

## Virtual Recruitment and Onboarding of Mapping Programmers during COVID 19- Merck's RaM Mapping Experience

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### ABSTRACT

Covid 19 has changed the way of life of human perspective due to lockdown of office work while work from home have become of new way of life. It also changed dramatically the business hiring process and remote hiring become a key tool with modernization of their recruitment processes rapidly and innovatively. Thus, virtual recruitment and onboarding originated out of necessity in this crisis, is actively become a go-to method for keeping the hiring ball rolling without suffering the new drug submission processes across the pharmaceutical industry especially tier 1 companies like Merck. Vendors of sponsor companies like ours following these processes for long years, due to pandemic lockdown situation big pharma is also following same methodologies with advanced technologies, tools, and connectivity.

RaM Mapping division of Merck has developed a 20-point recruitment, onboarding and team assimilation process of new mapping programmers for operational need to support of our portfolio enhancement in last March of 2020. We are going to discuss our established methodology in detail.

### INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 was tough for personnel recruitment due to lockdown with Covid 19 pandemic which provided a new opportunity of virtual recruitment, onboarding, training and assimilation into teams and functional groups for pharmaceutical industry like us and other fellow industrial sectors. There is a great shift in remote talent attraction with innovative recruitment methods such as through video conference interviews, encouraging internal skilled talent and enhancing FSP hiring models. Further, diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) become a central focus to our recruitment process for the last one year. Now, 89% of organizations have shifted and adapted virtual recruitment and onboarding since Covid lockdown.

There are some advantages with virtual recruitment process. We can save time, expenses and carbon footprint of travel and paper while overriding many in person touch points such as building rapport, picking up on body languages and sense of energies that individuals can bring. However, candidates with required and needed skills and technologies are the new currency to employers especially science-software based job opportunities of ours, there is no much difference between in person and virtual recruitment process as long as we have a centralized planning, coordination and best practices, hiring could be successful in virtual way. Sound digital technologies, tools, connectivity, effective communication, teamwork, collaboration, flexibility, adaptability, monitoring and mentoring will play key role in virtual hiring.

The concept of virtual organization, in which non-core activities will be outsourced is not a new one in biotech industry. Pharmaceutical industry is using contract research organizations (CROs) and technology suppliers in meeting their needs and recently FSP hiring models have been emerged as an alternative. Further, the majority of the candidates in the market today belongs to Gen Z generation and an effective virtual digital hiring process can make us to attract these and also at the same time provides a stand out among our competitors as an innovative corporation in augmenting the brand name with changing times, culture and environments.

We have advertised for 10 mapping programmers' positions for our needs of book of business and other special assignments in RaM Mapping division of global clinical operations in February 2020 internally and externally at various jobsites, websites of associations, organizations and EBRGs. The company was locked down after First week March due to Covid pandemic and we don't have other alternative except conducting virtual interviews through video conferences and afterwards followed remote onboarding, virtual training and assimilation into team.

We have established a 20point standard hiring methodology for both in house and virtual situations which brought lot of credibility in meeting our needs and become a transparent guidance document for fellow divisions for their hiring and for pharmaceutical inspections.

## FIRST MAIN TOPIC

1. Preparation of job requisition with current needs and covering at least 2 years ahead (in Pharma Industry every SOP will be revised in 2 years to incorporate changes and additions)
2. In workday job requisition creation and getting human resources advisor is the next thing and afterwards complete validation of job requisition and start advertising at both internal site and external site for at least 3 weeks. Next one is reaching out to hiring professional websites such as LinkedIn, Dice, Indeed (they are not costly and most of the times free), Organizations, Foundations, Associations, industry connections, CROs, Service providers to attract large number of candidatures with experience of industry standards and also needed skills and technical experiences.
3. Ask HR advisor to send resume bundles, start reviewing process and finalize required number of candidatures versus no of positions to be filled. Inform the HR advisor to proceed with HR interviews mainly in reviewing visa status, current employment, salary and other perks for assessment to fit into our scales, relocation and their availability at work and tele-commuting situations, their availability for attending the interviews of our probable dates etc.
4. In the meantime, identify interviewers to perform interviews and their availability on probable scheduled dates.
5. Ask HR advisor to transfer the selected candidatures in workday and complete the task of approval of interested candidatures while rejecting the other candidatures.
6. Ask the divisional personal administrator to schedule the interviews.
7. Conduct the interviews and call for a huddle meeting to select the candidate/s. Then, send the candidate selection summary report (CSSR) to HR advisor.
8. Complete the salary negotiations and candidate's acceptance of the contract and make sure everything will be approved in workday by hiring manager and hiring manager's (HM) supervisor.
9. Once background's contingencies checkup will start, keep an eye on the email transactions of NEA (New Employee Assistance providers). Usually, if all the things such as credit history, employment history, location history and other histories provided by new selectee are complying, usually it will take weekdays to complete the background check.
10. If we lose one day here for getting First Day request for the candidate by NEA, we will lose weekdays or sometimes 2 weeks (considering pay scale period of the organization) in bringing them to on board. Usually for working people, they have to give 2 weeks' notice to their employer. It is better to talk with selected candidates what type of flexibilities that they have as some employers can count as one week if employer could submit resignation on Friday of the week.
11. Immediately after, first working day selection and sending the information to NEA to inform the selected candidate was completed, ask the candidate to provide a A4 size digital photo to prepare organizational announcement and home address to send the laptop and other ancillary equipment.
12. After arrival of First day confirmation letter from NEA, Ask HR representative different from HR advisor to include the candidate's name in workday in order to get network ID (ISID), official Email ID and First Time Password. Network ID is more important to order laptop and also future workspace at office. Also new candidate needs a corporate security badge.
13. Inform the administrators about on boarding of new employee and include them in periodical departmental and divisional orientation sessions.

14. Once network ID and other things are arrived, order the laptop and other ancillary equipment with a timely request to IT department to make sure equipment will reach the candidate's place well before on boarding and set it up ready to login.
15. On the day of on board, call the candidates to log in and send the meeting invitations like Managers & Mentors meeting to help and facilitate the candidate in fulfilling the things like weekly time sheet filling, online pay check deposits, vacation days request and approval, myLearning activities, core hours of working etc. We have to send the organizational communication on the first day of joining of new employee. Also RaM mapping division, have prepared a 15-page documentation of requirements for new employee including above things and also what software applications that new employee needs, shop around, myLearning needs and also required things and processes.
16. Make sure Timesheet job codes are ready and their links are working.
17. MyLearning needs are two types 1. Organizational Fulfillment SOPs 2. Divisional or Functional area SOPs. On the first day organizational SOPs will be kicked off automatically. if not, we must ask training schedulers to check on that. At the same time, we must inform departmental coordinator to initiate the divisional myLearning needs. It will take 48 hours to trigger job codes from the day of onboarding.
18. Schedule the training and make sure that new employee will complete the training in time and then bringing them on to the work. We can also share virtual onboarding suggestive materials like HBR publications and other articles with them.
19. Talk to them frequently to facilitate comfortability and bringing them into team setting with as many as online video on individual and group meetings to make sure they will be assimilated easily into the team while walking with them hand in hand.
20. Finally, insert them in team meetings and other functional and work meetings.

## KEYWORDS

Keywords: Virtual recruitment, Onboarding, Covid pandemic, Training

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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