



Solution	BigRedSky
Company	AstraZeneca
Industry	Healthcare
Employees	1,000
Recruitments	70-75 per year
Challenge	To replace an electronic system that was not meeting business requirements such as poor technical support and poor customer support.

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CASE STUDY – ASTRAZENECA

In November 2005, AstraZeneca put out a request for interest (RFI) to locate a supplier of electronic recruitment software. Unlike many of its contemporaries, it was not replacing a manual system, but an electronic one that was not meeting business requirements.

AstraZeneca, one of the world's largest and most successful pharmaceutical companies, employs over 1000 people in Australia. Most work in manufacturing, with almost 500 people employed in its Sydney facility – a worldwide centre of excellence in the preparation of sterile liquids and tablet packaging. Around 300 sales people comprise the second biggest group of employees, with the balance operating in corporate roles, medical affairs, regulatory affairs and clinical research.

There are 14 HR professional supporting both the manufacturing and corporate functions in Australia. When the RFI was released, Terri Mulry was the recruitment specialist for sales – the highest volume recruitment area in the company. Mulry has since moved on to become a HR account manager, looking after the medical and finance business units, but remains the 'point (wo)man' for AstraZeneca's recruitment software.

"On average, we recruit around 70-75 positions each year, but in the last 12 months, we have recruited 100 people, because of business growth," she says.

Like many large organisations, AstraZeneca uses a range of ways to attract candidates. It runs all its own print ads; has about 15 preferred recruitment consultants that specialise in some very niche employment market areas; uses a job board (seek.com.au); has an employment section on its own website and operates an employee referral system that has been working well for them over a number of years.

The Search

'The main reasons we were dissatisfied with the system we were using were a combination of poor technical support and poor customer support. It became apparent that neither form of support was going to improve for the software into the future,' explains Mulry. So they made a decision to find a new system.

Because they had been out to market a few years previously, they knew who the key players were and also quickly found new entrants. They asked five vendors to present their software solutions to them. "We had a few of the companies try to sell us on the benefits of having an electronic recruitment system, rather than what theirs could do," recalls Mulry.

Another account manager and the director of integrated services (IT and IS) worked with Mulry to create a list of criteria against which each system's features were to be measured. (See box 1). The team made its decision at the end of 2005 and implemented the solution immediately.

The Decision

"We chose BigRedSky because it met most of our needs better than the others – especially when it came to ease of use, which was one of our most important criteria," says Mulry. "It's been a great improvement on the previous system, because candidates cannot duplicate their job application," she continues. The BigRedSky solution recognises candidates by their email address, which Mulry says is a fundamental difference that has brought many welcome changes.

AstraZeneca purchased three job boards – one used through its external internet site, one used by recruitment agencies and one used by internal applicants on the company's intranet. It pays a license fee per month, per job board.





Mulry says that implementation all went pretty smoothly. BigRedSky trained the HR team, who then ran a demo of the internal recruitment function at a monthly company information meeting. Rather than doing a company-wide rollout, HR waited till managers had a recruitment need, then trained then on the software.

Positives

According to Mulry, candidate communication has become much easier through the use of email templates, especially with bulk emails. Templates have also saved a lot of time when creating ads for frequently advertised roles.

Another feature valued by AstraZeneca is the job-seeker account. People who want to work for the company can now set up their own job-seeker account on the company’s website. They are automatically contacted when a suitable job becomes available.

Mulry has been delighted with the level of customer service and support given to them by BigRedSky. “Their help desk and customer service people are really quick to respond and very helpful. Even if the problem is user error, they are very kind. No question is a silly question,” she says. Mulry carefully reference checked current users about customer support, prior to purchase.

AstraZeneca’s managers have also found the software easy to use and quite intuitive. Mulry explains that this has been an important reason for BigRedSky’s success, because managers don’t use it on a daily basis, like HR does.

Negatives

When the software was initially launched, Mulry says that some candidates had problems with the application process. “We don’t know how many people had difficulties navigating the system, but we suspect it was more than the number who contacted us directly. BigRedSky was very responsive to our feedback and immediately made the system much easier to navigate. Any technical issues we had have been very quickly addressed,” she says.

Product Development

Mulry’s feedback has resulted in her being involved in testing product enhancements for BigRedSky. “I enjoy the involvement even though it takes a bit more time. I get to understand the enhanced functionality of the product and we end up with a product that is more customised to our business needs,” she says.

Return on Investment (ROI)

No formal RIO has been done on BigRedSky. “Because the number of sales positions is so high, the time we have saved is a given,” says Mulry. AstraZeneca has also purchased the BigRedSky reporting module. “Once we have a full 12 months of data, we look forward to maximising the reporting module,” she says.

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Terri Mulry, HR Account Manager

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