

Going mobile: Siemens supports school leaver career planning



With around 343,000 employees across the world working on the areas of electrification, automation and digitalisation Siemens manages a wide range of training programmes for its school leaver, apprentice population worldwide. In Germany, Siemens offers around 120 different programs – a variety that can be overwhelming for applicants who may have little insight into their strengths. To help, Siemens developed a Job Navigator tool to guide applicants – and, with the changes in user behaviour of mobile technology, this project is now an ideal testing ground for developing assessments that can be accessed via mobile technology.

The challenge: 'going mobile' to keep pace with the changes in applicants' technology behaviour

Siemens Professional Education (SPE) as a part of Human Resources at Siemens, concerns itself with specifying, designing and developing vocational training programmes for school leavers. Ulrike Assmann, who is responsible for diagnostics and competency management at SPE explains, "We see our training programmes as a solid foundation from which Siemens develops its employees of the future. Our programs are characterised by a high share of practical training in combination with theoretical learning at vocational schools and / or universities. All programs result in well-regarded certificates, which are recognised across Germany and by other companies. This makes our programme attendance highly desirable." In 2015 Siemens recruited nearly 2,000 school leavers for Siemens alone – as well as extending this programme to other small and medium sized external companies which lack the infrastructure, resource or capability to train young people in-house. There are currently 7,000 young people on vocational training programmes within Siemens and an additional nearly 3,000 supported by Siemens for other companies.

Those applying to become apprentices at Siemens complete an online assessment – based on the popular ability and aptitude tests from cut-e - scales. But, given the array of training programmes and the fact that many school leavers have little insight into the opportunities or careers which are in today's fast-changing world, how does a potential applicant know to which programme he or she is best suited?

The solution: the Job Navigator tool

To help in this choice, cut-e developed a job navigator tool for Siemens (Jona™ – www.jona.mentaga.de). Jona™ helps school leavers find out which of the education programmes at Siemens would be best suited to them based on their strengths. It allows potential applicants to work through a number of tests and assessments and, at the end, suggests the training programme most suited to them.

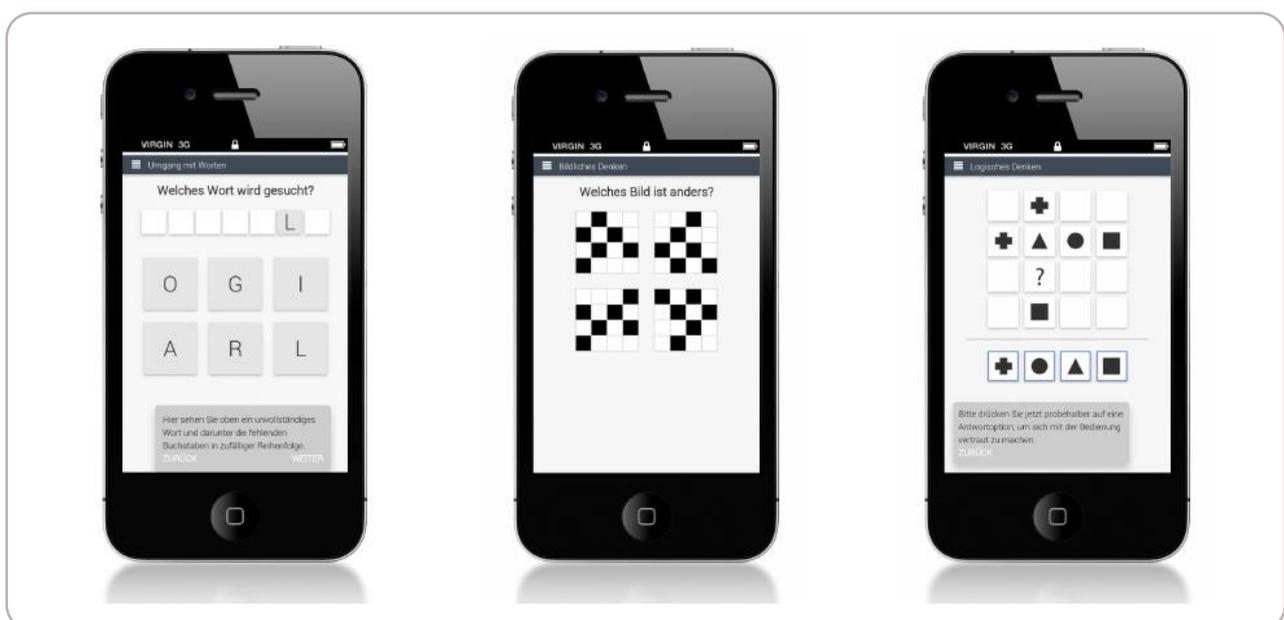
Initial questions on the job navigator are quite broad (Do you like working with computers? Are you creative?), before progressing to more competency-based questions and then the scales tests looking at logical thinking, spatial ability, dealing with numbers and dealing with text. Ms Assmann explains, "The Job Navigator tool is basically assessing the strengths of the potential applicants and highlighting these to the individuals to help them make their application choice. The tests are completed anonymously and we don't collect any personal information and it does not form part of the selection process."

When the Job Navigator was first launched in 2008, it was innovative, state-of-the-art and attractively designed. But the Internet looks different today, technology has moved on and people's habits have changed especially with regards to job search and application. As such, understanding the impact of mobile access and usage is very important to Siemens as a whole – not just for its apprentice programmes – so that it remains leading-edge in its assessment, but retains the high reliability and validity of its selection process.

Ms Assmann continues, "We know that our applicant pool is changing in terms of its use of technology and we can see that online assessment adds real value to our selection. We wanted to explore the impact of deploying the same sort of tests on smartphones. At this time cut-e was exploring how such tools could be adapted fairly and reliably and so we worked on this together."

One of the challenges facing the team concerned the number of devices in the market at any time on which an assessment needs to work – and the speed of innovation within smartphone development. This means that constant compatibility checks are required: can an assessment work on an old iPhone as well as the latest android? Mobile devices also change user habits. No longer are potential applicants sat at a desk in a well-lit area, they're now on the train, waiting for a friend, and so on. As this is standard, objective assessment, users need to be sure that the device, on which the assessment is used, has no influence on the test result.

Ms Assmann knew that Siemens wanted to move forward with mobile assessment, but also was aware of the risks of doing this with 'high stakes' assessment where a decision is made at the end whether to invite a candidate to an interview – or not. So the low risk option of the job navigator – where the results are for the test-taker only – was explored.



Screenshots from the JONA-Test-Center

The outcome: creating 'mobile friendly' solutions: the story so far

Adapting and developing the assessments to be suitable for mobile access was a staged process. The first step saw the roll-out of the professional interests and preferences assessments as well as the tests looking at the applicant's approach to numbers and logical thinking. cut-e then moved on to the more complex tests: those assessing the candidate's approach to text and those that considered visual thinking and colours assessment.

For this project, the team has needed to look at every aspect of test item, and user interface: the orientation of the test items, the graphical design elements, the use of 'swiping', the quantity of text on the screen as well as the responsive technology.

Ms Assmann comments, "One cannot underestimate the amount of work needed to move from a desktop version to a mobile version. cut-e's strong expertise, not only in the psychometric aspects of the assessment and what is – and is not – feasible, but also in the rapid changes in technology is invaluable."

A test bed for the future

By using the Job Navigator assessments as the trial for how assessments can be moved to a more mobile platform, Siemens has been able to identify and then meet the challenges without impacting the selection process.

"Be sure that we don't collect personal data about Jona™ users. We do ask for some basic demographic data for statistical purpose but we are not concerned with who is completing it, whether they go on to apply and, if they do, whether they are offered a position with us. And that's an important point for us. We see the value of the tests for helping the potential applicant with their career or programme choice and application, not as part of the selection assessment. In the future we may look at moving our selection assessments capable of being used on, say, tablets but at the moment, we know we need to learn and gain experience in the challenges these technologies are bringing."

Siemens first launched the Job Navigator in 2008 – and it is still accessed mainly by male users, although this is not surprising given that around 70% of Siemens' applicants are male. However, as Ms Assmann explains, it is exciting for the Professional Education team as by promoting the Job Navigator, more women may start to work through the assessments, apply and enter the technical training programmes. Siemens very much sees its Job Navigator tool as a great way to support its employer brand – and emphasizing its commitment to encouraging more women to explore the industry, helping guide school leavers and supporting other, smaller organisations.

"We know that our applicant pool is changing in terms of its use of technology and we can see that online assessment adds real value to our selection. We wanted to explore the impact of deploying the same sort of tests on smartphones. At this time cut-e was exploring how such tools could be adapted fairly and reliably and so we worked on this together."

Ulrike Assmann, Human Resources, Siemens

For any further information please don't hesitate to contact us!
E-Mail: info@cut-e.com
www.cut-e.com

