

# The Free & Hanseatic City of Hamburg

## backs innovation in staff selection



### Vocational aptitude testing for Hamburg municipal authorities

Employing more than 70,000 people across a diverse range of occupations including: administrative staff working in municipal offices; nursery school staff and teachers; law enforcement personnel and court staff; fire officers; technical and scientific professionals, and doctors, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg has been using traditional pencil-and-paper based tests within its selection processes to inform its decision-making.

#### **The challenge: widespread use of assessment and needing to ensure quality, and speed of process**

Within this Hamburg authority, the *Zentrum für Aus- und Fortbildung, ZAF* (Centre for Vocational and Further Education) has responsibility for fair and consistent test administration when selecting those wanting a career in administration, or promotion onto municipal training and study programmes. Every year more than 800 vocational training positions and study places are filled within the government and law enforcement departments, and nearly 2,000 aptitude tests are conducted each year to support this.

The ZAF is also responsible for approving the procedures in place for promotions within the law enforcement and fire departments. Those external candidates applying either to the government authority as a whole or to specific departments who don't already have the required occupational qualifications, also complete a number of aptitude assessments. Selecting from this external applicant pool, the Human Resources teams look to ensure that high quality staff are recruited into Hamburg's municipal administration, as well as gaining an insight into the future potential for mobility between departments. Successful aptitude test assessment is a requirement for entry onto any of the other training programmes offered by the city (e.g. bookkeepers, IT trainees), and this again is under the remit of the ZAF.

Test usage by the ZAF is therefore high – and can be time consuming. To support this, the ZAF appoints qualified psychologists holding the "A Licence" awarded to those qualified to use occupational aptitude assessments. This ensures that the aptitude tests have been carried out according to the demanding criteria of the DIN 33430 quality standard.

## The solution: innovation through new processes

At the beginning of August 2014, the ZAF replaced the paper-based written aptitude tests and template-based scoring with a purely electronic and online process. The tests are designed, developed and carried out by *cut-e* and are administered at the ZAF's modern facilities.

The ZAF draws from the aptitude tests in *cut-e*'s assessment range which explore logical, numerical and verbal understanding, tailoring the battery of tests based on the job role being assessed. But the testing process has also been designed to incorporate the ZAF's own general and cultural knowledge tests as well as two audio fill-the-gap exercises. In these tests, which were professionally recorded for *cut-e* for this project, candidates listen to a recording, which is accompanied by a text with spaces. The test-taker is required to fill in the gaps thereby enabling the ZAF to measure the candidates' spelling abilities.

To help tailor the assessment processes further, different application profiles have been designed to identify the specific aspects of each job role according to the ZAF's requirements. These application forms are reviewed regularly with *cut-e* to ensure that the quality and reliability remains high.

### The outcome: instant access to results, good candidate experience

One of the aims of introducing online testing was to create a robust selection process through which performance potential could be determined quickly.

This has been achieved as, in contrast to the time and resource-intensive processes of the past when paper-based materials were used, test results are now available to Human Resources staff immediately after the test has been completed. By using these assessments, the ZAF now receives an informative and reliable statement of each candidate's aptitude from *cut-e* in the form of an individual capability profile, with a suitability rating on a six point scale from 'highly recommended' to 'not recommended'.

In addition to the quality of information and the speed and accuracy with which it is collected, the attractive online presentation of the test material has prompted a high degree of acceptance by the applicants.

There is a seamless integration thanks to the XML interface provided by *cut-e* between the ZAF's application management tool and *cut-e*'s online assessment. The completely anonymised process guarantees data security in the communication between the ZAF and *cut-e*'s online assessment. The system itself is completely maintenance free and system updates take place automatically.

The move to online testing does not only demonstrate a fast, state-of-the-art selection procedure to candidates, but also increases the efficiency and effectiveness of this process. As a result, this transition to online assessment represents a significant advancement in the screening and selection of applicants.

*"The new test process is a modern and current element in our selection process."*

Volker Wiedemann, Business Manager, ZAF/AMD Municipal Agency

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