

Streamlining group selection

A leading city law firm was selecting 20 people a year onto the trainee lawyer programme. Each year they ran five assessment centres. The firm had developed a 'home-grown' assessment centre which while face valid was onerous on both HR time and required significant partner input. When asked to review the assessment centre, deWinton-Williams' first step was to assess (a) the commercial impact of the assessment centre and then (b) the strength of the assessment process. Our conclusions were that each assessment centre was costing over £160,000.00 in lost billable hours alone giving an annual cost of 800,000.00. HR and candidate expenses added a further £25,000.00. Our review of the assessment process highlighted a number of changes for improvement.

In response, deWinton-Williams created:

- A competency framework which formed the basis of all assessment tools
- A competency linked scoreable application form which reduced review time to 10 minutes and ensured consistency of short listing
- A new exercise which was relevant to the firm and its culture which could be observed by associates and scored to give partners a clear view of performance
- An competency based interview with a stock of questions which reduced partner preparation time and ensured consistency of approach

As a result, fewer candidates were short listed and the number of assessment centres were reduced to four. Partner time was reduced and the cost of 'lost' billable hours reduced to £30,000.00 per assessment centre – a saving of over 600,000.00. In addition, the assessment centre was seen to be better run, more relevant and more commercially focussed by the partners and the candidates.