

Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS)

Bringing talent acquisition in house cuts the cost per hire by 80%

Business Challenge

Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS, Dutch Railways) wanted to underpin its new centralised recruitment strategy with an online talent acquisition solution. The solution had to be flexible enough to facilitate recruitment of both graduate trainees and experienced MBA-level talent into a total of around 3,000 roles. It also needed to provide management information on, for example, the number of (external) vacancies.

Solution

StepStone's Talent Acquisition Solution meets NS's key requirements and enables a standardised approach to recruiting this target group throughout the organisation's business units. NS chose the solution offered by StepStone Solutions because of the system's proven technology on the different areas of talent recruitment.

Results

The ability to handle almost all of its MBA level recruitment in house has cut the cost per hire by 80%. NS uses its recruitment website to reinforce its brand image and attract higher-quality applicants for graduate trainee and management positions. The solution is also helping to professionalise the recruitment function; while automation allows recruitment specialists to manage an expanded workload without additional resources.

The Business

Nederlandse Spoorwegen is the principal passenger railway operating company in the Netherlands. Its activities span passenger services; hub development and operation; construction; real estate development; and retail services. Every day NS runs 4,800 scheduled trains and handles the train journeys for over 1.1 million customers in the Netherlands. NS also works with partners in Belgium, France and Germany to transport its customers to major European cities and is involved in train service provision in parts of the UK.

The Challenge

When Eline Pinkse joined NS as Manager, Recruitment and Employer Branding, recruitment was handled by business unit HR teams that outsourced 90% of job openings to recruitment agencies. The company lacked a system for storing and analysing applicant profiles — everything was paper based — and there were no defined candidate selection and management procedures.

This resulted in long lead times to fill posts and an average cost to hire of €15,000. Recruitment agencies didn't always fully understand NS's business requirements, so the quality of candidates was often lower than expected. With only 10% of job openings being handled via the NS website, Pinkse realised that the company was missing a golden opportunity to promote its brand image to applicants.



Solution: **Talent Acquisition**

Industry: **Rail transport**

Country: **The Netherlands**

Number of Employees: **23,000**

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**Eline Pinkse, Manager
Recruitment and Employer Branding, NS** ”

To overcome the high costs and inefficiencies of the fragmented recruitment process, Pinkse set out to define a centralised recruitment strategy for NS that would be managed by her corporate recruitment team and underpinned by an online talent acquisition solution. The solution had to be flexible enough to facilitate recruitment of both graduate trainees and experienced MBA-level talent into a total of around 3,000 roles. It also needed to provide management information to create a better understanding of the number of vacancies there are and in which areas they exist.

The Solution

Pinkse reviewed a number of options and selected StepStone's Talent Acquisition Solution as the best fit for NS's key requirements. "The solution could be configured to map onto our redesigned processes and ensure a standardised approach to recruitment throughout our organisation," explains Pinkse. "The system is able to collect and store in-depth data spanning all our key recruitment processes; and its user-friendly interface has been adapted to fit our business needs."

StepStone Solutions' consultants worked with Pinkse and her team to gain a thorough understanding of the company's business requirements and its centralised recruitment strategy. They then defined a best-practice workflow and configured the talent acquisition solution to maximise process efficiencies.

StepStone's Talent Acquisition Solution has been rolled out to NS business units throughout the Netherlands, where it supports the recruitment requirements of around 150 line managers, 20 HR managers and six HR directors. NS has successfully integrated the solution to streamline its internal recruitment process as well.

The Results

StepStone's Talent Acquisition Solution is delivering a significant return on investment for NS. The recruitment process is now handled almost exclusively in house via the NS recruitment website, powered by the talent acquisition solution. Only 10% of job openings — typically specialist roles or vacancies that need to be filled extremely quickly — are now outsourced to recruitment agencies, compared with 90% in the past. NS recruiters use the talent acquisition solution to co-ordinate the entire process.

Bringing recruitment in house has streamlined candidate tracking and management and cut the average cost to hire by 80%. NS invests the money saved into recruitment campaigns and events like job fairs that have a direct impact on its employer branding. The solution also provides management information for NS.

Using the solution is helping to professionalise both the recruitment team and its processes. Combining information from the system with other tools, like Google Analytics, delivers rich reporting that lets NS analyse and improve its recruitment efforts. The solution has also been extended to cover internal mobility, enabling NS to tap into its internal talent market more effectively using key information about the jobs available internally, including their strategic importance to business progression.

Within the framework of the centralised recruitment strategy, Pinkse's recruitment specialists take a consultative role and manage first-stage screening of all applicants. Although this has expanded the team's workload, the level of automation provided by StepStone's Talent Acquisition Solution means that Pinkse has not needed to increase her operational budget or the size of her team in order to cope.

Because applications are handled via the NS recruitment website the company's brand is reinforced from start to finish, instead of being diluted by recruitment agencies' branding. This helps NS raise its brand profile at leading business schools and other educational establishments and attract a very high calibre of experienced MBA-level candidates for professional management positions. Putting the NS brand at the forefront of the graduate trainee recruitment programme has likewise led to a dramatic increase in both the quantity and quality of applicants.

A video interview stage has been integrated into the initial application process for graduate trainees, using a solution from StepStone Solutions partner, Clooks. Applicants video themselves answering a series of questions and upload the clips to the NS recruitment website with their CVs. "The video interview adds an innovative aspect to the process, reflecting both our branding and the applicant profile we're looking for," says Pinkse. "And because it requires a certain commitment, we can qualify out applicants who aren't serious at an early stage and avoid wasting time."

Feedback on the video interview from both recruiters and candidates is positive. "It enhances our ability to connect the right candidate to the right vacancy, and will enable us to reduce the number of phases in the recruitment process, making us even more efficient," says Pinkse.

About StepStone Solutions

StepStone Solutions helps businesses get increased performance from their people, helps them build and develop global talent pools, and helps people find new jobs that match their talents. Across the world thousands of organisations rely on StepStone Solutions every day to improve their business performance and talent development strategies while millions of people rely on StepStone Solutions to improve their careers. StepStone Solutions delivers world class technology and services for finding, recruiting, retaining, managing and developing talented people.

StepStone Solutions provides a complete set of Total Talent Management solutions. StepStone Solutions' on-demand (SaaS) software and services enable organisations to implement efficient processes, including: attraction and hiring, post-hire talent management, performance management, compensation management, skills and competency management, career and succession planning, training and development management.

More than 1,500 organisations, including many of the world's leading businesses, use StepStone Solutions' software and services. It operates in 16 countries and employs around 450 people. Its global customers include Aviva, BASF, Deloitte, Deutsche Telekom, Lufthansa, Kruger Products, PUMA, and Virgin Atlantic.

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