Canberra Blind Society.

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Mentoring Program Checklist Series

Recruitment

Here are ways for your organisation to avoid barriers in the recruitment process.

Contents

Creating a position/role description

- Could the role be done by someone who is blind or has a vision impairment?
- Could the role be adapted slightly?
- Create a position/role description to be inclusive for all candidates.
- Check your position/role description with a colleague or co-worker who does have a vision impairment?
- Create a fully accessible document outlining position/role description and make it easy to find on your job website.

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- Review and reassess specific requirements. For example: Does the role really need the candidate to have a driver's licence and access to vehicle? This requirement is becoming more common for many positions and may not be an essential requirement. It is an immediate barrier to applicants with a vision impairment even if they meet all the other selection criteria requirements. Can transport, when required, be managed differently?

Job website accessibility

A great deal of work has been done by information technology and website development teams however there is still work to be done. There needs to be an ongoing process to check that all information is accessible especially after software or website upgrades. If available, it is recommended that you get someone with a vision impairment, with screen reader skills, to check any changes. Our review of information has discovered a few common challenges for applicants with a vision impairment. These include:

- **Position descriptions** – these details are sometimes positioned in an awkward location on the webpage. Directing applicants to all the information needed is required to increase success. This can be done easily by including an extra sentence or a link in an easily accessible position at the start of the information provided.
- **Document requirements** – attachment process is sometimes not accessible for documents such as Resume, Cover Letter and Selection Criteria information.
- **Confirmation tick boxes** – CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing Test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) options regularly provide problems for people with vision impairment and delay or stop application process.

Advertising the position

Explicitly say in the position/role description that the role could be done by a qualified person with a vision impairment. Promote the position with more than a simple inclusion statement. Try to tailor it to your organisation not just the same standard message used for every position, every time.

For example, instead of the standard:
"The Public Service supports workforce diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive workplace. As part of this commitment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, culturally diverse people and those who identify as LGBTIQ are encouraged to apply."

Get creative and try a new approach each time. Following are two examples that might be helpful:

Example 1 -
"This role has been designed to encourage people with a vision impairment to apply. While the role is open to everyone, we believe lived experience with a disability could be very helpful in this role. We have involved a diverse team in the job and role description design, and we are committed to ensuring we get the right person for the job. Please take a chance on us, give us feedback along the way and help us improve our recruitment process."

Example 2 -
"Don't meet every single requirement? Studies have shown that women and people with diverse backgrounds are less likely to apply for jobs unless they meet every single qualification. At our organisation we are dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive and authentic workplace, so if you're excited about this role but your past experience doesn't align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we encourage you to still apply. You may be just the right candidate for this job or other roles within our organisation."

Get creative in your advertising

Stop using the same processes and expecting different results. Don't just promote the role in the usual places – government job websites, Seek, Ethical Jobs etc. Reach out to Disability Employment Services, connect with your Diversity and Inclusion networks, remind your selected recruitment agencies to ensure they favourably review applications with diverse backgrounds. Investigate past candidates in your system that just missed out on a previous position however might be a good fit for your new position. Reach out as they might be doing project-based work and be available to consider your new role. Try new ideas and support the process every step of the way.

Put together a complete strategy for a more inclusive workforce and provide a range of opportunities for job seekers to consider. Following is link to a program collaboration between Department of Industry, Science and Resources with recruitment firm Randstad.
https://www.randstad.com.au/disr-people-first/

Another resource that could be helpful is Inclusive Language Guide produced by People with Disability Australia https://pwd.org.au/resources/language-guide/

Encourage applicants

Provide access to an experienced recruitment professional for people with a disability to have a confidential discussion and assist with the application process. Support them in finding out if they have the skills and experience for the position and answer any questions. If possible, ensure the recruitment professional has lived experience with disability so they can share their experience and how they were successful. Always be honest and if an applicant is obviously not the right fit for the role offer suggestions for building skills, experiences, and networks. Share details about other opportunities like graduate programs or disability programs. Encourage applicants to be open to sharing that they have a disability by explaining the benefits of taking advantage of different programs and supports. However, if they would prefer not to share then respect their decision.

If available your team could provide examples of adjustments in the recruitment process. Candidates are often now sure what they can and cannot ask for and therefore making suggestions is helpful. These could include alternative formats of the candidate kit, position description in Word or HTML format and not just PDF. When available inform applicants that Braille, large print, or audio on request. Alternate formats assist some neuro diverse individuals as well as blind, deaf blind and vision impaired individuals. Ask candidates for their preferred method of communication, email or phone.

Review applications

When reviewing applications be aware of your individual and the organisational biases and try and be open to applicants that might not have traditional experience. Take another look at the details and see if the role could be adapted to meet a more diverse range of qualifications and skills.

Get back to applicants as soon as possible

All applicants are excited to hear that they have been successful in getting to interview stage however, they would also like to know if they were not successful as soon as possible too. Respecting applicants time is important so they can continue their job search. **DO NOT wait till the full recruitment process is over before getting back to applicants that were not successful.** This approach is a significant flaw in the recruitment process for all candidates and not just those who share their diversity or disability.

For those who have been open to sharing their disability but were not successful it is important to provide more detail about their unsuccessful application. Do not simply say "it was a competitive field". This is not helpful for any applicants. While there may

not be capacity to go into detail for all applications it would be helpful to offer this support to people who have shared that they have a disability.

Booking interviews

For candidates who have been successful in making it to interview stage ask them what assistance might be needed. Build an understanding of the different needs of candidates with a disability. For example – easily accessible interview location for a person with a vision impairment or arrange to meet them and take them to the right location. Transport might take a little longer for some candidates so ask them the best interview time range. For example, if you book interview for 9am they might have challenges securing transport at this busy time of day. They will feel stressed about being late or missing their interview time.

Provide information around 'dignified access' and ensure the building and/or interview meeting rooms are accessible. Please inform candidates that their guide dogs and assistance animals are welcome in the premises.

If the interview is on-line take time to find out what assistance candidates need to limit technical difficulties at the scheduled interview time. Ensure you send the video call link on the morning of the interview as a back-up as this provides easy access for the candidate on the interview day.

Plus also provide a direct number to assist if there are technology challenges.

Important note about scheduling interviewers: Ensure all your interviewers are trained, experienced and aware of the extra challenges people with a disability encounter in securing work. Candidates with different disabilities don't have as many workplace experiences as other candidates. Interviewers need to consider all work, volunteer and everyday experience answers to questions and not just 'paid employment' examples.

During interviews

Make sure everyone is comfortable. Allow everyone time to share how they are feeling plus ask questions about best set up and interview approach. Check everyone has what they need. Allow extra time for set up and finishing. Give candidate more than one opportunity to ask questions. They might be nervous and need extra time to think about what additional information they would like to share. Be aware that there could be times when some candidates might miss the opportunity to share relevant information or ask another question. Take extra time to double check that candidates have all the information they need.

In some organisations there are misconceptions about what a blind and vision impaired people are capable of doing even with their extensive qualifications and work experience has been outlined in the application. An interview is therefore a good opportunity for candidates with a vision impairment to be able to sell themselves and really showcase all their skills and abilities. It is also helpful to offer the panel the opportunity to ask candidates anything they have on their mind, which could be based on both curiosity or concerns about potential challenges. The candidate can then respond, explain their approach, address concerns and put the interviewer minds at ease based on their lived experience.

Post Interviews

Contact successful candidates

If a candidate is successful, alongside sharing the positive news, there will be other discussions needed. Alongside start dates and normal employment contract details, information about workplace adjustments needs to be gathered prior to a new employee joining. Doing this well means that in the early days of employment new employees are supported appropriately from day one.

Working together with your new employee with a vision impairment will help in this process. Areas regarding support may have been discussed during the interview process. Refer to this information as well as asking considered questions based on prior experience and the individual needs of your new employee.

The individual employees may:
- be aware of what they need, have experience in gaining the right assistance and know how to use different supports. They just need the technology set up and they are ready to go.
- know what they need but could require extra training once set up.
- not know what they need so working together will work well to find out individual requirements, what supports are available and best process to ensure employee has the best support available when they begin their new role.

Develop a checklist that gathers information efficiently about workplace adjustments and other support that could be helpful before the new employee's commencement date. Suggestions could include:
- gathering information about software requirements (eg screen reader "JAWS") installation. More details in on-boarding/induction checklist;
- organising an orientation 'walk around' the office location/floor before the employee commences;

- discussing need for allocating a permanent desk if workplace is set up with hot desks or activity-based work areas;
- appointing a buddy/onsite support person for the new starter if their team is working remotely or other locations.

Important to remember even with all the best start date planning there could be delays with equipment or software. This can sometimes be challenging and is not the employer's or the new employee's fault. Communication is the key, even if the message is there have been a few unexpected delays.

Contact unsuccessful candidates

Informing interview candidates that they were not successful does require a bit more communication management. Organisations would like offers to the most preferred candidate to be accepted quickly however this isn't always the case. Keeping people informed that the process is moving ahead or if there are delays, is a polite way to respect all people involved.

Once the successful candidate has accepted, it is important to provide productive feedback to candidates who were not successful at the interview stage, especially if they have been open to sharing their disability. Again, the standard "competitive field of applicants" or "better candidate on day" letter is not helpful for anyone but especially not for people with a disability. The success rate for people with a disability is extremely low and can be demotivating.

Candidates appreciate feedback even if it is 1 or 2 areas they can realistically work on. For example, recommend getting application process assistance or more interview practice by seeking out or setting up mock interview opportunities. If you have information related to these supports, please pass this onto the unsuccessful candidate.

You could also provide information for alternate pathways. Perhaps there is a tailored graduate program coming up or disability identified positions you could direct candidates to investigate. Again, get creative with how you can assist people who are keen to join your organisation but need additional skills or experience.

Other resources

Eye to the Future – Blind Citizens Australia
https://eyetothefuture.com.au/employers/
https://eyetothefuture.com.au/recruitment-process/
Vision Australia
https://www.visionaustralia.org/news/2021-09-28/employers-must-do-more-support-people-who-are-blind-or-have-low-vision

https://www.visionaustralia.org/carols/see-whats-possible/tips-for-employers

NSW Public Service Commission

https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/culture-and-inclusion/disability-employment

Victorian Public Service Commission

https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/disability-employment-action-plan/