

CASE STUDY



next
next.co.uk

VOLUME ONLINE RECRUITMENT FOR NEXT RETAIL STAFF

BACKGROUND

Next is a multinational clothing, footwear and home products retailer with over 590 stores in the UK, making them the largest clothing retailer in the country. They attract a large number of applicants and see significant volumes of candidates applying for their entry-level retail positions, including Sales Consultants and Stockroom Assistants. A particularly busy recruitment period of the year is between October to January when hundreds of Sales Consultant and Stockroom Assistant positions become available for seasonal staff vacancies.

Aiming to refresh their previous recruitment process and responding to the challenge of a significant increase in applications for their retail roles, they needed to identify:

- assessment methods which would improve sifting and accuracy of large volumes of candidates
- a fair and positive candidate experience
- the best way to integrate these assessment methods into their online application process

and in turn:

- increase calibre of candidates assessed by stores
- increase success rate and quality of hire
- adopt an efficient value for money overall approach

OUR APPROACH

Next chose Criterion Partnership based on our significant experience and working relationships with clients in the retail sector as well as our online volume recruitment and selection assessment expertise. To provide a fit for purpose and elegant online recruitment process, Criterion Partnership identified the need to introduce an objective, role-focused sifting of candidates at the application stage. This approach would be achieved by:

- introducing a set of rigorous online assessments at the early application stage
- seamlessly integrating the online Coast assessments into the applicant assessment process
- communicating a positive, engaging candidate journey and client brand

Criterion Partnership conducted extensive in-store job analysis (using various techniques including focus groups and interviews) with current Sales Consultants and Stockroom Assistants, as well as their Managers, across different UK regions. This gained an insightful and thorough understanding of the demands and challenges of the role as well as associated qualities, motivation and culture fit attributes to identify high-quality candidates for Next.

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THE RESULTS

The screenshot shows a web-based assessment interface for 'next' (careers fashioned by inspiration.). At the top, a progress bar indicates the user's position, with 'YOU ARE HERE' above it, 'Start' at the beginning, and 'Finish' at the end. Below the progress bar is a table of six statements, each with five radio button options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, In Between, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The statements are:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	In Between	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. I am never distracted from a job once I have started it.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I have rarely experienced self-doubt.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. In my work I tend to leave nothing to chance.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I always look on the bright side.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I sometimes doubt my own capabilities.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I find it difficult to work in a chaotic atmosphere.	<input type="radio"/>				

Below the table are 'Suspend' and 'Next' buttons. To the right, an 'INSTRUCTIONS' box contains five bullet points:

- Click on the first button if you **strongly disagree** with the statement
- Click on the second button if you **disagree** with the statement
- Click on the middle button if you are **neither agree nor disagree** with the statement
- Click on the fourth button if you **agree** with the statement
- Click on the fifth button if you **strongly agree** with the statement

At the bottom of the interface, it says 'Powered by Criterion Partnership ©2014' and 'Accessibility | Website design and development by AVAMAE'.

Based on our research, we designed bespoke role-specific ability tests and personality questionnaires, alongside online scored application forms in time for the nationwide Next Retail 2013 Christmas staff recruitment.

To further improve the candidate experience, we worked in partnership with Next to build a fully bespoke web skin which seamlessly connects the Next Applicant Tracking System to the COAST online assessment system. The combined work resulted in an improved candidate experience and efficient up-front candidate sifting, characterised by:

- a seamless candidate journey
- an engaging, topical and efficient assessment suite
- confidence in the Coast infrastructure to concurrently assess large numbers of candidates (over 150,000 candidate assessments between October 2013 to January 2014 period alone)
- cost effective & value for money assessments

Followed up evaluation work confirmed an increased quality of hire, shown through a positive relationship between candidate assessment scores at the application and sifting stage as well as performance in the role. As a result, Criterion now work with other parts and levels of the business including Next Distribution, Directory and Head Office, to roll out and support Next recruitment strategies.