

Recruitment Case Study - East Norfolk Sixth Form College

Joanne McDonnell, Governance Manager of East Norfolk Sixth Form College, has taken forward a variety of governor recruitment strategies to seek a range of diverse and skilled governance applicants - this work is ongoing (April 2014). Until now the board consistently had a 'waiting list' of skilled governance applicants, largely drawn from those who had unsuccessfully put themselves forward for election as a parent governor. When a vacancy arose the skills of those on the waiting list would be considered to seek out an applicant with a 'best fit' for the vacancy.

Joanne attended a Level 5 Clerking course during 2013 where she was introduced to a range of strategies that can improve board recruitment. A session at the Sixth Form College Association on improving board diversity focused her thinking on the diversity recruitment challenges faced by the sector and she went on to source data on potential community groups from her local council's website. As clerk, Joanne knew that vacancies were due to arise on her board and she wanted to go beyond her waiting list and the more 'traditional' routes of advertisement and current governor contacts to source new potential governors. Her first step was to take a proposal to the Search and Governance Committee, who agreed that a range of strategies should be explored to open up board membership to a wider range of diversity, skills and experience, cautioning that in the current financial climate Joanne would have little or no budget and traditional advertising methods were not an option.

Firstly, Joanne set a specific timeframe within which to operate - then working backwards, interview dates were set, time was allowed for a competitive recruitment process i.e. interviews, arising from a range of recruitment strategies again with time planned to enable these. Due to budgetary restraints a digital campaign was planned.

Using in-house skills, she worked with the Marketing department to create a college branded recruitment leaflet. This leaflet is being used in a range of activities including being handed out to parents and visitors at the college's events and open evenings. The wording is aimed at attracting those currently working; the leaflet illustrates how meeting times can fit with professional diaries, along with the professional development opportunities that being a governor can bring to the individual. All materials are designed to be easily readable on screen to support the digital approach. The college's website was also updated to promote governor recruitment on its job vacancies and governance areas. Again using existing college skills, Joanne liaised with her Human Resources department to create a role and person specification for the role of governor, along with a new application form. This promotes the role professionally, aimed at attracting high calibre applicants. As Joanne says *"HR can not only help target who you're looking for but also ensure you're legally compliant and in keeping with the house style (as does marketing). I think if you're seeking business people the more "Corporate" the approach, the better."*

Alongside this work, Joanne approached a range of groups including the Womens' Leadership Network (WLN), Young Professionals Group, the local university, larger companies in the areas (and using governor contacts as appropriate), the Chambers of Commerce, professional associations e.g. mechanical engineers, actuaries, chartered surveyors), community and minority groups, and also by asking staff if they know of any suitable applicants among their contacts. All those approached are being tracked on a database. Joanne has also promoted

her vacancies through SGOSS (the School Governors One Stop Shop). Again in liaison with Marketing governor recruitment is promoted via social media i.e. Facebook and Twitter.

All forthcoming applicants will be interviewed, alongside those identified from the current waiting list, who Joanne has kept appraised throughout the current round of recruitment. The success of the above strategies will be evaluated and reported to the Search and Governance Committee to help inform future campaigns. Joanne's next steps are to explore the links that the college has with local employers, as well as pursuing the strong relationship the college has with its local radio station, Radio Norfolk, where they may be interest in doing a short feature on being a governor.

Joanne stresses that this has been taken forward with "no budget, just enthusiasm" (proving that a range of recruitment activities do not require a large budget, just the time and skills of a dedicated clerk).

Additional information:

- Job description and person specification
- Governor vacancy leaflet
- Advert

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