

talent management

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**Mike's Carwash:
Cleaning Up Candidate
Screening**



The Talent Whisperer

Intuit's Sherry Whiteley has a knack for finding the best talent in the most unlikely places.

CLEANING UP CANDIDATE SCREENING

Problem: Paper-based pre-employment assessments made screening job candidates cumbersome and decentralized at Mike's Carwash. While the organization assessed candidates across its locations, it had high turnover, which wasted resources and lowered productivity.

Solution: Mike's Carwash standardized and centralized its recruiting by updating its application process and including Web-based job fit screening assessments. This improved quality of hire and ensured hiring managers spent their time reviewing candidates who would be a proper fit.

Screening as many as 1,000 candidates each week, with an estimated 41,000 candidates completing pre-employment assessments each year, Mike's Carwash realized it needed to improve its hiring process.

With 42 locations, the company hires 400 to 500 wash associates each year. Seeking individuals with customer service and people skills, it has included pre-employment selection assessments in its recruiting and screening processes for more than nine years to help identify those who fit best for front-line, customer service and entry-level positions.

Previously, however, these were paper and pencil assessments, and they were not administered until the middle of candidate screening. As part of its application and screening process, after candidates completed assessments, hiring managers at the company's remote locations faxed the assessments to the HR team at headquarters for scoring and results. The process was lengthy and laborious, and the company's single full-time recruiter lost time and productivity on candidates who seemed like a good fit at first, but ultimately weren't right for the job.

Moving Screening Into Gear

In January 2012, Mike's Carwash enlisted



help from its pre-employment, sales skill and leadership assessment partners, The Chrysalis Corp. and Success Performance Solutions, to migrate and restructure its candidate assessment practices.

"We went shopping for a new solution that would bring our processes online, making it easier for each and every store, as well as our recruiter, to get the information they need to make the best hiring decisions," said Tom Wiederin, human resources and recruiting manager for Mike's Carwash.

Now, when candidates complete applications online for full- and part-time opportunities, they also complete a job fit assessment. The applicant tracking system walks candidates through the application and prompts them to complete assessments online.

The assessments are automatically scored and shared with the recruiter, who reviews results alongside the application to gain a deeper understanding of the behaviors and characteristics that contribute to the individual's work styles and cultural preferences.

The recruiter advances those who are a good match for the company and the position to the next steps in the screening process. Phone and face-to-face interviews, background and reference checks, and final interviews are all conducted by hiring managers at local stores.

"Our recruiter can make better decisions — supported by candidates' job fit and behavioral interview question results — and recommend high-quality candidates to hiring managers at each location," Wiederin said.

Rather than have managers spend time vetting candidates who aren't a good fit, they're able to nurture relationships with those who are.

Efficiency Assessments Pay Off

Implementing a more efficient application process and pre-employment assessments, Mike's Carwash:

- Included additional data points in its screening process to facilitate data-driven hiring decisions.
- Streamlined its application and screening process to gain deeper insight into candidates' abilities to meet position requirements and how well they match the company's customer service focus.
- Benchmarked and identified key characteristics and behaviors for success within the company culture.
- Reduced turnover by 25 percent in one year by improving quality of hire with assessments and re-evaluating its benefits and compensation program.
- Spends more time with the right candidates — managers hire one out of every 16 candidates they screen, as opposed to one in 100 candidates screened through the previous process.
- Improved compliance with a centralized, tracked and electronic-based system.

Mike's Carwash also gained deeper insight into the skills, behaviors and characteristics that make an individual successful as a wash associate.

Over time, the company experienced undesirable turnover. Using data from previous assessment results, it was able to analyze which characteristics were common to those employees who performed well, as well as characteristics common to those who were not a good fit. Armed with this knowledge, the company continues to build and manage its workforce with individuals who are well-suited for success.

"The main goal of a wash associate is customer interaction," Wiederin said. "Our associates are a diverse group of employees that span ages, cultures and experience levels, so understanding the characteristics that indicate a candidate has what it takes to greet, guide and treat our customers to the highest levels of satisfaction is just as crucial to our company."

Assessment Allows Candidates to Shine

Screening processes are now streamlined via the updated online processes — paper, hand scoring and faxing were all eliminated. The company is able to in-



Mike's Carwash team members in uniform and ready to serve customers. Photo courtesy of Media Wright Photography



One of the newest Mike's Carwash locations in West Lafayette, Ind. Photo courtesy of Media Wright Photography

vest time and resources more strategically, and with 160 hiring managers in the field, the new process is a time-saver. Managers trust that each candidate advanced to the next steps in the screening process meets the position's requirements.

Some of the insights from the assessment include candidates' ability to be team players, provide a consistent customer experience, present themselves in a friendly manner and be cooperative rather than pushy and tough when encouraging customers to add services. Since Mike's Carwash upgraded and centralized its screening processes, it also has improved its hiring percentages. Wiederin estimates the company previously hired one person for every 100 walk-up applicants at a location; now it hires one for every 16 candidates advanced to a hiring manager for consideration.

Rather than have managers spend time vetting candidates who ultimately aren't a good fit, they should spend time nurturing relationships with those who are.

"Employers are tired of hiring the wrong people — it's expensive in terms of money and stress associated with bringing poor-fit individuals on board," said Ira Wolfe, president of Success Performance Solutions.

Wiederin said the company has improved quality of hire and reduced turnover rates by using pre-employment assessments. The goal is to keep every new hire on board for a minimum of 12 months. "Anything less than that drains too many resources for training

a new employee," he said. "After reviewing the way that we analyzed assessment results, combined with some additional compensation and benefits changes at the company, we were able to reduce turnover by 25 percent in one year."

The company's new screening process also has improved compliance. With records maintained online, and hiring decisions that are supported by results from a scientifically based and valid assessment, Wiederin said he is confident they're meeting compliance requirements. "Anyone who has ever been subject to an audit can tell you that an outside entity going through records from dozens of locations is challenging. Having this centralized and defensible data all under one roof is a necessity for our kind of operation."

Further, in an industry where candidates are also potential customers, it's important that they feel their time is valued, and that they have a positive experience. Candidates have shared that while the application process takes a little longer to complete, questions are concise and easy to understand.

"Everything we do as a company is about consistency of quality for our customers. The same is true for the partners we work with, and for our job candidates," Wiederin said. "We want consistent results and exceptional customer service when we work with a vendor, and want our candidates to have a fair experience at every single one of our stores. It's not always easy to ensure that when there are remote locations to consider, but creating a standardized screening process helps us achieve that goal as we develop our workforce with individuals who provide that kind of experience for our customers." **TM**

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