

## How to provide outstanding candidate experience

### Case study with the Institution of Civil Engineers

*Susie Schofield writes:* It's not every day that *all* the candidates who were shortlisted tell us how much they enjoyed their interview with a prospective employer – but that's what happened when we worked with the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE).



Susie Schofield

What had ICE done to make it such an enjoyable experience? Exploring this case provides us with a welcome opportunity to share best practice in recruitment and how to help ensure a great candidate experience at interview with our readers. We spoke to two of the shortlisted candidates, **Emma Antrobus** and **Rob Shenton**, to find out more.

First, the background: ICE had retained the services of FJ Wilson Talent Services (FJWTS) to search the marketplace for talent for its Regional Director for the North West region.

#### Before the interviews

The job description for the role 'was very comprehensive,' Emma tells us. The detailed seven-page job description grouped the role's accountabilities under the headings: Customer, Operational, People, Financial, as well as providing an outline of ICE's business, a person profile listing technical skills, experience, behaviour competences and qualifications.

For the interview, Emma and Rob were asked to prepare an imaginary five-minute presentation to Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, on what they saw as the infrastructure priorities for Manchester.

'There is loads of information on the ICE website,' says Emma, and from it she was able to glean the institution's research and resources on plastic-free cities to match it with Andy Burnham's recently launched city-region wide plan to drive down single-use plastics.

Emma and Rob were advised by FJWTS who would be on the interview panel - the Regional Director's line manager, Wendy, and ICE's HR manager, Charlotte. Emma explained that, because interviewers 'want candidates to be interested in the employer and to ask about what they do,' she did as much research as she could.



From her research on ICE's website, Emma was able to identify 'what their priorities and issues are' and 'it was easy for me to ask questions about ICE's work'.

### **The interviews**

Emma saw that ICE 'had a clearly laid out form for how the interview was to go and what questions they were going to ask. The interviewers took lots of notes. There was a sense of fair process being gone through.'

'The interviewers were very nice,' says Rob. 'They put me at ease. It was a really nice environment. The questions were probing but in a nice way, in a relaxed manner. They weren't trying to catch me out.'

Emma felt that Wendy and Charlotte both 'established rapport really quickly. The discussion seemed warm and open. We had conversations which weren't just built around typical interview questions,' adding, 'we had a bit of a laugh. It was fairly informal as formal interviews go'.

For Rob, 'it was the most relaxing interview I've ever had'. Emma felt that the interview 'went really well. I really liked them. I really wanted the job. I can't picture how it could have gone better.'

### **After the interviews**

The attention to delivering a good recruitment experience did not end once the appointment had been made. Whilst Rob was not successful, FJWTS shared feedback they had received from ICE about his interview with him: all of it positive and constructive. Even though Rob wasn't appointed/placed, he tells us 'I enjoyed the process'.

After Emma had been selected, she received 'a congratulations email from HR at ICE with all the information I needed, like access to their portal, the contract, and a medical questionnaire'. Emma says that: 'I just felt like the whole process was really well done from both Fiona's team and ICE. It felt like a really well put together process and well thought through and thorough.'