

AstraZeneca strategy & objectives

- Recruit, retain and motivate the best talent in the industry. Something AstraZeneca admits was not happening.
- To significantly reduce the cost of recruitment, improve the quality of staff hired and reduce staff churn.
- To shift from a recruitment strategy that relied on multiple parties, to a more direct strategy.
- Four areas of focus: business partnering, HR excellence, HR projects and planning, and Talent and Resourcing.

Challenges

- Sales and marketing in the pharmaceutical industry is an exceptionally competitive area.
- AstraZeneca lacked a suitable recruitment framework.
- HR was seen as an overhead that was not delivering basic services to an acceptable standard.

StepStone's i-GRasp Solution

- StepStone is Europe's leading provider of online recruitment services and solutions.
- StepStone's i-GRasp gives recruiters the tools for complete control over all aspects of external and internal recruitment processes.
- Allows customers to operate their own private career sites, covering both external and internal candidates.
- Other clients recruiting with StepStone's i-GRasp solution include: British Airways, Cadbury-Schweppes, Cetelem, Essilor, H&M, KPMG, LVMH, Norwich Union, Orange, Oxfam, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Royal Mail and Vodafone.

Initiatives Rolled-Out by AstraZeneca

- Revamped its recruitment model.
- Introduced a preferred supplier list.
- Implemented a new IT system – StepStone's i-GRasp solution.
- More than half of new employees are now hired directly (compared to 2-3% in the past).
- Set-up a refer-a-friend scheme.
- Introduced quarterly talent reviews.
- Educated managers on the need to focus on potential as well as performance.
- Developed a people portal where HR and line managers can now gain a single view of individual employees, such as remuneration, absence, training, and so on.


 AstraZeneca


Key result areas

- More than half (55%) of new employees are now hired directly (compared to 2-3% in the past).
- The average time to hire has fallen from 90 to 40 days.
- The new IT system StepStone's i-GRasp, paid for itself within six months.
- The changes to recruitment cut the budget in that area by £2.5m.
- The time lost to discipline and grievances has fallen by a third.
- Staff turnover has dropped by 2%.
- The HR department estimates it has handed back a total of 9000 sales days to the organisation.
- The HR department is now seen as a key part of strategic corporate development.

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People Management

One of the things that really got us excited about working with AstraZeneca was the way they put value to faster hiring. When they looked at the revenue benefits of having their salesforce hired more quickly, they were able to translate 'time to hire' into increased sales, in hard cash terms.

Andy Randall, CTO, StepStone Solutions

The Business

AstraZeneca is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. Its products, which are sold in more than 100 countries, include therapies for cancer, gastro-intestinal disease, asthma, hypertension, high cholesterol, migraine and schizophrenia. In 2004, sales totalled \$21.4bn (£12.3bn) and operating profits \$4.8bn (£2.8bn).

The company, which was formed when Astra and Zeneca merged in 1998, employs 64,000 people and has its head office in Alderley Park, Cheshire. It employs about 2000 people in the UK, with 60 in HR.

The Challenge

"Sales and marketing in the pharmaceutical industry is an exceptionally competitive area," says Mark Burton, head of learning and development and acting HR director. "For one thing it's the most regulated market in the world. For another, every player invests vast sums of money in research and development, money that it really needs to make back at the other end."

As a result, AstraZeneca requires a strong HR function that recruits, retains and motivates the best talent in the industry. Something Burton admits was not happening.

"We lacked a suitable recruitment framework, and we were weak on reward. We were seen as an overhead that was not delivering basic services to an acceptable standard."

The Solution

In 2002, the then HR director, Andrea Dunstan, set about changing this. She outlined four areas of focus: business partnering, HR excellence, HR projects and planning, and Talent and Resourcing.

In June 2004, after two years in development, the business aligned people strategy was launched. In the area of talent and resourcing it revamped its recruitment model, introducing a preferred supplier list, a new IT system, and a refer-a-friend scheme. The HR department introduced quarterly talent reviews and educated managers on the need to focus on potential as well as performance.

Burton says: *"Many companies try to manage their talent, but just end up with a list of names and leave it at that. We have regular in-depth discussions with our leaders of the future to plan their development."*

This runs concurrently with Inspire, a company-wide programme of individual six-monthly performance reviews.

At the start of the process, the HR department had 68 sources of people information. Burton recalls: *"Many of our colleagues are field sales representatives and it was extremely difficult to deliver a good service without accurate information on issues such as remuneration, absence, training, and so on."*

So, AstraZeneca brought in a software development company to build a people portal where HR and line managers can now gain a single view of individual employees.

The Outcome

More than half (55%) of new employees are now hired directly (compared to 2-3% in 2003), the average time to hire has fallen from 90 to 40 days; and the new IT system, from StepStone's i-Grasp, paid for itself within six months. In all, the changes to recruitment cut the budget in that area by £2.5m.

Elsewhere, the time lost to discipline and grievances has fallen by one-third, staff turnover has dropped by 2%, and the HR department estimates it has handed back a total of 9000 sales days to the organisation.

For Burton, however, the most important outcome is that the HR department is now seen as a key part of strategic corporate development. He believes the evidence for this came at the start of 2005 when the sales and marketing functions were merged and HR was trusted to manage the process.

Employee Perspective

Sonal Riley is an HR consultant in the business partnering department of HR at AstraZeneca. She works with staff in the marketing company on their performance management, succession planning and change management.

Riley joined eight years ago and believes the department and her role have altered enormously since June 2004. She says: *"In the past we were very reactive and service oriented to the point of subservience. Now we look to challenge the rest of the business more."*

She continues: *"For instance, while in the past we would have administered a pay review, now we'll look at how it links to talent management and performance reviews to provide a strategic insight into how it can be done most effectively. I'm involved earlier in projects as part of cross functional groups. This helps me to make a more useful contribution."*

StepStone Solutions

StepStone, a pioneer in the area of online e-Recruitment products and solutions, delivers a powerful complete suite to reinforce each element of the recruitment and retention process from the initial pre-hire attraction of candidates, through on-boarding to Total Talent Management of employees post-hire including HR Management, Performance Management, Compensation Management, Skills & Competency Management as well as Career & Succession Planning, Training & Development Management and Organisational Charting.

StepStone's fully web-based software solutions have been deployed by more than 1000 companies such as Amazon, Astra Zeneca, British Airways, Cadbury Schweppes, Coca Cola, Deloitte, European Central Bank, Lufthansa, McDonald's, Statoil, TNT, Toyota, TUI, Vodafone, Xerox and Yahoo. StepStone's worldwide offices in Europe, North and South America, Asia and Australia, its partners and distributors guarantee customer proximity.

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