

The White Horse Insurance Ireland challenge

White Horse Insurance Ireland Limited is a general insurance company licensed in the Republic of Ireland to underwrite most classes of non-life insurance throughout the EU. It specialises in the travel insurance market and aims to be the market leader in the provision of worldwide travel insurance. White Horse Insurance Ireland underwrites travel insurance for the majority of the Thomas Cook Group, this being its parent company. In addition White Horse provides travel insurance policies for a large number of well known Irish and UK insurance intermediaries.

White Horse Insurance Ireland employees live a service culture that focuses attention on details such as:

- Making doing business with them easy while still fulfilling their legal obligations.
- Being cost effective in all stages of the supply chain.
- Adapting and designing policies specific to the requirements of each of their customer groups.
- Simplifying their retail travel policy so it is clear and easily understood by every customer.
- Providing end-to-end exemplary service experience for all clients or prospective clients, during every stage of investing in a White Horse travel insurance policy.
- Ensuring that in an event of a claim, customers feel that service levels are consistent with the brand behaviours expected of a company who stipulate they want to be known for their exemplary service levels.

The challenge

White Horse Insurance Ireland establishes their competitive positioning around their brand promises of: service; meeting individual needs; and value for money. The challenge was to find a highly motivated and capable Operations Manager who could deliver the operational innovations and improvements that would enable White Horse Insurance Ireland to deliver on all their brand promises. The multisite nature of White Horse Insurance Ireland business meant that the TAL team had to be capable of working virtually with client stakeholders based in different parts of the country.

The client need

To quietly (without alerting the market) source a pool of good quality candidates capable of fulfilling both the strategic and operational requirements of the role based in the company operational hub at Shannon but with frequent travel to their headquarters in Dublin.

TAL's approach

TAL's key objectives in this assignment:

- To work with the client and define the key requirements of the multidimensional role.
- To design a competency based structured interview selection process for short-listed candidates.
- To qualify the experience, skills and behavioural characteristics predictive of high performance for the job holder.
- To discreetly search and source a pool of suitably qualified individuals from which to select a short list to present to White Horse Insurance Ireland.

As per normal practice, TAL conducted its own research into the culture and brand values of White Horse Insurance Ireland and its parent company Thomas Cook Group plc. This enabled them to understand its strategic and operational aims, and business drivers. The TAL team visited both the Dublin headquarters and the Shannon operational centre to meet and talk with stakeholders and staff.

Utilising its own unique methodology, the TAL team designed a competency based job description for the Operations Manager role which won the approval of the White Horse executive team. This was used to define a comprehensive role profile for potential candidates and later formed the basis for the design and delivery of a structured interview selection process.

The results

TAL's approach concluded with a small number of interesting candidates being short-listed to complete the comprehensive selection process. The choice was then between two impressive candidates who following a challenging structured interview, were invited to participate in a competitive presentation to members of the White Horse executive team and a TAL director. Although both candidates had the potential to be successful in the role, the selection process highlighted their different strengths, weaknesses and motivational profiles. It is the opinion of many senior members of the TAL resourcing practice, that this type of situation is often helpful to organisations struggling to prioritise sometimes conflicting job requirements. Dealing with diverse choices of competency excellence can really help the client drill down and decide on what the business really needs to focus on in terms of performance. The selection process that the TAL resourcing team designed helped the client really understand the important competencies and behavioural characteristics that predicted success in the role. The successful candidate commenced their role as Operations Manager for White Horse Insurance Ireland in December 2008 and feedback from the client endorses that the right candidate was appointed.

More information

White Horse Insurance Ireland web site address is;
www.whitehorseinsurance.com

For more information about TAL's approach to this assignment or its other services contact TAL's Associate Director Ingrid Blades who lead this project.

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