

Virgin Atlantic soars ahead of the competition in its aim to win the talent attraction war with StepStone's i-GRasp solution

UK's second largest airline cuts time to hire by half, overheads by 19 per cent following global e-recruitment roll-out

Since it was founded in 1984, Virgin Atlantic has become Britain's second largest carrier, serving 30 of the world's key destinations by the end of 2007. Based in Crawley, with Heathrow as its main hub, it operates long haul services destinations as far apart as Las Vegas, Johannesburg and Sydney.

Virgin Atlantic has enjoyed huge popularity, winning a huge array of business, consumer and trade awards from around the world, including Best International Airline and Best Scheduled Airline to the USA, and most recently, recognition for its new and legendary Upper Class Suite and Heathrow Clubhouse. Virgin Atlantic is comprised of not only Virgin Atlantic, but also Virgin Cargo, Virgin Holidays and Virgin Flightstore, which all have a reputation for top-notch, innovative service, value for money and fun. Despite the business's rapid growth, they have retained these core values, and as a result, it is highly regarded by prospective employees and customers alike.

Virgin Atlantic has implemented i-GRasp across all of its businesses, which collectively receive some 130,000 applications for 2,200 vacancies advertised annually. With StepStone's i-GRasp, the organisation has introduced an enterprise-wide recruitment database for the first time, significantly reducing time to hire, delivering anticipated cost reductions of around 19% in the next year. The system has also delivered a wide range of additional benefits, from increased agility to fostering greater collaboration between its international offices.

The Challenge

Virgin Atlantic employs nearly 10,000 staff globally, and is a leading employer in the aviation industry. The organisation believes that its product, service, style and culture are all directly driven by the people it employs – so hiring the right people is a truly strategic imperative.

Alex Merrylees, Head of Resourcing, explains the recruitment challenges his organisation faces: "Competition for skills in the aviation industry is intense and we're a very selective employer. Our employees must be talented, self-motivated, enthusiastic and customer-centric to ensure we deliver the supreme level of service that Virgin Atlantic is synonymous with. At the same time, we recognised that the candidate experience could be improved, and our processes more joined-up."

Merrylees recognised that e-recruitment would help address the whole recruitment process: not only was the Group scaling up recruitment into its overseas operations – particularly in Africa – it was also handling increasing numbers of new hires. Computerising the management of candidates from recruitment through on-boarding and induction was seen as critical to reducing the Group's overhead, whilst ensuring the business hired the strongest applicants for each vacancy.



He continues: "Previously, our recruitment process was paper-based and very labour intensive. We receive over 120,000 applications for around 2,200 vacancies every year, and the administrative element alone meant our time to hire was around two months, which was a huge inconvenience, not just for us, but for the applicant as well. It was clear that we needed to redesign our process and selection application technology, to be able to deliver a consistent candidate experience, broader candidate access and much more."

The Solution

Virgin Atlantic implemented i-GRasp to process and manage applicant information for all airline vacancies advertised in the UK, including cabin crew, airport operations and all back office and support functions.

The system has subsequently been scaled to support the entire company providing a single database for every job applicant contacting the organisation. StepStone's i-GRasp solution deals with all aspects of candidate management, from online candidate application management, integration with online job boards, and "self-service" elements such as psychometric testing and assessment centre scheduling, which candidates can carry out by themselves.

Candidates can also sign up for email job alerts, immediately guaranteeing a ready audience for every new vacancy. Job alerts have already converted into hires and strong unsuccessful candidates can register to be updated with future vacancies as they arise.

The Benefits

Implementing i-GRasp has transformed the group's approach to recruitment. i-GRasp facilitates better access to quality candidates and pinpoints the most successful sources of hire.

Those channels that don't deliver can then be avoided and resources focused elsewhere. The online job alerts functionality alone enabled the organisation to fill 33 positions in just three months with a further 90 under offer.

StepStone i-GRasp's flexibility makes it easy for organisations to extend internationally, enabling "virtual" recruitment teams to collaborate with ease. With StepStone i-GRasp, Virgin Atlantic was able to recruit new staff to its Nairobi operation by remote control from London and South Africa. Whilst face-to-face assessments were held in Nairobi, all applications processing, management, background checks and administration were handled overseas, saving considerable time and money.

StepStone i-GRasp controls and processes a large amount of critical security information, such as documentation and identity checks. In spite of these vital checks, the recruitment team was able to process the 5,700 applications it received for the 48 vacancies in just 42 days from start to offer – all managed virtually. As a result, the group has been able to recruit a high quality team within a tight labour market – with no compromise on security or due diligence.



With the disappearance of the paper trail, the HR team spends considerably less time on administration, so it can arrange interviews within just four days. Overall, average time to hire has been cut by more than 20%.

Successful candidates can use of Virgin Atlantic's 'Offer Zone', which links to its onboarding services, including job descriptions, health and safety guidelines and company information. This means successful applicants can begin reading up on their new role and the company before they start work, speeding up the induction and welcome process.

Merrylees explains: "Talent is a valuable resource – and we aim to reflect this in the way we recruit new employees. They should be supported by a robust recruitment system that controls the process effectively: this enables us to ensure a consistent candidate experience. This is crucial as many are would-be customers: a positive experience will benefit our employer brand."

He adds: "We are a highly selective employer in an already tight job market. Finding the right talent can therefore be a real challenge, and we can afford to leave no stone unturned. StepStone's i-GRasp gives us broader access to potential employees through functions such as job alerts, and we can even create a pool of strong, unsuccessful candidates that we can go back to in the future if a relevant role arises."

The Future

Merrylees concludes: "StepStone has transformed our approach to recruitment: we can deliver a recruitment experience which fully reflects Virgin Atlantic's brand values to all of our applicants, whilst making sure we never lose sight of the strongest candidates. This capability, alongside the compelling administrative and cost savings we have seen, clearly demonstrates the true business case for e-recruitment."

"However, the most important benefit has been StepStone i-GRasp's ability to help us grow rapidly with no compromise on safety and security, innovation, customer services, value for money, and above all, fun! Without the people to advocate these values, our business wouldn't exist: it is a testament to StepStone i-GRasp's capabilities that we are able to identify and approach the right talent, and offer them the recruitment experience they deserve."

StepStone Solutions

As part of the publicly owned StepStone Group, StepStone Solutions is the leading European provider of software based solutions and innovative technologies for effective HR. Together with StepStone Online, one of the market leaders for online job boards, StepStone Solutions is the only global provider to offer Total Talent Management: From vacancy advertising to E-Recruiting, HR Management, Skills and Competency Management, Performance Management, 360 Degree Feedback, through to Compensation Management, Learning Management and Succession Planning.

Our clients, numbering more than 1,500, include Aral, Deloitte, The European Central Bank, Lufthansa, McDonald's, Carlsberg, Dannemann and Recaro Aircraft Seatings. StepStone is the only European provider to be rated as 'Leader' in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for E-Recruitment Software".

Contact

UK	+44 2074 072 300, uk@stepstonesolutions.com
Australia	+61 2 9004 7141, au@stepstonesolutions.com
Singapore	+65 6720 0680, sg@stepstonesolutions.com
USA	+1 866 708 4760, us@stepstonesolutions.com
Germany	+49 211 86282-0, de@stepstonesolutions.com