

Amgen

Amgen introduced the first biologically derived human therapeutics – the biotechnology industry’s first blockbusters – treating chronic kidney disease and cancer-related conditions. Today, its products support cancer care, as well as the treatment of anaemia, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases.



Project background

Ranked second amongst large companies by The Scientist in its 2007 “Best Places to Work in Industry” survey, Amgen has 17,500 employees worldwide. In the UK, changes in the way in which the healthcare market worked with its pharmaceutical suppliers forced the company to adapt.

Previously, salespeople had worked directly with clinicians in the NHS, but tighter fiscal control had resulted in the development of large, specialist procurement ‘hubs’ where purchase decisions were focused on price, as well as clinical benefit.

Against this backdrop, Amgen needed their sales team to develop a new, more holistic commercial

sales skill set. The UK sales team of 35 had previously been split into three roles which interacted respectively with doctors, procurement and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). Amgen needed to design a new role to provide a single point of engagement with the key decision makers within the local health economy.

Gary Sagar, Amgen UK and Ireland Human Resources Director, and his team established a competency framework which provided the basis for role definition. The next challenge was to assess the potential of the existing sales team to step up to these tough but essential new roles – critical to success in managing the change.

HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Business needs

- Change management
- Role definition for new sales team
- Assessment of existing staff for ‘fit to role’

Psychometric tools used

- 16PF

Benefits

- Positive reinforcement of the company’s confidence in staff
- Higher staff morale
- Increased self-awareness
- Use of assessment widened to use in all new hires

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Gary Sagar
Human Resources Director
UK and Ireland

The solution

Gary led the development of a one-day intensive assessment experience in which all the existing sales team would participate. As a strong believer in the predictive power of personality and behaviour data to sort 'outstanding' from only 'average' performers, he wanted a stretching combination of activities to set expectations of the new role.

Having been impressed with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) tool in his development work, Gary decided to use a personality assessment from the same OPP stable. He chose the 16PF, not only because it's one of the world's best validated tools, but also because OPP could map outputs directly to key competencies for the role.

The resulting tailored report (The 16PF Competency Report) gave him a detailed insight into 'fit' between the candidate and success in the job, as well as generating interview questions which were specific to the gaps between the applicant's profile and that of the role. The instrument enabled accurate measurement of attributes as diverse as creative thinking and organisation and planning skills.

Gary was keen to involve line management in the comprehensive assessment process which included data on previous performance and experience, account planning, negotiation role plays, tender preparation, a theory test about the NHS, and a panel interview that focused on behavioural competencies. The interview guides generated by the 16PF instrument were a strong supporting tool in helping to deploy the assessments effectively.

The whole process moved very speedily from kick-off in October 2007 to the successful candidates taking up new roles in January 2008. Gary says: "Experience shows that restructures are best done quickly, with a robust, transparent and valid process."

All of the existing team were immediately appointed to the post and, as one key purpose of the assessment day was a training needs analysis, every participant received in-depth feedback and the opportunity to create a development plan in the context of the new career structure.

Results

For the majority, ambitious development plans with clear objectives and strong line manager support gave a positive signal of confidence to the participants from the organisation. Gary says: "Some people were not convinced of the need for training at the outset, but the feedback is 'It's been great!'. We took a pulse

survey in January around how the change had been handled and directors followed up actions with their teams; morale has improved substantially and people can see it's the right structure and the smart thing to do."

As further evidence of the success of the project, the process – including the 16PF customised assessment – is now being adopted for all staff joining the organisation. "We are looking at making the report increasingly bespoke now so that it uses our language and is totally Amgen-specific," says Gary.

Gary says of working with OPP: "They gave good advice; we derived a lot of benefit from the debrief sessions we ran with OPP's occupational psychologist. OPP were very responsive, with every stage turned around quickly. And of course the 16PF has proved an effective decision support tool; the report narrative is a great aid for decision makers, whilst the Candidate Report helps candidates clearly understand their strengths and weaknesses."

And the real test of whether the process 'worked'? "I was so impressed that the results of the behavioural interview and the role-plays bore out the 16PF results so strongly – consistency was excellent. The mix of personality and behavioural assessment along with knowledge and skills assessment is really a uniquely powerful combination," Gary says.

Established in Oxford in 1989, OPP is one of Europe's largest providers of business psychology solutions. Its products and services are used by private and public sector organisations in more than 25 countries. OPP develops the 16PF personality assessment and also distributes many of the world's leading psychometric instruments, including the MBTI, FIRO and TKI tools.

To find out how OPP can help your organisation in talent identification, team-building and leadership development, call +44 (0)845 603 9958 or visit www.opp.com.