

# Diversity and Inclusion - Unlocking talent and potential

Oct 2018

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Diversity and Inclusion, or simply 'D&I', has become the trendy new sibling to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Companies, big and small, are wising up to the idea that diversity brings value to their organisations. From leadership roles right across to apprentices; attracting, recruiting and retaining diverse staff is not just the right thing to do, but makes good business sense. Apprenticeships provide a great route into employment for disabled job seekers, who may benefit from learning on the job and building practical new skills in an immersive environment. As such, apprenticeship training providers have a wonderful opportunity to be a step ahead, to ensure disabled apprentices have equal opportunities to thrive.

At Diversity and Ability (DnA), 2 out of the 3 founders and around 85% of the wider team self-identify as neurodiverse/disabled. We can testify that not only is this a positive thing in terms of improving the services we provide but also demonstrates that it is possible to tilt the shift on diversity demographics, should you want to!

D&I and HR professionals are tasked with the responsibility of making their workplace more accessible and attractive to neurodiverse and disabled employees and apprentices. Equally for training providers. So, when we talk about 'inclusion' we just mean ensuring that all aspects of the workplace and training; from the built environment, IT systems and recruitment process, for example, do not alienate people with disabilities. It is widely recognised there are three main drivers behind boosting diversity and inclusion, which are as follows:

1. **Commercial** - Diversity brings valuable and varied skill sets to the workplace and is proven to increase profitability, employee morale, innovation and productivity.
2. **Social/ moral** - In the UK there is a disability employment gap where 48% of disabled people aged 16–64 are in work, compared with 80% of non-disabled people- a 32% employment gap. This results in an enormous untapped pool of potential where people's talents are going unrecognised.

3. **Legal** - Employers are duty bound under the Equality Act 2010 to create fair opportunities for all. Inclusion is not only an ethical consideration but also a legal compliance one.

So now we know broadly what D&I is and why it's an important focal point, the next question is, how do we achieve it?

This is not a straightforward answer as all organisations have their own strengths and challenges when it comes accessibility. However, as a rule of thumb, you should be evaluating how inclusive your processes are in terms of attracting, recruiting and retaining neurodiverse and disabled candidates. If you follow a prospective employee's journey of employment from start to finish and can identify any blocks that might deter them from either applying or staying in their apprenticeship once they've been hired, there is work to be done!

Doing some groundwork on your organisation's 'blocks' is a great place to start, as this will help to reveal where the problems lie. For example, do you have a retention problem? Do your apprentice demographics reflect national disability statistics considering 20% of UK population is disabled? Are disabled apprentices progressing to permanent roles at the same rate as their peers? The actions might then involve anything from ensuring your apprentices have access to any support or equipment they might need to do their job to the best of their ability or evaluating how inclusive the language on an apprenticeship advert is. Above all, the lynchpin to success in improving the diversity of any organisation is instilling a culture of openness and a celebration of diversity and making that clear for all to see.

DnA is passionate about unlocking people's potential and truly believe that disability just means a difference that, when supported well, brings much-needed diversity to our society and allows everyone, and we mean EVERYONE, the opportunity to thrive.

If you would like some guidance on your Diversity and Inclusion journey, DnA is on hand to provide expert advice and support to you and your staff. You can visit our website to read more about the services we provide.

Get in touch; [emma.turner@diversityandability.com](mailto:emma.turner@diversityandability.com)

Or visit for more info [www.diversityandability.com](http://www.diversityandability.com)