

Case Study

Client Profile

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is one of the most complex components within the Department of Homeland Security charged with preventing terrorists and their weapons from entering the United States and protecting the interests of American business and agriculture.

Challenge

The Personnel Research and Assessment Division (PRAD) of the Office of Human Resources Management is dedicated to providing assessment processes that are effective, efficient, and truly reflective of CBP's commitment to its employees. Using a computer-based assessment process through **pan** facilitates the expansion of testing to multiple occupations and addresses the current and future needs of a 21st century automated HR staffing function.

Solution

pan provided a two-pronged solution for enhancements to PRAD's testing process for CBP's promotion system. First, **pan** web-enabled four proprietary assessments and developed a secure online talent management system to facilitate the execution of the promotion assessment program. Secondly, **pan** incorporated test centers and trained test proctors to ensure an effective process while maximizing efficiency for candidates and PRAD.

Results

By utilizing **pan**'s technology and test center network, PRAD has been able to streamline the CBP promotions testing process. The secure online talent management system allows candidates to schedule, reschedule, and cancel their testing appointments as needed. Due to **pan**'s network of state-of-the-art test centers, candidates are now able to select their preferred testing location, date, and time, rather than have the appointment dictated to them.

Customs and Border Protection

Client

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is one of the most complex components within the Department of Homeland Security. With over 54,000 employees – including 20,000 CBP Officers, 18,000 Border Patrol Agents, and 2,200 Agriculture Specialists – CBP's primary mission is to prevent terrorists and their weapons from entering the United States. CBP officers and agents are responsible for apprehending individuals attempting to enter the U.S. illegally, thereby stemming the flow of illegal drugs and other contraband. CBP is further charged with protecting agricultural interests from harmful pests and diseases and protecting economic interests and American business from theft of intellectual property. The agency regulates and facilitates international trade by collecting import duties and enforcing U.S. trade laws.

Challenge

The Personnel Research and Assessment Division (PRAD), within CBP's Office of Human Resources Management provides entry-level and promotion assessments for mission critical occupations within CBP and also for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). PRAD is dedicated to providing assessment processes that are effective, efficient, and truly reflective of CBP's commitment to its employees. According to PRAD personnel, "Using a computer-based testing process facilitates both expansion of testing to additional occupations and addresses the current and future needs of a 21st century automated HR staffing function". With this advantage in mind PRAD partnered with **pan** to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the promotion testing process by web-enabling CBP's proprietary assessments and utilizing a network of test centers for domestic and international testing.

Solution

pan provided a two-pronged solution for enhancements to PRAD's testing process for CBP's promotion system. First, **pan** web-enabled four proprietary assessments that had previously been administered in paper/pencil format, including tests of critical thinking and management writing skills, a job knowledge test, and an in-basket job simulation. A secure online talent management system was developed to facilitate the execution of the testing program. This system generates and sends email to all candidates who are eligible for testing. The email contains instructions on how to create an online testing account, which is then matched to CBP personnel data (e.g., grade level, previous test scores, etc.). After creating an online account, each tester can schedule a testing session. Based on CBP personnel data, the system shows each candidate a list of all the requisite exams for the relevant position and labels each as mandatory, ineligible, or optional for the candidate to take.

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If the test is mandatory, it is pre-marked for the candidate and cannot be unselected. If the candidate is ineligible for the test, the system prevents him/her from selecting it. If the test is optional, the candidate can select to take it or not. The system also sends messages that remind applicants to schedule testing and attend scheduled appointments. Assessment scores are loaded into the system so all candidates can access their own scores and a candidate feedback report explaining their individual scores in detail. Throughout the entire process, support from both CBP testing staff and **pan** technical personnel is available to ensure that candidates are able to schedule, complete tests, and access their scores successfully.

The second piece of **pan**'s solution incorporates test centers and trained test proctors. **pan**'s test center network includes locations throughout the United States, mobile testing capabilities, and international availability. **pan** test centers are intermittently audited to ensure that they meet specifications for both quality and security. In addition, all **pan** test centers are ADA compliant and allow for accommodations as needed. Each test center is staffed by proctors who are trained in the administration of CBP tests, security standards, and technology troubleshooting. Test proctors are responsible for greeting testers, checking them in, and verifying their identities. They are also responsible for completing and submitting incident reports in the case of testing difficulties, technology failures, and other abnormal circumstances. The proctors are available to candidates throughout the testing period to provide assistance.

Results

By utilizing **pan**'s technology and test center network, PRAD has been able to streamline the CBP promotions testing process. The secure online talent management system allows candidates to schedule, reschedule, and cancel their testing appointments as needed. According to PRAD, the reminder emails generated by the online talent management system "have helped to reduce testing no-show rates." The system is available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, as is **pan** technical support, thereby accommodating the needs of international testers. Because communications are automatically generated through the talent management portal and tests are accessed as candidates are checked in to test centers, CBPs' administrative efforts have been greatly reduced. In addition, PRAD personnel are able to view candidates' test schedules and information through one centralized environment. According to PRAD managers, "Converting to a computer-based testing process provides us with greater flexibility of the scheduling process, increases availability of testing dates and times, and reduces HRM's effort to reschedule candidates."

Due to **pan**'s network of state-of-the-art test centers, candidates are now able to select their preferred testing location, date, and time, rather than have the appointment dictated to them. In 2008, two-thirds of domestic CBP candidates traveled less than 30 miles for their testing appointments. "**pan**'s availability of test centers offers better coverage of locations where HRM needs to conduct testing, both inside and outside of the continental United States, resulting in reduced travel time and expense for the candidates and HRM staff," says CBP HRM. The test centers provide candidates with the technology needed to complete testing in a distraction-free, private testing environment. The use of test centers ensures that all candidates have similar testing experiences and mitigates the risk of technological factors affecting the testing session. In addition, trained proctors are available to provide support, assistance, and referrals to **pan** or CBP support as needed. Trained proctors also help to ensure the quality, consistency, and security of the testing process.

To learn more about how TALX can help your organization, contact us at **1-800-888-8277** or **moreinfo@talx.com**.