

TALENT

not TOKENISM

the business benefits of workforce diversity

filling skills
gaps



understanding our
customers

getting the best
candidate



finding new
markets



reducing
recruitment costs

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

A firm's success and competitiveness depends on its ability to embrace diversity and draw on the skills, understanding and experience of all its people.

The potential rewards of diversity are significant: an organisation that recruits its staff from the widest possible pool will unleash talent and develop better understanding of its customers. It will also enable it to spot market opportunities.

Employers featured in this report have proactively sought to achieve greater workforce diversity. Good practice examples range from supporting women's or ethnic minorities' career progression, running recruitment days for disabled people and establishing social networks for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees.

Promoting diversity in the workplace need not be expensive or time-consuming but it does require a commitment from the top to trigger a change in culture and attitude. Trade union and employee representatives can play their part in facilitating an evolution in working practices by offering advice and support to employees. Organisations such as the Equality & Human Rights Commission have an important role in providing support and guidance to employers, large and small.

However you decide to take this important agenda forward, we hope this guide will help you by providing ideas on where to start and tips on how to develop a successful long-term diversity strategy.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Lambert".

Richard Lambert, Director-General, CBI



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brendan Barber".

Brendan Barber, General Secretary, TUC



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trevor Phillips".

Trevor Phillips, Chair, Equality & Human Rights Commission

The business benefits of greater diversity

What do we mean by workforce diversity?
Why do so many businesses think it's important to have a diverse workforce?
And might your business be missing out?

The impression a business makes

Would you notice if you walked into a small shop and all the customers were women while all the shop assistants were men? Or if all the assistants appeared over 50 but all their customers were teenagers? Might you think this a bit odd?

You probably would. We are used to seeing a range of different people while out and about. Any concentration of one type of person can stand out, especially if a contrasting group is close by.

Although it can be harder to spot, the same is true for businesses. Its workforce influences how the business is perceived to the world outside.

Who is employed and what they are like says something about the business to customers, suppliers, contractors and potential recruits, as well as to existing employees and to trade unions representing them. If a company's workforce is uniform in sex, age, ethnic background, or any of the other characteristics people tend to notice about one another, then that can make a difference to the impression a business makes.

What the UK population is like¹

There are almost 61 million people living in the United Kingdom, slightly more women than men. Nearly 31 million of us are working or actively looking for work (most of the rest are under 16 or are retired). These days, the number of women either in, or looking for, paid work is getting closer to the number of men: 14.1 million women compared to 16.7 million men. Seventy percent of women between the ages of 16 and 59 are in paid work outside the home, compared with just 56% in 1971. This includes a majority of mothers with children under 16, whether they are married or living with a partner or on their own.

Around 3.5 million disabled people are in employment – around one in eight of all working-age people in employment. This represents an employment rate for disabled people of 50%, whereas the working-age population as a whole has an employment rate of about 80%.

The working population as a whole is getting older. Compared to 1971, a higher proportion of the population is aged 30 or older and this is set to continue to grow in the future.

The 2001 Census gives the latest definite measure of the UK's ethnic diversity, and showed that 7.9% of the total population, or 4.6 million people, are from ethnic minority groups. Indians were the largest minority group, followed by Pakistanis, those of mixed ethnic backgrounds, black Caribbeans, black Africans and Bangladeshis. The remaining ethnic minority groups each accounted for less than 0.5% but together accounted for a further 1.4% of the UK population.

The most recent British Social Attitudes Survey shows that 45% of the UK population identify themselves as having no religious belief (though they may hold non-religious beliefs, such as humanism). 47.5% of people say they are Christian, while 3.3% are Muslim, 1.4% Hindu, 0.5% Jewish, 0.2% Sikh, 0.2% Buddhist and 1.4% other non-Christian religions.

The majority of people are heterosexual or 'straight' and they are attracted to the opposite sex. HM Treasury Actuaries estimate that 6% of people are attracted to people of the same sex (lesbian women and gay men) or both the same and opposite sex (bisexual people).

1. Source: Social Trends 2008 (Office for National Statistics, April 2008)
All the figures are for 2007 unless otherwise indicated

Positive action, yes: positive discrimination, no

It is important to appreciate the legal distinction between ‘positive action’ and ‘positive discrimination’. Positive action is allowed under existing discrimination law. It is designed to create a level playing field so that historically disadvantaged groups can compete on equal terms for jobs, or for access to services and so on. It can include advertising in a specific place or publication to encourage applications from types of people who have not in the past applied for a particular job, or additional training to help someone show more effectively what skills they would bring to a role, or providing support networks, or adapting working practices. These ‘balancing measures’ reflect the possibility that in some cases, to achieve a fair outcome, a difference in approach and methods to encourage may be required. It is this approach that many of the companies featured here have used to increase the diversity of their workforce. It is essential that the under representation is clearly established before embarking on positive action.

This type of balancing measure is not the same as positive discrimination. Positive discrimination in the workplace usually refers to making recruitment/promotion decisions solely on the basis of a characteristic someone has, so that their gender or some other characteristic is a deciding factor in recruiting them, irrespective of whether they are in other ways the best candidate for the job. In other words, it ignores merit. This is not generally allowed under European or British discrimination law.

Treating each other with respect

It is also helpful to understand that treating people fairly and not discriminating does not have to feel like a legal minefield. It is important to get procedures right, but the most important thing is to try to make sure your workplace is one where people treat each other with respect and no-one believes that ‘different’ means ‘worse’.

Most of the time, asking your staff to treat each other as they would like to be treated themselves will ensure everyone is treated fairly and in a way that respects and even celebrates diversity.

Many of the companies featured in this guide have deliberately taken an additional step, which is to look at whether there is more they could do within the law to make sure their policies and procedures are operating fairly. Sometimes they’ve asked people who already work for them, directly and/or through their union or staff council, what they think, or they have looked for help from outside. They have then made changes to make sure no-one is unnecessarily excluded from a job they could do. This has meant either that their workforce has become more diverse, or that people in the workforce feel more valued and supported for who they are and what they bring to their jobs.

What a diverse workforce looks like

Lack of diversity can occur when employers don’t manage to look beyond the first thing they may notice about a person – that someone is male or female, older or younger, black or white, disabled or non-disabled, and so on – to consider in-depth whether that person has the skills required for the job. Instead, they go for what feels like the safe option of ‘someone like me’.

A successfully diverse workforce is one that contains people at all levels who have a range of different characteristics, able to be themselves at work as well as outside it. They will have been recruited or promoted on the basis of their abilities and competence in doing the job, because their employer has focused on this, and not on what they looked like. This guide shows why in the end a business that adopts this approach is likely to benefit.



The benefits of a diverse workforce

Businesses may begin to look at who they are recruiting to be sure they are meeting the requirements of the law and treating their employees and applicants for jobs and for promotion fairly and not discriminating improperly. Another reason may be to respond to something workers or their representatives in a union or staff association or network have suggested.

An equally important motive for treating people fairly and with respect is that it is morally the right thing to do. A socially responsible company will make sure all its workers, including managers, behave towards one another in a way that promotes the company's positive values. This is not just about avoiding discrimination, harassment and bullying, although this is important. Discrimination in employment, wherever it exists, makes it difficult for people to do their jobs properly or excludes people from a workplace altogether

because of an irrelevant demographic characteristic. This wastes individual potential and is also damaging to the business: it fails to recruit potential staff, existing staff leave and may bring tribunal claims, and revenues ultimately suffer – so the moral imperative and the business case go hand in hand.

Even more importantly, each of us thrives when we are valued as an individual, including our different experiences and viewpoints, which may in turn relate to our demographic characteristics – age, ethnic origin, disability, religious faith or non-religious belief, sex, or sexual orientation. This doesn't just apply to attitudes to employees, but also customers, sub-contractors, suppliers, and the wider community where a business is based.

Yet many of the companies featured here have found that what may have begun as a way of making sure they are doing the right thing either legally or morally has had tangible benefits for their core business. These include:

- Increasing employee satisfaction, which helps attract new staff and retain those already there, reduces recruitment costs, and can increase productivity
- Understanding better how the company's diverse customers think and what drives their spending habits, or how to access markets they have not previously been able to tap into so effectively
- Finding enough workers to fill skills gaps in areas with tight labour markets, where there are not enough 'obvious candidates' for the vacancies they have.

The case studies and 'top tips' included in this guide give more detail on these benefits.

How to use this guide

Have a look at your business, your workforce and where you operate. If your company has different levels of seniority, do the top ones as well as the bottom ones contain different types of people? Are you worried about high staff turnover or have people you've offered a job to decided to go somewhere else? Perhaps your customer base is limited to people who all look like one another and like your staff – this could mean there are untapped markets for your business that a more diverse workforce could help you reach. Or maybe your customers look very different from your staff and you're worried you don't know enough about how they think.

Ask yourself:

- Are we missing out on potential employees or failing to retain key people?
- Could we understand our customers better or access new markets?
- Are we experiencing skills gaps which could be filled by people we don't usually target for recruitment?
- What can we do to improve?

Look through the case studies and top tips to see whether there are approaches you can adopt and what the benefits might be.

Many of the suggestions do not require much



money or even much effort, and can benefit businesses of any size.

If you do decide to take any of these ideas further, there are lots of sources of additional help and advice, some of which we highlight at the end of this guide. Among other organisations, trade unions have a long experience of promoting equality and can provide information and work with employers and employees to help businesses realise the benefits of greater diversity.

If you are a trade union or employee representative or an individual employee, we hope this guide will:

- Give you some ideas to discuss with managers and employees at the company where you have members or where you work
- Show what benefits they could gain from addressing a particular aspect of diversity
- Offer practical suggestions for how to do this.



Attracting and retaining talent

Everyone brings to the workplace the different characteristics that make them who they are. Each person has a different experience and viewpoint. While it's important not to stereotype by assuming that all people who share a characteristic will think or behave in the same way, many companies now understand how they benefit from having in their workforce people with a range of characteristics, viewpoints and experiences who feel valued for all of these.

Treating people fairly in recruitment, training and development, and promotion has helped these businesses build a reputation for being good places to work, with benefits that include:

- Increased employee satisfaction
- A wider range of applicants for job vacancies
- Lower staff turnover.

“No-one questions that organisations have to become more agile in order to meet the increasing demands of customers. We must apply the same agile thinking to managing our people. This means embracing diversity. Talented people are not defined by their age, gender, current work status, where they live or their cultural background. They are defined by their skills, ability, energy and the unique perspective they bring to an organisation. Releasing their unique talents is key to business performance.”

Caroline Waters, Director, People and Policy BT

www.btplc.com



“Leadership at a senior level from a business director with a record of leading successful business change has made a significant difference. We’re not ‘pc’ and we don’t have quotas – we just want to recruit, retain and develop the best available people from the widest talent pools.”

Richard Flint, Director of Water Business Unit,
Yorkshire Water

www.yorkshirewater.com

“Our experience has shown that building a strong business case for diversity, making it a strategic imperative backed up by policies and processes is just not enough. Tackling the complexity of organisational culture requires a focus on what drives behaviour – this has taken us into the realms of organisational psychology so that we can each better understand ourselves and thus each other.”

Kieran Poynter, Chairman, PricewaterhouseCoopers

www.pwc.co.uk



CASE STUDY: Botanic Inns

Becoming an 'employer of choice' to reduce staff turnover

“The way we care about our employees has made us an ‘employer of choice’, helping attract a more varied workforce.”

Dominic McGeown, Head of Human Resources

Botanic Inns is one of Northern Ireland’s leading hospitality and leisure providers. With a workforce of some 600 staff, the company offers a wide range of dining, accommodation and entertainment services. Botanic’s portfolio includes 14 bar and restaurant outlets together with three small hotels.

The leisure and hospitality industry has traditionally been associated with tough working conditions and high staff turnover. Botanic Inns wanted to find a different way of doing business. Dominic McGeown, Botanic’s Head of Human Resources, says that one of the drivers was the company’s existing workforce at that time:

“We at Botanic Inns realised that to have happy and loyal customers, we would need to employ happy and loyal staff. So we set out to look for new ways of operating in order to ensure that our staff enjoys working with us and in doing so, it became very clear that we needed to be ever conscious of other factors that impact their daily lives.

In 1997, Botanic Inns employed about a hundred people, mostly young, single and with few caring responsibilities. But people’s lives change. Several original staff members were promoted into senior roles and also started families. Understandably, their focus and approach to work changed with their new responsibilities, especially at home”.

Botanic’s management recognised the need to encourage these employees to remain in the workforce, rather than lose their skills and expertise. The company’s Human Resources team was asked to find a way in which staff could more easily balance their work and home lives. One challenge was that, while work done at a computer or desk is often not especially place- or time-specific, preparing and serving food and drink to customers has to be done at the company’s premises between particular hours.

The answer for Botanic Inns was a competitive benefits package, including flexible working which is available to everyone. The options include compressed working weeks, term time working, flexitime, part time and working from home where the job allows it. The company also provides childcare vouchers as an employee benefit, enhanced maternity and paternity leave and pay, and access to unpaid career breaks after just a year with the business.

Other benefits for employees include subsidised sports facilities, subsidised staff meals, discounted access to private healthcare, and a 24 hour/365 day counselling service offering assistance from debt management to relationship problems. All employees also have discount cards which can be used in any of the company's outlets. Alongside this, and a key part of its approach to attracting and retaining staff, Botanic Inns has its own training programme offering core skills, support for professional qualifications and a career path.

Ten years on from first addressing the issue, where is the company now? Dominic sets out what's happened:

“Botanic Inns has been successful in retaining key staff in order to maintain continued company growth. Liaising with schools and other training organisations, we have highlighted the career potential within the industry and have provided some excellent opportunities for new and existing staff. We achieved Investors in People Accreditation for the first time in 2004, which is testament to our commitment to our workforce in terms of personal development and team success. This has been renewed on a regular basis, the latest being in the autumn of 2007.

Far from damaging the way we work, flexible working has made us better able to cover shift patterns. And this isn't all about being worthy – lots of our benefits for staff and especially for families are fun – personalised babygros, keepsake boxes and portrait sessions for our ‘Botanic Inn babies’; an annual family fun day; and Fathers' Day events for dads who work for us.

Our staff is very loyal and committed to us – we've been well-placed in the Sunday Times and FT indexes of good places to work, and have been recognised for our approach to flexibility and employing parents. But perhaps most importantly, we've won awards from within our industry, confirming our belief that our approach to diversity also makes us better at our core business, the latest being Best Multiple Operator at the UK-wide Publican Awards 2008”.

www.botanicinns.com

CASE STUDY: Pinsent Masons

Attracting talented people and enabling them to perform

Pinsent Masons is a solicitors' partnership with offices in London and six other UK cities including Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and Edinburgh, as well as an international presence. The firm employs 1,600 staff in the UK – a typical office has 300 people working in it.

When Jonathan Bond joined Pinsent Masons in April 2006 as Director of Human Resources, he didn't have a specific diversity remit. The firm's board did, though, ask him to create and implement a human resources strategy to help the firm meet its business goals. Diversity emerged as a key theme. Jonathan says:

“Our aim has been to create a culture where the firm's values of respect and co-operation would be practised by every individual in their everyday work. We also recognise that we're working in a very diverse recruitment market. To get skilled staff, we need to appeal to people in various UK cities - otherwise, we'll miss out on talent. Our wider HR strategy could be summed up as 'attract, retain, enable' and our work on diversity supports that”.



“My career really started to move forward once I took the step of coming out in the workplace. In a different era, that step was a difficult one for me to take, but the firm's diversity work now ensures that nobody should have any worries about coming out and being themselves at work.”

The firm also cites numerous studies showing that a diverse team produces a better work product because it can offer a client different viewpoints, and the interest that clients increasingly take in the policies and demographics of those bidding for work, especially those working in the public sector.

So how did LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) equality come to be one of the areas Pinsent Masons has focused on? The idea grew out of a wider diversity network set up for staff who were either from a particular group – female, ethnic minority, LGB - or were interested in diversity. This network met a couple of times and suggested launching a separate LGB network to act as a confidential sounding board for LGB members of staff, to advise on relevant policies before they're

Adrian Barlow, Partner – Head of Pinsent Masons' Property Group

implemented; and to hold meetings and social events. Other practical steps the firm has taken include:

- Reviewing some policies, such as ensuring partners of staff are treated equally whether they're straight or gay
- Including a sexual orientation monitoring question in the staff survey (4% of staff identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual), and analysing the survey results to check that LGB staff do not feel less positive about their experiences at work than other staff
- Including LGB equality issues when diversity training is provided, which is almost always as part of other training – such as the induction programme for all staff
- Working with suppliers to ask for confirmation that they comply with the firm's diversity approach and helping some who did not have policies to develop them.

In deciding what to do, Pinsent Masons has tapped into outside sources of advice – particularly Stonewall, the leading LGB campaign group – and in 2008 became the first law firm to be rated among the top 100 employers for LGB people in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index. Winning this external endorsement for its work has helped the firm promote what it is doing to clients who also have a track record on diversity, such as BT and the major banks.

The firm also believes that its programme is valued by all forward thinking people who work for it – appealing to existing staff and potential employees. While it will always want its reputation to be rooted in sound legal work, Jonathan Bond is clear that Pinsent Masons' work on diversity helps to achieve that excellence, by attracting key talent and enabling it to perform. On the staff survey, the number of staff who would recommend Pinsent Masons to a family member as a place to work has gone up. LGB staff are finding that if someone comes out, it's not a big deal: no-one needs to live a lie, and when people can be themselves at work as well as outside it, they perform better too.

There are quantifiable benefits too, even though costs are limited to a small proportion of staff time, plus payment for a few events and memberships. In the two years since the wider diversity programme began, the retention rate has improved. Lawyer turnover has dropped from 17.5% to 12% a year, and when every lawyer lost can cost a firm £110,000, that's no small achievement.

Jonathan Bond says:

“I'd definitely advise other businesses to be brave and go for it – don't spend too long finding the reasons not to change”.

www.pinsentmasons.com



CASE STUDY: RBS (The Royal Bank of Scotland Group)

Removing barriers to employment allows access to the best talent

RBS (the Royal Bank of Scotland Group) was founded nearly 300 years ago and is now one of the largest financial services groups in the world, including names such as RBS itself, NatWest and Ulster Bank. It provides banking, financial and insurance services for individuals, businesses and institutions. The Group still has its global headquarters in Edinburgh and employs 104,000 people in its UK businesses. RBS recognises Unite as a union for some of its staff.

RBS takes diversity seriously and is very open about its policies, which are available on its website alongside information about the composition of its workforce and the results of its staff satisfaction survey. The Group's 'Managing diversity' policy clearly sets out the Group's commitment to valuing and promoting diversity in all areas of recruitment, employment, training and promotion, and the responsibilities of the Group as employer and of all employees. It also challenges myths about different groups. Compliance with the policy is built into the Group's performance management framework and RBS expects similarly high standards from its suppliers.

One of the areas where RBS aims to go beyond the requirements of the law is the removal of barriers for disabled people, whether employees or customers. While the classic image of a disabled person is a wheelchair user who has been disabled since birth or childhood, that is far from the reality, as John Last, Group Head of Diversity for RBS, explains:

"Most disabled people acquire their disability later in life, often after the age of 45, through illness or accident, rather than being born with a disability. As well as visible physical impairments, disability includes conditions such as mental health problems and cancer. In total, about 15% of the population has a disability that has a significant impact on their everyday activities.

Yet disabled people are still under-represented in the workplace, because of the barriers they face, either getting into a job or staying in it if they become disabled during their working life. It's also a mistake to think of those barriers as being entirely about physical access, though for some disabled people that will be important – but often it's other people's attitudes that get in the way. Disabled people need a variety of changes, and often quite minor things can often have a huge impact”.

Practical steps the company has taken include:

- Interviewing every disabled job applicant who meets the minimum standards of the vacancy
- Giving a written commitment to ensure staff who become disabled while they work at the company are given every chance to remain in post
- Working in partnership with employees to develop reasonable and practicable workplace adjustments to allow them to perform their jobs effectively - for example by tailoring induction programmes to individual needs
- Ensuring intranets meet accessibility standards just as much as the Group's externally focused websites
- Setting up forums of disabled staff and using them to suggest and monitor changes.

There have been physical adjustments too. In 2006, RBS looked in detail at how offices and the network of branches worked for disabled people - employees and customers. Having consulted on what was needed, the company introduced measures including audio induction loops, automated opening and closing doors, disabled car parking bays, more use of handrails and improved lighting in every branch it could (a small number of branches are in listed buildings where changes are restricted).

Every new branch is built to incorporate these adjustments.

The company has also found that training is important. As well as broad training on diversity awareness and dignity at work, there are two mandatory online training sessions a year for every employee on what the Disability Discrimination Act means, focused on how staff interact with disabled customers, but which obviously has an impact on behaviour towards colleagues too. There is extra training and advice for line managers.

This approach has won recognition and several awards for the Group and its constituent businesses, for example, from the Employers' Forum on Disability. However, although the awards are welcome, ultimately John Last says that there are clear 'bottom-line' benefits to RBS's work on disability:

“Diversity means attracting everybody regardless of disability and removing all barriers to employment. For RBS, this is all about making an investment to get the best people”.

www.rbs.com

“We really try to focus on the business case for diversity. Of course, there's a moral case as well, but I think organisations need to focus on how they can get the best people for the job”.

John Last, Group Head of Diversity

CASE STUDY: InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)

Commitment, loyalty and reduced absence

“The training course gave me the confidence I needed to take the first step back into the workplace. I enjoyed taking part in the team-building exercises and learned some useful skills. I’m really proud of myself”.

William Johnstone, employee, Holiday Inn Edinburgh.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is the world's largest hotel group by number of rooms, owning a portfolio of well-known hotel brands including InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express in the UK. Its hotels employ approximately 8,000 people across the UK.

When the law changed in 2004 to require services to be more accessible to disabled people, IHG trained all its employees in customer service and disability awareness, as well as looking at physical changes to its hotel premises. Following its customer-focused work, IHG's UK human resources team decided to target disabled job seekers as potential recruits, believing they could be a source of new talent for the company. Instead of just advertising available jobs and hoping disabled people might apply and be suitable, disabled people looking for work were given the opportunity to have relevant training and support before, during and after the application process.

Working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People), IHG held a pilot recruitment open day in January 2006 at Holiday Inn Edinburgh. It was attended by over 70 people with a range of disabilities. Almost half went on to be interviewed for jobs at the hotel, and four of these were successful – two housekeeping assistants, a receptionist and a hall porter.

Twelve more people attended a two-week pre-employment course before being interviewed. This course was designed to provide potential applicants with a variety of useful transferable skills, including interview techniques, customer service training, and certificates in health and safety and basic food hygiene.

At the end of the course, these 12 were also interviewed for specific positions at Holiday Inn Edinburgh. Four secured employment – two housekeeping assistants, one maintenance assistant and one kitchen porter. Those who didn't



immediately secure positions were offered a six-week work placement at the hotel which resulted in a further linen porter's position being filled.

The model has been repeated in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and Shaw Trust in the London area, and there are plans to extend it to other areas too.

IHG makes the point that reasonable adjustments don't have to be complicated or expensive. Often, it is working practices that need to change slightly. For example, one person recruited as a hall porter has Asperger syndrome, a form of autism, affecting the way a person communicates and relates to others. The following adjustments were made for him:

- Task sheets were adapted to include an expected timescale for each task
- An extra clock was put in place in the lift area to help with time management
- A clipboard was implemented at reception to record guest requests to help deal with an initial reluctance to use the porter's radio
- A radio holder was provided to make it easier to use the radio.

It is important to understand the disabled person's needs and potential – but removable – barriers to their carrying out the duties of the job. This is one reason why establishing close working relationships with specialist organisations such as RNIB and Shaw Trust has been fundamental to the overall success of the initiative. IHG acknowledges that the expertise of specialist organisations has enabled IHG not only to recruit disabled people, but to retain them by helping find answers to what adjustments may be required to do a job.

Additional workshops at the hotels involved – ahead of each open day - have been used to help departmental managers understand more about employing disabled people and to make sure they knew what support was available. Now managers

are more likely to take the initiative when recruiting, training and dealing with different disabilities, accessing additional information from disability groups or the internet.

IHG is sure the business has benefited from these positive attitudes and from the recruits themselves. As well as receiving recognition by winning RADAR's People of the Year Employment Award in 2007, the programme has:

- Helped IHG to tap into a wider pool of talent
- Developed line managers
- Promoted team-work
- Reduced absence and employee turnover.

Ultimately, it has demonstrated IHG's commitment to recognising employees as individuals and for what they can bring to the business, which every employee can appreciate - not just those with disabilities.

Christopher Rawstron, Vice-President Operations UK and Ireland, says:

“Being a global hospitality business, IHG has one of the UK's most diverse workforces and this is something we are very proud of. Recruiting disabled people allows us to access a wide and rich pool of talent, and we are attracting fantastic staff to our great teams. Our disabled employees are typically committed and loyal to their jobs, so we are very pleased to have them on board”.

www.ihgplc.com

CASE STUDY: Arriva

All types of people can succeed at work

Arriva has about 13,000 buses and trains providing more than one billion passenger journeys a year in ten European countries. In the UK, Arriva's 6,500 buses and 204 trains make it one of the country's largest bus operators and the provider of the UK's most extensive rail franchise, Cross Country. Its 21,800 UK employees work in a huge range of roles from driving and engineering, professional and admin to leadership and management. The company's headquarters is still in Sunderland where the business that grew into Arriva began in 1938. The unions ASLEF, RMT, TSSA and Unite are recognised in different parts of the business.

In 2002, Arriva decided the company needed a structured approach to create an environment where people's differences were accepted, understood and appreciated. New legislation was due to come into force, adding sexual orientation, religion and belief and age to the characteristics on which discrimination at work was already unlawful. However, Alison O'Connor, Director of Human Resources at Arriva, is clear there are reasons beyond legal compliance, both a moral and a business case:



“We need to be able to reflect the communities in which we serve, in terms of our employees’ diversity”.

Alison O'Connor, Director of Human Resources

“We believe employers who ignore the importance of promoting diversity will ultimately enjoy limited success when employing people and trying to increase their customer base. By positively welcoming all types of staff and customers, we have an advantage over other companies, making Arriva an employer of choice. We will have the best employees, we will offer a better service to our customers and this will benefit us all”.

The company introduced a new initiative, ‘the Arriva approach to diversity’ across the company. This was designed to create a working environment that:

- Maximised the potential of all employees
- Acknowledged, understood and appreciated all differences in people, whether customers or employees.

The question was then how to turn what might have been an abstract concept into reality for staff across the business. The support of Arriva's Board ensured the issue was taken seriously, while the involvement of union representatives signalled widespread support for the changes. A diversity committee featuring senior managers from across the group, and chaired at board level, was established to set the aims and monitor progress, reporting back to the board at regular intervals. In addition, a best practice forum on diversity was set up to share ideas.

An innovative approach to training was an important part of helping change values and attitudes towards diversity across the group. Arriva decided traditional classroom style training would not achieve one of the company's objectives, which was to challenge and change values and beliefs.

Instead, a series of interactive sessions, which included role playing by professional actors, was used to train 1,800 directors (including Arriva's Chairman), managers, supervisors and staff on the importance of valuing and welcoming difference. Among those trained were 90 in-house facilitators who were able in turn to cascade what they had learnt to Arriva staff across the board, using specially designed workshops and a DVD produced specifically for Arriva to help stimulate discussion. To date, around 5,800 employees have attended these 'Valuing and welcoming difference' workshops, which continue to be held for front-line employees and new recruits. Online training on the company's values and the benefits of diversity has also been developed, including a series of questions and answers addressing issues such as:

- "What if I don't want to work with different people? This is not a choice. We all have to work together
- Does part-time working mean the rest of us get the worst shifts? This is a myth. As diversity means that we can all be successful at work, we must work together to ensure everyone is treated fairly
- What does my trade union think of this? The trade unions naturally value and support different people and we will therefore work together to make diversity happen".

Twenty-four learning centres at Arriva bus depots throughout the UK opened with funding support from the TUC and the Learning and Skills Council, helping to deliver this training, along with many other courses and qualifications, including NVQs. For Alison, this approach to lifelong learning for all staff is a key part of getting and keeping the right people:

"Our employees are the life-blood of our business. They are the people who meet our customers every day, whether on a bus or train, or working with tendering authorities and local and national governments. Providing opportunities for development, being an employer that people choose to work for, and retaining quality people is vital to Arriva".

The company has also focused on recruitment from a wider pool. A best practice guide 'How to recruit from a wider pool' was developed and rolled out across the business. The guide explains steps and provides examples of actions that can be taken by managers to recruit a more diverse workforce. A demographic analysis was also conducted to assist in understanding where and how to recruit most effectively.

Within Arriva's UK regional bus operation, a working group was set up to review recruitment and advertising with a view to attracting a more diverse workforce, and followed this up by changes to working practices that might suit and support particular groups.

For example, Arriva Yorkshire introduced male and female mentors to support new starters and make them feel as comfortable as possible in their new environment. They also introduced a rota for couples with children who are both bus drivers, which put them on opposite shifts to cover childcare and give them days off together.

There have been measurable benefits to these new approaches. For example, since the introduction of the 'How to recruit from a wider pool' guide, Arriva North West and Wales reported a 60% increase in the number of women drivers and the number of part-timers more than doubled. Following the introduction of mentoring for new starters, Arriva Yorkshire saw a 33% reduction in leavers within the first two years of employment.

More than 20 people applied for the 'couple rostering' arrangement.

The changes have also won wider recognition – from Opportunity Now and Race for Opportunity, the CBI's Human Capital Awards, and (for its wider approach to vocational training) from the TUC.

Alison is not resting on her laurels, though:

"We'll continue to deliver on the current initiatives and develop new ones to recruit and retain new employees into non-traditional roles. It's obvious to Arriva that diversity is about recognising and accepting that all types of people can be successful at work. It is about values, behaviours and culture rather than numbers or targets.

We also make it clear to all staff that we're not talking about political correctness or only about minority groups: this is a business opportunity that affects everyone and which calls on us to take a proactive approach, rather than merely reacting or regarding it as to do with legal 'problems' or issues".

www.arriva.co.uk



“Arriva values difference in our employees and our customers. This helps us attract and retain a more diverse workforce that’s becoming increasingly representative of the communities we serve.”

David Martin, CEO, Arriva plc



Understanding customers, attracting new business

It's not only employees who must be treated as individuals – so must customers. Obviously, sales and market research can help a business see if it is making the right decisions. However, including people who aren't all the same sex, ethnicity, age and so on in the workforce

and among key decision-makers can lead to an even better understanding of how customers think. It can also assist in opening up new markets – and it can be a positive selling point with some customers, including the public sector.

“When diverse customer groups see themselves mirrored in our workforce they're more likely to do business with us. We've seen this happen particularly with our race programme. This demonstrates that diversity isn't a 'nice to do' – it's a source of competitive advantage.”

*Fiona Cannon, Head of Group Equality & Diversity,
Lloyds TSB*

www.lloydstsb.com

“Diversity at Barclays is not a ‘programme of the year’, where we do our best and then move onto something else – this is a long-term commitment. Only when our own teams truly reflect the diversity of our customers can we best serve them and fulfil their needs.”

Gary Hoffman, Vice Chairman, Barclays Group

www.barclays.com



“B&Q recognised and acted on the need to widen its talent pool nearly 20 years ago and is now synonymous with the employment of older workers. Alongside work to extend B&Q’s offer into the home improvement market, the knowledge that women make the majority of home improvement decisions has led us to embark on our gender action plan, which among other things, has driven market leading improvements in our flexible working and maternity policies.”

Martyn Phillips, Director of Human Resources, B&Q

www.diy.com



“The business case for diversity is competitive advantage. About 20 million customers cross Shell’s doorstep every day around the world. What could be more important than having a diverse workforce that understands and responds to our customers’ needs? Diversity is right in principle and good for business.”

James Smith, Chairman of Shell UK

www.shell.com



CASE STUDY: PPDG (Pertemps People Development Group)

Strong community links make staff better at what they do

PPDG (Pertemps People Development Group) has since 1997 been helping unemployed people to find long-term, sustainable employment and training opportunities, delivering government-funded welfare to work and skills programmes. The company began as a team of 20 based in a prefab beside a school in north Solihull.

That first team was largely made up of local people, who understood and cared about the area, and the people they were working with. Ten years on, two thirds of the Solihull staff are still with the company: they've been joined by 650 others working out of 30 centres in the West Midlands, north east, north west and London.

PPDG's 'advancement centres' are where their unemployed clients attend for advice and support in getting into work. They're designed to be places where people find it easy to go – not just local high street shop-fronts, but places such as church halls, swimming baths and shopping centres. Often, when PPDG moves in, it will refurbish the premises but make sure they're not intimidating to clients who may not have been in a workplace for a long time. The company encourages other activities to exist alongside it: a crèche, a café, a credit union, a gym. Where it can, PPDG uses local tradespeople to provide services such as catering.

The company's vision is not just to help unemployed people back into work by 'unearthing the spark of brilliance in everyone' but at the same time to become part of the community, helping to reinvigorate each area where it is operating.

So what has this approach got to do with diversity? Ben Birchall, PPDG's HR Staff and Development Director, explains:

"As a company, it's attracting the right people to work for us that matters more than anything else. That may seem standard, but what's less standard is what we look for in a successful applicant: attitude, outlook, the ability to learn and grow, and



"Diversity doesn't have to be contrived. It's about being at your roots".

Ben Birchall, HR Staff and Development Director

motivation, more than formal qualifications and existing skills. We use a competency-based application form and a whole day assessment process, including role plays, teamwork exercises, discussions and debates.

“We think it’s our responsibility as an employer to find the inherent skills an individual has, not just accept what it says on a piece of paper or a first glance impression. What’s important to us is what someone brings, including their local knowledge and commitment to their community – and that results in a diverse workforce”.

Back in 2000, the company became part of a pilot Employment Zone in Birmingham, requiring them to set up seven centres in just three months. PPDG wanted to recruit people from every ethnic

background, because that’s what the city is like. But there weren’t any quotas – diversity happened organically. This has continued elsewhere. The local mix translates into a national workforce that is 44% male and 56% female, while 35% of staff come from an ethnic minority and 18% are disabled. But perhaps the most striking statistic is that over a third of PPDG’s permanent staff are former clients. People who had been out of work, sometimes for long periods in areas of high unemployment, are now helping others into work as employment coaches and even as centre managers. These employees consistently bring a high level of local knowledge and the commitment to make a difference to the communities which they are part of.

“Your centres truly reflect the make-up of the communities they serve. When meeting your staff I’m constantly amazed at the cultures and countries they represent, the languages they speak and the understanding they have about addressing the needs of the community. It’s through this understanding that you are able to successfully help so many local residents find work, a clear benefit in my view of employing such a diverse workforce”.

Derek Inman, Chief Executive, Birmingham Foundation





“I joined the company in October 2000 as an employment coach at our Newtown Advancement Centre, working one-to-one with long-term unemployed people. Since then, I have successfully progressed through the company, to my current position on our operational board”.

Muj Choudhury, PPDG Business Development and Regeneration Director

PPDG believes this gives the company a competitive edge, helping it win contracts and clients. For example, when Jobcentre Plus clients in Birmingham were given a choice as to which of three companies to go to for help in finding work, PPDG’s share of the market went up from 50 to 63%. Alongside that, the company’s ethos – which includes respect for, and celebration of, different cultures and a belief that everyone can learn from each other – means lower than average staff turnover, with obvious savings in recruitment costs. PPDG has not found any disadvantages to its mix of people – for example, there are no additional grievances nor any extra bureaucracy.



The company acknowledges that its approach to recruitment does take a bit longer and costs more, but believes this is far outweighed by the benefits. “What we’ve found is that it’s worth making an effort as a business to take the lead in creating and using links into different communities. That has helped us unearth untapped potential among local people in the areas where we work. All we’ve needed to do after that is to give everybody a fair chance to get through the door”, says Ben Birchall.

“Our recent success on the POEM (Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities) project is a testament to our approach – our recruitment policy ensured that we employed staff based on

their ability to communicate, rather than purely on academic qualifications. It was largely through the diversity of the team and support invested in them that they were able to achieve such phenomenal results”, adds Muj Choudhury.

www.ppdg.co.uk

Public recognition for diversity helps attract and keep customers

IBM is one of the world's oldest and most successful IT (information technology) companies, originally founded in the 19th century in New York. IBM is now involved in the invention, development, and manufacture, of the industry's most advanced information technologies. These include computer systems, software, storage systems and microelectronics. The company also provides professional solutions, services and consulting businesses worldwide. In the UK, approximately 20,000 people undertake a variety of technical, sales and marketing and support roles for the company.

Even before it was legally required to do so, the company had developed policies for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender/Transsexual (LGBT) staff that promoted equality and eliminated discrimination. Des Benton, IBM's UK Diversity & Inclusion Programme Manager, says that the company has a long history of equality, inclusion and progressive action, both in the US, where the company started, and in the UK:

"IBM's first equal opportunity statement was made in the US in 1953, simply stating that 'IBM will hire people based on their ability, regardless of race, colour or creed'. That may not appear especially dramatic by today's standards, but you have to remember it was ten years before the US Civil Rights Act of 1964, and racial segregation was a real issue in some parts of the States. And, of course, more recently, we had put in place the policies and networks to promote equality on grounds of ethnicity, gender and disability that you'd expect from a company like IBM".

This then was the background for the policies and benefits the company introduced which were aimed at gay and lesbian staff: they were also extended to include interactions with customers, suppliers, partners and the wider community in which IBM operates. Des sets out what happened:

“Even before it was legally necessary, IBM had explicitly added sexual orientation to its non-discrimination policy. In 1991, it began to create networking groups for LGBT employees across Canada and the US, and in 1998 it set up groups in the UK. Initially, the groups in the UK were set up to help introduce changes to employee benefits for same-sex partners, ahead of the legislation which came into force in December 2003, although they’ve since focused more on social and business networking”.

While corporate social responsibility plays an important part in IBM’s thinking, there was a clear business imperative behind its approach to LGBT equality too. Des explains:

“As a large company, IBM feels a responsibility to ‘give something back to the world’, but that wasn’t the only reason for this initiative, nor was the fact the law was changing. IBM, like many other employers, wants to have good diversity policies in order to attract the best people and to recruit from the widest possible pool of talent. We also believe that a workforce that looks like our customers helps us understand our customers better – and the government estimates that 6% of the UK population is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

In addition, several surveys have shown a powerful brand loyalty among gay and lesbian consumers. One survey showed that 87% would remain loyal to companies who market directly to them, while 77% would switch brands to companies with positive stance toward the LGBT constituency. So being known for our commitment to LGBT diversity would help us access this market, as well as being the right thing to do”.

One change identified by the networking group was the need to introduce identical benefits for same-sex partners to those already received by

partners and spouses of heterosexual staff. This was done across IBM’s UK business in 2001, and included coverage by the company pension scheme and relocation expenses. In addition, a policy was drawn up outlining IBM’s approach to diversity and senior executives helped push initiatives forward. Communication with all employees about the value of the company’s approach has also been important, so that IBM employees today see this approach as part of the norm.

IBM accepts that implementing the policy has not been cost-free. The company has spent money in supporting social activities for LGBT staff to network internally and externally. It has also sponsored and organised events to highlight what the company is doing – these range from internal events for IBM staff to two leadership conferences, exploring and building on the qualities of LGBT managers and future leaders. It has invested in specific advertising and sales efforts targeted at the LGBT community, including in 2001 setting up a full-time Sales & Talent team dedicated to the LGBT market and last year organising an LGBT Europe, Middle East and Africa Sales Event. Perhaps most impressively to those looking in from the outside, the company walked away from business where a client did not want LGBT employees working on the project, and it has also demoted managers who failed to follow policy or demonstrated poor behaviour relating to diversity issues.

“To be recognised by Stonewall as the leading employer for workplace equality is a source of tremendous pride. I am convinced that the principles of diversity, inclusion and equality must sit at the heart of any truly modern, successful and confident organisation.”

Larry Hirst, now Chairman, IBM Europe, Middle East and Africa



“It’s really important to develop your business case. Focus on employment and customer-facing opportunities and risks, and be clear what the costs and benefits might be. Find a way of implementing the changes without alienating people who aren’t part of the group you’re targeting by communicating the planned changes clearly, including the business reasons for them. And follow up by monitoring what happens – not only the benefits but also if any opportunities or issues arise. Finally, avoid complacency: here at IBM, we’ve achieved a lot, but we recognise we can do better still”.

Des Benton, Diversity & Inclusion Programme Manager

However, Des is confident there is clear evidence of the success of IBM’s approach:

“IBM has been recognised as a leading employer for LGBT people, helping to attract and retain staff from LGBT backgrounds. In 2007, we topped the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index which is the definitive national benchmarking exercise showcasing Britain’s top employers for gay people, and in 2008 IBM was still the UK’s most gay-friendly private sector employer. Results from our staff surveys, which ask for voluntary information about a person’s sexual orientation, back-up our view that our policies help all our staff to feel valued.

We’re increasingly finding that diversity and inclusion policies are something other businesses look for when deciding whether to do business with IBM, and we’ve also been part of external activities such as Stonewall’s Education for All campaign aimed at tackling homophobic bullying in schools in the UK, which has prompted feedback from people outside the company. This all helps to promote us to LGBT customers, giving us the business advantage we were looking for”.

www.ibm.com/employment/uk/diversity



CASE STUDY: Serco

Responding to the needs of communities

“Our aim is to have a modern workforce that reflects its communities and enables its people to excel”.

Christopher Hyman, Chief Executive

Serco is an international service company that employs 50,000 people in over 35 different countries. It offers operational, management and consulting expertise in many areas of public life including home affairs, healthcare, nuclear, transport, IT, business process outsourcing and defence.

Serco combines commercial acumen with a deep sense of public service ethos and as a significant proportion of its business is with governments, it is aware of the responsibilities and opportunities this brings.

Since 2002, public bodies (including local authorities, schools and colleges, health sector organisations, police and prison services and central government departments) have been required to promote race equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination. The same duties – known collectively as the public sector duties or equality duties – were extended to disabled people in 2006 and to equality between women and men in 2007.

Many public bodies regard their procurement processes as subject to the equality duties, meaning that they place requirements on businesses tendering for work to have in place good equal opportunities and diversity policies. Often, public bodies will also check whether there have been any recent tribunal or court decisions against a business relating to discrimination. Those awarding contracts are using the concepts of ‘best value’ and ‘value for money’ to look beyond lowest price to wider social considerations, so far as this is allowed within EU law.

However, Serco is clear that promoting diversity in its approach to customers and in its workforce isn’t just about winning contracts. Christopher Hyman, Chief Executive of Serco, explains:

“Delivering a broad range of services around the world means we must be an innovative and diverse business. Employees that have broader

experiences and thinking styles help us improve the services we deliver and develop new types of business that benefits our customers, their customers and of course our people”.

Over the last few years, Serco has taken practical steps to achieve this vision, devising a strategic framework to improve the way the company manages diversity. Key ingredients include:

- A commitment from Serco’s senior team to be accountable for achieving its diversity goals and to lead by example
- Providing diversity training workshops to change the way managers perceive people’s differences, encouraging them to see diversity as a source of corporate strength and explore the opportunities that it offers. This training has been cascaded throughout Serco’s businesses
- Actively supporting and encouraging people from a wider range of backgrounds to work for Serco, for example, by advertising vacancies in a targeted way
- Making sure the working environment is as flexible as possible to recruit and retain a wider diversity of people with varying needs and commitments
- Ensuring all its employees have the opportunity to access learning and development
- Using its power and influence as a significant supplier and a procurer of products and services to encourage and promote diversity through the public service supply chain and within local communities
- Ensuring it has robust and clear data to measure its progress and provide transparency.

An important part of Serco’s approach is the way the group works with trade unions to establish effective partnerships for the benefit of Serco’s employees, the business and its customers. At over 60% of Serco’s UK operating businesses

there is some kind of collective consultation and participation forum. The group has over 80 recognition agreements with over 20 trade unions in the UK, including Amicus, ASLEF, Prospect, PSU, RMT, TSSA and Unite.

As Christopher Hyman says, Serco sees obvious links between its workforce diversity and how it engages with and serves the communities within which it works. A good example of this is the work Serco did with local residents in the five London boroughs where the company runs the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) on behalf of Transport for London.

In 2004, Serco decided to look at the barriers local residents might be finding to using the DLR. 724 families from a wide variety of backgrounds who were not using the DLR were interviewed. The main discovery was that many residents felt excluded from using the DLR for a number of reasons – all of which were a combination of physical and psychological barriers.

Interviewees said that the top six changes which would make them use the DLR were: cheaper fares, better security, information about access to job opportunities /getting a job, better walking routes to stations, better station environments and more information about places to visit. Some of these factors showed up as particularly important for women, disabled people, those from different ethnic backgrounds and older people. Serco addressed them in very practical ways, such as:

- Looking with local residents at the street environment around stations. The DLR already provided step-free access to all stations and trains, making life easier for wheelchair and pram users, but this ‘walking routes’ pilot looked more widely at approaches to stations, road crossings and issues such as graffiti
- Increasing security through CCTV and Travel Safe Officers at stations and on trains

“If you’re in a wheelchair or a mother with a pram – I’d always recommend DLR as it’s accessible and caters for all”.

Mrs Nazeerah Rahman, local resident and community worker

- Introducing special tickets for local residents allowing short, flexible journeys
- Training customers who wanted it in using the DLR ticket Vending Machine – this was offered through community centres, and sessions were held in Bengali and Somali for groups of women who had asked for this
- Setting up a Community Skills & Recruitment centre at Shadwell station in conjunction with the Pecan Community charity
- Targeting job ads to encourage local people to apply
- Publishing free information about training, places to visit and social activities that can be reached by using the DLR
- Setting up a team of four Community Ambassadors to help to engage with local communities.

Serco believes that understanding the market (in other words, the diversity of the local communities served by the DLR) was critical to the success of the campaign. It became clear that people’s lack of mobility could be addressed through simple information on fares, services and safety, bringing about an increase in confidence – and with it many more journeys made by local people.

www.serco.com



Filling skills gaps

In some geographic areas and some sectors, the labour market is very tight and skills shortages exist.

Some companies recognise that being associated with just one demographic group says little about their ability to perform specific tasks and are able to select from a much wider pool of talent.

It makes sense to find out more about people than what you notice about them from their CV or what they look like when they walk through the door.

Recruiting and promoting people on the basis of competencies (whether they can – or have the potential to – do a job) can help a business to find talent in unexpected places, and to hang onto those people longer.

Finding the right people with the right skills and aptitudes is essential, particularly when companies are facing economic pressures.



“Employing a diverse workforce has greatly benefited our business. A diverse workforce means our staff possess unique qualities and perspectives which lead to innovation and creativity within our organisation while helping us meet our skills needs.”

Mark Cahill, Managing Director, Manpower UK

www.manpower.co.uk

“Unilever sees diversity as being about inclusion, embracing differences, creating possibilities and growing together for better business performance. Diversity at Unilever is about more than just physical diversity – gender, nationality, style, race and creed. It’s about us – creating an environment that inspires different individuals to contribute in their own different ways within a framework of shared values and goals.”

Alan Walters, HR Director, Unilever UK

www.unilever.co.uk



“Diversity is more than simply setting goals, increasing scores and ticking boxes. It is about individual and team actions, and about working together to make a difference. The contribution made by our employees through our networks and consultative groups is absolutely vital to our success.”

John Fleming, President and CEO, Ford of Europe

www.ford.co.uk



CASE STUDY: Oakwood Builders and Joinery

If people can do the job right, nothing else matters

“I’ve been in the joinery workshop for two and a half years now. Oakwood is different to other places, the people are nice, there’s great teamwork.”

Janis Meiers, joiner



Oakwood Builders and Joinery is a family firm of builders based in the Oxfordshire countryside near Henley, but it stands out from the crowd for several reasons. One reason is the firm’s commitment to environmental sustainability, another is the diversity of its workforce, and a third is the amount the company reinvests in training – “All the money we can spare” says Chairman, Tim Fenn.

Tim is clearly the driving force behind the way the company does business. Determined that Oakwood will be known first for the quality of its craftsmanship, and definitely not a fan of political correctness, he says:

“I didn’t set out to do anything differently. I needed skilled workers and people came through the door needing jobs. I looked at whether they could do the work to the standard I wanted, and if they were keen, and that was it”.

Tim had helped his father in the family business while growing up, but trained as a soil scientist and went to work in South Africa for several years. He returned in 1998 when his father wanted to retire. At that time, there were just eight employees.

Construction is notoriously a skills shortage area, and Tim came up against this when he wanted to expand. He just could not train people fast enough, so decided to look only at what applicants for jobs could do and how hard they would work.

Often, those he employs have been turned down for other jobs. Looking at the quality of their work and their commitment, neither they nor Tim can understand why, unless it is because they don’t fit many people’s idea of what a builder looks like. In other cases, it may have been because of a lack of language skills. Tim’s answer to both these issues is simple: to avoid preconceptions about whether someone will be good or bad at their job without interviewing them and giving them a trial, and to pay for new arrivals to access ESOL (English for

Speakers of Other Languages) lessons.

Now the 35-strong workforce contains:

- Five women
- Twelve Eastern Europeans (from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia)
- Two Romany Gypsies
- One Indian
- One locally born African-Caribbean.

The youngest employee is a 17 year old apprentice, while the oldest is 66.

Most of Oakwood's clients are individuals, rather than public bodies who may ask contractors about workforce diversity. Even so, Tim feels it does the company no harm to be seen as modern and forward-thinking, both for its commitment to environmental sustainability and its mix of workers.

Tim explains how he deals with some of the common anxieties around diversity:

"There's a perception in the media that you're more vulnerable to a discrimination claim if you employ particular people, but that hasn't been my experience. In ten years, there's never been a discrimination claim against Oakwood.

"Six years ago, when I first employed a woman on a building site, it was new to everyone, and I did say to the guys 'take it easy', just as a precaution, but now I wouldn't have to say anything at all.

"Employing younger women obviously brings with it the chance they'll want to have a family and will take time out or need flexibility, that's part of the package. We're as flexible as possible within the demands of the business, that's the price of having a good person, whether it's women who've recently finished degrees in construction management or our oldest worker, who's so skilled I'm happy for him to alternate two months on and two months off.

It's important to be open about issues. People should be proud of who they are and where they come from. Even though they have a complex and skilled craft, many construction workers lack self-esteem. Openness is part of building up people's confidence".

Oakwood would not have been able to expand as it has if Tim hadn't taken this approach to recruitment. He's also found that the company is somewhere people want to stay: only about one employee a year leaves and the longest serving employee has been there for over 25 years. Everyone is paid the same rate for the job they're in and has equal career prospects within the company.

Explaining why he does it this way, Tim says:

"You're only as good as your people. If you can learn to look for ability and identify potential, and see past anything else, you can choose the right people. You then have to put in place good training and appraisal systems for monitoring and recognising performance. That way, you get a really strong team who will go the extra mile when you need it because they know you value them. How cool is that – to know you have that sort of back up from your team?"

www.oakwood-builders.com

"I joined Oakwood straight from school and have just stayed. People do stay, six, ten, 17 years. The quality of the work is high too."

Syd Loveridge, joiner

CASE STUDY: GSK (GlaxoSmithKline)

Enabling people with key skills to stay on



GSK (GlaxoSmithKline) is a global pharmaceutical and consumer healthcare company, undertaking research, development, manufacturing and sales worldwide. The company employs about 19,000 people in the UK in a range of businesses. In some of its workplaces, GSK recognises the union Unite.

GSK was formed in 2001 when Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham merged. One of the first global policies to be developed by the new company was its diversity policy. The aim of the policy is for GSK to have a workforce and working environment that fairly reflects the different backgrounds, cultures, beliefs and characteristics of the communities in which the company operates. GSK seeks to use the talents and contributions of all employees effectively in pursuit of its goals.

In the UK, diversity and inclusion is driven by a steering team. This is chaired by Martin Swain, GSK's UK Director of Policy, Employee Relations, Diversity & Inclusion, and contains a representative from each of GSK's UK businesses. Each representative has the job of translating GSK's global and national approach to diversity and inclusion into one appropriate to their business - whether research and development, manufacturing or commercial operations. Martin explains:

"The different parts of the company need to be able to adapt to their local population and environment and their particular business drivers. We recognise that diversity and inclusion needs a local flavour. So although 11.5% of our UK workforce as a whole is from an ethnic minority background, that's going to be much larger in west London than it is in Scotland, because the local population is different".

When GSK came to think about implementing the new laws prohibiting unjustified age discrimination in the workplace, Jacky Weller, UK Policy & Employee Relations Manager, knew the first step was to build a strong business case – to

enable the company to recruit and retain the best people regardless of age by being considered an 'employer of choice' in an increasingly competitive labour market.

As part of the merger, GSK had brought all employees under a single set of employment policies. The changes to the legal framework on age now meant reviewing all of these policies and all of GSK's processes and practices. If necessary, they would then need to be amended – in consultation with employee representatives from across the organisation, including the company's union, Unite - to ensure they complied with the intentions of the age discrimination legislation. Jacky comments:

"We wanted to go beyond removing any discrimination within the company to eliminating prejudice against people because of their age, whether that's younger or older. Our consultation framework helped hugely as a way of starting to change the culture".

To put this into practice, Jacky co-ordinated a steering group made up of the HR directors from all GSK's UK businesses. Four sub-groups looked at:

- Compensation and benefits
- Employment policies, processes and terms and conditions of employment
- Recruitment, employee development and talent management
- Employee education and communication.

Changes implemented include allowing employees to request to stay beyond the normal retirement age of 65: if the answer is 'no', this is justified to the individual in business terms. In some cases, GSK has requested that employees remain with the

organisation beyond their contractual retirement age as they possess key technical skills that may be in short supply. In many instances, GSK has adapted the working patterns of the individual in order to be able to achieve this.

One key area where training of managers mattered was to make sure that length of experience was not regarded as a deciding factor in recruitment decisions, unless there was a good reason to do so. Instead, the focus is on competencies: what people are capable of doing, not how long they've been doing it. Dates of birth do not appear on the forms the selection panel sees, and applicants are encouraged to list previous work in order of relevance rather than date. Short-listing is based on the evidence applicants produce about the skills they have to do the job.

On the day the new law came in, there was a celebratory atmosphere at GSK's Brentford headquarters and at its other premises, with posters, banners and balloons. Martin, Jacky and their colleagues made it clear that everyone would benefit from being treated fairly on grounds of age, not just older workers. Martin says why this is especially important to GSK:

"There are high expectations on the values and ethics of a pharmaceutical company, which is as it should be. That includes how we treat our employees and how they treat each other. We want treating people with dignity and respect to be the foundation of everyone's behaviour. Our aim is that everyone will be treated as an individual, and valued for everything they are".

“The company consulted us on proposed changes and actively listened to our views and responded positively. What we have implemented has not been detrimental to any of our employees in the UK.”

John Clough, Senior Shop Steward, Unite, and employee representative

“It’s really important that GSK does everything it can to ensure that discrimination and prejudice is eliminated and that GSK becomes the best place for people to work regardless of their age.”

Chris Smith, Lead Employee Representative

“GSK’s approach to age allowed me to work in a permanent position into my 70s on a flexible contract that suited my own lifestyle. Although now no longer in permanent employment with GSK, I am still working there via a temporary agency.”

Diana Bradshaw, Administrator

Contrary to some media scare stories, birthday cards and cakes have not been banned at GSK, and age-specific cards are still stocked at the convenience store at the Brentford site. But Jacky says colleagues’ response is sensitive and clearly led by what the individual wants:

“Many people would be upset if their birthday was ignored at work – but we wouldn’t force someone who was feeling fed up at turning a particular age to have a jolly party! This is all about being open, and encouraging dialogue and compromise, understanding what is appropriate in the workplace and coming to some agreement”.

The principal cost of the policy has been people’s time, together with a budget for the process of education on what the new law meant for everyone – but the benefits make this worthwhile, Martin Swain believes:

“If GSK is valuing every individual and every individual feels valued, then we have an environment where people are flourishing, and giving the company extra effort. We want to be seen as an employer of choice for all generations, and that’s happening at both ends of the age spectrum”.

Martin identifies what has made the policy work:

“We took the time and were prepared to talk - and listen - to our employees, including the union, rather than assuming that we knew it all. We did make changes as a result of the feedback we received, which helped to make it more about the way we do things at GSK, not just doing what the law requires”.

www.gsk.com



CASE STUDY: Beacon Foods

Two-way flexibility to meet the needs of both business and workforce

Beacon Foods was established in 1993 by managing director Edward Gough and his mother, Rae Jones, with a workforce of just four, producing pureed garlic and ginger for the food manufacturing industry. Now its 30,000 sq ft factory based in the Brecon Beacons National Park in Powys, Wales, operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and the company employs 112 people. Beacon's range has grown to over 500 different processed and cooked vegetables and fruit products which the company delivers across the UK.

The staff are a mix of men and women, with men in the majority, and includes people originating from Wales, England, eastern Europe, the United States, Iraq, Africa and Nepal (the Gurkha regiment is based locally, so family members of serving soldiers and one former soldier are employees). The workforce ranges in age from 18 to 65.

The company operates in a region which has very little unemployment and this has had a significant influence on Beacon's approach. Linda Lloyd, HR Director at Beacon Foods, explains:

"We're a family-owned business. Our two owners, Rae and Edward, are very hands-on. They care about the workforce, and like to encourage anyone who wants to work for the business. We find that what works is flexibility to meet the needs of both the business and the people working for it. We do try to accommodate people's needs of all sorts, whether that's to do with children or other caring responsibilities or to accommodate different wishes as someone gets older. We've changed someone's role and adapted the job to suit them where this was necessary to hang on to them, because we didn't want to lose them. We try hard to look at our employees as individuals. It's in our interests to be flexible, as it can be difficult to find good people who want to live and work locally to where we are".



One worker was recruited just two years ago at the age of 63. She's staying on past the company's normal retirement age of 65. Each request from an employee to stay on is considered individually. In addition, Beacon would itself consider asking someone to stay on, perhaps more flexibly than before, where this would retain skills in the business, provided the employee is happy to do so.

Even operating in an area with such a tight labour market, Beacon commands significant loyalty from its staff. One 62 year-old employee has been with the company for 14 of its 15 years in business, while another, the company's technical manager who is 58, has worked for Beacon for 11 years. HR Director Linda says:

"We don't consider age to be a problem at all. Regardless of whether an applicant is 50 or 20, or whatever their ethnic background, we look at their suitability to do the job. We do ask everyone to be committed and adaptable, but we just don't think in terms of how much 'mileage' someone has in them, either before or after they join us.

Instead, we try to treat each person individually and look at how the business can use that person and develop them to their full potential. We want to encourage people of all ages to work for Beacon – for example, we're developing a young technical team of recent graduates, who are just as important to us as our older workforce".

Beacon first received Investors in People (IIP) recognition in 1999 and regards training of its workforce as very important to developing employee potential to the full. It has made use of significant funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to help provide both management and skills training.

Training is open to all workers regardless of age or any other characteristic, and is provided in line with people's needs and those of the business. Increasing people's skills can also enable them to stay with the company while switching areas or

hours of work. This means that you're likely to find a 54 year-old logistics co-ordinator on the same management training course as a 23 year-old NPD process technologist, or someone who started as a factory production operative being promoted to a quality assurance role.

Linda is sure the business benefits from having such a diverse workforce:

"People come with different views, sometimes influenced by age. So for example, our thirteen drivers range in age from 30 to the mid-50s, and when we hold a drivers' meeting, they'll all bring different views. It's like that all the way through the company. It just brings a different shape to the organisation and makes work more interesting for everyone.

We also have very few disciplinary issues or absenteeism or lateness with any of our workers. And by the way, our older workers don't use our occupational health service any more than their younger colleagues!"

Does she have any advice for a business looking to follow Beacon Foods' example?

"I'd say that you've got to be flexible and consider what your business needs are and how you can meet those with your available labour resource. Look at what the person can do, not the package they come in".

www.beaconfoods.co.uk

"I have learned more in my four years with Beacon Foods than in the last twenty years with my previous employers".

Bob Plumb, Logistics Co-ordinator

CASE STUDY: Listawood

Hours to suit the key to success in a tight labour market

“Our organisational culture makes us an employer of choice. It is allowing us to become an agile manufacturer with quick and flexible responses to customer needs. And it really does make a difference: staff who feel valued in turn value and nurture our customers.”

Alex Turner, Managing Director

Listawood manufactures and distributes computer mouse-mats and accessories, magnets, mugs and other promotional products. The company was founded in 1987 by Arthur and Irene Allen manufacturing travel games working in a back room with just one other employee, but then diversified and grew. Now as AT Promotions Ltd, and trading under the Listawood name, the business is owned by a group of staff and friends. It has a workforce of 215 staff in 47,500 sq ft premises on an industrial estate (and former air base) near Fakenham in Norfolk.

Most of Listawood’s employees live within ten miles of the company’s premises. About two thirds of the workforce are women and over three quarters of the staff have working patterns which are different to what is traditionally considered the full-time “normal working week”. Flexi-time and part-time working, staggered hours and term-time working are all in operation. This flexibility and the firm’s commitment to work-life balance is a significant part of recruiting and retaining the people Listawood needs to grow and succeed.

When the Allens first set up the business, their own two children were small. In an area with a relatively small population and a tight labour market, many of the staff they took on as they expanded were local parents, especially mothers, who had been out of the labour market, and who needed to organise their work patterns around school days and terms.

Because this was how Irene and Arthur were working themselves, it made sense – and seemed fairest – to organise the business in a way that allowed their workforce to do the same. The business kept the same approach as the company grew so that it could retain the skilled workers they had recruited and trained.

How is it possible to operate a manufacturing company to take account of school hours? Irene Allen explains:

“When we started, we avoided what might have been a problem of not having people around when we needed them, during school holidays, for example, by introducing an early evening ‘twilight’ shift. That way, the mums we employed could be home with their children during the day and come in later when another person, usually their partner, could take over.”

Right from the beginning, there was little distinction between part-time or full-time staff and this has remained. There are no particular financial incentives to work unsocial hours, so if people opt for evening and weekend working it’s because it suits them in other ways. As the company grew, the emphasis changed to team work with a strong ethos of mutual trust and support, setting and demanding high standards and with a clear focus on meeting the needs of the customers.

Something else that has helped Listawood is its approach to recruitment and staff development. The company recruits staff with appropriate skills where these exist in the local market but it also has to take on staff who acquire their skills working in the business. What the company has learnt is that in either case it must ensure that new recruits share its values and ethos.

The company’s values are made clear to all job applicants and reinforced at interview and induction, and set out in a series of corporate documents. There is a very open culture. Every quarter, Listawood’s Managing Director, Alex Turner, gives a presentation to all staff on how the company is performing, including its profitability, and the challenges it faces. In regular surveys, staff say they

are very clear on what the business is trying to achieve and how they can contribute to its success.

Irene comments,

“When we were small, some people working in large organisations suggested that it was easy to manage flexibility in small companies; then when we were larger we met arguments the other way round, that flexibility was only possible in larger companies. We never thought that any of this made sense. The key to making it work well is setting high standards and demanding mutual respect. This was true when we were small and it’s true now.”

Alex says the benefits of the company’s approach are very clear:

“Everyone who comes to Listawood is surprised by the degree of flexible working. Work patterns are extraordinarily diverse and there’s no over-dependence on rules and regulations – that’s lazy management. Our managers and team leaders do have to work a little harder but the benefits to staff and business are much greater. We’ve learned that flexibility must be a two-way street. It isn’t just about us allowing our staff to work the hours they need - what we’ve found, and what we expect, is that staff repay our flexibility with a commitment to help the company when it needs it.”

www.listawood.com

The law on equality and diversity

One of the reasons for treating all your staff fairly and considerately is because the law requires you to do so. You, and everyone who works for you, should make sure no worker has a reason to complain of less favourable treatment because they belong to a particular demographic group. The law allows employees who believe they have been discriminated against to bring a claim for damages in an employment tribunal, exposing your business to both financial and reputational risks.

The law forbids less favourable treatment of people at work on the basis of:

- Age
- Disability
- Race (including ethnic and national origins, colour and nationality)
- Religion or belief (including lack of religion or belief)
- Sex (including pregnancy, maternity, married status and gender reassignment)
- Sexual orientation and civil partnership status.

Anti-discrimination law as it relates to employment is mainly contained in:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended)
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended)
- The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended)
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

In addition, the Employment Rights Act 2002 and the Work and Families Act 2006 set out the procedures for considering an employee's request to work flexibly if they have a child under the age of six, a disabled child under the age of 18 or is caring for an adult, together with rights to maternity, paternity and parental leave.

The UK's membership of the European Union means that some of the law reflects common standards across Europe, contained in a number of European directives. These acts of Parliament are also supplemented by regulations, codes of practice and guidance.

In some cases, different regulations apply in Northern Ireland, and these may contain slight differences from the equivalent regulations for England, Scotland and Wales.

If you are concerned about whether your knowledge is up to date, or want to know if a particular situation is in accordance with the law, you can obtain information on what the law is and how to meet its standards from the organisations listed on p.52. If necessary, you should always obtain specialist legal advice about the specific issue you face.

Future developments

The government is committed to bringing together all the existing laws on discrimination and equality in a single Act of Parliament. This is expected to simplify the law and make it easier to apply, rather than significantly alter employers' responsibilities or employees' rights. Further announcements are expected over the course of 2008 on the timetable for introduction of the legislation into Parliament. Full information on its progress towards becoming law will continue to be available from the CBI, TUC and EHRC.

The government is considering extending the right to request flexible work to parents of older children.



Sources of further information and advice

The CBI – the Confederation of British Industry

The CBI is the UK's leading business organisation, speaking for some 240,000 businesses that together employ around a third of the private sector workforce.

www.cbi.org.uk

020 7379 7400

TUC – the Trades Union Congress

With 59 member unions representing over six and a half million working people, the TUC campaigns for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

www.tuc.org.uk

020 7636 4030

WorkSMART

WorkSMART is a web-based resource from the TUC to help working people get the best out of the world of work.

www.worksmart.org.uk

EHRC – the Equality and Human Rights Commission

The EHRC is the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain. It aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. The EHRC helplines advise both individuals and organisations such as employers and service providers.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

0845 604 6610 (England helpline)

0845 604 6620 (England textphone)

0845 604 5510 (Scotland helpline)

0845 604 5520 (Scotland textphone)

0845 604 8810 (Wales helpline)

0845 604 8820 (Wales textphone)

Acas – the independent advisory, conciliation and arbitration service

Acas aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations. It provides impartial advice, training, information and a range of problem resolution services.

www.acas.org.uk

08457 47 47 47 (helpline)

08456 06 16 00 (minicom)

Age Positive

The Age Positive campaign is based in the Department of Work and Pensions and promotes the benefits of employing a mixed-age workforce that includes older and younger people.

www.agepositive.gov.uk

0113 232 4444

BERR – the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

BERR is the UK government department with responsibility for trade, business growth, employment and company law and regional economic development.

www.berr.gov.uk

020 7215 5000

020 7215 6740 (minicom)

Business Link

Business Link is a service set up by government to provide businesses with practical advice, support and information at a national and local level.

www.businesslink.gov.uk

0845 600 9006

ChildcareLink

In England, Scotland and Wales, ChildcareLink provides details of local childcare providers for employees and employers, as well as general information about childcare.

www.childcarelink.gov.uk

In Northern Ireland, Employers for Childcare provides details of local childcare providers, together with practical information on childcare applicable to the whole of the UK.

www.employersforchildcare.org

CIPD – the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

The CIPD promotes good practice in the management and development of people, and provides information and training to achieve this. Although primarily a membership organisation for HR professionals, its website includes factsheets which are available to non-members.

www.cipd.co.uk

020 8612 6200

Directgov

This website hosts a wide range of government information and services, including on rights, responsibilities and equality at work.

www.direct.gov.uk

EFA – the Employers Forum on Age

The EFA is an independent network of employers who recognise the value of an age diverse workforce. It provides advice and support for employers and campaigns for change.

www.efa.org.uk

0845 456 2495

EFB – the Employers Forum on Belief

The EFB is an independent employers' network to share good practice on religion, belief and non-belief. It offers employers practical guidance and shares solutions to common issues.

www.efrb.org.uk

0207 785 6533

Employers for Carers

Employers for Carers is a partnership of employers led by ACE National – Carers UK's Action for Carers and Employment which promotes the business benefits of supporting carers in the workplace.

www.carersuk.org/employersforcarers

020 7922 8000 (Carers UK)

EFD - Employers Forum on Disability

The EFD is an employers' organisation focused on disability in the workplace, sharing best practice to make it easier to employ disabled people and serve disabled customers.

www.employers-forum.co.uk

020 7403 3020

020 7403 0040 (minicom)

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission exists to advance equality, promote equality of opportunity, encourage good relations and challenge discrimination through promotion, advice and enforcement in Northern Ireland.

www.equalityni.org

028 90 500 600

028 90 500 589 (textphone)

Equality Britain

Equality Britain promotes opportunities to people from all sections of the community.

www.equalitybritain.co.uk

0151 707 6688

Fair Play Partnership

The Fair Play Partnership is an independent non-profit making organisation working to promote equality and diversity in the workplace and public and community life.

www.fairplaypartnership.org.uk

0113 262 2789

GEO – Government Equalities Office

The GEO was established in July 2007 with responsibility for the government's overall strategy and priorities on equality issues.

www.governmentequalitiesoffice.gov.uk

0207 944 4400

liP – Investors in People

The Investors in People Standard provides a practical framework for improving business performance and competitiveness through good practice in human resource development.

www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

0207 467 1900

Multifaithnet

The Multifaith Centre at the University of Derby promotes mutual understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs and to build respect between people as fellow human beings. Its website has information about different religious faiths.

www.multifaithcentre.org

OGC – Office of Government Commerce

The OGC is an office of HM Treasury which is responsible for policy and standards on procurement across the public sector, including its role in delivering high-quality public services and best value for money. It produces guidance and information for public bodies which companies may also find useful in bidding for contracts.

www.ogc.gov.uk

Opportunity now

Opportunity Now is a membership organisation representing employers who want to ensure inclusiveness for women, supporting their potential to be as economically active as men. Opportunity Now is part of Business in the Community.

www.opportunitynow.org.uk

0870 600 2482

RfO – Race for Opportunity

RfO is a network of private and public sector organisations working across the UK to promote the business case for race and diversity. It is part of Business in the Community.

www.raceforopportunity.org.uk

0207 566 8716

Stonewall

Stonewall is a registered charity working to achieve legal equality and social justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is a good practice forum for employers who want to promote sexual orientation equality in their workplace.

www.stonewall.org.uk

020 7593 1850

020 7633 0759 (minicom)

Working Families

Working Families helps children, working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work pragmatic advice and practical solutions.

www.workingfamilies.org.uk

0800 013 0313

Note: The views expressed on websites other than their own are not necessarily those of the CBI, TUC or EHRC. However, we hope that these details will help you find out more about particular issues or to obtain further advice. Although not all these organisations provide services across the whole of the UK, they will usually be able to suggest others who can give you information appropriate to your location.

For a copy of this report in alternative formats, please contact:

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