

CASE STUDY

CIVIL SERVICE TALENT

FUTURE LEADERS AND SENIOR LEADERS TALENT SCHEMES



In June 2016, the Civil Service launched selection for the 2017 intake for two talent schemes – the Future Leaders Scheme (FLS) and the Senior Leaders Scheme (SLS) – championed by both the Chief Executive and Head of the Civil Service. Both schemes give targeted development to Civil Servants who show high potential to be the future senior leaders within the Civil Service. For the 2017 intake, the FLS offers up to 370 – 400 spaces with those eligible working at Grades 6/7 while the SLS offers up to 65 spaces to those operating at SCS1.

Candidates wishing to be selected for these High Potential development programmes had previously required departmental approval to apply, but this was changed to allow staff to self-nominate via an online application form.

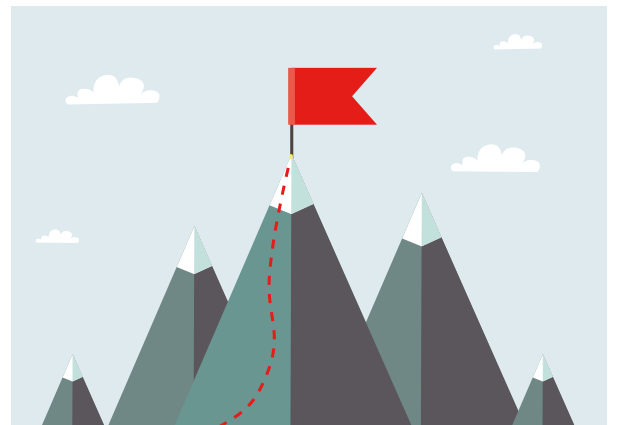
This self-referral capability encourages a more diverse range of entries across departments and their Arm's-Length Bodies. Successful candidates are then invited to complete psychometric tests with the final selection made following an interview.



Cabinet Office

THE CHALLENGE

CS Talent introduced the self assessment element of the selection process for FLS and SLS in 2015, aiming to expand the reach of the programmes. Both were well-subscribed the previous year, with 1300 candidates of which 505 went through to interviews. But this initial approach did not achieve the full potential of ensuring the application process was as digital as possible. A technicality meant some candidates had trouble accessing the service because the original supplier had been unable to provide backwards compatibility for the IE6 browser. This effectively excluded some government departments, and prevented support for future technologies.



THE PROJECT

The CS Talent team met with Toplevel in April 2016 to outline service requirements for the online self assessment form which would form Stage one of the process. The FLS and SLS online application service needed to be made available for a limited period, from June to July, so it made sense to host it externally so that it could be rapidly commissioned and decommissioned. The application process itself needed to prevent multiple log-ons by the same user and incorporate a time-out feature. Plus statistics would need to be generated in a timely basis to determine the number of users accessing the system and which departments they came from. Finally, the template needed to adopt the same look and feel as the GOV.UK service.

Toplevel was awarded the contract to design and deploy the online application service, which was due to run for three weeks with an application deadline of 1 July 2016, after which the process was handled in-house by Civil Service Talent.

Using the eForm Digitiser module from Outreach, the Toplevel team set about planning and designing the template which would form the basis of both the FLS and SLS self-assessment. Using the GOV.UK format, the application service, comprised of ten sections, was completed in just four weeks.

The online application service was uploaded onto a secure hosted server accessed via the Civil Service Learning Site. Because the template adopted the same fonts and layout as other GOV.UK sites, the transition appeared seamless to the candidate, who was simply presented with an introductory page on the requirements of the process.

An initial page of practice questions was configured to allow the candidate to become familiar with the process with business logic rule sets to ensure the user could access and complete the service only once and within a 20 minute window through the implementation of a timeout feature.

After entering their name, parent department, working department and contact details, the candidate then moved on to a self-assessment questionnaire. The sections covered Aspiration, Engagement, and Ability in setting direction, engaging with others, and delivering results. Each section comprised up to ten questions which required candidates to rate their own abilities from 1 – 5 (with 5 ranking the highest) with 49 questions in total.

The service supported up to 300 concurrent users, although this could be scaled higher if required. There was no limit set as to the number of acceptable applications during the time the application process was live.

Following completion of the online process, candidates were then notified of the results by email and their eligibility for progressing their application (as was their sponsor/line manager who was then required to validate the application in order for the candidate to proceed to the next stage of psychometric testing).

BENEFITS

The main benefits for the Civil Service have been the speed of deployment, and support for existing and future technologies. From the outline of project requirements, Toplevel took just four weeks to deliver the solution to a go live state.

The FLS and SLS are promoted through every government department. The Civil Service was able to measure how effective take-up was by analysing the statistics generated by the service on a daily basis. This was then used to target outreach to those departments from which only a small number of applications have been received or none at all. After the application process, these statistics will be used to assess where improvements can be made for next year.

KEY RESULTS

Rapid deployment with the online application service comprising Stage one of the FLS and SLS selection delivered in four weeks.

Delivery of a backwards and forwards compatible system that is platform and browser agnostic.


Statistics collated on a daily basis to provide information on uptake and determine where outreach is needed to encourage applications from specific departments.


Service can easily be suspended after the application period has ceased avoiding management overhead.


Easily adaptable template enables the Civil Service to make changes quickly.

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