

C-suite buy in boosts disability disclosure

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

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Getting genuine buy-in from the top is key to improving levels of disability disclosure and, consequently, facilitating requests for workplace adjustments. That was the conclusion of a recent round table hosted by the Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDI) (<https://ridi.org.uk/#>).

The focus group also found that while some HR and diversity specialists are sceptical about the level of support available from senior leadership teams, once the topic is brought to the attention of the board, the response is often overwhelmingly positive, with one attendee sharing that leaders within her organisation responded by asking, “Why aren’t people telling us? We can really make this work”.

The event was hosted by HS2 Ltd and attended by a diverse mix of representatives from private and public sector organisations including Morgan McKinley, Kelly Services, the Clear Company, DWF, Guidant Group, and the REC.

There continues to be a significant gap between the employment rate of disabled people and the rest of the population. According to the Office for National Statistics, just 49% of disabled people of working age are in employment.

Practical ways in which leaders can bolster disability initiatives shared at the event include; identifying ‘disability champions’ within the business who can communicate their own stories, implementing unconscious bias training, instigating ‘reverse-mentoring’ initiatives where senior managers are partnered with disabled colleagues and leading by example by being open about their own disabilities.

Following the event, Mark Lomas, Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at HS2 Ltd, commented:

“The overwhelming consensus on the day was that the level of confidence around disability within an organisation is greater if it’s coming down from up high. At HS2 Ltd, for example, a letter from the CEO, delivered direct to the inboxes of employees was instrumental in boosting participation in a programme designed to ascertain workplace adjustment needs, with 75% of employees without a current DSE assessment completing a Clear Talents profile within 72 hours.

“However, it is essential that leaders approach disability with purpose, authenticity and trust. Success lies in creating and fostering a culture of trust so that all stakeholders, including senior leaders, feel comfortable asking questions and seeking solutions.”

Kate Headley, Director at the Clear Company and spokesperson for RIDI, added:

“It is natural to have a fear of the unknown, but leaders can have a positive impact on disability inclusion by not being afraid to ask questions, being visible in their support of the disability agenda and learning from others, both internally and externally.

“Senior executives should seek out success stories within their own organisation, and use these as a

tool to help boost disclosure during recruitment. As our panel highlighted, making adjustments for people who return to work after acquiring a disability is rarely an issue and technology is constantly enabling more people to do a wider variety of jobs.

“We’ve now moved beyond selling the business case for diversity – leaders are no longer asking ‘Why?’ but ‘How?’ Poor inclusivity is rarely intentional and success is entirely dependent on organisations partnering to share best practice. By supporting others, and holding others to account, we can move this agenda forwards. But there is no ‘silver bullet’, change depends on a seismic shift in ‘micro-behaviours’ across the recruitment landscape.”

If you would like to share the great things your organisation is doing to engage with disabled talent, or are looking for additional support in this area to help build confidence, get involved with RIDI today. For more information visit ridi.org.uk.

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