

Russell Group University - Team Based

HR Recruitment Process Improvement

Lean approach enables significant rethink on a key organisational process

With a new Human Resources Director and a shift in the strategic thinking of the department, change was required in many of the core processes operated by HR in their support of an ever changing and dynamic client base within a highly successful institution

Background

The University has stated objectives of being “50 by 50”, i.e. in the world’s top institutions within 50 years of its inception.

In order to do this within the current climate support was required to enable functions to be fit for purpose; to deliver high quality services so that it can best exploit its strong academic and research capabilities.

We were invited by the incoming Human Resources Director to introduce Lean as an approach to improve the way that the department performed its services, and to ensure that it provided a significantly better and more efficient service for its customers. Initially the focus was to raise effectiveness so that process users were better supported.

The approach subsequently supported the institutions drive to ‘Simplify, Collaborate & Deliver’.



Our Approach

Over the project, we worked with the Deputy Director of Human Resources and Project Manager to educate, apply and roll out ‘Lean’ thinking across the recruitment department. Staff needed to be engaged, own the problem and solutions, and create a passion for effectiveness, efficiency and continuous improvement

We agreed that a team-based, [Rapid Improvement Event](#) using the principles and tools of Lean, was the best approach to drive change, engage staff and deliver benefits to process users

Getting Started

An initial workshop was designed and facilitated to build the senior team around a clear understanding of the delivery imperatives for the current academic year and to gain a collective restatement about what was required.

This enabled the ongoing development of the process of developing a clear vision for HR and an outline strategy for change. It also considered the current situation they faced, and limitations and blockages to moving forward.

The team carried out a high-level evaluation on 17 key processes and identified the need to prioritise the Recruitment/Approval to Appoint Process as being of most benefit and having high stakeholder impact. This process was chosen as a pilot for the adoption of Lean improvement methods.

“The RIE was a superb way in bringing people together who had been frustrated in how the process was working and letting them design how it could improve. Bourton Group and particularly Lesley, did a great job of challenging us to see things differently and to understand what really added value.

By being focused on the real problems and not just the ones that we see has allowed us to understand better and to implement solutions that the team believes will work. Some of our recommended changes require senior managers to change the way that they perceive the process, but the team is working on this”.

Deputy Director HR Department

Process improvements

A [Quad of Aims](#) was developed to ensure team members understood the project by clarifying Purpose, Customer / Impact, Deliverables and Success Criteria for the project. A decision was taken to use the Rapid Improvement Event approach to drive the changes required.

The initial scope was to:

- Focus the process and team on the added value for the customer
- Understand the end to end process and the impact on stakeholders
- Ensure that the process was ‘fit for purpose’, efficient, compliant, easy and logical to follow and to execute.
- Reduce the lead time and [eliminate wasteful activities](#)
- Create a professional and attractive process for candidates, that will be reputation enhancing
- Showcase “Lean” tools and techniques for future use
- Support the generation of a more engaged and empowered culture

The Recruitment process team were trained in a one-day workshop that focused upon developing an understanding of the basic elements of Lean thinking. They were given the tools to understand value adding activity (in the eyes of the customer) and what was wasteful.

The workshop also introduced the approach of rapid improvement activity or blitz as a way to fix, improve, and transform processes.

This workshop paved the way for the team to be engaged with a process improvement event. The ‘event’ process began with Stakeholder engagement and translating the voice of the customer into factors critical to quality.

This was followed by a five-day event that mapped the true current state and detailed process analysis, the identification of value adding and non-value adding activity (waste).

The final stage of the event concentrated on developing an ideal future state and a possible interim solution that dealt with quick wins and the elimination of the easy to achieve steps.

This output of the work was presented to HR senior managers and representatives of the customers of the process. A plan for implementation and improvement was agreed.

Value Delivered

Whilst the event focused on the reduction of process steps and therefore efficiency, a great deal of the associated actions resulted in a significant improvement in process effectiveness which resulted in a significant rise in stakeholder satisfaction. Specific targeted benefits include:

- Identification of the reduction in process steps by 60% resulting in shorter process lead time by removing waste
- Clearer expectations for customers:
 - process compliance
 - clear Service Level Agreements in place and adhered to
- Reducing overall interview costs by making more effective use of management time (value add)
- Improved performance and engagement with processes

- Delivery of appropriate candidates within agreed timeframes
- Ensuring that shortlisting is consistent and fair and making the process easier and quicker for recruiting depts. to process by the creation of guidelines for recruiting departments
- Increase in system functionality (e.g. electronic forms) and the design of key specification for a new (institution wide) HR system
- Adoption of a recruitment toolkit by process users to eliminate time wasting step and the reduction of input errors
- Less rework of adverts and quicker advert turnaround times due to the adoption of a pro forma advert and appropriate training
- Creation of a culture of trust, reduced delays and increase departments ownership of budget via the delegation of financial decisions and responsibility of existing posts in 5-year plan and associated advertising costs
- Reduction in “waste” due to right first-time approaches and the reduction in the number of errors/queries
- Improved customer service (survey data)

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