



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Attracting Global Talent Via the Web

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Project Manager, Queen's University Belfast

Queen's University Belfast is a world class university in Northern Ireland. Founded in 1849, the university has approximately 30,000 students and 3,500 staff from over 70 countries located across 250 buildings. As a member of The Russell Group, the university is one of the UK's top 20 research driven institutions, offering students a high quality education across a range of courses.

The university has a long standing relationship as a MHR customer. Having upgraded to iTrent the university was familiar with the extremely configurable, single web solution for talent management, workforce planning, HR and payroll. Soon a project was initiated to implement web recruitment which went live eight months later, delivering a user friendly solution on time and within budget. Within seven months 5,736 applicants had used the system, virtually eliminating paper applications. Almost half (47%) of those applicants provided feedback on their experience of the new web recruitment procedure, with 81% (2,227 applicants) scoring it four or five out of five for ease of applying.

SUMMARY

Organisational Objectives

- Attracting greater numbers of international staff to the university

HR Objectives

- Implement a contemporary web recruitment solution

The Solution

- Implement the Web Recruitment module of iTrent

Key Results

Via a comprehensive and user friendly interface, iTrent Web Recruitment has enabled the university to:

- Attract international academics
- Receive applications from anywhere in the world
- Offer applicants a simple end user interface
- Integrate the corporate branding
- Improve back office efficiency

A Need For Change

Prior to the project, the online application process involved downloading an electronic rich text form (RTF). The completed form was subsequently uploaded to the corporate jobs page. Basic personal details were also captured at the form download stage and data converted on iTrent. While this process did act as an initial familiarisation with electronic applications, the process would receive negative feedback from applicants who found the fixed formatting restrictive. Other issues also existed with equal opportunities monitoring and the conversion of data contributed to the administrative burden of staff. Overall, it was a short-term solution in the absence of a full web recruitment option.

Outlining the Objectives

The university's academic plan specified that one of its goals was to attract greater numbers of international staff to the university. Recruiting respected academics from across the world would enhance the university's international profile and contribute to developing overseas links at an institutional level.

Glenn Campbell, project manager at Queen's University Belfast, comments: "To achieve this corporate objective, the HR key objectives identified recruitment as vital; from key academic positions to the ongoing recruitment in fluid staff categories such as research and clerical staff. To achieve this, a robust, flexible online recruitment solution was needed. The director of HR identified the project as key to achieving his recruitment related objectives, which provided the project with a clear corporate mandate; a measurable HR objective; and a defined project goal to return to it later. Providing benefits for the back office recruitment operation was also a goal. Furthermore, the aim was to achieve a smooth

change management process which in turn would result in favourable feedback from staff and applicants."

A Team Effort

The Project Implementation Group comprised a wide ranging membership, including professional HR staff, key users, an equal opportunities officer, systems analysts, school managers and the personnel clerical supervisor. The school managers are experienced, managerial staff members who manage administrative processes within each school enable initiation of the iTrent Web Recruitment implementation.

Phase one of the project addressed the 'customer experience', focusing on the actual application side of recruitment. The project objectives were set to enable online applications from anywhere in the world while also improving back office recruitment efficiency.

A flexible and comprehensive solution with a simple end user interface was needed to seamlessly integrate with the corporate website and branding, along with more practical, usability factors such as the functionality to save a partially completed application and From the outset, their inclusion was identified as a key element in helping deliver a smooth transition for staff," adds a representative. "Similarly, the personnel clerical supervisor provided back office knowledge whilst also offering an opinion on the workability of certain aspects and acted as the credible link to the back office operation."

The group met monthly, reporting progress to the director of HR and providing a formal update to the university's Administrative Support Advisory Committee which oversees all primary software developments within the university.



The project timeline saw the initial kick-off meeting take place, with a go-live date planned for seven months time. This was to broadly coincide with the new academic year when we typically see a surge in recruitment activity.

Proactive Communication Strategy

The Project Implementation Group used its members to promote a proactive communication strategy.

It was imperative that the change management approach be inclusive for all staff either individually or through representation. School managers updated colleagues at their monthly school board meetings whilst the personnel officers completed monthly demonstrations and updates to junior clerical staff in the personnel department. Testing provided another opportunity for involvement with personnel clerical users and staff from schools contributing to both unit testing and the pilot test.

Three months prior to the go-live, sign off was granted by the Director of HR following a demonstration of the iTrent solution.

"Given how intuitive the iTrent Web Recruitment software is, we decided against a roadshow-style communication.

A comprehensive how-to-apply user-guide was developed instead and linked directly into the application form. Feedback statistics from applicants indicated that the guide worked well. Periodic communications via email bulletins were issued across the university while a summary message was added to payslips during the month of go-live."

Surmounting Challenges

The university had a number of bespoke requirements that were not met through the standard functionality of iTrent's Web Recruitment module. The requirements included greater granularity in some areas so that academics could search for vacancies, not only within a job category (e.g. academic, research, administrative etc), but also within their particular area of expertise (e.g. medicine, electrical engineering, pharmacy etc). Furthermore, since academic jobs in the university require a CV in addition to a summary application form, clerical staff required functionality to print CVs alongside applications for each requisition. Both requirements were satisfactorily met using some innovation alongside iTrent.

Significant work was also carried out on the look and feel of the web recruitment pages, allowing iTrent to fit seamlessly with the corporate branding.

Future Plans

Phase 2 of the project involves the development of an application to handle the pre advertisement aspect of web recruitment, including the preparation of job descriptions, employee specifications and interview dates. Phase 3 will see the implementation of paperless short-listing across the university.

Results

With a user friendly solution delivered on time, within budget, and meeting all objectives, the project was deemed a success by the director of human resources. "In supporting the university's overall strategy, the project was vital to HR delivering its main objective. The project succeeded in achieving its objectives and managed to do so within time and cost targets whilst delivering the software orientated objectives. A significant reason for the success was how well the diverse project team worked together to accomplish the project goals. The team encompassed varying levels of staff, from clerical to senior management across different departments within the university," states a representative.

"Where challenges were faced, innovative solutions were implemented, particularly for integration with the corporate website and bulk printing of application forms and CVs for our personnel staff. The communication and change management strategy worked extremely well with positive comments and contribution from those involved. All staff were happy with the level of involvement and information provided throughout the project."

"Exceptionally friendly website, makes it a pleasure to apply. Comparing to other UK applications which I found a total nightmare - stupid questionnaires asking academic applicants to type again information already available on the CV and irrelevant information about high school. Your application system is by far the best. Congratulations to whoever designed and implemented it!"

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