

The Success of Morrisons' Degree Apprenticeship Programme with Amberjack Technology and Services

Background

Morrisons is the fourth largest chain of supermarkets in the UK. They began life as an egg and butter stall in Bradford before evolving into a business with almost 500 stores across the country. Morrisons source and process their fresh produce through their own manufacturing facilities and have it prepared in-store. With a workforce of around 97,000 – serving 11 million customers each week – Morrisons is committed to finding future leaders.

Morrisons has a long tradition of retailing excellence and Early Careers is vital to our future success and part of the DNA of the company. We know that nurturing our own future leaders drives business growth. Our business strategy never stands still and now more than ever we are operating in a world that requires us to work flexibly and respond to the needs of our customers.

Objectives

Morrisons partnered with Amberjack to create a new degree apprenticeship programme to accompany their existing graduate scheme, using a different approach to ingrain their 'Ways of Working' at an early stage.

They wanted Amberjack to develop tailor-made recruitment programmes for Manufacturing, Corporate, Logistics and Retail roles in partnership with the University of Bradford and Sheffield Hallam University. The purpose of these programmes was to identify candidates with the potential to improve Morrisons' performance, culture and future direction. Each programme needed to be customised to the organisation's exact needs.

Morrisons wanted to target candidates in an engaging way that aligned their talent with the roles, while also changing pre-existing perceptions and educating them on the diversity of the business. Morrisons were determined to improve the quality of their candidates before providing the skills and experience for them to enter a management role, with CMI chartered membership, after three years.

Solution

To design Morrison's requests, 50 business leaders were interviewed to help identify the core behaviours required for role success and to ensure we were assessing the right fit for Morrison's business streams. Insights from these interviews shaped the attraction and recruitment strategy for their new processes.

The strategy for Attraction was digitally driven and included transforming the Morrisons website to create authentic and insightful content that would resonate with both students and their influencers, such as parents and teachers.

The new and innovative recruitment processes included a short registration, Situational Judgement Test, and video interview that introduces programme specific case studies featuring our colleagues. This provided an interactive and realistic experience.

Before the pandemic, assessment centres were held at programme sites so candidates could take part in bespoke exercises in the environment where they applied to work, assessed by real colleagues including senior management. The assessment centres include defamiliarisation exercises to take candidates out of their comfort zone and help differentiate potential from experience. Due to the current restrictions these have been adapted and are currently hosted virtually.

The new digital recruitment programme featured cutting-edge technology, without sacrificing a human experience for candidates. The automated, time-saving process is accompanied by personal feedback to coach, support and build trusted relationships that enhanced candidate experience.

Impact

The partnership between Morrisons and Amberjack has been supremely effective. The recruitment process is now aligned to their business, and they assess the right behaviours for role success.

Attraction is targeted, and Amberjack have helped Morrisons maintain application levels when other organisations have been up to a 67% drop (Amberjack Insights Data).

Morrisons also made significant progress against diversity targets. 20% of offers were made to BAME candidates, and they also achieved a 52:48 male female offer ratio.

Candidates said, Morrisons “went the extra mile”, and even those that had been unsuccessful talked about applying again. Only 7% of candidates declined offers, 33% lower than average (ISE). 100% retention has been the ultimate measure of success - this has been met.

The first cohort of Degree Apprentices graduated from their programme in November 2020. Many of them were working on the front line at the peak of the pandemic placing them under significant pressure. All achieved their degree, with 96% achieving a first or 2:1.

50% of degree apprentices who completed their scheme in the last two years have been identified as having the potential for promotion. 27% are identified as having the potential for accelerated progression to be part of our most senior people in the company (top c.200 in the company).

