

# Most effective recruitment strategy

## Winner

# MTR Crossrail

When MTR was awarded the bid to operate the new Elizabeth Line in July 2014, there was a need to create a brand new business from scratch to run the service. For the HR department of the newly created MTR Crossrail, this meant it had just nine months to target, attract, assess, select and appoint the best talent to get the railway up and running on time.

Further to this was the complexity of a TUPE transfer of 207 staff from Abellio Greater Anglia in 2015, and the TUPE transfer of 59 Great Western staff and seven South Eastern Rail staff in 2017.

Aside from the challenge of recruiting an entirely new workforce, any recruitment strategy would also have to be based around the company's Staged Opening Programme. This plan outlined the different stages of the Elizabeth Line and dictated as and when recruits would be required. But the urgency and pressures placed on the strategy didn't hamper the passion of the organisation to take this as an opportunity to recruit a diverse group of people.

A key element of the strategy has been moving away from the traditional talent pool associated with the rail industry. There has been a drive to attract more women to apply for train driver roles – something that was at odds with the male-dominated profession of the past. This included targeted campaigns, as well as an ongoing partnership with workingmums.co.uk and wearthecity.com to develop a female-friendly recruiter page for MTR Crossrail.

Equally important has been the commitment to attract more young people to the industry, through

reaching out to schools and unemployed young people around London. As part of Rail Week – a dedicated week aimed at inspiring young people to consider a role in the sector – MTR Crossrail held events for school pupils, while it also works closely with Young London Working, promoting opportunities via its website and network of local youth organisations. And then there has been the commitment to improve BAME recruitment and retention within the company.

Looking at recruitment diversity alone, the figures speak for themselves: 11% of MTR Crossrail train drivers are female, compared with an industry average of just 6%; 47% of drivers are aged 35 and under, while just 10% fall into this age group across the UK; and where only 5% of train drivers nationally are BAME, the figure is 25% at MTR Crossrail.

But MTR Crossrail's aim of building a diverse workforce doesn't stop at women, young people and BAME

### Shortlisted

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**Charles Taylor**

**Costain Group**

**CAS Behavioural Health**

**St Mungo's**

**Office for Nuclear  
Regulation**

**Volkswagen Financial  
Services**



staff. The strategy extends to refugees looking for employment in an area they are qualified in, working with Transitions, a specialist not-for-profit careers and employment service in London. Then there has been its work with homelessness charity Crisis to create and support some of its clients into roles at MTR Crossrail, as well as its partnership with Working Chance to support ex-offenders into employment.

The decision to recruit ex-offenders and homeless people into the organisation particularly impressed the judges, who were bowled over by the broad outlook of the strategy.

"They made a conscious decision not to fill the seats with the traditional bums," said one judge.

"I like the fact that they looked to recruit ex-offenders, for example. This is an area that lots of companies shy away from, so I think it is a very open-minded – and in this day and age – very important approach to take."

Results are also proving the success of the strategy, with the fact that 100% of trainee drivers recruited have passed the first stage of the programme, pointing to high-quality candidates being recruited. So it seems likely that the judges will have been right in predicting that this strategy will inspire others to take a more open-minded approach to recruitment.