

How Amazon Operations Hired Thousands Of Staff Across Europe This Year

Amazon's business expansion is built on innovation, but innovation requires great talent. So, at the start of this year we announced Amazon would be adding 15,000 jobs across Europe during 2017 to help meet customer demand. A significant proportion of these roles were in Amazon Operations and recruitment became a top priority for the business. All of these hires would be at management level, and would be supporting the launch of 16 new European fulfilment centres during the year. My European Talent Acquisition team supported the hiring of 4,800 staff in 2016 and 2,900 staff in 2015, and this project represented another significant acceleration and an exciting challenge.

To add to the complexity of the project, we were hiring for very specialist and technically demanding roles. We have a rich history of developing and introducing cutting-edge technology into our fulfilment centres to assist our employees in their roles and deliver for our customers. For example, we have introduced robotics to a number of our sites last year. The robots slide under a tower of shelves where products are stowed, lift it and move it through the fulfilment centre, helping to speed order processing time. That technology requires us to hire developers with outstanding technical excellence into robotics; but we also needed to hire staff with grocery experience into AmazonFresh and the very best engineers and analytical minds into our Logistics, speciality businesses and operations teams. So how did we do it? We needed to establish some scalable mechanisms.

Step one. Expand our own Talent Acquisition team. At peak, across Europe we had 300 recruitment specialists, advisors and leaders to support this massive project. Roles varied from recruiters to business intelligence specialists and even management consultants who have experience in large-scale integration projects. We started this process two years ago, and began to move teams into functional alignment

rather than just country teams. Tying the talent acquisition process to functions helped bring acute focus, each function had very specific talent requirements and this new structure helped the team target the very best talent, wherever they may be located in Europe.

Step two. Start with the candidate and work backwards. We like to think Amazon is redefining the way the supply chain works and improving the customer proposition through something like one hour delivery. That is a constant process in which the Operations team constantly look at new innovations to improve the service for customers. But to continue doing that we need to attract the very best graduates with STEM degrees into Amazon Operations - we need to show the business through a technology lens to attract our next generation of leaders.

We also invested in marketing using programmatic advertising and a social media to underpin our campaign, as well as new immersive technology which allowed us to, bring the fulfilment centre to the candidate, using virtual reality at our recruitment days! We also tried to think out the box, rolling out unique recruitment channels. In Hamburg for example, we asked prospective candidates to come and show off their problem solving abilities by inventing their way out of an Amazon Escape Room. A fun event, which gave candidates a chance to mix with Amazon employees - our recruitment teams also had the opportunity to see how candidates applied critical thinking and solved complex problems.

We also looked to partner with university's to attract top tier talent, launching our "Academics@ Amazon" programme. For this to be successful, campus engagement was very important - we used campus ambassadors; ran a series of guest lectures, and also implemented new innovative ideas and approaches to engaging with students on campus. In the Czech Republic we installed mobile information kiosks across 16 different university campuses, and in France we partnered with the MBA programme at HEC Paris, to run a case competition called, "Pioneer without Fear". These events and channels reflect Amazon Operations' culture and way of working; they helped us engage with new candidates and explain the interesting challenges they will face in Operations on a day-to-day basis.

Step three. Be flexible. Each year many of our staff at Amazon makes a move internally. We believe this helps our employee's personal development, and it also allows us to flex-up certain teams during our peak periods. For example, we built a new team providing our customer service teams with the opportunity to learn about and work in recruitment during our peak hiring time and then returning to customer service when that team hit their peak. We aren't a traditional organisation in that sense, we don't believe in certain skill sets being a strength or weakness, but instead we focus on developing people's superpowers. We all have superpowers, some people will be outstanding at mentoring and developing their colleagues, others will have amazing technical know-how. We value those powers and moving across the organisation means our employees bring fresh ideas and constantly challenge the way we do things, which is absolutely crucial if we are to keep on innovating and delivering for our customers.

It has been a huge task with immense ambiguity, it has taken a huge amount of planning, and process transformation, and in the end has been exceptionally rewarding. We have now filled the majority of positions, and, as we move into our busy Christmas period, the great talent we hired during the year are at work, solving problems, innovating and trying to deliver a great service for our customers.



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