

Disability Confident Event 2017

It's a great honour to be here and share with you CGI's road to disability confidence. It's something I feel personally very passionate about and so I'm very happy to be here to tell you about our disability confidence journey.

As many of us here today know, most people aren't born with their disability or impairment and it isn't something we invite into our lives: for most it's unwelcome and long staying. Often adjustments are required for us to be able to carry on and do what we want to do in life – and for many it's a difficult and tough journey. The arrival of disability into my life back in my 20s has had a lasting impact. But my role at CGI has enabled me to use the lessons I've learned from the arrival of this unwelcome guest to good use. It's difficult trying to pretend to be something your not – able bodied, not depressed, without dependants that require your support and time. And knowing that people work better when they can be themselves has shaped my role and driven my passion for building a disability confident business at CGI.

Our members may choose not to identify themselves as having a disability; or they may have already made adjustments to their life and don't consider the term 'disability' something they relate to. But they still need to be confident that they work in an organisation that supports them work to the best of their ability. We are also mindful of the fact that some of our members may not have a disability or impairment themselves; they may be caring or responsible for someone who has and so still require support. Though we still have a lot of progress to make, I'm really proud of the achievements we've made to support our members be themselves at work and to support them with their caring responsibilities.

Being a disability confident organisation starts with a disability confident recruitment process. That means attracting the right candidates, regardless of any disability, to apply. It also means ensuring they want to join your organisation. This is a big area of focus for us at the moment, and we're working with some external agencies such as diversity jobs to ensure our vacancies have a wide visibility.

Once someone has found a role with us they want to pursue we use an online system to ensure all candidates can easily let us know about any adjustments they need us to make. Often simple adjustments can make all the difference to someone who is striving to perform at their best. In most cases there is very little or no cost involved; just some time and some thought. Recent examples we've made in our recruitment process include giving people more time to complete the assessments or where we have group-based tasks, we've read the brief out to the whole group rather than expecting the candidates to read and quickly process the information. For a recent applicant with an autistic spectrum condition, adjustments included an additional email outlining the structure of the day and completing our assessment in a separate room from the other candidates and using their own PC with their specialist software preloaded.

Should we be right for the recruit and they're right for CGI, we can use the adjustment information supplied during recruitment to ensure they have all the support they need when they start working with us from day one. In a recent case, a candidate joined us with dyslexia. Because the recruitment process helped identify the adjustments required, we were able to provide what the member needed from day one and this was ready and waiting for her – Dragon Software, coloured screen overlays etc.

Through our online adjustment process, Clear Talents, we've also been able to help members to recognise their own disabilities – sometimes before they are even aware themselves. We've recently had a number of cases of members who through the system questions were able to discover they have the dyslexia. And through our adjustments process, they were easily able to get the help they needed to work to the best of their ability. And of course as our members' needs change, so does their adjustments. Regular conversations with line managers ensure the correct adjustments are still in place. This is helped by our use of an Adjustments Passport which is a written record of adjustments, both equipment and organisational, which have been agreed between the manager and team member. And through our Capability Network, which I'll come onto, they are able to have access to peer to peer support and guidance with their disabilities.

Being a disability confident organisation is also about recognising and appreciating the qualities and benefits a diverse workforce brings. We are working closely with specialist charity, Autism Spectrum Connections Cymru in an effort to recruit more people with Autism to work for us at CGI. As part of this recruitment process, some of our managers from Bridgend have had the specialist training provided by the charity to help them understand and support any members who may have those needs. We've already identified one potential candidate who was successful at interview, but unfortunately, he decided he wasn't quite ready to take on the challenge of working for us just now. However, we look forward to seeing more successful candidates in the future.

As we push for greater digital transformation, it is crucial that some of the gains and savings are redeployed to ensure those with a disability are not left out. Both employment and digital services should be accessible for all. And especially in IT services, many roles require only minimal adjustments to be well suited to those with a disability or impairment. We currently have members who have returned to work after a serious stroke, or who have neurological conditions such as MS, but with the right kind of support, they are able to work productively and comfortably. We've been using the disability standard and signed the Forum's Accessible Technology Charter to further emphasise our alignment to the ten commitments to good practice designed to help organisations embed accessibility in everything they do. These include easy access and awareness of workplace IT adjustments, designing accessible products and services, a more disability confident recruitment function and dealing with IT suppliers to ensure accessibility is taken into account in the procurement process.

For us, an important part of retaining a disabled workforce is about providing a place for peer to peer support. Focusing on our members, our disability network, known as the Capability Network is growing in interest, sharing stories, providing mutual support and developing confidence in our managers and colleagues. We have network groups for mental health, caring, dyslexia and stammering and we expect the list to grow as more members join us and share their area of interest. As senior sponsor for the group, we started the conversation with my own personal story. And as the network continues to grow, I have been overwhelmed by the other stories which our members had previously kept to themselves and through the network finally had the courage to share. The power of the network, as I'm sure many of you will have seen in

your own networks, is to embark on that cultural change journey and send the message that there are other people facing similar journeys, they are supported by the organisation and there are opportunities. It starts the ripples of confidence and conversation.

Thinking more broadly about disability, one of the initiatives I'm particularly proud of that we've implemented in the last year is our mental health awareness and first aid training. We know that 1 in 4 people suffer from a mental health problem during their lifetime, so it makes sense to have people in our offices that are trained to listen to colleagues in distress, offer informal support where needed and signpost them towards the sources of help available. As part of our wellbeing programme, which includes building resilience workshops, mindfulness training and webinars 76 people so far have attended the two day course organised by Mental Health First Aid and a further 11 are attending the course in Bridgend literally as we speak! We are well on the way to reaching the recommended ratio of 1: 50 employees, approximately 110. As part of this programme we've started drop in sessions in two of our offices so members can easily have a chat to a Mental Health First aider or collect information on support measures available.

We are also really promoting our Member Assistance programme which has a huge amount to offer in terms of information, support and various forms of counselling but was underused. Over the past 3 years usage has increased steadily quarter by quarter as we publicised both its existence and its confidential nature so we are now just above the industry standard of 5%.

Underpinning all these initiatives, including the Mental Health First Aid and like the capability network, it's all about starting conversations and building disability confidence from the top to the bottom of our organisation. I'm very proud to be in a position to have started the conversation at the top and see the ripples grow into waves throughout CGI to make us a more disability confident organisation.

Additional documents

Capability Network overview

Clear Talents process