

How to attract and select **great graduates**

Today's graduate recruiters are striving to make their assessment and selection processes shorter, more focused and more engaging, says Suzanne Courtney



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In the face of fierce competition to find the right talent, today's graduate recruiters are striving to make their assessment and selection processes shorter, more focused and more engaging. Here are five essential tips to help you to stand out from the crowd:

1

Be crystal clear who you're looking for



A good assessment process starts well before any assessment tests are utilised. You need to understand the exact competencies, abilities and job-related behaviours that are critical for success. Consider your values, your culture and the needs of your business. What qualities do your high-performing graduates share? What makes them different to your low-performing graduates? Knowing what you're looking for will give you a 'blueprint' of requirements that you can recruit against. Then you need to find a way to identify those abilities, characteristics and values in your graduate applicants.

2

Differentiate your assessments



Good quality numerical and verbal reasoning tests can highlight which applicants have the abilities you need. Assessing their personality will give you a more complete picture of how they'll fit within your business.

However, you shouldn't simply use the same assessments as every other company. That simply provokes weariness, as candidates think 'here we go again'. Artificial Intelligence is now used to automatically generate 'test items' in assessments and to automate scoring and reporting. Graduate employers often assume that candidates want a high level of human interaction in the selection process but what they really want is a fast yes/no decision. Automation can improve the speed and efficiency of your hiring, helping you to quickly find right-fit candidates, so don't be afraid of it. Gamification can also help ... but there are caveats. Your graduate applicants want to be taken seriously. Recruitment for them is a high-stakes situation. They want assessments that feel relevant to the job experience – they don't want to be shooting aliens or sailing a pirate ship! So use gamified assessments (which feature interactive challenges, gaming elements and immediate feedback), not game-based assessments (which are games that try to assess the user). It's very important that your assessments 'look' like they measure job-related abilities.

Interactive situational judgement tests can also be incorporated, which showcase what it's like to work in your organisation. For example, Rolls-Royce, one of the world's most admired brands, recently won an award for creating an innovative instant messaging simulation assessment, as part of its global graduate recruitment. Their customised situational judgement test measures the strengths, personality and cognitive abilities required for role success. It also assesses each candidate's social skills, conscientiousness and their ability to organise themselves and manage pressure.

Many of today's assessments are quick-to-complete. But you should ensure that your psychometrics are valid and robust, with scientific evidence that proves that they predict performance in the role. Stronger candidates should consistently achieve higher scores than weaker candidates. The tests should also be cheat-resistant – and they should generate feedback that you can give to your candidates. The best tests will be proven not to have bias for, or against, any groups of applicants. They can therefore help you to recruit a more diverse cohort of graduates.

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3

Make your assessments accessible



Whichever assessments you choose, make sure that candidates can complete them on a mobile device. That's where your applicants will be spending their time! Talented candidates not only want to research and find jobs on their phones, they want to apply for them as well without changing their device. However, there's a big distinction between assessments that are mobile-enabled (they can play on a mobile device) and mobile-first (tests which have been purpose-built for mobile devices). A test might play on a smartphone but if it is not optimised for that format, it will penalise candidates because they won't be given the same testing experience that they'd get on a laptop or desktop computer. You have to ensure that the same test experience is provided on every device.

4

Engage your candidates



In the past, communication with candidates was often restricted to a yes/no letter. Now, employers are striving to ensure that the candidate experience is as engaging as possible. This means interacting with candidates and treating them as individuals. To achieve this, you need to look holistically at all elements of your graduate recruitment process and ask whether they'll engage or disengage your candidates. You want to be remembered for giving your applicants a positive experience. That's not easy to achieve when all graduate recruiters are doing the same thing! But it is certainly possible to make your selection process different.

For example, Nationwide, the world's biggest building society, redesigned its graduate assessment centre to include an innovative 'escape room' challenge that assesses relevant competencies and behaviours. The escape room element assesses the problem solving and creative thinking abilities of candidates as well as how they collaborate and work together. Always ask yourself: how can you make your selection process more engaging?

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5

Create greater efficiencies



Competency-based video assessment offers the logistical freedom to conduct many more candidate interviews in the early stage of your selection process. This has benefits for candidates as they can think through the questions, record answers in their own time and it saves them having to attend initial in-person interviews. However, video interviews must be job-related and your assessors should be trained to avoid personal bias.

Another way to create efficiency is to utilise paperless assessment centres. Candidates can be provided with iPads highlighting the itinerary and exercises. Assessors can make notes directly into their laptops. These notes can then be quickly and easily compiled to create detailed developmental feedback reports for each candidate.

It's also possible to significantly reduce the duration of assessment centres by running virtual case study-related exercises in advance. These activities are usually designed to assess a candidate's ability to analyse information, interpret data, draw conclusions, make decisions and present recommendations. But, actually, they don't have to be run 'live' at your assessment centre. You can assess these aspects just as effectively if your candidates video themselves and send you their responses.

These five tips will not only help your selection process to stand out from the crowd, they'll enable you to recruit great graduates and enhance your employer brand.



About the author & cut-e

Suzanne Courtney is a recognised occupational psychology consultant with extensive expertise in assessment, leadership development, people strategies and employee engagement. As UK Managing Director of cut-e – the global talent management and assessment specialist which was acquired by Aon plc in 2017 and is now part of Aon's Assessment Solutions – she is responsible for the company's performance and growth in the UK market. cut-e and Aon undertake 30 million assessments each year in 90 countries and 40 languages.

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About cut-e

Founded in 2002, cut-e (pronounced 'cute') provides online tests, questionnaires and gamified assessments for attraction, selection, talent management and development. The company's smart, valid and innovative psychometrics have made it the preferred partner of multinational organisations.

In May 2017, cut-e was acquired by Aon plc, a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. cut-e now operates as part of Aon's global offering in talent solutions, helping clients achieve sustainable growth by driving business performance through people performance. cut-e and Aon, as Aon's Assessment Solutions, undertake 30 million assessments each year in 90 countries and 40 languages.