



'Spotlight on...' equality, diversity and inclusion

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I applied for the Willmott Dixon Management Trainee programme back in 2012 and embraced the possibility of a long and difficult process in winning a place in the coveted programme.

This feeling was based on my arduous experience of applying for jobs following graduation from University – this was down to the fact I am profoundly deaf and that prospective employers were apprehensive about accommodating me, even despite the fact I gained three degrees, complimented with the requisite industry experience. Additionally, I was already a Chartered Construction Manager.



However, with Willmott Dixon, I found such a refreshing contrast to my job-hunting experience. For instance, with the programme, the first interview stage involved telephone interviews. It was impossible for me. Undeterred, the Principal People Manager Lydia Rowlands came up with an alternative approach, which was an instant messaging Skype interview. This greatly encouraged me as I felt I was being treated fairly, and I passed it as well!

That was a stark contrast to interviews with other major construction companies who agreed to my proposal, whereby I flew over from my native Ireland to the U.K., to meet them personally to conduct the telephone interview, at my own expense.

I was invited to the second stage of the interview with Willmott Dixon, and Willmott Dixon volunteered to pay for my flights regardless of the outcome. That made a positive impression on me. Lydia informed the interviewers of my disability – this generated awareness – and led me to feel I was treated fairly. It was a grilling interview and I was successful once again.

This led me to the final interview with the Managing Director. He was aware of my disability and communicated clearly with me and sold me his vision of incorporating me in his Willmott Dixon team.

This inclusive ethos by Willmott Dixon has carried on in my seven years in the business – it has inspired and helped me forge a rewarding career in the business – I have been promoted twice and feel like a vital and valued member of my team.

Willmott Dixon has consistently sought out to understand my needs and how they could be met to enable me to perform my role to the best of my ability. For instance, Willmott Dixon has promptly supported my application for grant funding with Access to Work for funding for British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and electronic note taking support. In meetings I am always given the opportunity to be heard and allow my views to be shared. My line managers have always had my best interests at heart. This all essentially provided me a platform to succeed.

Case Study: Willmott Dixon



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Another great example of Willmott Dixon's inclusive ethos is its close captioning (also known as subtitles) feature enabled across the entire Willmott Dixon video library. As the business placed greater emphasis on communication and marketing - internally and externally - on videos/video messaging in recent years, worried that I (and deaf people and people whose first language is not English) was missing out, I asked the business to add close captioning and this was again promptly implemented. This is another example that inspires me to deliver my role that benefits communities the business serves.

It is not just me alone that benefits from the inclusive culture with an equality first attitude – our customers, our stakeholders and communities are huge beneficiaries of it. For instance, on one of our Special Education Needs (SEN) school projects (St. Nicholas SEN School, Croydon, south London), it was learnt that some of the students in the school were deaf. This led the Willmott Dixon project team to produce a British Sign Language (BSL) pictogram/dictionary to educate the deaf students on the main activities of construction around the site.

The construction industry has a challenge in retaining and attracting future talent and is doing everything it can to make it possible – particularly in parallel with an unnerving focus to make it a more equal and inclusive industry – and I am seeing it first-hand myself. It is happening on me and all of the people around me. It takes hard work and leadership, particularly from Willmott Dixon, but it is proof it is working and will continue to deliver.