

A road map to becoming more 'Business Confident'

The 'OPD & Business' Agenda - Moving into action Susan Scott-Parker OBE

- **Start with an Agenda Opportunity Audit**
 - Profile any existing local 'business-disability collaborations'
 - Which local senior business leaders have a personal track record for positioning 'wanting to get it right on disability' as a business priority?
 - Which business leaders are known to support the wider ESG or responsible business agenda and might be open to also addressing disability equality and inclusion. Who might agree to join your Business Advisory Group?
 - Which local companies are members of ILOGBDN, Valuable 500, any local National Business Disability Network: what have their leadership teams publicly promised to do? Can you help them keep those promises on the ground?
 - Which local employers will need to fill more than 10 vacancies in the next year?
 - What skills will they be looking for?
 - How do they usually find candidates? Can you bring pre-screened disabled talent into that mainstream process?
 - Or will the employer need to take positive action and craft a 'disability confident' alternative process?
 - Who in your organisation, and/or which colleagues in your wider disability sector, have business relevant skills, contacts, experience?
 - Who locally has proven 'business relevant' expertise relating to employment, workplace adjustments, accessible technology, accessible built environments, community investment, disability awareness training?
 - What resources for employers, such as the Employer Toolkit, do you have readily available – what is missing?

- **Invite a small group of business leaders to join your informal ‘business advisory group’** to help you, as allies and critical friends, to deliver on the 10 commitments – meeting informally, perhaps every 6 weeks and ask them: “What would they do in your shoes” that that would make it easier for them and other employers to deliver best practice/ access disabled talent?”
- **Prepare your Business Agenda communications strategy and social /mainstream media ‘package’** – ensure your members, the local business community, funders, any local National Business Disability Network, the ILOGBDN, Valuable 500 and not for profit allies -and public policy makers- know that you are signing the Agenda because you are determined to promote the practical partnerships with business that expedite the economic empowerment of people with disabilities..
- **Organise informal gatherings bringing business people and disabled people together i.e.** to celebrate the launch of your signing up to the OPD & Business Agenda - and/or to raise the profile of your informal ‘Business Advisory Group’- and/or to share learning and impact of the Business Orientation experience...there will be many occasions to recognise progress while enabling employers and disabled people to learn directly from each other.
- **Year One: Launch a ‘Bridging the Gap’ business orientation initiative** in year one: employers invite OPD team members, and others responsible for economic empowerment initiatives locally, to spend 2 days on their corporate premises to further their ‘business orientation’ journey – see concept note below.
- **Year Two – Progress Review & Consultation** Invite business leaders and other key stakeholders to come together to review progress in delivering the 10 commitments – and set priorities for the next 12 months.

“Bridging the Gap” between Business & People with Disabilities

A 2-day ‘on site in the ‘Business Orientation’ programme

Our Purpose

- To enable organisations that help disabled people find employment to meet the needs & expectations of employers as valued service users & potential allies or partners– so that significantly more persons with disabilities find work.
- To build sustainable, authentic, mutually beneficial personal and professional relationships between disabled people and their advocates and people in business.
- To ‘bridge the gap’ and challenge deep rooted, unhelpful assumptions regarding the business as held by the disability sector - and regarding the disability sector as held by people in the private sector.
- To build trust and mutual understanding of each other’s ‘lived reality’.

‘Bridging the Gap’ - Programme Design

A group of companies invite OPDs and/or NGOs to spend 2 days on site in each business – to experience an informal ‘corporate orientation’ -which enables those helping disabled people to find jobs, livelihoods, careers to:

- meet and build relationships with key managers & staff in selected businesses.
- understand participating businesses: their different cultures, priorities and challenges.
- understand the range of jobs in each company/industry sector & the vacancies anticipated.
- understand what the company typically requires and values when they recruit (skills, qualifications, attributes, career potential etc.)
- Help managers to become more confident personally and professionally
- Inform managers of existing business-relevant services, support, resources – while asking them to propose improvements, identify gaps...
- identify any access challenges OPD learners encounter while on site (built environment, ICT, other) and share solutions as useful feedback to the host company.

Bridging the Gap Outcome & Impact

OPDs and others in the disability sector gain:

- an understanding of the employer's reality -as experienced and described by local employers - to include insights into how they recruit - what they are looking for from candidates- the types of jobs they predict will become available - the language recruiters recognise and respond to...
- an understanding of the obstacles well intentioned employers encounter when seeking to employ disabled people.
- the opportunity to joint problem solve.
- personal confidence in how to build relationships with people in business.
- confidence in how to articulate the benefits for persons with disabilities and for business, which flow from making it easier for employers to recruit on the basis of capability & potential, and from positioning the employer as a valued service user and potential partner.
- enhanced capacity to effectively pre-screen job candidates, who are then more likely to gain and sustain employment.
- enhanced ability to negotiate with employers when particular candidates require flexibility or adjustments in order to compete on an equal basis.
- a better understanding of the obstacles disabled people and the enlightened employer encounter - those are in the control of the employer – and those that are not – and so become better equipped to remove those obstacles.

Participating employers gain

- a better understanding of the disability sector and the lived reality of persons with disabilities in their community.
- Enhanced confidence and motivation as they now know where to go for relevant, friendly, expert assistance.
- recognition for having invested time & expertise in a programme which will in the long term enhance the life chances of so many needlessly excluded.
- personal and professional connections with the disability sector and community.
- opportunities to explore potential collaboration with a new community of key local stakeholders.

- the opportunity to create more efficient and fair job markets, as local influencers and providers gain a better understanding of how to meet the needs and expectations of *both* business and disabled people.

While not as powerful as the 2--day on site orientations

Structured Bridging the Gap Workshops can also be helpful.

HR directors and other managers from a range of companies contribute to workshops with organisations promoting economic empowerment where they, employers, share and discuss their 'reality', their needs, their expectations.

- This is my world - our business - what we do - our priorities - our challenges - our successes - our culture.
- This is how we usually attract - assess - appoint - induct new talent.
- This is where we usually go for help in recruiting.
- This is what we expect from a CV - interview- on line application etc.
- This is what would make it easier for us to routinely - and/or via targeted projects - recruit persons with disabilities.
- This is what we have tried in the past – and these are the obstacles we encounter when we try to deliver good practice – can you help?

Remember: Your primary purpose – be it on site or in such workshops -is to enhance your 'business awareness': it is NOT to deliver disability awareness to business. Yes, enhanced disability confidence usually follows when people in business begin to meet people with disabilities - however Bridging the Gap programmes must focus on enabling disabled people/ OPDs to learn directly *from* business as you explore potential collaboration.