PAREXEL

Partnering to create a customized recruitment solution helps enable PAREXEL to attract and hire the right candidates

Overview

The challenge

PAREXEL needed a recruitment solution that would not only source and screen potential candidates, but also develop and build talent pipelines, understand the labor market, deliver top candidates during periods of heavy hiring, scale up and down quickly, and build a strong connection between the hiring manager and recruiting consultants.

The solution

IBM implemented recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) and IBM Kenexa BrassRing on Cloud talent acquisition solutions to meet the hiring needs of PAREXEL.

The benefits

- Hired at 90 percent over forecast in the program's first year.

- Delivered a multi-regional solution, including North America and 17 countries in Europe.

- Lowered time-to-fill by 40 percent.

- Significantly reduced first-year turnover rates.

Over the past 30 years, PAREXEL has developed significant expertise to assist biopharmaceutical and medical device clients in the development and launch of products to bring safe and effective treatments to the patients who need them. With its headquarters in Boston, PAREXEL operates in 76 locations in 50 countries around the world, and has more than 15,000 employees. Website: www.parexel.com

PAREXEL is one of the largest biopharmaceutical outsourcing services organizations in the world, and helps its clients develop and launch much-needed products from the earliest stages of inception through clinical trials and commercialization.

As an outsourcing services provider, hiring the right employees is paramount to PAREXEL's and its clients' success. The ability to execute sponsor projects to the highest standards hinges upon finding experienced, talented clinical research professionals and hiring them on short deadlines. With the right recruiting solution in place, PAREXEL is able to meet the talent demands of its clients, drive customer satisfaction and support the development of products that improve lives around the world.

The challenge: working together to find talent

The life sciences industry, specifically clinical research, is a very competitive space. The most qualified talent is highly trained, highly educated and most often gainfully employed when approached about a new opportunity. When you add in the fact that PAREXEL is a project-based business, the task of recruiting the right people is increasingly more difficult. Forecasting hiring needs is challenging and heavily impacted by new project wins. Most months, PAREXEL has about 300 open requisitions, but that number can increase rapidly at a moment's notice. In 2012, PAREXEL forecasted the need to hire 600 employees through its partnership with IBM.
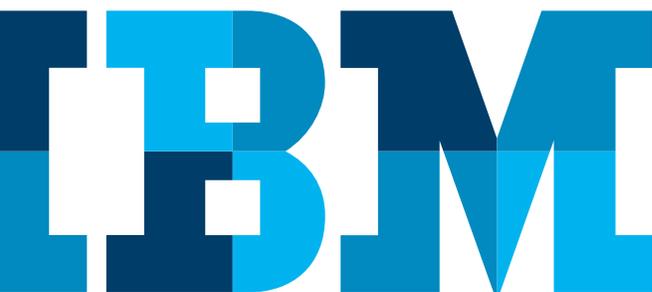
Solution component:

- IBM® Kenexa® Recruitment Process Outsourcing

- IBM® Kenexa® BrassRing on Cloud

Since 2006, PAREXEL has partnered with IBM® Kenexa® Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) to attract and hire clinical research professionals, such as biostatisticians, regulatory consultants and clinical research associates. "It has worked well," said Tom McGoldrick, Vice President of Talent Acquisition for PAREXEL. "However, going into 2012, we wanted to see how we could improve." McGoldrick believed there was opportunity to increase the depth of institutional knowledge held by talent acquisition, and increase recruiting scalability and market expertise.

PAREXEL executives knew that building a stronger recruiting solution was only the beginning. Being one of the leaders in strategic partnerships within the clinical research industry, the company also knew that deepening the partnership through equal accountability and a shared vision was critical to realizing the value built into a solution. "From the beginning of our redesign, one of the things we insisted on was a dedicated senior leader from IBM specifically for our project, and we mirrored that on our side. We selected a full-time program manager within PAREXEL," McGoldrick said. "There are a lot of organizations that do not do that, and it is a mistake. In my experience, the most successful partnerships have as much skin in the game on the client side as the service provider does on their side. You need that level of commitment in both partnered organizations to be successful."

Through a longstanding partnership with IBM, McGoldrick and his team worked collaboratively to develop a tailored model that could achieve the highest level of institutional knowledge while still maximizing scalability, quality and cost-effectiveness. "Through this evaluation, what we tried to do was give our company the best of everything," McGoldrick said. "We felt the institutional knowledge would be best achieved through in-house recruiters and IBM would maximize sourcing strategy, candidate development and labor market understanding to help guide us and assist us in developing candidates."

The solution: a tailored RPO solution that brings out the best

The model aligned two teams of recruiters; a team of in-house recruiters from PAREXEL and a team of candidate development recruiters from IBM. Each in-house PAREXEL recruiter was partnered with a candidate development recruiter from IBM. Institutional knowledge and hiring manager influence was to be driven by the in-house recruiters and market intelligence and scalable candidate flow was to be driven by the IBM recruiters. The design centralized large requisition loads through these partnered recruiters and leveraged a flexible recruiting team dedicated to the program through a project based recruiting methodology.

As PAREXEL and IBM designed the future solution together, they also looked to build a program that could be deployed globally. Shortly following the launch of the new RPO model in North America, PAREXEL introduced the RPO design to 17 countries in Europe. IBM's global infrastructure helped make this a smooth expansion by bringing several options to the table, including: more than 30 global locations, seven unique centers of excellence and recruiting services delivered in six local languages.

The final piece to the custom-designed solution was a technology backbone for the program. PAREXEL wanted to take advantage of IBM's applicant tracking solution, IBM® Kenexa® BrassRing on Cloud, to help ensure that recruiters and hiring managers had an effective way to quickly share and manage top candidates. The system is part of IBM's full-cycle talent management solution and fully integrates with sourcing, assessing, hiring and onboarding solutions to find top candidates who are the right fit for a company.

McGoldrick brought these conversations through to the creation of a solution that was truly designed around PAREXEL. The new RPO program included a custom delivery model, technology, global recruitment infrastructure and local language capabilities.

The results: exceeding expectations

PAREXEL implemented IBM's modified RPO in November 2011, and in the first year the solution delivered better than the company's expectations. PAREXEL hired several in-house recruiters who partnered with the IBM team and worked directly with the hiring managers, providing a high level of institutional knowledge. This helped enable the IBM team to focus exclusively on building strong talent pools and recruiting the top talent PAREXEL needed.

Original forecasts predicted PAREXEL would need to hire about 600 clinical professionals in the first year. However, business boomed and instead the company hired more than 1,100 new employees in North America alone. The scalability of the RPO solution helped drive a 150 percent increase in qualified candidate flow within 60 days of the change in forecast, and helped ensure the positions were filled quickly and with highly qualified, talented individuals.

"I think the relationship in its current structure brings out the best in both organizations," McGoldrick said. "For our hiring managers, we offer a dedicated internal contact that has a stronger knowledge of our business strategy because they are embedded in our company. IBM also has a world class team of candidate development recruiters. This helps enable us to offer the highest level of consultation to our hiring managers, meet project deadlines, stay within budget and hire the best."

More top candidates are now looking at PAREXEL as well. Managers are asked to rank each new hire for their initial effectiveness and scores have improved since the company implemented the RPO solution.

While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact monetary figure on this key metric, McGoldrick said that the improvement in the quality of hires has a significant impact on productivity and resource allocation. "Since most of the hours our clinical researchers work are on projects for our clients, improving our quality of hire has a direct correlation to the quality of the work we produce for our clients. Additionally, our ability to recruit new talent into the organization has helped us staff new projects."

PAREXEL has also lowered two other key metrics: time-to-fill and first-year turnover rates. Time-to-fill has dropped by about 40 percent, and new hires are staying longer. First-year turnover rates globally have fallen significantly from their pre-2012 levels. "This reduction in first-year turnover rates has a direct correlation to improved productivity and efficiency."

For more information

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Notes