

ETC Brings New Kind of Simulation to Attractions Industry— Employment Simulations, That Is

■ Standard employment tests as part of a job application can tend to be tedious affairs. Employment Technology Corporation (ETC) of Winter Park, Florida, knows this, which is why it pioneered employment simulations more than 30 years ago and has been refining them ever since. Now, the company is bringing them to the attractions industry.

ETC's co-founder and president, Joe Sefcik, says his development of these simulations first began in the late 1970s to early 1980s, when he worked with a group conducting employment role plays—more than just pencil-and-paper tests. That progressed to re-creations of different employment scenes and situations, which developed into early simulations at companies like General Motors and Coca-Cola, and finally led to today's web-driven simulations, with high-end graphics and virtual animation.

Sefcik explains the advantage of simulations over traditional employment testing: "There has to be a better way than written tests that depend on [applicants'] opinions of what they think they can do. For example, if you wanted to administer a roller coaster affinity test, you'd ask, 'Do you like to go up and down? Like to go fast? Do you enjoy being scared?' and people would respond to those questions. But would that truly and accurately reveal people who really enjoy riding roller coasters? A simulation would really show how a person would react on a roller coaster."

Historically, ETC has worked with clients in the financial services and call center industries, but it wanted to expand into hospitality and amusement parks. Sefcik says ETC saw its simulation program, called EASy Simulations, as a great match with attractions when it released the program



EASy Simulation-Virtual Customer immerses job candidates into a variety of attractions and hospitality venues where they must prove their abilities to provide outstanding service to a variety of customers.

to the industry nine months before IAAPA Attractions Expo 2014, and then exhibited at the show last November in Orlando.

"More than anything, what we've done is bring a fun approach to something that wasn't that way at all," he says, "and that's what that whole [Expo] was about—it was a perfect match."

A simulation takes 20 to 30 minutes. Here's how it works: Either on-site or at home, an applicant replies to an e-mail that engages the simulation. Following brief instructions, a variety of customers appear, to whom the applicant reacts. The simulation takes place within a virtual city containing four or five venues that are entertainment/hospitality related, including a theme park. The applicant visits each venue as a service provider and handles a series of questions from customers. Then, he or she responds to questions about the simulations. Those responses go to the staff monitoring the simulation and then to an online portal data center.

Employers can access the informa-

tion through a variety of different sorting options. They receive information on interpersonal effectiveness, problem solving, initiative, dependability, and conscientiousness, and learn whether an applicant will act independently and take initiative.

"The most important challenge in doing screenings to hire employees is linking it to what you want them to be doing," says Sefcik. "With hospitality and parks, the goal is to find those who will show the organizational commitment to the guest. Applicants don't even think they're going through a test because it's fun, and they get a whole different perception of the organization."

He notes that very small attractions with few employees would find less value in the simulations, but those approaching 50 or more employees would discover tremendous benefits. He says the cost of a simulation works out to around the cost of paying an employee for one hour's work, and adds, "The real cost to an organization is when guests aren't pleased with the service they're given." ■

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