

Recruiting into challenging environments such as the Oil and Gas, Energy, and Engineering industries, MSK Search is no stranger to the gender imbalance in the workforce. Working with OFGEM, MSK Search have changed recruitment processes significantly taking best practice in unbiased recruitment to the next level and making it auditable.

What we did and why.

OFGEM's process requires completion of a job specific questionnaire in the first stage, and submission of a CV if selected for interview. The bespoke questionnaire asks probing questions on the candidates' suitability for the position which promotes fairness and equality for all applicants, and removes potential bias.

- Applications were electronically submitted and then all identifiers, including gender, name, age, school name, university name and employer details were removed.
- Candidates were offered the opportunity to check at this point to ensure nothing had been lost.
- Anonymised applicants were long listed based on the answers submitted by each applicant, interviewed face to face by MSK Search and an anonymised report on each applicant was created.
- A shortlist was defined and candidates were interviewed by an OFGEM panel focussing on the fit and what the candidate could bring to the organisation as the questionnaire had already covered the historical aspects of the candidate's careers.

What happened?

- This auditable, anonymised process ensured that there was no gender bias, racial bias, academic bias or favouritism for internal candidates.
- Of the initial 44 applicants, 23% (10) were female, of which 40% (4) made the long list and 50% (2) made the short list.
- This is a significant increase compared to more traditional application processes in this sector where, on many occasions no women make a shortlist.

Feedback from OFGEM was that they were surprised that none of the 10% of internal applicants made the shortlist. They also said that they recruited from an organisation they would normally have discounted and that they found a higher calibre of shortlisted candidates than through traditional recruitment.

What lessons we learned and what we would do differently next time.

Techniques used here can be directly transferred to be used in any level of recruitment including for apprenticeships, with anonymised applications and job specific questionnaires minimising any bias not only on gender or race, but educational institutions and social background.

