# Episode 5: Recruitment

Hello and welcome to this the final episode of the Australian Disability Network miniseries podcast on how to make Australian boardrooms more accessible and inclusive.

My name is Andy McLean, and in this episode, we are going to look at the topic of recruitment, including a number of very practical and proven tips to help you secure a more diverse board of directors.

Let's jump in and get started. Episode five, Recruitment.

We'll start off this episode with a quote from one director who participated in a recent Latrobe University survey of board members with disabilities. This is what they said;

“I have never been contacted by a headhunter to sit on a board. And that includes in my industry, where I've completed more than $50 billion worth of transactions globally”.

Similar sentiments were echoed by many others in that survey, which revealed the extra effort intellectual, emotional and physical effort that people with disabilities often make to even be considered for board appointments. But, there is some good news boards can take several simple steps to reduce such strain and to make recruitment more inclusive and accessible. In doing so, boards will gain access to a swathe of untapped talent, while becoming much more representative of the customers and communities they serve.

Let's start off by talking about the board's skills and attributes matrix. For your board, it's imperative that you're recruiting talent for their expertise and strengths, and how these will complement the existing board members’ strengths. A good place to start is by reviewing the skills and attributes matrix that articulates the range of experience and capabilities that you require on your board. In that matrix lived experience of disability should sit alongside technical skills, include lived experience of disability in your brief to recruiters for boards and leadership roles. Tell them that you want to interview someone who has both the technical skills and the lived experience of disability. This sends the message that lived experience of disability is valued by your board.

Now let's talk about the application process. Before you even advertise a role or invite people to apply, it's important to think about how people will access the essential information. Plan to provide details in a range of formats via accessible website. And a side note here if you check out Australian Disability Network’s website, you'll find some accessibility testing tools there to help you out. Consider your application process from end to end and ask these kinds of questions. How accessible are our online forms? Have we offered alternative ways for applicants to submit their details? How will we find out what adjustments and communication methods are preferred by our applicants, and have we named a contact person to be available to assist applicants throughout the process? When advertising or inviting applications for board positions online, include wording that encourages people with disability to apply.

It's also important to use inclusive language and make information available in a range of formats. And incidentally, for tips on accessible content and inclusive content, check out our previous episode, Episode Four in this podcast series, which is packed full of practical tips. And one final point for your application process. Do make sure that you provide access to your disability employment policy. Now let's move on to the screening process.

When reviewing applications for your board, make a point of not rejecting candidates based on employment history gaps. Candidates with disability may have had career breaks to manage their health.

Invite all applicants to make requests for adjustments and preferred communication methods. Adjustments might include things like accessible interview venues, Auslan interpreters, live captioning services, alternative formats of materials, for example, accessible Word documents rather than PDFs and so forth. If an applicant notifies you of their preferred communication methods, such as a video call rather than a phone call, then make sure that that informs how the applicant is contacted not just at that stage but throughout the full recruitment process.

And here's probably a good time for us to flag up disability confidence training too. Board members and interview panelists should complete disability confidence training to ensure that they're aware of inclusive interview techniques and don't inadvertently discriminate. For details of disability confidence training, check out Australian Disability Network’s website. Next, we're going to share 10 practical tips for the interview process just after the short break.

Welcome back to this Australian Disability Network podcast miniseries. So, we're about to talk about the interview process and provide some practical tips for you. Before we do that, though, let's hear a few words about the recruitment process from Alice Anderson, who is a board member of Sydney, Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Making Waves Foundation and Access Sydney Community Transport.

**Alice Anderson** 05:38

Yes, accessible and inclusive recruitment isn't just about job ads and the processes. It’s looking at the organisation holistically, to making sure that the policies and procedures are in place, that the workplace culture is ready.

So, they've been fostering inclusion and diversity. It's also looking at the candidate pools and what the markets doing at the moment, and then tailoring the job ads and the recruitment process. So, you actually attracting the right types of candidates and making sure that people can bring their own experiences and skills and have adjustments made in a fair and equitable process along the way.

**Andy McLean** 06:14

That was Alice Anderson. And so, let's jump in and talk about the interview process.

So, there are several steps that you can take to ensure your interview process is accessible and inclusive. I'll just quickly run through them in summary, and then we'll go into more detail. So, the first one is about welcoming adjustments, in other words, expressing your willingness to make adjustments for people during the interview process. The second step is about considering carefully your location. The third is about following online etiquette. The fourth is about being supportive. The fifth is about having a diverse interview panel. The sixth is about taking care over questions. The seventh is about providing time and space. The eighth is about respecting privacy. Number nine is about accommodating interpreters. And number ten is being clear about what happens after the interviews.

Now let's go into a bit more detail on each of those ten. So, when we're talking about welcoming adjustments, what we're really thinking is that when inviting board applicants for interviews, express your willingness to make adjustments for example, saying something like if you have any adjustment requests for this interview, please let me know via email or phone. And also, be clear about what candidates can expect on the day, including who will be conducting the interview.

Our second tip is about considering your location so your building and interview room need to be accessible. So, if there are barriers at the venue, highlight this to the applicant to allow them to make or request alternative arrangements. Also, interview and assessment processes should be accessible. So, for example, if applicants need to complete any paperwork during the interview, make sure the documents are available in alternative formats.

Our third tip is about following online etiquette. So, if you're holding interviews online, follow accessible digital meeting practices. For example, one person speaks at a time, people say their name out loud before speaking, and that people keep their cameras on throughout the interview, and that you offer captions, and so on and so forth. Do note that in our previous episode, episode four of this podcast, we talked a lot about inclusive communication practices that can be really helpful. There's a whole stack of tips in the previous episode if you want to go back and listen to those.

Our fourth tip is about being supportive. So, before the interview, provide pre reading materials such as the board pack or selection processes, and make those available in an accessible format. Also offer applicants the option to engage someone to support them if necessary. So, for example, someone with a visual impairment might ask for a personal assistant to attend with them.

Our fifth tip is about having a diverse interview panel. So, to mitigate unconscious bias join your selection process ensure your interviewers have a range of backgrounds, experiences and beliefs and so forth.

Our sixth tip is about taking care of your questions. So, interview questions should be focused on the essential requirements of the board role and behavioral questioning is best. As people with disability have sometimes experienced disadvantages in the labour market, but still have the requisite skills and aptitude, you might also look for transferable skills. So, for example, rather than asking about previous board experience, you might ask about previous experience making strategic decisions.

Our seventh tip is about providing time and space. Give applicants sufficient time to answer questions before you ask them to respond. If they asked to receive interview questions in advance so that they have time and space to comprehend questions before responding, then grant that request.

Our eighth tip is about respecting privacy. So, if a board applicant shares with you that they do have a disability, keep that information private and confidential unless they give explicit consent for you to pass on that information. And in the interview, don't ask personal questions relating to the candidate’s disability.

Our ninth tip is all about accommodating interpreters. So, some board applicants may require that interpreters are booked for the interview. Sometimes Auslan users have preferred interpreters. So, ask the applicant if they have a recommended or preferred interpreter that they'd like you to book and be mindful that lead times to engage Auslan interpreters can be several weeks.

Our tenth and final tip is to be clear about what happens next. So, at the end of the interview, explain what the next steps in the process are, and what the timings will be. Next, we'll round off this podcast series by providing a few tips for how to make these changes that you're introducing sustainable and to set yourself up for board success in the longer term.

Hello, and welcome to the final section of this podcast. So, we're going to talk a little bit now about setting your board up for success.

After appointing anyone to your board, including someone with disability, you'll naturally want them to succeed in the role. So, these five steps are really about helping your board members be the best that they can be. And they cover these topics, listening, coordinating business as usual, mentoring and following up. So, let's just quickly run through them now.

So, the first one is listening. So, ask if the new director requires any adjustments to participate on the board, and if they require a personal emergency evacuation plan. A personal emergency evacuation plan is an agreed plan of action developed with the person with disability to be implemented in the event of an emergency.

Our second tip is about coordination. So, ensure that your nominated contact person, often called a board liaison, understands what the new director’s preferred method of communication is and what adjustments have been requested.

Our third tip is specifically about business as usual. What we're talking about here is ensuring that any presentations or meetings conducted during and after the director’s induction are accessible and inclusive. So, for example, ensuring that PowerPoint presentations are accessible and making sure that digital meetings observe accessible digital meeting protocols. And again, if you check out episode four of our podcast series, you'll find a whole bunch of practical tips in that regard.

Our fourth tip is about offering mentoring opportunities, consider mentorship or coaching opportunities tailored for directors with disabilities, such as those offered by Australian Disability Network.

Our fifth and final tip is all about following up. So, to continuously improve your board, you'll need to seek feedback from your new director about their experience at the selection process, ask them too about adjustment requests that they made, how effective those were, and the implementation process itself. First of all, you're helping that individual board director, if you can find out and get the feedback from them in case you need to make any further adjustments. And secondly, any learnings that you get from the feedback that you get from that board director can help you to continuously improve and to make your board more accessible and inclusive for other board directors in the future.

And that brings us to the end of this Australian Disability Network podcast miniseries on improving access and inclusion in the boardroom.

Now we've covered quite a lot of content over the past five episodes, so don't forget that you can also download the comprehensive director's guide on improving access and inclusion in the boardroom, which includes all of the suggestions and practical tips that we've shared in this podcast miniseries. You can download the guide at AustralianDisabilityNetwork.org.au That's AustralianDisabilityNetwork, all one word .org.au.

Before I go, I did want to mention that at Australian Disability Network, we can help you build disability confidence and understanding. We can help you check progress on accessibility and inclusion and connect you with others sharing the same journey. Our services, programs and tools make it easier for you to welcome people with disability as board directors, employees, customers and stakeholders. So please visit AustralianDisabilityNetwork.org.au to check out our resources and services. There's a whole stack of information on there. You can also phone us on 1300 363 645.

And that brings us to the very end of this podcast series. Thank you so much for listening and goodbye for now.