

Identifying Leadership Potential at Hertfordshire Constabulary

Hertfordshire Constabulary remains one of the best performing police forces in the UK by the HMIC's Police Performance Assessment and has become a forerunner in leadership assessment and development thanks to the pragmatic approach it adopts.

The challenge

With the Constabulary reaching full establishment in 2007, the organisation needed to be even more selective to ensure the correct number and right calibre of people entered the leadership development programme. Specifically, the roles of Sergeant and Inspector are considered to be critical to the effective delivery of policing services within Hertfordshire. Performance in the current role, as measured through the Performance Development Review (PDR), is not necessarily considered to be a universally reliable indicator of an officer's leadership potential for a higher rank. The requirement for a different and more objective type of assessment was identified and the decision was made to introduce the 360 tool as part of the selection for promotion process.

Selecting the right tool

Hertfordshire's succession management manager Amanda Johnson selected Head Light to build the model around her required criteria: it had to be completely anonymous, robust enough and designed for selection purposes and last no longer than 20 minutes. Talent 360® known internally by Hertfordshire Constabulary as 'Leadership 360' was deployed. In addition to this on-line product, a diagnostic questionnaire was also required. For officers to accept this questionnaire, it needed to be based on the nationally recognised frameworks of the Police's Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) and Police Leadership Qualities Framework (PLQF). *"Using all of the standard ICF behaviours would have resulted in a questionnaire that was far too expansive for use when operational demands compete for time and would not have focused on the Leadership behaviours that are so important to us,"* Amanda said. *"The Leadership Board had their own opinions of the officers' behaviours and on reviewing the data they were impressed with how closely that and their own impressions of the officers matched,"* Amanda added.

Key enablers for success

Talent 360® includes a number of unique process controls, to make it robust and fit for use in a selection process, specifically the role of the Moderator. This, as well as some other software features, makes this tool uniquely suitable to meet the requirements for robustness and transparency for this 'high stakes' application of 360, that includes feedback from those both within and outside the organisation. As a result of being able to keep the questionnaire as short and as relevant as possible to those completing it, combined with the ease of use of the software, the Constabulary experienced industry-breaking levels of 360 review completion. *"We have enjoyed outstanding levels of engagement for this process and tool, both within the Constabulary and outside to its stakeholders and other forces,"* said Amanda. *"We have had completion rates in excess of 93% for every single 360 process we have run. That compares to a more common 50% - 60% achieved across industry as a whole"* she added.



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Amanda Johnson,
Succession
Management
Manager,
Hertfordshire
Constabulary



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Adding to the overall picture for an individual

Candidates for promotion have to demonstrate their technical competence by achieving at least a ‘competent’ rating in their PDR. They then participate in a Leadership 360 degree review to assess their leadership behaviours against a benchmark. In combination with a performance measure, the selection decision is based on the model below. A. Candidates scoring high in both their PDR and 360 are invited to attend the Promotion Board. B. Candidates with above competent PDRs but 360 results that are below the benchmark may not be good candidates for promotion: they may have peaked in their current role. These candidates would previously have been encouraged to go for promotion and may have subsequently dropped out, or not been effective in a more senior rank. C. By contrast candidates with strong 360 results but without the strength in their PDR may be people who are less suited to their current roles but will thrive in higher ranks. These people would previously have been denied the opportunity to be promoted.

Objective Programme Evaluation & Benchmark Data

The Constabulary completed an extensive external project evaluation of this 360 process, the tool, the questionnaire and gathered the thoughts and opinions of those who used it.

- A staggering 74% of those who have been reviewed reported that, going through this process and the subsequent follow up, helped improve their leadership performance.
- Over 81% found the tool easy to use with only 7% reporting an adverse impact on their time.
- The graphical output contained in the Individual’s Personal Report was also given outstanding ratings and over 80% considered the feedback to be valuable.

Since then the Constabulary has implemented structured 360 review processes for promotions across the ranks from PC to Sergeant to Inspector. “We have a huge amount of data here as a result of these reviews,” said Amanda. “We can quickly compare individuals against the benchmarks created by Talent 360® to see who is showing potential and identify where any development areas might be, personally or across the group.”

Return on Investment and Expectations

“My personal definition of leadership,” explains Amanda, “is the ability to inspire willing action in others’ and as such is not just the preserve of those at the top, but can be demonstrated by people at all levels in the organisation. The use and implementation of our Leadership 360 tool reflects this philosophy and it is made widely available for learning and development purposes as well as formally for selection.”

Indeed, word has got out amongst the force and the Constabulary now has a constant stream of requests for further ad hoc 360 reviews to be performed, this time driven by individuals who were reviewers in past review programmes. “I was genuinely surprised, and of course pleased to hear that even in a working environment that historically has been dominated by a command and control ethos, there was an appetite driven from a personal perspective for this type of review and feedback. Employees in other organisations might ‘shudder’ when 360 is mentioned but with Head Light’s help we have created something very different here,” said Amanda. “I started out by wanting to use a diagnostic tool that would be able to accommodate the needs of the force now, and in the future, without being locked into one way of doing things or a fixed assessment or role profile. With Talent 360® we can add new indicators of behaviours that we think are important to this Constabulary (such as indicators of Engagement) and Head Light keep the product bang up to date with all the latest innovations and thinking in this field”, she concluded.

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