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See Potential

An information pack
for employers



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What is See Potential?

See Potential is an employment campaign supported by employers across every industrial sector, showcasing the talents and business benefits of hiring people from different backgrounds. These can include the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, care leavers, recovering addicts, homeless people, single parents and some military veterans. The campaign seeks to challenge negative perceptions and attitudes towards candidates from these groups and encourage employers to recruit more of them.

See Potential celebrates the work of employers who provide jobs and training opportunities to people from different backgrounds, showing other businesses why it's worth their while reviewing their recruitment practices and broadening their talent streams. We use real-life testimony from individuals and employers to illustrate the personal, societal and business benefits of giving people a chance in the world of work.

Who supports the campaign?



Sir Richard Branson, Deborah Meaden and Simon Cowell are See Potential's ambassadors and the campaign is supported by well over 100 employers. These include well-known brands like Tesco, Marks & Spencer, Costa Coffee, National Grid, BAE Systems, Eversheds, Admiral, Fujitsu, Marriott, Carillion, Hyundai, Virgin and EY, as well as growing numbers of SMEs. They all have open recruitment policies and are leading the way with their more inclusive approach to finding fresh talent.

See Potential is endorsed by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Institute of Directors (IOD) along with a string of charities, including Business in the Community (BITC), The Prince's Trust, The Big Issue, Nacro and many others. They all believe businesses should double their efforts to tap into the valuable skills, energy and insight that candidates from different backgrounds can bring to businesses.



Why open recruitment matters

Evidence from business suggests that people from different backgrounds can become some of your best employees. These are people who will have overcome their own personal challenges, so can bring fresh ideas and solutions to problems.

Businesses report that employees from these groups go the extra mile to secure results, stay with their employer for longer, have a strong commitment to their organisation and lower rates of absenteeism. They also report a number of key benefits of hiring them, which are set out below.

Resolving skills shortages

The CIPD has found well over half of employers struggle to fill vacancies due to skills shortages. And evidence suggests it affects all sectors, not just traditional areas like hospitality and logistics. Financial services, for instance, experienced the sharpest rise in skills shortages of any sector last year. The latest Employer Skills Survey also shows that over two-thirds of employers struggling to fill vacancies experience a direct financial impact. Being more open-minded about who you recruit can help you overcome this.

Care leaver Mark builds a career as an electrical engineer at Marriott Hotels



Mark from Glasgow went into care when he was five. He struggled at school and was worried that he would end up homeless and unemployed. But at the age of 16, Marriott Hotels noticed his potential. Despite having no experience, Marriott spotted his flair for customer service and took him on as a breakfast chef. According to his manager, Mark's now one of the strongest members of their team and the most reliable member of staff. He's gone on to train to become an electrical engineer with the company. Mark says being given the chance has transformed his life and enabled him to build a life for himself and his partner.

Reducing recruitment costs

The CIPD has calculated that filling the average non-managerial vacancy costs around £2,000. Work Inclusion initiatives, where employers work with specialist organisations to take people on from disadvantaged backgrounds on a paid trial basis, can help reduce those overheads - saving your organisation substantial sums. Heathrow Airport's employability scheme saved its employers over £6.3m.

More than **3 in 4**

companies have actively become more inclusive workplaces in the last five years

Source: CBI/Pertemps Network Group Employment Trends Survey (December 2016)

Increasing staff retention

Employees recruited from different backgrounds have demonstrated lower turnover rates than the wider workforce. For example, a few years ago Ginsters experienced a 50% reduction in churn amongst their personnel after hiring homeless people. The higher value placed on having a job for such groups often leads to higher levels of loyalty which, in turn, reduces recruitment overheads.

Ex-offender Susanna fast-tracked to management at Timpson



In 2008, Susanna was sentenced to four years in prison for her part in a robbery. Whilst inside, she resolved to turn her life around. She applied to the Timpson Training Academy and her commitment and hard work was clear. She learnt core skills and services like shoe and watch repairs, key cutting and engraving. Timpson immediately noticed Susanna's strong and bubbly personality, her strength of character and potential to work well with customers. Her manager put her forward for a work placement in a local branch whilst she was still in prison. She excelled and, once released, Timpson gave her a full-time job. The company considers her one of their best recruits and she's been promoted to store manager at a busy London branch.

Reducing staff absence

Evidence suggests employees who have faced barriers to getting employment tend to have a below-average number of days off work. M&S, for instance, say their employees who are single parents, ex-offenders and have histories of homelessness are less likely to be absent from work than the rest of their staff.

Improving client relationships

Open recruitment policies and running work inclusion programmes can support a company's commercial relationship by creating competitive advantage. 92% of future private business leaders say that responsible business is key to them as potential investors. Being inclusive and diverse increases your appeal as an organisation to do business with.

Homeless Lee forges career in IT with Fujitsu



Lee joined Fujitsu in January 2012 on an apprenticeship scheme. He had been unemployed for three years and became homeless after falling behind with his rent. He was desperate to be given the chance of a job, but despite his outgoing personality, he kept on getting knock-backs. But Fujitsu spotted something. They helped him get his life back on track. He immediately hit it off with colleagues and he's gone from strength to strength, completing his apprenticeship and taking on a key role in providing IT support to a major client.

92%

of inclusive employers say it's enhanced their reputation – often helping them win new contracts

Source: Business in the Community, 'Business Benefits of Work Inclusion' (2015)

Up-skilling existing workforce and boosting morale

Recruiting or offering placements to people who have faced barriers to work can help develop existing staff's professional skills through involvement in training and mentoring. Two thirds of employers say becoming more inclusive has boosted skills levels across the workforce. Almost 60% also said it had increased employee engagement and satisfaction.

Demonstrating a social conscience

Employment is key to creating a route out of poverty for individuals and their families and so is good for society. So developing an open recruitment policy, and actively hiring people who have faced barriers to work, will help reduce social problems, saving the taxpayer money. It also shows you're committed to giving something back to the community you serve.

Boosting corporate reputation

Providing employment for local people, from all walks of life, enriches the reputation of a company in its local community. It also improves the profile and brand of a company nationally, as it gains public exposure. 92% of businesses with open recruitment policies surveyed by BITC say it's enhanced their reputation.

Single parent Danielle moves ahead at M&S



29-year-old Danielle from Cardiff became a single mum after a six-year relationship came to an end. Struggling to balance childcare, she was told by someone to put her career dreams on hold. But Marks & Spencer saw past her circumstances as a parent and gave her a chance. They thought outside the box and offered her flexible hours that enabled their business to benefit from her skills, whilst allowing Danielle to carry on being mum to seven-year-old Dale. She's now flourishing in the role, with managers saying she's one of the store's best team players.

Over **2 thirds**

of employers struggling to fill vacancies due to skills shortages report experiencing a direct financial impact

Source: The UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey (2015)

Company profile: COOK

Kent-based SME COOK delivers home-cooked frozen meals. Last year they decided to employ two per cent of their workforce from disadvantaged communities. They began by speaking to local homeless shelters and recruited four people who had been living on the streets.



Next they spoke to HM Prison Stanford Hill, working with their community team to identify ex-offenders who could come and work in their kitchens.

COOK won The Sunday Times Best Companies Award for Discovering Potential for their efforts in helping people from different backgrounds into meaningful employment.

“Employing people from a diverse range of groups is the right thing to do. Ex-offenders work really hard and are some of our most committed workers. My tip for success would be to get everyone in your business involved in the discussion and get their buy-in to the idea first. But take it from me, the benefits far outweigh the risks.”

Edward Perry

Cook Chief Executive and Founder

How your business can get involved

If you would like to help transform lives and tap into the talents of people like Mark, Susanna, Lee and Danielle, our employer guide, ‘Strengthening your workforce with talent from different backgrounds’ can help you get started. Produced in partnership with BITC, it offers expert advice on tried-and-tested ways of becoming more inclusive. With top tips and organisations that you can work with to source diverse talent, it will help your business fill skills shortages and boost productivity.

By doing more to become an inclusive employer, you will be joining progressive businesses of all sizes and across all industrial sectors, including Lloyds Banking Group, Pret a Manger, Halfords, Stagecoach, KPMG, COOK and The Blue Sea Food Company.

Get in touch

Thank you for taking the time to find out about See Potential. If your organisation is already practising and benefiting from an open recruitment policy or you have a scheme to help those from different backgrounds, please let us know.

Join the growing number of professionals sharing recruitment tips with **#SeePotential on Twitter**. For up to the minute news and insight on inclusive employment, follow us on [LinkedIn](#). And you can drop us a line at contactus.seepotential@dwp.gsi.gov.uk