Prospects College of Advanced Technologies and Cezanne HR

UK's first college of Advance Technology takes an integrated approach to HR

PROCAT is a large and rapidly expanding technical vocational education provider based in Essex, in the heart of the Thames Gateway, with a national reputation for its work promoting and delivering technical vocational education.

Prospects College of Advanced Technology has been able to add professionalism and polish to its HR processes with the help of online software solution Cezanne HR. The Essex-based FE Institution – which specialises in construction and engineering – has also been using the system to revitalise its approach to performance management and to streamline recruitment.

Getting started

Until a year ago, Prospects College was managing all its HR data and people processes on spreadsheets and paper-based systems. A move from private to incorporated status, coupled with an increase in staff numbers, prompted the need for a new, automated HR system that would allow the college to manage its people more efficiently and present a more professional face to potential job candidates.

HR Officer, Denise Mooney saw Cezanne HR at the HR Software Show and was impressed by the design and capabilities of the system, as well as the cost. "The pricing model was the cherry on the cake," she said. "We particularly liked the fact you paid a set fee per employee per month, which could be adjusted up or down depending on how many staff you had at the time."

The college was able to get up-and-running with the system quickly thanks to support from Cezanne HR's customer services team, who helped upload employee data and provided training at their office. Denise also opted for a one-to-one onsite session with a Cezanne HR consultant, who helped to set up the system to meet the college's specific needs.

"Like many educational establishments, we have staff on numerous different contracts, some term-time only for example, as well as people working different hours at different times. What Cezanne HR were really good at was understanding how our organisation works and showing us how we could configure the system so it did what we needed," she said.

Manging absence

Prospects started with the core HR module, which puts all employee data in one central place and offers a self-service element so that staff can update their own personal information. The Absence module also went live at an early stage and quickly made a significant difference to the way annual leave and sickness reporting were handled.

"Before, we had paper annual leave forms which could easily go missing, and if people wanted to find out how much holiday they had left, they had to contact me and I had to go and look it up on their file," says Denise. "Now they can access that information themselves and it's much quicker and more efficient." Reporting on sickness absence has also improved, now that managers can simply log on to the system and record if someone has called in sick. "Previously, if managers were busy,

sickness didn't always get reported in a timely fashion, but it's so much easier now," says Denise. "The system also generates a 'who's off today' report for reception and senior managers, which has improved communication and allowed us to respond better if teaching staff are off and we need to arrange cover."

Revitalising performance management

With the system running successfully and proving popular with staff, Prospects College decided to switch on the Performance Management module, using it as an opportunity to refresh their whole approach to appraisals.

The old system of an annual appraisal on the anniversary of someone joining was proving difficult to implement, with managers constantly having to be chased to have the conversations and send in the forms.

The new system was set up with an appraisal period that matched the academic year. When managers were trained on how to use the new module, they were briefed to move away from the concept of an annual event to a series of on-going conversations with their team. Competencies for key teaching, support and managerial roles were input into the system and managers sat down with their staff at the beginning of autumn term to set initial objectives. Prospects opted to set up the Performance module to let managers enter ongoing feedback and comments throughout the year, with employees able to see their own information at any time.

"Before, our performance management process was just a snapshot in time, whereas now it's a much more open and fluid process," said Denise. "Jobs change, priorities change, line managers change – the new system reflects this and allows

both managers and individuals to review and refine throughout the year. It allows us to put much more thought into the process and is more transparent as employees can log into their record at any time."

Professionalising recruitment

Making recruitment a more polished process was another priority for the college, who have recently introduced the Recruitment module that's available with Cezanne HR. Prospects is already reaping the benefits of access to a wider pool of candidates and a more streamlined process for managing applications.

Once vacancies are entered into the system, Prospects has the option to automatically publish them across a number of free external job boards, such as Indeed, and to post vacancies to their own website, LinkedIn or other social media sites.

All applications go into one central place, where they can be seen by HR and the relevant hiring manager, making it easy to identify what stage of the recruitment process a candidate is at. Candidates can log in themselves to check the status of their application and the system can be set up to generate standard emails to applicants if required.

I have been really impressed by the calibre of candidates coming through and in the short time since going live, we have already made nine job offers," says Denise. "We are also able to get vacancies out there much faster, so we are providing a better service to managers when they need to hire new people."

The pricing model is also proving to be cost-effective for the college, who can advertise as many vacancies as they like over whatever time frame they need, without having to pay hefty agency fees.

Providing reliable HR data

For Prospects College the ability to generate accurate HR data is another big advantage. "I can run specific reports on everything from age profiles and length of service to absence and retention rates and then give them to the board to help inform their decisions," says Denise. "Previously, that information would have been difficult to collate but now we can get it at the touch of a button. It's allowing us to respond to requests much faster and helps to improve the professionalism of the organisation."

"I have been really pleased with the system and the Cezanne HR team has been superb with set up, support and response times. The feedback from our managers and staff has been great. They have found the system easy to use and have been able to navigate their way round it, even if they are not particularly technically minded."

About Cezanne HR

We've built something special at Cezanne HR; a powerful, configurable HR software solution that's simple to deploy, easy to manage and remarkably cost-effective, whatever the size of your business. As a team, we've a long track record of delivering successful HR solutions to businesses worldwide. We've worked with companies of every size and across every business sector. That's why we decided from the very start to build an exceptionally robust and scalable SaaS platform for human resources management which, like our customer community, is growing all the time.