

A Business Disability Forum guide to best practice for recruiting and retaining disabled people



Sponsored by

The logo for Ingeus, featuring a small orange dot above the letter 'i' in the word 'Ingeus'.

Introduction

With the employment rate for disabled people 30% lower than it is for people without disabilities, growing the numbers of disabled people in work is urgent.

As increasing numbers of people stay in the workforce longer and our population ages more generally, the numbers of people with disabilities and long term health conditions in work or seeking work will keep rising. Yet, less than half of disabled people are in work and for those that are, many are underemployed or don't progress well in their careers.

Business Disability Forum (BDF) and BDF Member Ingeus are committed to helping employers access the widest possible talent pool. We recognise that often employers want to make their recruitment and retention processes more inclusive of disabled people, but are not sure where to start. That's why Ingeus is supporting BDF launch a retention maturity model and toolkit in April 2016 that helps employers move from 'we don't know where to start' to systematically working towards best practice in retaining and developing their disabled talent.

But there is much that employers can do already to recruit and retain disabled talent. Try out these top tips!

Business Disability Forum (BDF) and BDF Member Ingeus are committed to helping employers access the widest possible talent pool. inclusive of disabled people, but are not sure where to start.

Recruitment top tip number one:

1

Look at your talent attraction strategy

BDF and Ingeus come into contact with many businesses that say we are committed to a diverse workforce, we want disabled talent, but we can't seem to encourage disabled applicants to apply. Yet, unconscious biases are often built into talent attraction strategies that work against attracting disabled talent.

For example, BDF conducted a mystery shopper study of the FTSE100 in 2015. The study found disabled people reported that only 1 in 4 businesses appeared to have an interest in hiring people with disabilities. There was a lack of visibility about disability on corporate websites, use of imagery suggesting no commitment to diversity and no specific actions to encourage recruitment of disabled talent. For example, just 1 in 20 employers were clear and upfront about their willingness to make adjustments for disabled candidates as part of application processes.

Yet, there are some very straightforward techniques that can demonstrate commitment to the recruitment of disabled people.

First and foremost, disabled people need to be visible in the organisation's talent attraction strategy. Have disabled employees share their experiences through testimonials that form part of promotional materials and on recruitment pages of websites, for example. It is one of the most successful ways for potential candidates to believe you are committed to recruiting and retaining disabled talent. See for example this employee testimonial of BDF Partner Shell: <http://www.shell.com/global/aboutshell/careers/feature-stories/2013/thinking-outside-box.html>.

Think also about advertising vacancies on disability-specific websites. For example www.greatwithdisability.com is a specific site for businesses to advertise vacancies to disabled candidates. Many BDF Partners and Members advertise vacancies on this site which also offers top tips to help candidates with disabilities successfully navigate their way through a recruitment process.

Recruitment top tip number two:

2

Make sure websites are fully accessible

Online recruitment is a key part of modern recruitment and it's vital that website developers use W3C accessibility guidelines when developing websites. This is particularly important for recruitment pages and portals. These reflect a global standard in digital accessibility. See www.w3c.org.

Some very specific tests you can apply for disabilities most impacted by inaccessible application forms are set out on the next page. If you overcome all of these, you'll be well on the road to increasing the accessibility of your online application process.

If you use automated short listing, ensure the system can make adjustments for disabled applicants. For example, some CV sorting and data mining software will sift on the basis of inaccurate spelling, which may discriminate against applicants with dyslexia, or will reject applications with gaps in work history or which do not meet minimum educational criteria. To avoid this, ensure the type of functionality set out above in your online application process.

Online recruitment is a key part of modern recruitment and it's vital that website developers use W3C accessibility guidelines when developing websites.

Type of disability	How online process can act as a barrier	What you can do to overcome
Visual impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using small font. • Lack of keyboard support or screen reader compatibility. • Not compatible with speech to text technology. • Application forms contain poorly marked up frames and tables and contain unlabelled graphics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always use at least an Arial 12. • Ensure recruitment websites are fully accessible e.g. compatible with speech to text technology and screen readers. • Tables, graphics etc. should be accompanied by text explanation. • Allow choice of how CVs, applications etc. can be submitted. • Confirm details of interviews / tests via email rather than in hard copy by post.
Dexterity problems such as Repetitive Strain Injury and arthritis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty using keyboard for online applications. • Use of time-out function which makes it challenging for the person to complete sections in time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure recruitment websites are compatible with speech to text technology. • Do not have time-out functions as part of the application process.
Dyslexia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty accessing online recruitment process (e.g. not compatible with adaptive technology.) • No spell check function available. • Use of time-out function. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure recruitment websites are compatible with adaptive technology. • Ensure spell check functionality. • Do not have time-out functions as part of the application process.

Recruitment top tip number three:

3

Work experience and trials

Given some disabled people will have non-standard work and education histories, it is best practice in application/interview processes to make clear that life experience and voluntary work will be considered when asking a candidate to demonstrate their ability to fulfil criteria for a role. Another good adjustment is offering work experience or trials to give disabled candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills. It's especially helpful for disabled people such as those with an autistic spectrum condition who may experience problems with communication, social interaction and changes in routine.

There is a lot of support for employers that offer work experience or trials for disabled candidates as well. The Government's Access to Work programme can assist with funding adjustments for disabled people on work trials. Specialist employment service providers which help unemployed disabled people into work can help employers too.

Asda bags successful trainees with Ingeus

A new youth training programme designed to support unemployed 18 to 24 year-olds closer to retail careers is recording its first successes at Asda stores in Altrincham and Norwich. The grocery giant has teamed up with national skills provider Ingeus to offer eight week traineeships to young people not in education, employment or training. With roles available to learners successfully undertaking the traineeship and interview, recruits from the first of 14 scheduled programmes are now settling into full time positions at Asda's newest stores as a result.

Tom Stephens, 23, from Sale in Manchester, is one of the 13 trainees to date to have been supported back into work by the new programme. Tom, who has cerebral palsy, submitted 950 job applications over the past five years but struggled to secure a permanent role until taking part in the Asda youth training programme. After completing his traineeship with fantastic feedback from his store colleagues, Tom spoke of his experience at a celebration event attended by representatives from Ingeus, the Altrincham store and Asda headquarters. After gaining experience of merchandising and self-serve hosting, he now works on the checkout and 'couldn't be happier'.

There is a lot of support for employers that offer work experience or trials for disabled candidates as well.

“I never gave up, but all those rejections really knocked my confidence,” said Tom. “The traineeship gave me a refresher in basic employment skills and practical experience of a work environment. I loved it and was over the moon to get a permanent job. I have belief in myself again and have made so many new friends.”

Ingeus aims to contribute significantly to Asda’s Movement to Work commitment of recruiting 1,000 young people with barriers to entry-to-work by the end of 2016. Movement to Work is a voluntary collaboration of UK employers committed to tackling youth unemployment through provision of high quality vocational training and work experience.

Hayley Tatum, Senior Vice President People and Stores for Asda, said: “I am really pleased that we have been able to offer such a great opportunity to these young people who have been trying desperately hard to get a job. Tom’s story in particular is really inspirational. He applied for 950 jobs and could easily have given up, but he kept going and going until he got his opportunity. That’s the sort of person we look for at Asda and I am proud that we have given him the chance to show what he can do.”

Ingeus pre-screens and interviews applicants for the Asda youth training programme and delivers all of the training. The first three weeks are classroom-based and cover functional English and Maths, a Level 1 Introduction to Employment in Retail and Level 1 Skills for Employment. Ingeus tutors also provide in-work mentoring tailored to the needs of each learner during their four weeks’ work experience, with the programme culminating in a final week of assessments and attending the celebration event.

The Government’s Access to Work programme can assist with funding adjustments for disabled people on work trials.

Recruitment top tip number four:

4

Make sure that any recruitment supplier or partner is disability confident

You could be doing everything right within your organisation but find yourself working with a recruitment supplier that you assume is disability confident. You've never been to their inaccessible offices where they conduct interviews. You've not asked for materials in alternative formats or had to request they organise a British Sign Language interpreter which they say they can't do. You've not seen them ask how a candidate thinks their disability won't limit them to do the job. Yet they are representing your organisation. For the candidates they come into contact with, they represent your brand. They represent your legal obligations.

It is recommended that you take account of the disability confidence of potential recruitment partners and suppliers.

Given your commitment to addressing barriers to the recruitment of disabled candidates and having access to the widest talent pool, it is recommended that you take account of the disability confidence of potential recruitment partners and suppliers. And here's some strategies for doing so:

- Have disabled people 'mystery shop' their online recruitment processes to confirm accessibility.
- Ask for evidence of what disability-related training potential recruitment suppliers have taken up in the last 24 months.
- Ask for evidence of how they approach the provision of adjustments for candidates at all stages of the recruitment process and ask them to do so for at least three different types of disabilities.
- Ask about their knowledge of the Equality Act 2010 as it relates to disability and information about their experiences of interacting with initiatives such as the Government's Access to Work programme.

Recruitment top tip number five:

5

Have a workplace adjustment process which delivers the right adjustment quickly

Disabled employees identify that the quality of their workplace (reasonable) adjustment process is one of the most important determinants of whether or not they are successful at, and remain at work.

There are many actions that organisations can take to improve the quality of their workplace adjustment process. For example:

- Trust your employees. Have employees initiate an adjustment process without a formal diagnosis.
- Only use assessments where these are necessary. If an employee understands their impairment and the adjustments they need, fast track the request.
- Create a one-stop shop so that employees are supported by the same case manager throughout.
- Centrally fund your adjustments. In this way, they don't impact a team budget which eases the risk of adjustments being denied because of cost. It also offers scope for savings through centralised procurement and more productivity through creation of pre-approved catalogues of the most common adjustments.

Lloyds Banking Group undertook a transformation of their workplace adjustment processes based on these principles. The results are impressive and include average case costs reducing by more than 50%, a nearly 50% reduction in formal assessments, 63% of line managers reporting reduced sickness absence and average case duration reduced from 3-6 months to 14 days¹.

¹See: <http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/about-us/news/case-study-lloyds-banking-group-transforms-workplace-adjustments-process/>

Best practice in action: Lloyds Banking Group workplace adjustments

Graeme Whippy, Senior Disability Manager, Group Disability Programme, Lloyds Banking Group in describing what Lloyds Banking Group have achieved in transforming their workplace adjustment process said:

Disabled employees identify that the quality of their workplace (reasonable) adjustment process is one of the most important determinants of whether or not they are successful at, and remain at work.

'Lloyds Banking Group is committed to providing workplace adjustments for colleagues with disabilities or long-term health conditions because it makes business sense to help our colleagues with disabilities work effectively, contribute to the success of their teams and help us retain their talent in our organisation.

Implementing a robust centralised process has helped us reduce the costs and time taken to make adjustments. It has helped improve colleague and line manager confidence in asking for and agreeing to adjustments, and it has helped us reduce sickness absence and improve productivity. For us it's an essential component of being an agile and "disability smart" organisation².

²Selvanera G and Whippy K, 'State of the Nation: Retaining and developing employees with disabilities' Business Disability Forum (June 2015) p.25

Recruitment top tip number six:

6

Build the skills and confidence of line managers

BDF research with 145 employers and 352 mainly disabled employees about what helps and what gets in the way of successful retention of employees with disabilities and long term health conditions identified that line managers without the right skills and confidence is the single biggest barrier to retention³.

Providing training to line managers is an essential part of building skills and confidence, but it goes further than this:

- Policies relevant to disabled employees should be accompanied by clear guidance so that line managers do not interpret policies in different ways.

Not only can there be legal and reputational risks to leaving line managers to operationalise policies but employees with disabilities and long term health conditions will have different experiences and outcomes in the same workplace. Key policies include disability related absence (as distinct from sickness absence), return to work, performance management and workplace adjustments.

- Line managers benefit from access to up-to-date advice and guidance on all aspects of how disability affects employees. It's useful to keep this guidance centrally and to regularly publicise the availability of this advice and guidance.
- Line managers benefit from support when on-boarding new team members with adjustment requirements and when existing staff acquire a disability.

BDF research with 145 employers and 352 mainly disabled employees identified that line managers without the right skills and confidence is the single biggest barrier to retention

³Supra n.2

Recruitment top tip number seven:

7

Active engagement with any employees that have been absent. Try what EE does!

EE's Chief of HR, Patrick Bradley, is the Board sponsor to make EE a more disability-smart business. As Board sponsor, Patrick champions making improvements to disability performance across the business and this is reflected in performance targets for senior managers that are accountable for improving the retention of employees with disabilities.

Senior managers working together with the disabled employees network (Employee Voice Group on Disability), their teams and relevant experts have developed action plans to improve retention of employees with disabilities.

Senior managers working together with the disabled employees network (Employee Voice Group on Disability), their teams and relevant experts have developed action plans to improve retention of employees with disabilities. This has been grounded in learning from evaluating performance using BDF's Disability Standard.

A key focus has been reviewing sickness absence policies to ensure these focus on helping employees successfully return to work. EE's sickness absence policy covers short and long term sickness absence and occupational health and line manager roles and responsibilities. There is also guidance especially for line managers about managing sickness absence and return to work which includes checklists and other resources.

Fundamental to improving rates of successful return to work has been active engagement with employees whilst they are off sick. An employee returning to work will be supported by their line manager and return to work interviews will be held and completed for all absences longer than half a working day/shift. To assist further, there is proactive engagement during this time with EE's occupational health provider and independent medical experts to ensure that any reasonable workplace adjustments can be agreed and implemented as quickly as possible.

Similarly, any engagement with Access to Work will also be undertaken by EE (as a recognised third party) to help the employee. This has helped increase the use of Access to Work to support employee retention with 39 employees in work with support through Access to Work in 2014 up from 4 in 2011.

All adjustments are recorded and are portable throughout EE. The adjustment passport was launched in 2013. Any assessments that need to be conducted are also conducted in the workplace rather than at an external assessment site to ensure that the assessment is relevant to the actual role.

EE knows the approach is working.

A long term female employee working in a customer facing role went off work with anxiety and depression. There had been ongoing engagement throughout the absence and within 4 months she started a phased return to work with the support of a third party vocational rehabilitation consultant. The vocational rehabilitation consultant provided line manager and employee support on a phased return to work to include additional support in the form of training and buddying, change of shift pattern and additional breaks which reduced over time as her confidence was built.

This has helped increase the use of Access to Work to support employee retention with 39 employees in work with support through Access to Work in 2014 up from 4 in 2011.

Recruitment top tip number eight:

8

Create an employee network with links to senior leaders

An organisation's greatest asset is its culture: one that understands the importance of disability in the workplace and how to effectively work with and develop employees with disabilities and long term health conditions. This happens in organisations where there is a visible commitment to employees with disabilities.

Many employers have encouraged the formation of disabled employee networks that enable employees with disabilities to share experiences, offer support, and develop innovative solutions to issues such as accessibility. Where senior leaders are committed to making a positive change for disabled employees and pay attention to what network groups are sharing with them, these can be a very positive, organisation-enhancing activity, at the same time as encouraging the retention of disabled employees.

BDF Partner Barclays Bank, for example, has done some great work with their disabled colleague network, Reach. Reach held a conference that focused on addressing the career development ambitions of employees with disabilities. Reach also acts as a sounding board for Barclays Bank about how to make their products and services ever more accessible in line with their ambition to be the 'most accessible and inclusive bank for all our customers and clients'.

BDF Partner Fujitsu's SEED (Support and Engage Employees with a Disability) Network launched in 2013 has spearheaded the creation of advice, guidance and support for employees with dyslexia and the introduction of a 'disability passport' which enables portability of workplace adjustments as employees change roles within Fujitsu.

An organisation's greatest asset is its culture: one that understands the importance of disability in the workplace and how to effectively work with and develop employees with disabilities and long term health conditions

Business Disability Forum

Business Disability Forum (BDF) is a not-for-profit member organisation that makes it easier and more rewarding to do business with and employ disabled people. BDF provides pragmatic support by sharing expertise, giving advice, providing training and facilitating networking opportunities to support organisations become fully accessible to employees, candidates and customers with disabilities and other adjustment requirements.

To find out more phone 020 7403 3020, email info@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk or check out www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk.

Contact us

Business Disability Forum
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London
SE1 2NY

Tel: +44-(0)20-7403-3020

Textphone: +44-(0)20-7403-0040

Fax: +44-(0)20-7403-0404

Email: enquiries@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Web: www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Business Disability Forum is committed to ensuring that all its products and services are as accessible as possible to everyone, including disabled people. If you wish to discuss anything with regard to accessibility, please contact us.

Company limited by guarantee with charitable objects. Registered Charity No: 1018463. Registered in England No: 2603700.

Business Disability Forum Partners include*:

Accenture
Allianz
American Express
Atos
Bank of America Merrill Lynch
Barclays
BBC
BT
CGI
Cisco Systems
Deloitte
Department for Transport
Department for Work and Pensions
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Environment Agency
EY
Fujitsu
GlaxoSmithKline
HM Revenue and Customs
Home Office
HSBC
Infosys Limited
Kingfisher plc
KPMG
Lloyds Banking Group
Lorien Resourcing
MAXIMUS UK
Microlink PC
Ministry of Defence
National Crime Agency
Nationwide Building Society
NHS Scotland
Nuance
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Royal Bank of Scotland Group
Royal Mail Group
Sainsbury's
Santander
Shell International Ltd
Sky UK Limited
Standard Chartered Bank Plc

***correct at the time of publication, visit our website for the current list.**



Sponsored by

ingeus