

Time to Change?

With the increasing demands on local government, recruiting new senior staff often leaves authorities with a choice of broadening their skills set or 'playing it safe' says John McDonough

As local government faces increasing demands and challenges, coupled with specific skills shortages, it needs to gain skill sets which are not always traditional or homegrown. This can be slightly unnerving at times and provokes debate over the type of person to be sought. Do you 'play it safe' and only recruit those with a specific background, or do you take the opportunity to broaden the spec and increase the skill base within the organisation?

In many instances, a senior recruitment requirement can be seen as an opportunity to pause, review, and genuinely question the vision and progress as well as what is needed to achieve it. With many future challenges facing authorities, there will be a demand for a new way of working - moving away from simply replacing a skill set which has

been prevalent for the last 10 or 20 years.

Councils can be understandably anxious when hearing how difficult or competitive the market is due to skills shortages. There may also be a nervousness facing attraction or reputation issues. As experienced professionals retire, and the fruits of previous attraction and retention issues are borne out, certain experienced people will quite simply run out. If everyone wants 'X', there won't be enough to go around. This is obviously unsustainable and whilst it is encouraging to see the re-emergence of apprenticeships and leadership development schemes, a more immediate solution is needed.

Hays Executive has developed an offering which will allow upfront consultancy and diagnostics at the beginning of an assignment. This may include competency design or cultural



/ top team review. Linked with competency based assessment and evaluation of the job description and person specification, it will identify what is really required to deliver the vision and identify the broadest base of candidates.

This consultancy is supported with 100 day post-appointment coaching. Together, this process allows councils to mitigate the risk of an appointment

and maximises the performance of a new person, whilst supporting them and accelerating the 'return on investment'.

Customer and shared services, PFI, partnership working, HR and OD, regeneration and development are all areas that should be taking advantage of this solution. However, more traditional areas such as finance, law and IT often have very thin shortlists if local government experience is specified - these areas too need to look at these techniques to find a resolution.

Demand for diversity is still increasing along with consultation, partnership and efficiency. Local authorities are competing for innovation, best value and choice in partnering, leading to the best possible outcomes for residents. Partnering organisations have to choose whether or not to bid and in the process of this deci-

sion-making, can they work with the organisation? As capacity becomes an issue for them, they too will engage in the war for talent. It is vital that local authorities have the necessary skills, capability, experience and understanding to deal with them and make themselves as attractive a proposition as possible.

With the challenges faced by local government, councils should embrace these opportunities to add real talent and diversity to both the top table and the organisation.

The market will force this change but at what cost?

Next time you have a senior role to fill, what will success look like?

John McDonough is associate director at Hays Executive. For further information contact John on 020 7799 8610 or visit www.haysexecutive.com