

DISABILITY CAFÉ



Graduate Recruiter's Disability Café

Wednesday 16th September,
2015

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for open discussion

Introduction & Context

On 16th September 2015 over 30 recruiters, careers advisers, disabled students and other stakeholders came together to discuss what disabled students and recent graduates value most in an employer, with a focus on helping recruiters to appear more attractive to disabled students.

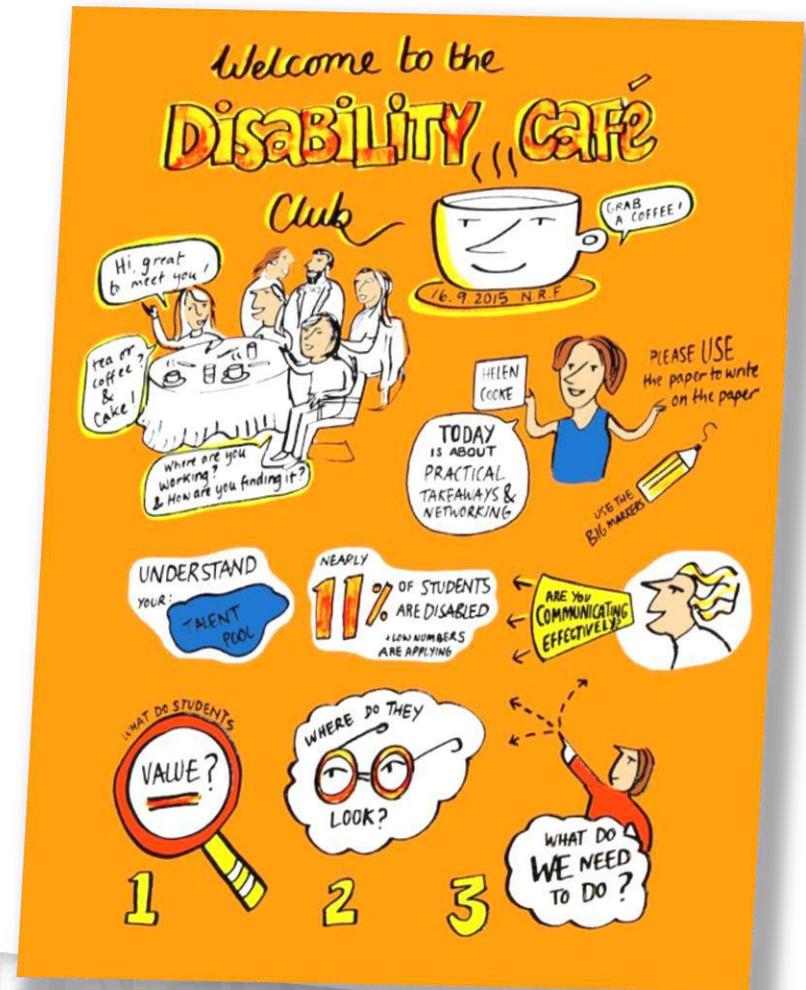
Helen Cooke, Director of My Plus Consulting & Founder of the Graduate Recruiter's Disability Café Club, welcomed the delegates and introduced the focus of the event.

Helen began by highlighting the disparity between the 10.7% of graduates who had a disability, and the shockingly low number of these individuals successfully gaining graduate jobs. Evidently, if recruiters are to succeed in attracting graduates from this talent pool, they need to develop an understanding of their additional or different wants and needs.

During the Café the delegates would:

- Know what disabled students value
- Know where they look for the information that is important to them.
- And have identified what you need to do in order to position your organisation as a company that reflects their values.

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Getting started...

Helen started the delegates thinking about the afternoon's subject by asking them to write on the white table cloths what they wanted to get out of today.

Comments included:

- What does 'right' look like?
- Targeted marketing.
- How do we appeal to students?



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Findings from the research

Prior to the event, students and recent graduates with a disability had been asked: What 3 things do you value most when deciding which employers to apply to?

Some of the responses demonstrated that they have the same wants and desires as their non-disabled counterparts. These include considerations such as:

- Company's status / reputation
- Progression / opportunities for development
- Knowing they invest in training
- The day to day work life / Intellectually stimulating work
- Job stability
- Satisfaction
- Salary / benefits

Equally, some of their responses may or may not be related to a disability – depending on how you wish to interpret them. Indeed, you don't have to be disabled to value the following considerations:

- The employer's overall approach to diversity
- Integrity
- The work I will be doing – will I be able to do the job
- Diversity / a diverse culture
- Respect
- Location of the job / role
- Flexibility of employer
- Work life balance

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What disabled students value.

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Helen then moved on to present the feedback she received to the questions relating specifically to disability. Identifying 11 key things, 5 of which were shared in the first session:

1. Overall approach to diversity

Respondents want to know what recruiter's overall approach is to diversity, as opposed to just disability. They want to know that you have a diverse workforce, beyond disability. They also want to know that you have a reputation for inclusion – as a whole. The emphasis here was very much about – are you an inclusive employer, are you a diverse employer.

2. Your reputation for inclusion

Disabled students want to know who employer's partner with; who they you work with, what awards they you won? Stonewall accreditation was highly valued amongst respondents; it was interpreted as employers caring for their people – including those with a disability.

Awards and accreditations are another way of applicants knowing employers are authentic. It makes what is said about their approach to diversity real.



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What disabled students value contd/.

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3. Disability specific information

Respondents talked about wanting a disability specific page on the employer's website – where all the information they want and need is located on one place.

This includes information about your recruitment process, and about the adjustments you can make; help with how to inform you about their disability and statistics on the number of disabled employees that employ.

4. Experience of your disabled employees

They also want to know about the real experiences of your disabled employees; hearing from your employees reassures them that you will do what you say you will do once they have joined the organisation.

5. Access to your disabled employees

Disabled students want more than just to read testimonials or watch videos, they would actually like to have direct access to your staff including those who are the diversity / disability network leads.

They would also like to see you running sessions / events so they can ask questions directly.



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Communicating what you do.

In addition to asking disabled students what it is they value in an employer, respondents were asked to identify how they look for this information.

The overwhelming response to this question was by looking at the company's website. Not surprisingly this is the key place where students are going to look for information, they therefore need to be able to find it easily.

Other popular ways disabled students research information about an employer include:

- Student / graduate guides: do you include diversity / disability information here? Do you provide links to the relevant pages of your websites.
- Open days: do you talk about disability during your open days? Is it a core part of any presentations that you make?
- Calling the recruiter: is this easy for them to do?
- Specific disability events: whether participating in one with other firms or hosting one internally.

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Discussion...

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After hearing from Helen, the delegates were asked:

Having heard what the key opportunities are, what can you do to improve on these specific areas?

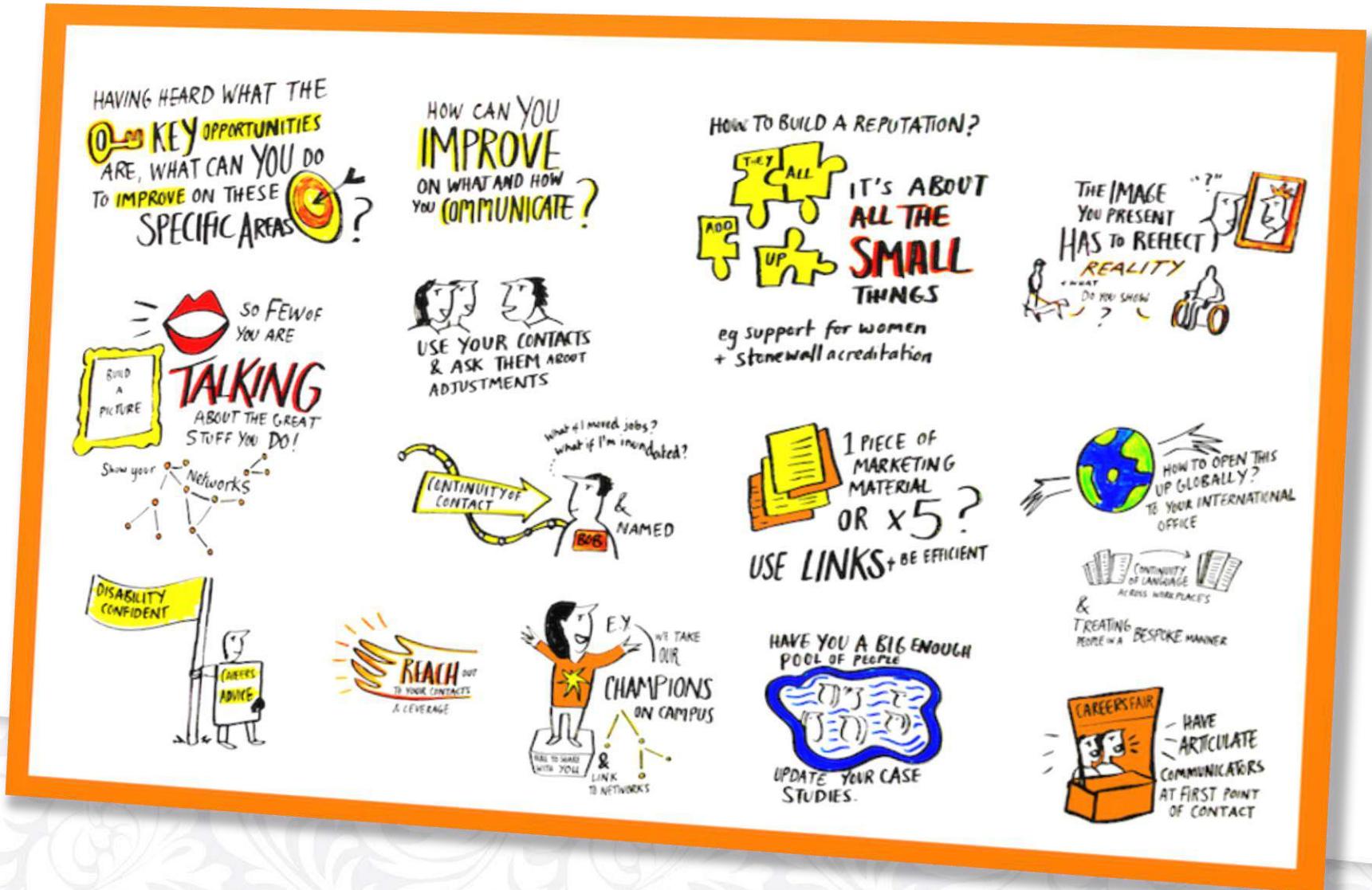
How can you improve on what, and how, you communicate?

In small groups, delegates thought about and discussed what they had heard. As they did so they captured their conversations by drawing and writing on the table cloths. The delegates were also asked to move around the room providing them with the opportunity to hear different perspectives and insights.



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What disabled students value - part 2

After a short break, Helen shared the remaining 6 disability specific things disabled students value in an employer.

6. Inclusive processes

When respondents talked about inclusive recruitment they mean this in the broadest sense from being easy to apply to knowing how employers can adapt the process.

7. Named contacts

Disabled students want to be able to speak / communicate with employers about what they require. Since they are potentially going to be sharing personal information they ideally wish to have a named contact to speak to. If this really isn't possible then they at least need to know who is at the end of the generic email / number and how their information will be managed.

8. Adjustments

All employers say that they will make adjustments but once again our respondents value the evidence. They would like employers to provide evidence / examples of what has been provided in the past.

They also like having examples of what could be provided since they don't necessarily know what is 'reasonable' particularly when a cost is associated with it.

And this goes beyond the recruitment process, this is about adjustments and support in the workplace in general.

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What disabled students value - part 2

9. Support on ways to be open

Research carried out earlier this year found that over $\frac{3}{4}$ of disabled students were concerned about being open about their disability. What this study found was that they want employers to help them to be open. This includes:

- Informing them on how the information will be used
- Advising them on what to tell you
- Reassure them of confidentiality

10. Flexibility

Flexibility, or the lack of it, was a key theme in the feedback. The perception is that everything about work is inflexible. Recruiters need to look at how they address this image and present a more realistic view.



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11. Not judgemental; treat disabled people as 'normal as possible'

Unsurprisingly disabled students want to be treated as 'normally as possible'. They want to be respected for who they are, not judged by their disability. They want reassurance of equal treatment; to be offered the same opportunities as everyone else.

Helen stressed that this is really important particularly when it comes to how you recruit, how you make adjustments during the process, ensuring they can participate in the induction programme along with their non-disabled employees. Someone's disability must not be a great big red beacon flashing all the time. Disabled individuals just wish to fit in with everyone else.



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Discussion...

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Having now heard all 11 things that disabled students value in an employer, delegates were once again invited to explore the following questions:

Having heard what the key opportunities are, what can you do to improve on these specific areas?

How can you improve on what, and how, you communicate?



HAVING HEARD WHAT THE
KEY OPPORTUNITIES
ARE, WHAT CAN YOU DO
TO **IMPROVE** ON THESE
SPECIFIC AREAS?

HOW CAN YOU
IMPROVE
ON WHAT AND HOW
YOU **COMMUNICATE**?

eg: STUDENT tells the
EMPLOYER
about ADJUSTMENTS

MANAGE
EXPECTATIONS
& **BE EFFICIENT**

SOME ADJUSTMENTS
ARE COSTFUL
BUT STILL AVAILABLE!
AVERAGE amount =
£30 = not much...

"BUSINESS
AS USUAL" =

To not
be seen as a
HASSLE.



Team training
on attitudes of
openness, non-
judgemental

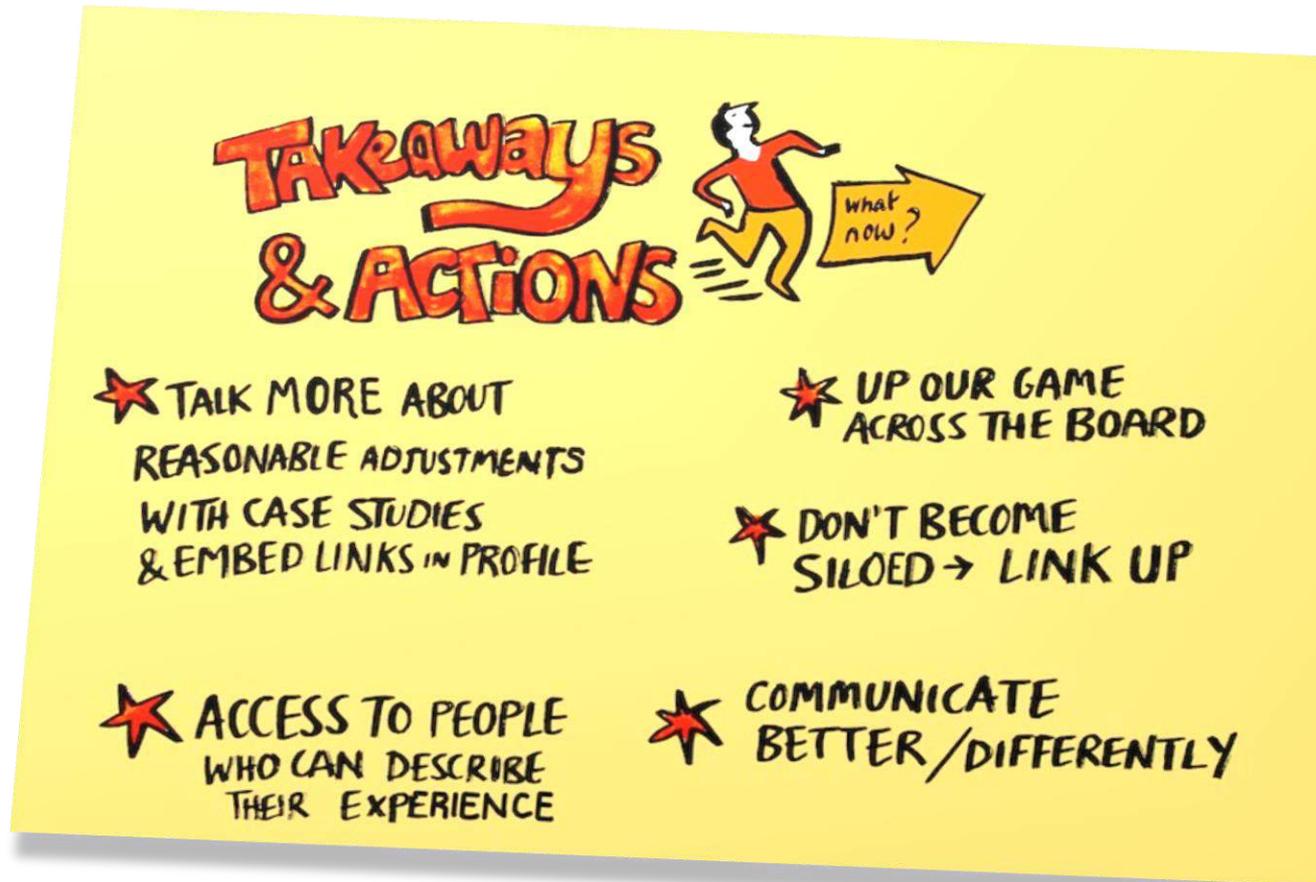
generic
but consistent?



make it
reassuring
+ easy for
me!

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During the final part of the Café, Helen took the participants through the graphic recording of the afternoon so far reminding them of what they had heard, the key questions they had been asked, and the conversations that had taken place.

As they listened, the delegates were asked to think about what had really stood out for them during the discussions that had taken place and what they would be looking to action in their organisations.

News....

This was the final Café Club event for 2015; in 2016 there will again be 3 Disability Cafes and 3 Breakfast Seminars each focusing on a different area of disability. If you would like to input as to topics that would be of interest to you please contact Helen with your ideas:
Helen@myplusconsulting.com

Equally, if you are interested in hosting an event for 2016 please let me know.

For those wishing to join the Graduate Recruiter's Disability Café Club you are invited to offset the cost of this Café against membership should you wish to do so. Please contact Helen Cooke for more information.
Helen@myplusconsulting.com
This offer is open until 9th October 2015.

And if you are not yet listed on our pioneering new website www.greatwithdisability.com then please get in contact to find out about the opportunities to be included.

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Contact Details

Helen Cooke
Director
My Plus Consulting

Tel: 01753 360018
Mobile: 07740 986758
Email: helen@myplusconsulting.com
www.myplusconsulting.com

Graphic recorder:
Sandra Howgate

Tel: 07766 945902
Email: sandrahowgate@hotmail.com

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