scored against key criteria for the role and the details would be transferred into a Candidate Management System. In this way manual screening would be a thing of 'Christmas past'.

HMV partnered with **Changeworknow Ltd** to identify the selection criteria for the seasonal recruits that included the 'essential' and 'desirable' skills, qualifications and experience for the role. A series of on-line questionnaires were developed to provide all candidates with immediate feedback as they progress through the application process. Candidates who are meeting the requirements are encouraged to continue. Those falling short are given feedback about the areas in which they do not meet the job requirements and they are able to make the decision about whether or not to continue with their application.



"The volume of applications we receive is very high and not all applicants meet our criteria and we wanted to find a way to reduce the quantity but increase the quality of candidates applying. We had developed a similar approach for a number of our other high volume roles with much success" explains Sam Pearce, Head of Retail Human Resources at HMV.

The approach has paid off. The campaign began in late August inviting candidates to apply via the recruitment website. In total 12,850 candidates started the process. Of these, 4326 submitted their application with 62% of applicants meeting the job requirements. A high number of candidates falling short of the 'must haves' self selected out – up to 66%.

Tony continues, "By building a web presence in the summer we were able to get first mover advantage and start to attract candidates early on. The automatic screening of candidates on-line has significantly reduced the administrative overhead and we have been able to send quality applications through to stores within hours rather than weeks. This has speeded up the process and enabled us to fill all of our vacancies quickly and efficiently. Store Managers have been able to focus on sales and customer service at a time when the business demands are high".

There have been cost savings as well. **Advertising costs have been reduced by 68%**. The team have been able to respond promptly to store requests for temporary employees and have a database of screened candidates ready to source to the business at a moments notice.

The engine behind the approach, the **Candidate Management System**, has proved invaluable to the recruitment team. The system shows at a glance how candidates are matching up to screening criteria and provides the facility for communicating directly with candidates. All candidate details are presented in a clear and consistent format increasing the speed at which decisions can be made. A powerful management reporting tool is measuring the success of the campaign.

The decision to use such a streamlined internet approach has been a sound one. Over 22% of applicants were just browsing the HMV site or specifically targeting their favourite retailer showing the strength of the employer brand.

"The web has once again proved a success for us. We are now seeing the benefits of this comprehensive approach across a wide range of roles within the business" concludes Sam.