

# people development



## Assessment Centres for Director Recruitment

### The Client

The Chief Executive of an inner London Primary Care Trust needed to restructure her Board in order to be in a position to meet the challenges of World Class Commissioning (WCC). Only three of her Directors were permanent appointments, so she had the opportunity of recruiting people externally who had the skills to complete her new Board.

### The Requirement

At the time, a number of PCTs were recruiting Directors, so there was a requirement to attract suitable candidates as well as to ensure that those appointed would be up to the challenging new jobs. An executive search firm was retained to headhunt and advertise nationally and shortlist for three new Director posts - Director of Resources, Director of Strategic Development and Director of Performance and Commissioning Improvement.

### The Solution

Zenon Consulting were commissioned to design assessment centres to test the short listed candidates against the inaugural individual World Class Commissioning competencies developed by NHS London. This would be the first time the competencies, which were 'hot off the press', would be used in this way, as they were made available by special arrangement to Zenon and the PCT. The competency-based behavioural indicators against which the candidates were measured were also linked to the PCT's core skills and leadership behaviours for Directors and its Behaviour Model.

Within a very tight timetable, Zenon designed a one day assessment centre which utilised not only assessment elements based on WCC but also, innovatively included involvement with a 'stakeholder' selection group made up of representatives from the 'real world' of potential colleagues for each post. Zenon ran a centre the day

before each panel interview took place. The centre consisted of bespoke observed exercises, a presentation to stakeholders and feedback to the candidates. The candidates also completed online "Mental Toughness" tests, the results of which were given to the interviewing panel along with advice on areas to probe at interview. Mental Toughness was seen to be a key competency required of all Directors to enable them to deal with the challenges and pressures of a changing environment.

### The Results

The three Director posts were filled and a fourth Director was recruited to support the commissioning agenda. The assessment centre gave insight into how the candidates would actually perform in their post and this, combined with the other aspects of the selection process i.e. Mental Toughness test, stakeholder presentation and panel interview, gave a very rounded picture of each candidate. This, in turn, reassured the panel that their decisions on offers of employment were based on robust evidence. In addition, the candidates were given feedback on their performance in the assessment centre. Their feedback said how realistic the scenarios that they worked through were.

### Next Steps

The CEO was so impressed by the Mental Toughness Test that it was decided to use it as a development tool for the entire board as soon as they had finished recruitment.

Feedback and coaching on Mental Toughness was arranged for all Board Members and the Mental Toughness Organisational Development report was used in conjunction with MBTI as the basis of a development day.



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