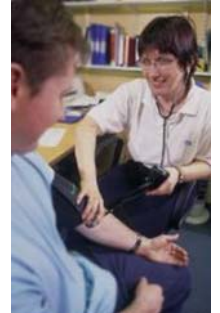


Konetic Recruit empowered recruiting:

Case Study: NHS GP Training



This year the NHS's National Recruitment Office (NRO) for General Practice Training returned as our client. Their story of why they left us and why they returned is a fascinating example of why organisations use Konetic.



The NRO manages over 9,000 GP trainee applications to place 3,500 of them over a four month period. 30 users based in 17 Deaneries (regional speciality training colleges) across the country manage this process using Konetic.

The NRO first used Konetic in 2006. The system ran successfully that year, but in 2007 all the Deaneries were instructed by the Department of Health to use one centrally provided system called MTAS. In 2007 the MTAS system performed so poorly that it was closed down and the NRO was given permission to return to using Konetic in 2008.

We spoke to Gai Evans, the NRO's National Recruitment Manager, to understand their experience of using Konetic.

Background

To enter into General Practice medicine, doctors must undertake a rigorous training programme, lasting over 3 years. These GP Training schemes, supervised by regional Deaneries, ensure educational excellence and provide the expertise necessary to become a GP. The National Recruitment Office, based in the West Midlands, manages the national appointment of all applicants to these training programmes.

Before using Konetic the process was paper based. Gai Evans explains "When we reached the deadline for applications, each Deanery would end up with a room full of sacks of mail that needed to be sifted and sorted manually." The entire process, including time taken to ensure no errors were made, was extremely labour intensive for both the recruiters and the applicants.

What were the main reasons for choosing Konetic the first time?

The NRO reviewed a number of different systems before choosing Konetic. Says Gai Evans "During my selection procedure Konetic put the effort in to understand the nature of our business, far more than other rival ATS (applicant tracking system) providers.

Konetic also understood our constraints, as well as the personalities involved. GPs and NHS administrators expect to be listened to and understood! Even on reporting, Konetic understood the psychometrics of what we were measuring in our applicants; the scores weren't simply numbers." Other providers, like recruitment agencies, had 'ready-to-go' systems, but little understanding and flexibility. "They were recommending solutions inappropriate to us, i.e. the usual job advertising techniques, and application forms with customisability that was too limited for us. They also offered things I didn't need."

The NRO was pleasantly surprised to find it didn't appear to take much effort for Konetic to match their hiring process. This is because Konetic's basic design is carefully set up to anticipate reconfiguration by clients. Importantly, reconfiguration of one feature does not disable or spoil the functionality of something else. "Konetic was reconfigured to fit our processes, rather than having to change our processes to fit Konetic's system," says Gai.

Nevertheless Konetic's experience allowed us to advise and recommend methods that could improve the NRO's performance when using good technology. "Konetic went further than simply following our instructions, and were proactive with making suggestions and improvements." Gai Evans adds "But what impressed me most was that its interface was intuitive, easy to use". The layout on the screen and the logic of the process is obvious to the user.

Why did the NRO change from Konetic to MTAS?

In 2007 the NRO and all other NHS bodies that make “speciality” hires were instructed by the Department of Health to use one centrally provided system called MTAS. Its appeal was that it would, in theory, keep everything on the same database, and would ensure that the process was the same and fair for all. However, the MTAS system struggled to cope with this complex, varied, and large-scale process, and was closed down.

Towards the end of 2007 the NRO was granted permission by the Department of Health to return to using Konetic.

What did the NRO miss most about Konetic?

Konetic doesn't dictate how you recruit. It is dangerous to change a client's own processes just to accommodate the technology. For example, the Deaneries call applicants in to sit a test as part of the short listing procedure. The NRO's implementation of Konetic has such extra steps added to the recruiter's 'workflow'. It's flexible, and it's process driven.

Konetic also allows human intervention when required: the technology doesn't lock you into a process when dealing with situations that require one-off decisions. For example, in some special cases Deaneries were able to ensure married couples could get jobs in the same geographical area. Konetic's system enables the NRO's recruiters to allow what they call 'linked applications'. In fact at any stage recruiters can intervene in the process and communicate directly with applicants to deal with exceptions in the application process.

Such features as 'reminders', 'group actions', and detailed 'flags' are some of the features that, on the surface, sound trivial but are in fact extremely important. Gai Evans emphasises “Konetic has a fantastic way of flagging up things that need further investigation. For example, if an applicant doesn't have UK GMC registration they cannot work as a doctor. However, there are a very small number with a European GMC (Irish GMC, for example) who are indeed eligible. That may only be 2 out of 2,000 applicants but we need to spot that. Konetic flags these up in an easily identifiable way so that we can get to them quickly and clear them if appropriate. A system that cannot do this, or 'flags' problems without specifying what the problem is, is no good to us.” Exceptions, whatever their nature, will always crop up.

Some of Konetic's other standard features, such as tools to stop multiple applications from the same applicant, are particularly important to an organisation that is under pressure to ensure that everyone abides by the rules. “We used to have real problems with applicants who made multiple applications. That doesn't happen any more,” says Gai.

The NRO is the coordinator, but it's the separate Deaneries that make the decisions. The NRO needs to know the outcomes and see everything, enable best practice, and ensure all targets are met. It is the Deaneries that manage the process and make the individual decisions on appointments. Konetic ensures the right people execute the right actions, and have access to the right information.

How easy was it to return to Konetic?

Gai Evans says “One of my administrators said 'It's like going back to an old friend', another said 'It's like having a favourite temp coming back: somebody who already knows how we work.’

When the NRO started using Konetic again a whole day was set aside for a user refresher course. It was so easy to pick up again that everyone went home after lunch. “For over 30 different people in 17 locations to find it intuitive is quite something, considering everyone has their own expectations,” says Gai.

The deadlines to re-activate Konetic were short. If it had gone wrong, it would have been back in the papers after the extensive press coverage of the MTAS episode. Fortunately this was technology that had a proven track record of large scale hiring using a comprehensive range of features. Everything went according to plan. Says Gai Evans, “Konetic copes easily with the large numbers. It handles everything we want, from application to offer”.

What's Next?

There will be more development to the system this year. The process is continually evolving as the NRO's needs change. “Every time we run a campaign there will be changes, and we fully expect Konetic to be able to deliver as it has done in the past,” says Gai. The NRO recruits once a year, between January and April. “We plan to give ourselves three months to make necessary changes to Konetic, followed by four months of frantic use!”

Once again the NRO is fulfilling one of its stated aims, declared on its website, to “enable the sharing of best recruitment practice throughout all Deaneries in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.”

Gai Evans observes, “Other Specialities and Deaneries in the NHS are now looking at our use of Konetic. We have shown Konetic can support us.”

