

THREE EASY STEPS FOR MAKING OUR INDUSTRY MORE INCLUSIVE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Working towards and maintaining a supportive workplace for people with disabilities is a win for everybody, writes Bridget Weaver.



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The spectacular group of individuals who make up the Australian media industry is not entirely reflective of Australia as a whole, and this can be seen quite clearly when it comes to disability.

While people with disabilities make up 17 % of the population, only about 4 % of our industry identifies as having a disability.

So what can we do to make Australian media a more accessible and inclusive industry for people with disability?

We can start by addressing three key areas:

THE WORKPLACE

Workplace accessibility can be one of the first hurdles faced by many people with disabilities during a job hunt. If someone is physically impeded from accessing all or part of the workplace, employers lose out on potential candidates before they even have an opportunity to show their skills and qualifications. At a time when agencies face high role vacancies and staff churn, it's not only a shame, but counterproductive to limit the available pool of candidates because of a cumbersome staircase or inaccessible toilets.

THE TALENT SEARCH

In addition to making workplaces accessible for people with disabilities, employers can evaluate where they are finding talent. Diversifying where candidates are sourced leads to a diverse pool of talent. By contrast, primarily sourcing candidates through referrals from existing staff or internal promotion often means limiting the talent pool to people with more homogenous experiences and perspectives.

Partnering with DES providers, posting on disability-focused job boards, and ensuring channels for sourcing talent cover a diverse array of the Australian population are fantastic places to start in an effort to improve representation of people with disabilities in the industry. Disability Employment Service (DES) providers like APM, Wise Employment and atWork Australia, offer assistance to job seekers with disabilities, including employment assistance and skills development.

Get Skilled Access, founded by Australian of the Year, tennis legend, and disability advocate Dylan Alcott, partners with employers to help to establish inclusion action plans. GSA recently launched thefield.jobs, a job board partnering with inclusive employers and job seekers with disabilities to help more than 500,000 Australians with disabilities currently seeking work.

THE INTERVIEW

Organisations like theField.jobs provide invaluable support not only in acting as the medium between job seekers and employers, but also in assisting employers in better catering to disabled applicants by tailoring the interview experience.

For a variety of reasons, some people with disabilities may have difficulty best displaying their talents and qualifications in a traditional interview setting. As such, offering the option to provide resumes in alternate formats, such as video or the option to request specific interview formats (in-person, phone, VC) or accommodations (skills assessments for those who struggle with traditional interview formats, Auslan interpreter, etc) better caters to people with disabilities who are more inclined to flourish and best convey their potential with minor changes.

Hiring in Australian media is as difficult as it has ever been, while the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is disproportionately high. Here is an opportunity to address both issues.

As a added bonus, research shows that organisations focused on disability engagement grow their sales 2.9x faster and profits 4.1x faster than the competition.

Working towards and maintaining a supportive workplace for people with disabilities is a win for everybody. By closely examining workplace accessibility, talent acquisition and interview processes, the industry can make considerable strides towards becoming more inclusive.