



**Review of the CEO
recruitment process**

**For the attention of Slough Borough Council
18th January 2018**

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Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Surjit Nagra on behalf of Slough Borough Council. CIPD were asked to review the most recent recruitment process for the CEO. We have provided an overview of the key principles underpinning standard CEO recruitment and reviewed the process recommended by Penna.

Important to note: As a professional institute, while we can help with advice and training on HR practices, we do not comment on how these are specifically carried out nor on the quality of decision making that arises from these processes – in this case, the hiring of your CEO.

Standard practice for senior level recruitment

It is standard practice for senior level recruitment to use a third party consultancy. This is a combined activity between the consultancy and the employer - with the consultancy recommending process and the employer choosing which elements to change to suit their internal culture.

The process begins once a consultancy has been chosen, some organisations will do this by competitive tender, others by going directly to a consultancy that they have used before. Key to this is the consultancy's knowledge of the specific market and awareness of current trends.

It is the employer who usually produces the job pack to go to candidates and identifies core competencies but the method of candidate attraction will be jointly decided with advice from the consultancy based on market research. Often an employer will require a microsite to be developed and in this case the consultancy will do the work.

It is standard for a consultancy to handle all enquiries from prospective candidates and take in and acknowledge applications. The consultancy will have agreed timescales and the screening criteria/competencies with the employer. After the closing date they will evaluate applications against these criteria and produce the long-list of candidates to be considered. They will also have agreed the rating terminology for candidates on this list and throughout the process.

In setting up the process there are a considerable range of activities that can be used to evaluate candidates and these can include personality and psychometric testing. There are a large number of test providers and ultimately it is the consultancy that advises, and the employer who chooses, which to use and at what stage in the process.

Similarly interview structure and the number of interviews will depend upon the employer culture. There can be screening interviews carried out by the consultancy in person or by phone, a varying number of employer interviews either one to one or by panels and assessment days managed by the consultancy. The consultancy will provide advice on this and, once the employer decides how they want to proceed, will manage the process, providing written guidance.

Standard practice is for the consultancy to provide full written reports on who to take forward at each stage of the process - both comparative and on individual candidates. These will be discussed with the employer. The reports will contain recommendations and it is the employer who decides whether to accept them or not.

Any interview panels should receive training either from the consultancy or internally. Often the consultancy will provide questions for the panels. At interview the employer can ask the consultancy to take notes or provide an internal resource to do so.

At all stages the consultancy will manage the candidates, either rejecting them or taking them through to the next stage and ultimately to referencing and negotiating the offer.

Review of the selection process for Slough Borough Council's CEO

***Please note:** In the first discussion with Slough Borough Council about this work, I was made aware that Penna advised on the recruitment process. I declared that I had worked with Penna in the past, in previous roles. As I had never worked with the Penna Consultant Julie Towers who advised the Council, it was confirmed by Belinda Colins that there was no conflict of interest.*

In conducting this review, I have spoken to Belinda Collins for an initial briefing and Surjit Nagra, both employees of Slough Borough Council. With the Council's permission, I have received relevant documentation and spoken to Julie Towers from Penna, the consultant responsible for the recruitment exercise. All discussions have been over the phone.

I have also reviewed a number of documents pertaining to the recruitment process (as referenced below).

I comment as follows:

1. The invitation to quote from Slough Borough Council and the tender response from Penna. I cannot comment on this part of the exercise, as I am not a procurement specialist.
2. Papers written by Surjit Nagra to the Council dated:
 - a. 31st January 2017 asking for approval of the job description and advertisement
 - b. 31st January 2017 outlining the process to be followed
 - c. 20th and 26th June 2017 relating to the appointment of the various committees that were involved in the process.These papers follow a standard Council format and the content is clear.
3. The Council Recruitment and Selection Policy: this is a clear document
4. The Penna documentation:
 - a. The Job Pack provided by the Council: Julie Towers told me that Penna managed the development of the micro site which was used to attract candidates and also candidate enquiries.
 - b. The longlist pack dated 31st August 2017 and meeting details.
 - c. Watson Glaser Critical Thinking test results. Watson Glaser is a well-known test supplier.
5. Technical interview reports by Penna

- a. Penna briefing papers for panels. Panel training was carried out internally by the Council and has not been reviewed.
- b. Initial interview questions for panels and notes taken at the interviews
- c. Interview and assessment reports on individual candidates
- d. Shortlist reports
- e. Final interview timetable

Conclusion

My conclusion is that the Penna process is a standard process for this level of recruitment and all reports are written in a clear fashion.

About Jackie Alexander

Jackie Alexander is a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD and a solicitor. She is an HR consultant, coach and trainer. Jackie has held a number of senior HR positions, namely Managing Director Resources LCH. Clearnet, a leading Clearing House; Recruitment Partner PricewaterhouseCoopers, HR Director BBC Worldwide, interim HR Director at the Royal Automobile Club. She started her career at British Airways and then worked in local authority and the NHS. Jackie is a Chair on Nursing and Midwifery Council fitness to practice hearings; chairs CIPD investigations and until December 2014 was a member of the General Dental Council Appointments Committee.

Training, education and qualifications

LL.B Southampton University

Solicitor

Chartered Fellow, Institute of Personnel and Development

British Psychological Society, Certificate of Competence in Occupational Testing

Accredited AOEC coach