

WHO ARE WE?



Robert Hunter (Trustee), a solicitor advocate. In the course of 30 years in the City, Robert has been a partner in a magic circle firm and a specialist litigation boutique. (Robert is also profoundly deaf).



Liz Dawes (Trust Officer), previously deputy general counsel for an asset manager, now responsible for the day to day work of City Disabilities (and mother of two children with disabilities.)



Kate Rees-Doherty (Trustee), a lawyer with over 20 years of experience in charity and private wealth law who has extensive experience of working with and enabling colleagues with disabilities.



Kayleigh Farmer (Trustee), started her career as a legal PA and was promoted to Executive Assistant, before moving over to an IT Programme. Kayleigh has extensive experience of working with and enabling colleagues with disabilities.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have a disability or long term health condition, and would either like our support or to offer your help as a mentor, then we would love to hear from you.

You can contact us:

- via our website at www.citydisabilities.org.uk
- by email on info@citydisabilities.org.uk
- by phone on **07955 244048**.

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**HOW TO SUCCEED
AT INTERVIEW WHEN
DISCUSSING YOUR
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Many well qualified people with disabilities struggle to perform at interview. This leaflet is designed to help you think about why this might be the case, and to offer some practical tips for improving your interview technique. There is no legal obligation to raise a disability at interview, but for the purposes of this leaflet we have assumed that a candidate either wants to, or has a disability that will be obvious to the interviewer.

KEEP YOUR DISABILITY IN PROPORTION

Candidates with disabilities are understandably worried about how employers will react to them. Do not allow this to dominate your view of yourself. Your disability is not your defining characteristic. View it as something that, with the right employer, can be addressed.

It is now standard practice for employers to encourage candidates to “disclose” their disability before the interview stage, whilst offering assurances that this will enable them to be fairly assessed. Frequently, concern to appear “disability friendly” results in a great deal of discussion about the difference in question, reassurances over how inclusive the employer is, and demonstrations of their many diversity policies and groups. The fact of the

candidate’s disability comes to dominate the interview and recruitment process, with the employer spending too much time considering the disability, and not enough time discovering whether the candidate is the right person for the job.

At its worst, this approach can even distort the candidates own perception of themselves. We often meet mentees who have felt pressured into being “open and honest” about their differences, to the extent that they have started to view their disability as their most dominant feature. It becomes the salient point in their working life; something they should “get out in the open” as soon as possible. The result is that the candidate presents themselves as a person with a disability first, and a skilled and valuable employee second.

At this stage, all parties have lost a sense of proportion, and cannot consider the disability sensibly and practically in the context of the work place.

To avoid this approach, give careful thought to the following matters before you go to an interview:

FOCUS ON THE JOB ADVERT AND THE PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job adverts come with a job and person specification, setting out the tasks you’ll need to complete and the skills required

to do the job. The purpose of an interview is to discover if you are the right person for the role. Like any other candidate, you must be able to demonstrate that you have the experience and skills required. You can do this by having answers ready that show how you have carried out such duties before, and that articulate your talent and experience. If you don’t do this, you won’t be successful. If you have spent too much time considering how your disability affects your work, and not enough time thinking through how you can show you are the best candidate, it will show in your interview answers. It sounds simple, but it is surprising how many candidates do not do this. If you regard the issue as: “Will they employ someone with a disability?” rather than: “Am I the best person for the job?” then your interviewer will do so too.

HOW DOES YOUR DISABILITY IMPACT YOUR WORK?

Do not highlight your disability as a “big deal”. Instead ask yourself: what part of the job does my disability affect and how? What practical solutions can I put in place to deal with those effects? Once you have those answers ready, you can raise the topic of your difference in an effective way, within the context of how it affects your job. If you are asked about how you will complete a part of the job, and it happens to be impacted by your disability, explain this in your reply. So to use a simplified example, let’s imagine a person with some hearing loss has applied for a job that requires frequent use of the telephone. When asked about that part of the work, a candidate can say: “Because I have partial

hearing loss, it can be difficult for me to hear conversations over the telephone.” They can then go on to explain what practical solutions work best for them.

WHAT SOLUTIONS WORK FOR YOU?

It is important to present employers with solutions and not “problems” (as they may see it). If you can, demonstrate that you have already found solutions to any issues. Consider advances in technology, practical matters of access, and the kind of support you might need. To use our example above, do not end your answer after “it can be difficult for me to use a telephone”, but rather go on to say “and so I find that using a palantypist/particular type of telephone/specific hearing aid is most helpful”. When an employer considers a disability in context, and can see how adjustments are easily made, they are less likely to perceive your difference as an insurmountable problem. You will also be demonstrating that you are self-aware, have considered the requirements of the job, and have a practical and proactive approach to problem solving.

Of course, it would be ideal if employers had already educated themselves about a difference and the practical ways to accommodate it in the workplace, but we must deal with the reality of the workplace as we find it now. Some employers will have thought these matters through and be ready to discuss solutions with you. Others will need to be educated, however annoying and indeed tiring that can sometimes be.

BE WARY OF INAPPROPRIATE REACTIONS

If you encounter a negative reaction to your discussions, think carefully about the employer. If they see disability as a big issue, or if they focus too much on small details that they are convinced are difficult to solve, you may find them hard to work for. That’s not to say that you shouldn’t work there, but if you do not believe the culture of an employer is the best for you, then you may struggle to be treated fairly, or to feel happy in your workplace.

AND FINALLY, “DESIRABLE DISADVANTAGES”

Employers often say they are looking for candidates with resourcefulness and dedication. As well as highlighting the skills and experience you have gained from other employment, remember that candidates with disabilities have very often overcome more hurdles than their non-disabled colleagues. Our mentees have shown resilience, grit, persistence, determination, a sense of humour, problem solving and lateral thinking in order to overcome many different difficulties. We think of their disability as a “kite mark” that shows how motivated and resourceful they have been in order to secure their education and professional training. Do not be afraid of pointing out the issues you have dealt with, while still achieving

the same level of academic and career success that has got you to the interview stage. Remember that you are able to compete with other candidates who have not been challenged in this way. Think about what your particular experience has taught you. One mentee with dyslexia has exceptional attention to detail because he finds written work challenging and so is meticulous about everything he presents. Another of our mentors believes that his disability has taught him tenacity and perseverance. What skills has your disability taught you?

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

Above all, instead of focussing just on your disability, make sure you do what all other candidates must do if they are to perform well: think about what is required of you, what the content of your work will be, and the relevant skills and experience you have. This should run alongside a consideration of what practical issues, if any, your difference might present, rather than take second place.

If you would like more guidance on how to do this, do get in touch. We have mentors with disabilities in many different professions and with many different experiences, lots of whom recruit for their employers. We may be able to help.

