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Ten steps to improving your attraction and retention of graduates with disability

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Employing graduates with disability is a key step towards creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace culture, which is critical for innovation, growth and sustaining business success.

The Diversity Council Australia / Suncorp Inclusion@Work Index ,2020 survey of 3,000 working Australians, revealed that if you work in an inclusive organisation you are:

* 5 times more likely to innovate
* 3 times more likely to be highly effective than workers in non-inclusive organisations
* 3 times more likely to provide excellent customer/client service

Using disability as an example, the survey also found that when organisations take action to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, it benefits both workers with and without disability. With these benefits in mind, the following are some strategies that you can implement to support your journey in attracting and retaining graduates with disability.

Work proactively with university careers staff to advise students you are open to hiring people with disability and why. ***From the graduate’s perspective,*** this will help graduates to address their fears regarding sharing information about their disability.

A survey of 1,040 University students with disability in the United Kingdom conducted by MyPlus Consulting highlighted:

* 76% of student respondents were concerned about informing a potential employer about their health condition.
* 81% of students said they would be more likely to share the information if their careers advisor told them an employer would be disability confident.

Consider how your recruitment process includes the benefits of discussing disability, and how you offer workplace adjustments for graduates with disability.

* ‘My Plus Consulting’ found 71% of students surveyed wanted to know the **benefits of sharing information** about their disability to an employer.

Provide clear information about the stages in the recruitment process and tasks involved so that graduates have forewarning and prompts at each stage to request accommodations or adjustments. Many organisations such as Telstra, IBM and ANZ are embracing accessibility requests, to gain a fair and equitable observation of graduate’s skills.

Ensure all recruitment staff are disability confident and (with appropriate authorisation from the applicant) are aware of the applicant’s needs at each stage of the process, these needs are provided for, and supporting or administrative staff are also aware of these if required and necessary. This can be done by having a clear contact point for matters relating to accessibility during recruitment, but ideally would involve all staff being capable of performing this function

Language and terminology matters - reflect on terminology used in the recruitment processes***:*** Certain types of language can discourage applicants to apply for roles as they evaluate whether they match the description used. Terminology such as ‘work to deadlines’ instead of ‘work under pressure’ suggest inclusivity of skills and attributes and focuses on the task, not the person.  Ensure the words describe the output you are seeking from the employee.

Conduct a Trial Run to check that the entire recruitment process runs smoothly, and to be aware in advance of any physical, communication and/ or information accessibility, lighting and technical issues that may need to be rectified.

Build ways to proactively connect prior to the interview. Genuine human connection builds trust and collegiality. This can be done via internships, experience days, open days, work shadow opportunities, and ‘come and have a look’ open time periods. Allow multiple ways for this to occur (e.g. online, choice of large or small groups, opt-in or out without impacting employment prospects.)

Consider reasons for gaps in resumes where possible. A gap in a resume or academic transcript does not necessarily have meaning relative to current competence.  Be mindful that gaps may be due to students managing the loading between disability and study. It is worthwhile considering that students with disability are often strategic, diligent, tenacious and have acquired excellent advocacy, creative problem solving, negotiation and organisations skills. These skills can be as important as the qualification or grade point average for many roles.

Review the use of psychometric tests and behavioural interview questions. Do they create a complete understanding of who the person is and if they can produce the outputs of the role they have applied for? Does testing create unintentional roadblocks as you expect there to be only one way to complete a task successfully and one profile of an individual who will achieve in the role?

When in use, behavioural interview questions such as “walk me through how you would …” can provide more insight into the skills you need for your organisation, instead of seeking specific work examples and provide a more level field during the interview.

Know and utilise national resources and networks***.*** There are several existing national peak bodies, projects, and resources your company can connect with relating to disability recruitment and Tertiary Education.

* USEP: <https://www.adcet.edu.au/graduate-employment/usep-toolkit>
* Australian Network on Disability: [https://www.and.org.au](https://www.and.org.au/)
* GradConnection: [https://au.gradconnection.com](https://au.gradconnection.com/)
* [Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability (ATEND)](https://www.atend.com.au/): [https://www.atend.com.au](https://www.atend.com.au/)
* EPHEA Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA): [https://www.ephea.org](https://www.ephea.org/)
* JobAccess: [https://www.jobaccess.gov.au](https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/)
* Specialisterne Australia: [https://au.specialisterne.com](https://au.specialisterne.com/)

Diversity Council Australia, DCA-Suncorp Inclusion@Work Index: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce; <https://www.dca.org.au/inclusion-at-work-index>

MyPlus Consulting; <https://www.myplusconsulting.com/services>

Telstra’s FY21 Accessibility Action Plan; <https://www.telstra.com.au/content/dam/tcom/about-us/community-environment/pdf/telstra-accessibility-action-plan-digital.pdf>

IBM Human Ability and Accessibility Center, Executive brief Accessibility at IBM: An integrated approach  
<https://www-03.ibm.com/able/access_ibm/downloads/accessibility_at_IBM_an_integrated_approach_accessible.pdf>

ANZ Accessibility and Inclusion Program; [https://www.anz.com.au/careers/programs/accessibility-inclusion](https://www.anz.com.au/careers/programs/accessibility-inclusion/)

Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, WAM @ AHEAD.ie, Advise for Employers on Recruitment of Graduates with Disability p.17- 18; <https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/shop/free/WAM_Advice_for_Employers_Web_Version.pdf> cited 24/12/2.

The Recruitment Events Co., Resourcing Leaders 100, Behavioural Interviewing Now, New, Next, White Paper, p.14, 2020); [https://recruitmentevents.co](https://recruitmentevents.co/). Ibid p.6-7, cited 24/12/20, p.17, cited 24/12/2, Ibid p.25, cited 24/12/2, p.20.[cited 24/12/2](https://www.ahead.ie/userfiles/files/shop/free/WAM_Advice_for_Employers_Web_Version.pdf)

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