

Inform Podcast
Episode 19: Cracking the Job Market—tips to land your next role

Kirby Fenwick

Hello and welcome to Inform, a podcast where you'll be hearing from people with disabilities, as well as industry experts, on a range of topics.

I'm your host, Kirby Fenwick.

Of the more than four million Australian's living with disability, just under half are of working age. But according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, people with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than people without disabilities.

In this episode of Inform, we speak with Karla Fernee, the lead for the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator which is the employer engagement team at JobAccess. Karla has some great tips, advice and resources that just might help you land your next job.

First up, just what is the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator?

Karla Fernee

So, the National Disability recruitment coordinator or the NDRC works with larger employers by providing expert advice, resources and strategies to improve their disability confidence through free and tailored 12 month partnerships.

The partnerships are designed to help identify and remove any attitudinal, systemic and operational barriers to employing people disability, and we provide a practical framework to get organisations to a place where they feel really inclusive and disability fit.

The NDRC also supports disability employment service providers or DES in many ways this includes sharing job vacancies targeted for people with disability.

Kirby Fenwick

Karla has worked with JobAccess for more than eight years, so she has plenty of great advice for cracking the job market and landing your next role.

Let's start at the beginning. What are some of the challenges facing people with disability on the job search?

Karla Fernee

Yeah, sure. So, some of the challenges that we come across in our everyday conversations, and through research as well, is people with disability can experience inherent barriers to looking for and keeping work. These range

from discriminatory attitudes during recruitment to low awareness of employment rights and poor physical or technological accessibility.

A lack of awareness and understanding among employers is a barrier that can impact the participation of people with disability in the workplace. A survey commissioned by the Department of Social Services just in 2018 found that 77% of businesses believed it was important to include people with disability in the organisation. However, nearly 40% of employers viewed that as a step into the unknown. And what this means is employers are willing to employ people with disability but really don't know where to begin. And one thing that's important to note is that employers don't have all the answers. And it is in fact okay for applicants to provide employers with information and have an open, honest conversation about the supports they may need in the workplace.

Kirby Fenwick

Karla says when looking for work, it can be helpful to start by identifying employers who are already embracing diversity and inclusion.

Karla Fernee

And an easy way to do this is by reviewing their website and identifying things like diversity statements within the careers or about us pages, often welcoming people with disability to apply. A way you can find these organisations is you can visit the JobAccess website, and you will see a list of organisations that we've partnered with in the past and these organisations are committed workplace diversity. Another service that supports employers on disability confidence as the Australian Network on Disability, another acronym AND, they also showcase a list of member organisations that welcome people with disability into organisations. You can then make a list of available jobs that interest you within these organisations and take time to fully understand the tasks or inherent requirements involved in the job and make sure you can safely perform all or at least most of them before you submit the application.

Kirby Fenwick

Once you've found a job that catches your attention, the next step is preparing your resume. Karla says when it comes to job applications, it's often the little details that need that extra focus.

Karla Fernee

Well, it may sound like a small detail, but a well-written application can really go a long way in creating a good first impression to help secure the job. Ask a friend to edit for simple errors such as spelling, you would really be surprised how many employers reject applications for basic editing mistakes so, tapping a friend on the shoulder is a very valuable resource.

Before you start writing the application really research the employer and the position that you're applying for, identify your skills, knowledge, experience,

and qualifications that suit the advertised role. When preparing the application only include the skills and experience that are relevant to the job.

One of the things that comes up quite often is gaps in a resume. It may be due to, due to having surgery or due to a period of time where you weren't able to work, or just coming out of university. Employees also really do like to hear about work experience, or volunteer work that you have done that may be also be relevant to the role. Coordinating a sports team event requires skills and abilities, whether it's paid employment or volunteer work, and can still demonstrate those attributes for the role.

Kirby Fenwick

So, you've found a great job, prepared your resume and submitted your application, and now you've been invited in for an interview. How can you ensure you feel prepared and ready for what can be a scary process?

Karla Fernee

Being prepared for the interview can really help make you feel more confident about how you perform on the day. Think about the skills and attributes the job requires and have your answers prepared in advance. Employers really like to hear about real examples to demonstrate your experience or qualifications. So have a, have a think about them and have them at hand and it's absolutely fine to take notes in with you if you'd like as well.

For example, during the interview, the employer may ask why they should choose you for the job or how your abilities and qualities meet the job requirements. It might be good to ask a friend or family member to practice with you and get an idea of how you will answer the question.

Just practicing your responses. Like for anything else, practice will certainly help build your confidence, really hone those the message that you want to get across. And so, tap a friend or family member on the shoulder. And it really does help build your confidence. And, you know, if you aren't successful right away, remember that each application is a learning opportunity to practice your interview skills. So, try and have some fun at the same time.

And if you are registered with a DES provider, they can also offer guidance and support that you need to prepare for the interview.

Now, if you do require support to attend and participate in an interview, you can discuss your access requirements with the potential employers then. Employers often provide a specific contact that can assist to arrange any support you may require. For example, if you have hearing loss, you can request for a sign language interpreter to be present at the interview. If you have a vision impairment, you can request detailed instructions to find the exact interview location. Your disability employment services provider can also help you organise this.

And it's really important to note that the Disability Discrimination Act or DDA states there is no legal obligation for you to share information about your condition with the employer unless it affects your ability to do the job, or impacts your safety or the safety of co-workers. However, sharing some information about your disability, and only if you're comfortable to do so can really create trust and an open relationship with a potential employer, and allows you to talk about how you perform your tasks to the necessary standards and discuss any adjustments you may need to do the job.

Kirby Fenwick

Looking for work can absolutely be challenging but Karla says one important key is to approach the process with confidence.

Karla Fernee

Yeah, absolutely. So, people with disability often have more to offer an employer than they realise. When looking for work, identify and list your strengths and weaknesses. Think about your skills, interests and abilities you can offer an employer. When talking to employers be confident about your skills and circumstances and keep discussions to the point.

Use positive words such as I can to highlight your skills, knowledge, experience, and to explain how you'll get the job done. For example, employers with limited knowledge of workplace adjustments, as I've mentioned before, may not always understand how you would go about performing a certain task. Just let them know you how you will be able to complete the task.

If you experience symptoms that may affect how you perform essential requirements of the job, you may need to think about changes to your work area or working hours. Such changes are called workplace adjustments or reasonable adjustments. And these may enable you to be equally considered during the selection process.

The employer may get help to cover the cost of making workplace adjustments through the Employment Assistance Fund. Some but not all employers are actually aware of this. The JobAccess website has a helpful information sheet about the EAF that you can consider printing to discuss with the employer at an interview if required. It's okay to spend a bit of time educating the employer at the same time.

Kirby Fenwick

If you are on the job hunt, there are some extra services and supports that can help.

Karla Fernee

So, disability employment services or DES is an Australian government employment service that helps people with disability find work and also keep a job. They can help include career advice, employment preparation, resume development and training. You can also get help from DES providers with job

searching and ongoing support at work if you require it including funding for necessary workplace modifications and wage subsidies for employers.

Kirby Fenwick

You'll find links to the resources mentioned in this episode, plus more, in the show notes at informonline.org.au

Our thanks to Karla Fernee and JobAccess for being a part of this episode.

Thank you for listening to Inform, a production of Independence Australia. Inform is hosted and produced by me, Kirby Fenwick. Our managing editor is Alison Crowe.

This episode of Inform was recorded and produced on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulan nation. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

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