

Commercial in Confidence

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT
HQ PERSONNEL**

Date: 24th October 2008

**On behalf of
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE ASSESSMENT LIMITED**

Assessor: Stephen Hudson

Assessment Identification details:

Assessor: Stephen Hudson
Organisation: HQ Personnel
Address: 6 Church Street, Wetherby, LS22 6LP
Sites: 2 (Wetherby & Harrogate Offices)
Senior person: Sarah Pullan, Managing Director
Investors contact: Jane Brown, HR & Training Manager
Mentor: Andy Richardson
Date of pre-meeting: 1st October 2008
Assessment date(s): 14th & 22nd October 2008
Feedback date: 22nd October 2008
Number of staff: 11
Interviewees: 11

Introduction to the Organisation

HQ Personnel, established in 1997, with offices in Wetherby and Harrogate, has firmly established itself as one of the leading employment agencies in Yorkshire. The offices are staffed by qualified members of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, working to the code of professional conduct. Clients range from small independent businesses to large PLC's. The business is proud of its record of providing temporary and permanent commercial and industrial recruitment solutions to meet client needs.

The organisation has been working with a YHAL mentor and agreed Action Plan to improve and fine tune the systems and processes which enable the outcomes and objectives to be achieved. Any visitor to the company would be impressed by the sense of passion, teamwork, communication and unquestioned commitment to providing a superior level of customer service.

Assessment objectives

The assessment visits were made to assess the available evidence against the Investors in People National Standard. There were no additional objectives.

Strengths and areas of good practice

- Clarity of purpose and strategy with all staff describing the *Eight to be Great* performance objectives with such enthusiasm
- Inspirational, role model leadership in all respects
- A stable team who are coached and developed, so that learning is a “way of life” within the business
- A wonderful feeling of equality, support, freedom to act and take decisions, creating a culture where staff are empowered, often making career progression and sharing in the rewards
- A comprehensive Competency and Role Profile framework
- All staff are recognised and rewarded for their contributions, with excellent communication channels which celebrate achievements and successes
- You are a “listening organisation” with systematic feedback mechanisms which allow outcomes to be achieved
- Continuous improvement at the heart of your dynamic and “thriving” business, for example the current work to put clear milestones in place to support the performance goals

Areas of Improvement for consideration

- You may wish to consider introducing 360 degree or upward appraisal to further strengthen feedback for “Top Managers”
- In the medium term, with business growth and expansion in mind, you may wish to formalise the coaching/mentoring relationships, perhaps offering accredited qualifications as part of the process

- At peak periods such as Christmas, a temporary “Office Junior” position could help to maintain the feeling of work-life balance which is part of the HQ culture
- Maintain a pro-active approach to “Investors,” consideration could be given to the use of the Profile framework and/or asking a team member at each office to “champion” the Standard
- There is no doubt that HQ Personnel is a “*great place to work*” and as part of on-going work-in-progress explore longer term benefits, such as pension schemes or share options which reward commitment and long service

Findings from the assessment

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

An Investor in People develops effective strategies to improve the performance of the organisation through its people

1. A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood

The business development strategy, 3 year plans and 8 performance goals were fully explained by the MD and HR Manager, with Business Managers, Consultants and Administration staff fully engaged and consulted. The team described with passion and commitment how they take ownership of the business goals and individual key performance indicators. They confirmed the value of your systems and processes for quality assurance, maintaining effective communications and the rigour of the performance improvement meetings structures including team meetings, systematic 1:1 dialogue and annual Appraisal. People were clear about company, branch and individual KPI's, describing coaching, work-shadowing opportunities, company visits and teamwork as empowering and motivational. Evaluation, monitoring and continual improvement is allowing everyone to work smarter, with impressive company growth showing through as a result of the approach taken.

2. Learning and development is planned to achieve the organisation's objectives

To support achievement of your business vision, there is a detailed learning and development strategy with Training Plan Actions which link back to the 8 business goals. As well as common needs, such as REC Certification, good use is made of internal expertise with coaching and mentoring being of particular value to less experienced staff. Staff described how their roles continue to evolve within the business as you become more multi-skilled through sharing knowledge, skills and information. Staff are given “acting up” opportunities, for example in covering for maternity leave and also representing the organisation at business network meetings. The blend of support, freedom, formal and on the job learning by doing is impressive for a small business working in such a demanding and dynamic marketplace. The MD and HR Manager set the lead and are active and visible coaches who “live and breathe” the learning and development strategy.

3. Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people

The assessor was hugely impressed by the multi-faceted learning and development opportunities created and grasped by all staff within the open working culture at HQ Personnel. All interviewees gave specific examples of how they have been consulted and empowered by attending your conferences, the systematic meetings structures and general atmosphere of respect, trust and teamwork. A typical comment included: *"It is very busy and professional yet I am always asked what I want to achieve"* At both the Wetherby and Harrogate branches staff articulated the positive culture where all people can contribute ideas, ask for guidance, take decisions and make continuous improvement suggestions. Staff regularly cited improvements including use of Excel spreadsheets, research and consultation regarding introduction of new software (voyager), as well as being given advice and recognition. You celebrate success as a team and have "fun" at work, socialise together and raise considerable sums of money for charity.

4. The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively are clearly defined and understood

The MD and HR & Training Manager described and provided documentary evidence of the comprehensive HQ generic competencies which provide a template for personnel selection, succession planning, performance appraisal and development. All roles in the business has a role profile which describes in detail the key result areas, key performance indicators, skills and experience required, the possible next development step, the dimensions of the role and competences required. For each competency a calibration has been completed to indicate the level at which an individual is "fully satisfactory" in performing the role. During the assessment visits people regularly referred to the value of the focussed step by step approach to performance improvement. They consistently mentioned teamwork, inter-branch co-operation, improving confidence, competence and appreciation of colleagues learning styles. You are developing current managers as well as encouraging staff to take the next steps within the career ladder.

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

An Investor in People takes effective action to improve the performance of the organisation through its people

5. Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people

During the assessment both managers and staff gave practical examples of the regular and constructive performance improvement processes. There is rigour and diligence to the process, with staff appreciating the lead set by the MD, all managers and peers. As a small business which operates in such a fast moving working environment you are keen to seek feedback from staff regarding manager effectiveness as well as other company indicators which make HQ a "great place to work." The opinion survey results are impressive and the company has already

responded to survey ideas which will help everyone achieve the goals you are aiming for. As an example, the feedback regarding allocation/delegation of new challenges and interesting work demonstrates that there is still scope for improvement. Managers also described the push forward to fill in the detail of “how” goals will be achieved and the need to agree milestones of achievement along the way. There is mutual support and self-motivation with all team members explaining their needs and wants “*to achieve and self-actualise.*”

6. People’s contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued

Throughout the visits the assessor was able to see and hear the team interaction and ownership of the business goals, meet people who have achieved worthwhile career progression and who are recognised for their achievements, both internally and externally. A Senior Consultant won the “rising star” category in the “Yorkshire Finest Awards” run in conjunction with the Yorkshire Post and the REC. Staff confirmed the fairness of the bonus schemes and incentives. They are willing participants in the company charitable activities. People confirmed that the company picks up on their ideas and suggestions and felt that yours is a truly “*inclusive organisation.*”

7. People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision – making

All interviewees described the shared vision and values which are built upon such solid foundations of teamwork, co-operative working relationships and encouraging decision making throughout the company. Specific examples quoted included: *consultation regarding voyager software, competitions, incentives and an extra day’s holiday for staff to celebrate their birthdays.* Staff confirmed their accountabilities for developing the business as HQ continues to grow its turnover and customer base. In addition staff felt the liaison between offices was of mutual benefit, in particular citing improving customer service. The appointment of an HR & Training Manager was acknowledged by the team as bringing “*more structure*” and building upon the already established good practice. There is real “*synergy*” and a “*buzz*” about everything you do.

8. People learn and develop effectively

There is a wealth of documentary evidence, supported by staff performance and verbal descriptions of how the approach taken to learning is helping to realise company and individual goals and aspirations. People gave examples of improved communication, flexibility, customer satisfaction, career progression, REC qualifications, achievement of KPI’s, in-house coaching to improve job knowledge and skills and generally working smarter. Where necessary the company is prepared to “buy in” bespoke training, for example the sales skills modular programme and listen carefully to staff feedback to shape the next module. Every interviewee had a personal success story to tell, not least in their total commitment to HQ Personnel where stretch, growth and making learning fun demonstrates you are “*not a typical recruitment agency!*”

EVALUATING THE IMPACT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION

An Investor in People can demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation

9. Investment in people improves the performance of the organisation

The MD described the performance improvement and return on investment delivered as a result of the approach taken, which included pro-active use of the Investors framework with support of an experienced mentor. Amongst others these included: quality assurance feedback, staff survey feedback, more inter branch referrals and split fees, growth of the client base, smarter branch and individual performance target setting. Investment in training is carefully monitored, with average days per employee and investment per employee documented. Hard evidence is gathered which clearly shows increased sales turnover, improved labour turnover, improved sales ratios and KPI's. As already mentioned previously in this report several staff members have achieved "promotions" within the past year. The two new senior consultants have also helped the running of the branches in the business manager's absence and will also provide vital support during maternity leave cover.

10. Improvements are continually made to the way people are managed and developed

The business growth, feedback from the team on the company, their job, manager, pay and benefits and in particular learning and development is ongoing within the team culture. Positive changes to the way in which people are managed and developed could be cited and consistently recognised across a range of activities by the Director, Managers and Staff.

Examples included:

- Voyager software demonstration
- Staff survey in place and to be completed again in January 2009
- REC Certification achievement by the Harrogate Branch Administrator
- Opportunities for a Senior Consultant to "act up" as Business Manager to provide maternity cover
- Bespoke Sales Training workshops
- Bespoke Mentoring and Coaching workshops
- Improving the overall staff employment "package of benefits"
- Introducing an HQ staff "uniform" from 2009
- The ownership of the *eight to be great company goals*

Overall, despite the recent downturn and so called credit crunch, you continue to invest, help staff to develop capability and competence and maintain HQ Personnel as a *great place to work*.

Conclusion

From the evidence seen and heard HQ Personnel complies fully with the Investors in People National Standard. The assessor is pleased to confirm that there are no actions required for the company to meet the Standard, following the successful assessment visits.

Subject to Panel's approval, recognition is granted for a period not exceeding three years.

Thank you to everyone at both branches for making the assessment such an enjoyable and engaging experience. Your hospitality was appreciated.

Stephen Hudson
On behalf of YHAL