



First Bus –
Transformation Programme

Case Study

Sector: Transport



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Kevin Green, Chief People Officer, First Bus

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What was the challenge?

Following the disposal of its US business, FirstGroup plc planned to grow and reposition its First Bus division to be the premier bus operator within the UK. In order to achieve this, First Bus devised a transformation strategy to deliver a bigger, better, more innovative and future-focussed organisation to enhance customer service and capture market opportunities, while driving efficiency and profitability in the process. With the business having grown across the UK through a series of acquisitions, operating companies throughout the group were at various stages of scale and development.



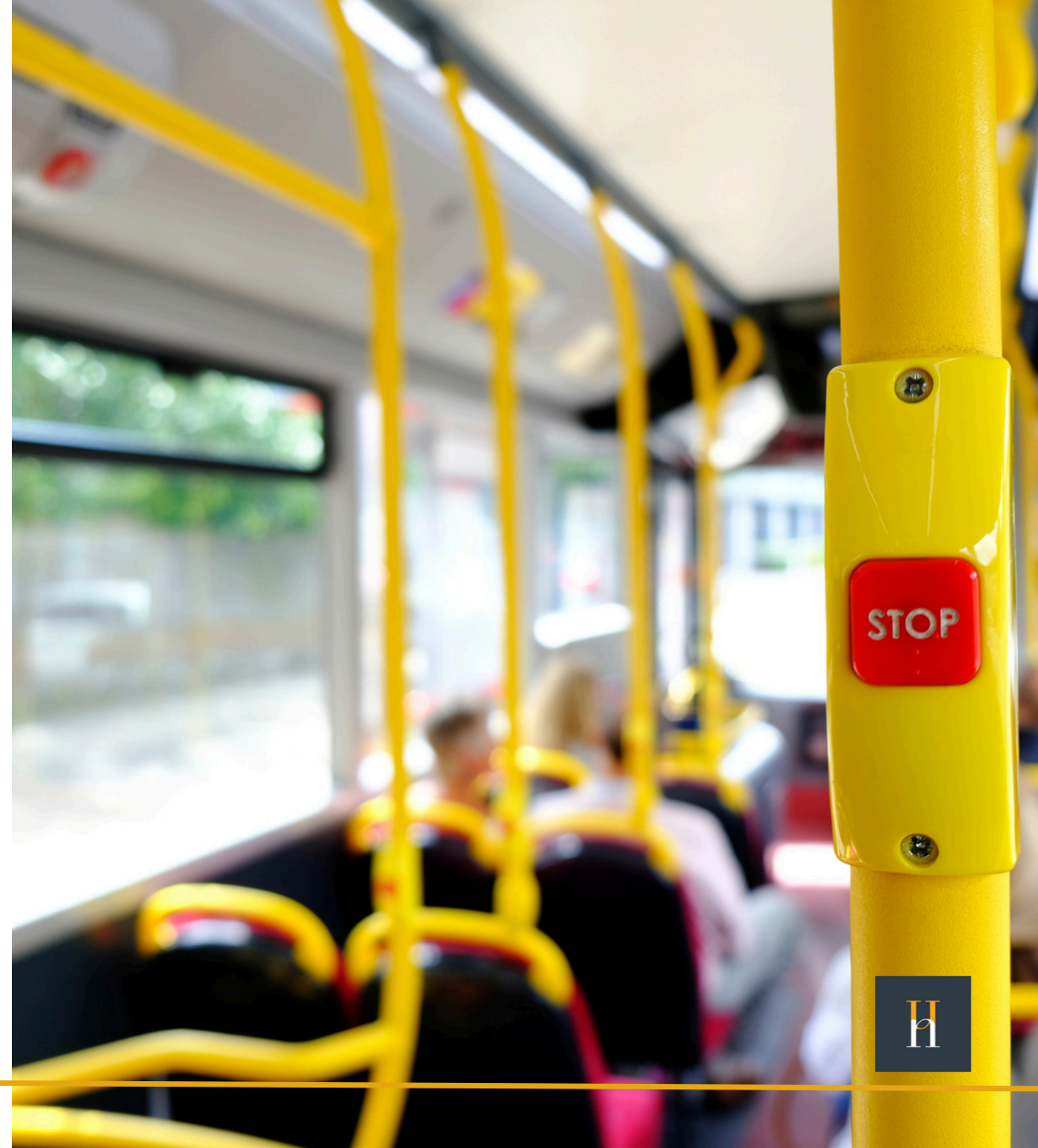


First Bus wanted to create greater homogeneity across the business and ensure that the MDs and leadership teams of each region were aligned to support the future strategic direction of the group. While First Bus was restructuring the business and taking the opportunity to confirm the leadership teams for the future, it was necessary to ensure that ongoing financial performance was not compromised. Likewise, with the reshaping of the business reducing the number of operating companies, there would inevitably be a reduction of headcount in certain areas and potential uncertainty across the workforce. As a result, it was key that the process was handled in a sensitive, fair and robust manner while being delivered at speed upon commencement.

What did we do?

Holmes Noble worked in partnership with the First Bus team to design an assessment process for internal and external candidates which could provide a consistent view of the appropriate leadership teams to take the business forward.

Holmes Noble created a tailored and detailed capability and competency framework, complemented with a suite of psychometrics and psychologist interviews to deliver personality profiling and assess critical thinking, emotional intelligence and intellectuality. This helped to align critical leadership skills to the First Bus strategy across four key leadership positions (MD, Commercial Director, Engineering Director and Operations Director) within each operating company.





Holmes Noble managed the entire assessment programme, taking over 40 internal candidates through the process. Upon completion of the programme, Holmes Noble provided First Bus with a suite of sophisticated reports highlighting the relevant competencies and profiles against each leadership role.

This independent assessment was then used by First Bus to allow them to select the most appropriate leadership teams across each of the future operating companies, based upon consistent, fair and unbiased data and intelligence. Once the internal population was assessed, and where gaps were identified through the process, Holmes Noble built a view of the talent market landscape across several industries to inform the sourcing strategy and then entered the external candidate market to identify and secure new, game changing talent aligned with the First Bus strategy using the same detailed assessment process.

What were the results?

Following the assessment and selection process, Holmes Noble successfully placed senior management teams across all First Bus operating companies with a mix of internal and external candidates, bringing in fresh ideas and ensuring that the right 24 leaders are in place to deliver the strategy now and in the future.


Once the programme had been designed, co-created with First Bus and signed off by the board of FirstGroup, the entire assessment and selection process was undertaken in less than 9 months, providing confidence in the executive group and during which financial results continued to be achieved.





All teams in the business have been rigorously assessed, providing consistency across the group, while those who were unsuccessful have been supported through post-assessment feedback.

These sessions with Holmes Noble's recruiters and psychologists have provided a positive and valuable learning experience that can be taken into future careers and supported the requirement from First Bus to treat their people with the utmost respect.



“ Having supported First Bus throughout the programme, from helping us shape and lead the transformation and assessment process (underpinned with an impressive and robust capability and competency framework and suite of psychometrics) to supporting our people through it and beyond, Holmes Noble provided a great service from start to finish. Treating our people fairly and with integrity was core to our approach and I can say without question that Amy Speake, Katie Poxon and the team delivered that in spades, taking the time before, during and after to ensure our people benefited and developed across the process.

The independent assessment provided First Bus with a clear view of who could take our organisation to the next level and allowed us to augment identified gaps with fresh ideas and game-changing talent from the external market. I would highly recommend any organisation undertaking substantial transformation to work with the Holmes Noble team.

- **Kevin Green, Chief People Officer, First Bus** ”

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