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COULD DO BETTER...

“Willing but could do better” was the term a group of graduate recruiters recently used to describe their efforts at attracting disabled graduates to their organisations, a term with which many other employers will surely concur. “Willing” because you know that this is a talent pool that you wish to access, but “could do better” because you are still failing to do so. Helen Cooke, Director, MyPlus Consulting, explores why many organisations are failing to engage with this group of individuals, and how the company is helping recruiters to address this.



In 2010, 9% of degrees were obtained by graduates who declared a disability. However, on average, graduate recruiters reported less than 1% of their applicants had declared a disability. Graduates form the future talent for your organisations. Overlook a proportion of them and you miss out on talented individuals who could make a difference.

In 2010 My Plus Consulting launched the Graduate Recruiter’s Disability Café Club (GRDCC). Its purpose is to help those involved in graduate recruitment achieve real progress around attracting, recruiting and developing disabled graduates. The GRDCC recognises that disabled graduates want to be treated as equals to their non-disabled peers. It works with members to build their knowledge and confidence enabling them to engage directly with disabled graduates and to process them through their standard recruitment processes.

Members of the GRDCC grow their knowledge through events and seminars; these provide the opportunity to discuss complex issues and share best practice with others facing similar challenges. Disability Cafés are at the core of the GRDCC. The interactive design enables participants to discuss the real issues they are facing and to take away practical solutions and advice that they can implement in their own organisations. There is also the opportunity to learn from disabled graduates who share their first hand experiences.

Members also take advantage of in-house training and consultancy that is tailored to the specific needs of their organisation. In the past year workshops have covered topics such as understanding your target market, inclusive recruitment, and attraction and marketing.

Last year, the GRDCC was approached by Lloyds Banking Group to undertake research into how disabled graduates search for jobs. Lloyds recognised that being an inclusive employer was crucial for ongoing success:

“Attracting talented people from all sections of society is critical to our success both now and in the future. A diverse workforce brings a range of experiences and perspectives that strengthen and enrich our organisation.”
Fiona Cannon, Diversity & Inclusion Director, Lloyds Banking Group.

In order to engage with graduates who have a disability, Lloyds recognised the need to market themselves as an employer of choice for disabled graduates. To successfully do this they wanted to understand how this group of people searches for graduate jobs. Results were collated from 1,600 respondents. They highlight what is important to disabled graduates and provide insights into how best to engage to with them. It also details the types of support and guidance they are looking for which, if provided, will encourage them to view a prospective employer more favourably.

This ground-breaking piece of research was shared with graduate recruiters at September’s Disability Café. It provided delegates with the information needed to make real progress in attracting and recruiting talented disabled graduates to their organisations.

Going forward the GRDCC will continue to deliver useful and practical events designed to help graduate recruiters move towards their goals. By the end of the year, the aim is that recruiters will have moved from “willing but could do better” to “willing and winning”.

For more information about the GRDCC visit www.disability-café.com

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Helen Cooke
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