

✦ Case Study

From Application to Offer: How JCB Achieved 100% Offer Acceptance in Early Careers Hiring

**+75%**

Online completion rates across assessments and video interviews

90%

Of candidates find the assessments engaging

100%

Of surveyed candidates say they would accept an offer from JCB, if made one

Overview

JCB is a global leader in manufacturing construction and agricultural equipment, headquartered in Rocester, Staffordshire. Known for its engineering innovation and heritage, the business attracts thousands of early careers applicants each year for apprenticeships and graduate programmes.

With over 40 schemes available and thousands of applicants each year, JCB needed more than efficiency, it needed a way to identify future talent with the potential to thrive, while ensuring fairness and consistency across every scheme.

Challenge

The scale of JCB's early careers recruitment created challenges. Each year, more than 8,000 applications were submitted across 40 apprenticeship and graduate schemes. Every programme had different entry requirements, making manual sifting of CVs against criteria like grades or right-to-work status both labour-intensive and reliant on recruiters manually assessing. Manual sifting also made it difficult to ensure fairness and consistency across recruiters and programmes, increasing the risk of unconscious bias and subjective decision-making.

The existing platform added further pressure. It was glitchy, overly complex, and lacked the scoring functionality needed to fairly compare candidates at scale.

Recruiters struggled to move applicants efficiently through the funnel, risking operational delays and increasing the risk of losing top talent to competitors with faster processes. The candidate experience also suffered: applicants faced longer, unclear processes.

While the process worked, it placed a considerable administrative burden on the Resourcing team and limited the time they could dedicate to supporting candidates directly. JCB wanted to ensure that the quality of the candidate journey matched the quality and reputation of its programmes.

Solution

JCB partnered with Sova to implement a bespoke early careers online assessment. This solution was designed specifically for high-volume graduate and apprentice recruitment, allowing JCB to go live quickly. Sova's Early Careers assessment is built on validated psychological models proven to predict success in early careers roles, enabling JCB to identify candidates with the right potential, not just the right grades.

The process now works as follows:

-  **Application and initial sift**
Candidates apply to a scheme. Recruiters run an initial screen against essential criteria such as grades and right-to-work, **reducing 8,000 applications to 4,000.**
-  **Online assessment**
Candidates are invited to complete the Sova assessment. Automated scoring makes shortlisting faster and more consistent.
-  **Video interview**
Candidates who progress complete a structured video interview focused on motivation and self-reflection, offering richer insights into candidate fit and potential beyond qualifications.
-  **Assessment centre**
Final-stage candidates attend an in-person assessment centre, giving them the opportunity to engage directly with JCB teams and showcase their skills in a realistic environment. Candidate feedback from this stage is consistently positive, with a satisfaction score rarely seen in the industry: 100% of candidates that go through the process say they would accept an offer from JCB if they were made one.
-  **Feedback for all candidates**
At every stage, candidates receive feedback. Those who complete an assessment receive a downloadable report outlining their areas of strength and suggestions for improvement. Those not progressing gain valuable insight and guidance for future applications, particularly important for individuals at the start of their careers.
-  For recruiters, the shift away from manual sifting freed up time to engage directly with candidates, increasing touchpoints and strengthening the candidate journey.

This approach gave hiring teams confidence in their decisions while transforming the candidate journey into a clear, structured, and engaging process.

Results

The shift to Sova's assessment platform delivered measurable improvements for JCB:

8,000
applications

efficiently managed since launch, streamlining high-volume recruitment and reducing manual effort.

98%
attendance rate

at assessment centres, confirming the accuracy and predictive power of earlier assessment stages in identifying the right candidates.

75%
completion rate

across both assessments and video interviews, demonstrating strong candidate engagement throughout the process.

100%
acceptance rate

among candidates receiving an offer and completing the full process – a clear sign of improved candidate experience and strengthened employer brand.

Further benefits that JCB is now able to track include:

- ✓ **A reduction in time-to-hire**, helping JCB secure top talent before competitors.
- ✓ **Improved conversion rates** at each stage of the funnel, showing the efficiency of the process.
- ✓ JCB's recruiters now have **more time to speak directly with candidates**, offering a more personalised experience that makes candidates feel their time and effort are genuinely valued.

Next Steps

Encouraged by the success of the early careers programme, JCB plans to expand the use of assessments into other areas of the business. Internal benchmarking is underway to fine-tune the process further, and the company is exploring additional features such as automated integrity monitoring and cheating prevention measures – already embedded into the assessment by design. The long-term goal is to create a consistent, enterprise-wide approach to talent selection, underpinned by fairness, efficiency, and strong candidate experience.