

When we first met with Unilever, they were in the process of changing from a group of separate businesses to one conglomerate. A key part of this transition was a move to a shared services HR model. In fact, the UK was to act as a trial for the roll out of this structure globally. An internal team of specialist recruiters – peoplelink - would deal with all vacancies and screening. We were brought in to act as a partner and as specialists in attraction. They wanted our help to move away from an expensive dependence on consultancies and to educate their team on marketing and attraction. We would also act as overflow when there were too many vacancies for peoplelink to cope with.

### Working with the shared service centre

We became a seamless extension of Unilever's team. In practice, this meant often meeting with line managers and attending meetings in place of the *peoplelink*. We acted as the conduit for information and made sure everyone was kept in the loop, whilst saving Unilever time and resources, as well as educating and giving best practice advice.

Over time, Unilever's model has changed and parts of the HR business have been outsourced to Accenture. We've therefore extended our relationships. In fact, we're constantly evolving and adapting the way that we work to act as true partners and add value wherever and whenever we can. Now, we are even working with the global business on graduate recruitment, which is managed internally.

### The work in practice

We've worked with Unilever in all kinds of ways to drive response to recruitment solutions. We've prepared two specific case studies that we feel show off our work in practice. What's clear is that, over time, our relationship with Unilever has evolved and adapted. But – whether we're working on large-scale graduate attraction and liaising with internal contacts, or filling specialised vacancies in partnership with *peoplelink* or Accenture – we've been a seamless partner and extension of Unilever itself to consistently deliver the right solution.

**UNILEVER**

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ENGAGING CHALLENGES

WORLD LEADING BRANDS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

BETTER REWARDS

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TURNOVER IN THE BILLIONS MORE

PERSONAL RENAISSANCE RE

A BETTER WORLD A SENSE OF PRIDE RE

ROOM FOR IDEAS EXCITING WORK RET





# FINDING AND HIRING TWENTY RARE SCIENTISTS FOR A MARKET-LEADING SAFETY INITIATIVE

## Building the team

Over 20 advanced scientific and technical roles from toxicologists and risk assessors to computer modellers and decision analysts had to be filled urgently. The need was unexpected: the roles were not in the resourcing plan or budget, management of the programme was likely to throw a huge additional burden on peoplelink, and the skills that were required were – by definition – in short supply and huge demand. With the eyes of the Board on everyone, recruitment had to be delivered. Quickly. And, as Unilever had dropped off the radar as far as potential candidates were concerned and had virtually disappeared from the scientific employment market, the challenge was greater than ever.

So we set ourselves three objectives

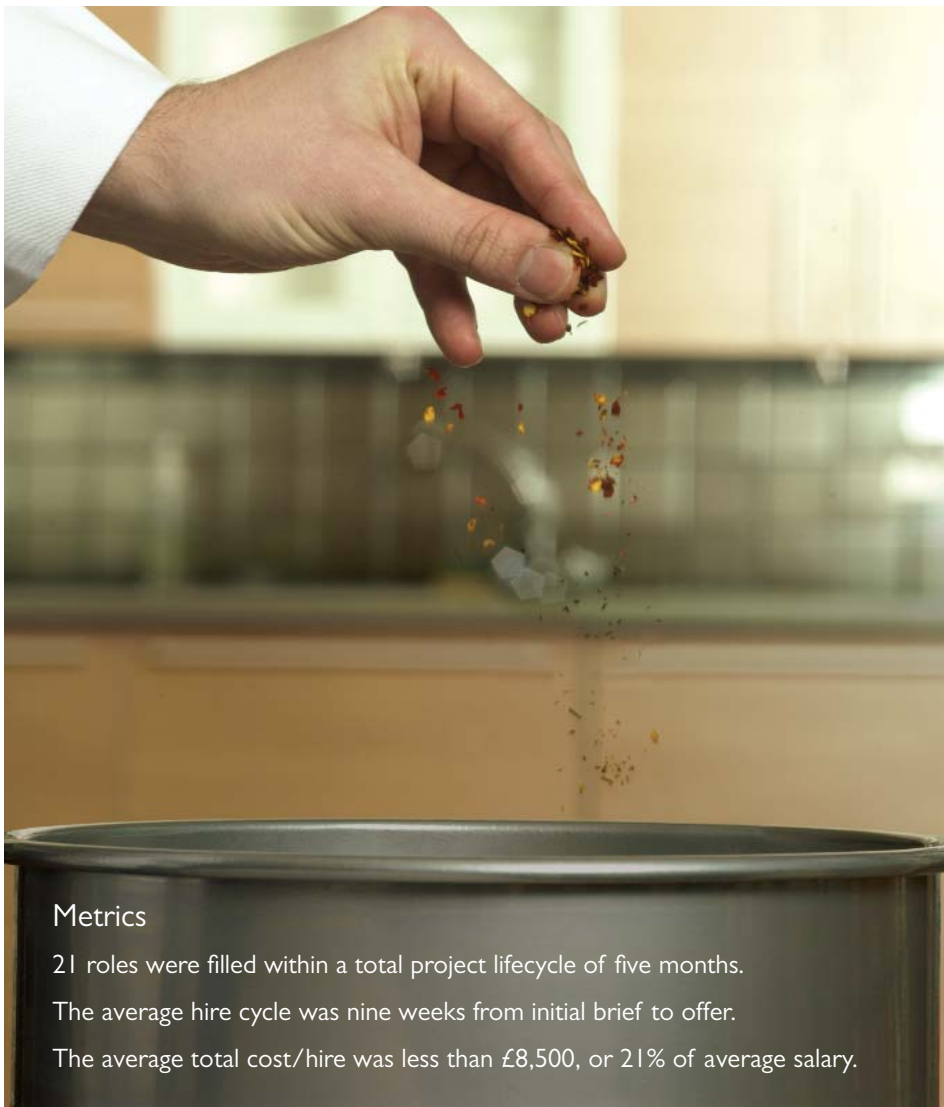
- To continue the regeneration of Unilever’s employer reputation among scientists
- To attract sufficient candidates to fill the immediate roles
- And to relieve the pressure on peoplelink by assuming responsibility for the entire candidate management and assessment process, up to the offer stage.

## Maximum impact

Our advertising budget was limited, and to create maximum impact we concentrated our exposure on a limited number of full-page, full-colour ads in relevant scientific journals, supported by online marketing. Copy was short and narrative engaging – in frank contrast to the monochrome and text-heavy style of most scientific recruitment advertising.

## Best practice

As response began to flood in, our managed resourcing team went to work. As well as providing administrative support and facilitation for assessment centres, work project managers worked closely with Unilever line managers, helping them to achieve best practice in screening and assessment processes. In practice, the work team operated as a seamless on-site extension of peoplelink, allowing Unilever’s own people to stay focused on their own priorities and recruitment objectives. This took a great deal of trust on the part of peoplelink, especially as this project had such a high profile within the business.



## Metrics

- 21 roles were filled within a total project lifecycle of five months.
- The average hire cycle was nine weeks from initial brief to offer.
- The average total cost/hire was less than £8,500, or 21% of average salary.

Within Unilever, this was accepted as vindication of the shared service model. The success of the project was a result of recruitment specialists working in close support of recruiting line managers to meet a specific and shared objective.

## Results

All roles that needed to be filled were filled. This would have been a very respectable total cost/hire for scarce scientific personnel at any time, but given the urgent timescale and rolling changes in role specifications, it was a very good result indeed.

The percentage of salary quoted below may at first appear to be competitive with recruitment consultancies. In real terms, however, it’s represents much better value. Because, besides advertising, basic screening and candidate management, our total price includes the facilitation of assessment centres, coaching of line managers in screening and assessment techniques, and internal reporting. In fact, everything that an in-house HR team would still normally be required to do themselves when working with a consultancy.



The sixty-strong sales force of Unilever's catering-sector business (UBF FoodSolutions) tipped into a vicious circle of attrition and replacement. The traditional mix of reactive advertising and recruitment consultancy was proving to be a losing formula. And – as turnover grew among the sales team – so the rate of recruitment had to increase. The faster the business had to recruit, the lower the quality of new joiners, leading to even higher turnover.

## A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SALES RECRUITMENT



### A losing battle

This had resulted in small, rushed ads appearing in local papers all over the UK. There was neither the time nor the budget to prepare them properly. The ads failed to make an impact or promote the opportunities effectively, so response was poor too. Similarly, the selection process became more rushed and time-consuming and increasing amounts of money, effort and senior management time were being poured into a process that was yielding less and less.

### Senior contact

We'd been working with peoplelink for some time and were trusted to work directly alongside senior line managers on big resourcing challenges. In this case, we met the Sales Director repeatedly to scope out a new approach to recruiting the sales team. Front-line involvement and consultation of this sort is a distinctive feature of our approach:

we produce effective solutions because we make sure that we really understand the problem.

### Cost versus value

We were confident that investment hiring was the answer for Unilever, but we had to convince our client contacts in both HR and sales management. Based on the given cost/hire target and previous year's attrition figures, we hypothesised a need for around thirty hires across the year. Then, having identified the likely cost of filling the roles through recruitment consultancy, we showed how the same budget could be used more effectively – not just in terms of immediate results, but also as an investment in a sustainable sourcing strategy.

At the heart of our solution was a shift from tactical to strategic thinking. Although 'cost/hire' was – and is – an important measure of effectiveness, we could show that 'quality of hire' was even more critical: a sound rule of thumb is

that the cost of turnover to any business is roughly equivalent to a year's salary per leaver. So, whilst the cost of each hire is measured in hundreds of pounds, the value of each high-quality hire is measure in the tens of thousands.

### Creating the pipeline

Rather than dissipating advertising budget on small ads that didn't work, we concentrated spend on a strategic campaign. There were far fewer ads, but we used bigger spaces and stronger messaging to grab interest in key media. Advertising directed readers to a purpose-built microsite that explained the special attractions of the role in detail, including a 'Day in the Life' video. This approach allowed candidates to self-select against detailed, open and honest information. Which means we deliver not only a higher number of candidates into the system, but candidates of a higher quality.

Handling the volume work handled the initial responses, screening and candidate management all the way through to short-listing before final interview. This amounted to a wholesale upgrade of the system, in terms of quality, efficiency and rigour. It also liberated management time. Most importantly of all, a robust and effective process of attraction and selection reduces turnover in the workforce. Making better hires would ultimately mean making fewer hires – and the vicious circle is broken.

## Banking the talent

The next step was to introduce a 'speculative' section on the microsite where interested candidates could register for future vacancies. This closes the loop and cuts out the middle man once and for all: Unilever can own the relationship with a growing pool of well-informed and positively disposed candidates, rather than paying repeatedly for access to candidates of questionable and variable quality.



## Results

In the first year, fourteen vacancies were filled within the cost/hire target set. Turnover among new hires dropped (reducing the number of vacancies below our hypothesised value). Advertising spend dropped. Managers (both in peoplelink and within the sales hierarchy) were free to concentrate on priorities other than recruitment firefighting. And – most importantly of all – Unilever took ownership of its relationship with potential candidates and target audiences. We made a massive investment in their employer reputation and sourcing strategy, but spent more than would have been spent on recruitment consultancy.

In 2004, UBF FoodSolutions became the fastest-growing part of Unilever, sustaining steady growth in a flat market for the food-service industry.

Using Saratoga Institute's formula, this activity delivered an ROI of 995.65%.

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