

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg
**backs innovation in
staff selection**

Turning a traditional paper and pencil-based test into
an innovative, efficient and effective online assessment

Innovation in staff selection

Vocational aptitude testing for Hamburg municipal authorities

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg employs more than 70,000 people across a diverse range of occupations. These include administrative staff working in municipal offices, nursery school staff and teachers, law enforcement personnel and court staff, fire officers, technical and scientific professionals and doctors. The City of Hamburg has used traditional pencil and paper-based tests in its selection processes which have formed a part of its decision-making.

The challenge: widespread use of assessment and ensuring quality and speed

The Zentrum für Aus- und Fortbildung or ZAF (Centre for Vocational and Further Training) is responsible for fair and consistent testing when selecting candidates interested in a career in administration to municipal training and study programmes. Every year, more than 800 vocational training positions and study places are filled within the government and law enforcement departments. Approximately 2,000 aptitude tests are conducted to facilitate this.

The ZAF is also responsible for approving promotion procedures within the law enforcement and fire departments. External candidates who apply to the government authority or to specific departments and who do not have the required qualifications, complete aptitude assessments. While selecting from this external applicant pool, HR teams ensure that high-quality staff are recruited into Hamburg's municipal administration. This is as well as gaining an insight into the potential for moving between departments. Successful aptitude test assessment is required to enter the other training programmes offered by the city (e.g. bookkeepers, IT trainees). This is under the remit of the ZAF.

The ZAF's use of tests is, therefore, high and time-consuming. To support this, the ZAF appoints qualified psychologists holding an 'A Licence' (for those qualified to use occupational aptitude assessments). This ensures that aptitude tests have been carried out according to the demanding criteria of the DIN 33430 quality standard.



“The new test process provides a cutting-edge element to our selection process.”

*Volker Wiedemann,
business manager, ZAF/AMD
Municipal Agency*

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The solution: innovation through new processes

At the beginning of August 2014, the ZAF replaced the paper-based aptitude tests and template-based scoring with an electronic and online process. The tests are designed, developed and carried out by cut-e and administered at the ZAF's offices.

ZAF uses aptitude tests from cut-e's assessment range. These explore logical, numerical and verbal understanding, tailoring tests which are based on the job role being assessed. However, the testing process has also been designed to incorporate the ZAF's own general and cultural knowledge tests, as well as two audio fill-the-gap exercises. These tests were recorded by cut-e for this project. Candidates listen to a recording accompanied by a text with spaces. The test-taker is required to fill in the gaps, allowing the ZAF to measure the candidate's spelling abilities.

To tailor the assessment processes, different application profiles have been designed to identify specific aspects of each job role according to the ZAF's requirements. These application forms are reviewed regularly with cut-e in order to ensure quality and reliability remain high.

The outcome: instant access to results, good candidate experience

Introducing online testing allowed for the creation of a robust selection process through which performance potential could be determined quickly. This has been achieved. In contrast to the time- and resource-intensive processes of the past when paper-based materials were used, test results are now available to HR staff once the test has been completed. The ZAF receives an informative and reliable statement of each candidate's aptitude from cut-e in the form of an individual capability profile. This contains a suitability rating on a six point scale from 'highly recommended' to 'not recommended'.

As well as the quality of information, speed and accuracy with which it is collected, the attractive online presentation of the test material has been popular with candidates.

Due to the XML interface provided by cut-e, there is a seamless integration between the ZAF's application management tool and cut-e's online assessment. The completely anonymised process guarantees data security between the ZAF and cut-e's online assessment. The system is maintenance free and system updates take place automatically.

The move to online testing does not only demonstrate a fast, state-of-the-art selection procedure for candidates but also increases the efficiency and effectiveness of this process. The transition to online assessment represents a significant advancement in the screening and selection of applicants.



Innovation, efficiency and effectiveness

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About cut-e

Founded in 2002, cut-e (pronounced 'cute') provides online tests, questionnaires and gamified assessments for attraction, selection, talent management and development. The company's smart, valid and innovative psychometrics have made it the preferred partner of multinational organisations.

In May 2017, cut-e was acquired by Aon plc, a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. cut-e now operates as part of Aon's global offering in talent solutions, helping clients achieve sustainable growth by driving business performance through people performance. cut-e and Aon, as Aon's Assessment Solutions, undertake 30 million assessments each year in 90 countries and 40 languages.