



In Pursuit of Treasure

According to the AGR Graduate Recruitment Survey 2006, only 0.6% of last year's recruits have a disability, yet, 7% of graduates in that year had declared a disability on their entry form. Helen Cooke, director of Genesis HR Consultancy explains why there is an untapped pool of talent out there and looks at the challenges around attracting and recruiting graduates with disabilities.

Searching for the best talent for your organisation can seem like looking for lost treasure on a beach; you need to turn over every pebble to ultimately find what you are looking for. The same is true of graduate recruitment – if organisations don't fish from as wide a talent pool as possible they are potentially missing out on finding the best people for the job.

A key challenge in ensuring that graduates with disabilities are reached is to make sure that any disabilities are actually declared. This is imperative so that appropriate adjustments can be made to ensure that students do not face further obstacles during the recruitment process which could prevent them performing to the best of their ability.

Unsurprisingly there is reluctance amongst some graduates to actually declare their disability; this stems from the belief that if they do so, they will be automatically screened out of the recruitment process. In addition to fearing discrimination, many graduates don't see their disability as something they want or need to state; they simply wish to be viewed alongside all the other graduates rather than singled out.

While there is no guaranteed way to ensure that individuals do declare their disability, they are more likely to be forthcoming if you explain why you are requesting this information. Organisations can only make the right adjustments for them during the selection process with the right information, ensuring that they can then be selected on an equal footing.

Graduate marketing must also take into account graduates with disabilities, not just in the imagery and language that it uses in its literature, but also at the front end of its marketing activities. Representatives who attend graduate careers' fairs and presentation events must be confident in speaking to graduates with disabilities and be able to answer questions that may arise. It is also very powerful if you are able to draw upon contemporary role models.

In terms of the actual resourcing process it is imperative to ensure that no barriers exist that could preclude graduates with disabilities from applying or progressing through the process. Alternative ways of applying other than online must be made available; screening criteria must be reviewed to ensure indirect discrimination does not occur; and organisations must be able to effectively and efficiently make reasonable adjustments to testing, interviews and assessment centres. Organisations must be confident in their knowledge and ability of what they need to do and how they go about it.

Underlying all of your disability processes and policies is the need to ensure that all the people involved in the graduate recruitment

process are confident when it comes to dealing with graduates with disabilities. This includes everyone from the graduate recruitment team to representatives at marketing events through to the consultancies you outsource to, recruiting line managers and those involved with induction and training. Ensuring your people are comfortable and knowledgeable is crucial; attitude counts for a lot.

Recruiting graduates with disabilities does not lower standards; a resourcing process which poses no barriers simply means that individuals can compete fairly alongside their peers for graduate careers. With the "War for Talent" as strong as ever, embracing disability can only be viewed as good for business. Excluding any graduates, whether intentionally or not, means organisations miss out on bright, motivated and talented individuals; we should not be leaving any pebble unturned...

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BEING DISABILITY CONFIDENT

Be aware of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and what constitutes a disability

At a very basic/minimum level you need to be knowledgeable of the DDA and what is covered by it to ensure that you are taking all relevant action.

Understand your target audience

As with any target group, in order to effectively target graduates with disabilities you need to understand them. Where are they studying? What are they studying? How do you most effectively reach them?

Ensure your recruitment process is fair

Audit your resourcing process from "end to end" to ensure that it is fair, and identify any barriers which potentially exist.

Ability to make "reasonable adjustments"

Ensure you have an effective reasonable adjustment process in order that you can efficiently make any adjustments that a candidate may require.

Disability Confident Personnel

Ensure that all those involved in the resourcing process are comfortable and confident in speaking and dealing with graduates who may have a disability.

Accurate Monitoring

Accurately monitoring graduates with disabilities who apply and progress through the process will not only allow you to measure success, but will also enable you to identify any barriers which may exist in the process.