

Diversity in Apprenticeships

Case Study Number Three: Best Practice in the Recruitment Process for Atypical Apprentices

Funded by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), the UKRC developed and ran a 'Diversity in Apprenticeships' pilot project in 2010/11, working with the UK's leading energy providers to increase the number of female and BAME apprentices in this sector.

Driving Force

A lot of effort and resources goes into attracting applications from non-traditional candidates (see Case Study One of this series – The Business Case for Atypical Apprentices). Organisations involved in this project were therefore keen to review their recruitment process to ensure it doesn't inadvertently jeopardise these candidates' chances of successful employment.

Action

The majority of the organisations involved in this project, had staff involved in the recruitment process attend the UKRC's Understanding Unconscious Bias Training. The aims of these three hour sessions are to understand how the unconscious bias that exists within us all has the potential to impact on our business decisions, and what processes we can put in place to overcome this. The feedback from this training was very positive, with all organisations making changes to their recruitment processes as a result.

"The UKRC delivered an Understanding Unconscious Bias workshop which we have now rolled out to line managers and assessors. It was incredibly useful." (Sharon Goymer, Resourcing Manager, National Grid)

In addition, the partner meetings were a good source of knowledge and ideas on improving the recruitment process, with organisations sharing learning and good practice.

Results

The sharing of good practice between the organisations taking part in this project produced the following summary of current best practice and advice, from across the energy sector:

- Analyse the data from previous years' recruitment processes. Identify any drop off points. It may be a particular test, or a part of the process, that atypical candidates fail or drop out at. You may be surprised at the results.
- If you don't have data split by equality strands such as gender, race and disability, start to collect this from now on. If you don't, you won't be able to tell if the positive action you are undertaking is effective.

- Have an expert organisation review your tests. When E.ON reviewed their data, they found that some of their online tests were having an adverse effect on female candidates. They worked with an occupational testing provider to improve the fairness of the testing process.
- Ensure that those staff involved in the recruitment process are trained. The UKRC's Understanding Unconscious Bias Training is particularly beneficial for men and women involved in interviewing and selecting candidates. This training goes far deeper than what you are, or are not allowed to ask at interview.
- Some practical tests undertaken at assessment centres can inadvertently disadvantage female candidates, as they are less likely to have been able to practice these skills at home. Although the tests are a useful indicator of practical ability, remember women are less likely to recognise and select appropriate tools. Having a practical session at a women only taster day can help female candidates feel more comfortable practicing in a less stressful environment.
- Recruitment can be a long process. It is important to keep candidates informed of where they are in the process, and the expected length of time they have to wait for the next stage or a decision. Experience has shown that if not kept informed, women are more likely than men to find an alternative job or career.

Further information and acknowledgements

There are four case studies in this series. This is number three in the series, 'Best Practice in the Recruitment Process for Atypical Apprentices'. It looks at how you can improve your recruitment practices to ensure that women and BAME candidates have as good a chance of successful appointment, as other candidates. The others in the series are: The Business Case for Increasing the Diversity of Apprentices in the Energy Sector; Best Practice in Attracting Atypical Applicants to Apprenticeships; Best Practice in Running Women Only Days. There is also a Good Practice Guide to complement these case studies.

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