

Series 1 : Openness

Ebook 1 : Benefits of being open

GOT A DISABILITY OR LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION?

HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD BE OPEN

AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF BEING OPEN WITH AN EMPLOYER.

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MyPLUS STUDENTS' CLUB

INTRODUCTION

Employers are looking to recruit the best and brightest talent in the industry and you can be confident that they will support you throughout the application process if you are open about your disability and have requested adjustments or support.

Only you can decide whether or not you are going to be open. In this ebook we encourage you to look at both the benefits of being open with, and the impacts of not informing, an employer of your disability prior to making your decision.

This ebook also provides practical recommendations from recruiters and relevant advice from graduates who have a disability and have been successful in their applications. We hope these perspectives will show you how being open can improve your chances of landing that dream job.

This ebook will cover:

- The benefits of being open
- The potential consequences of not being open

This is the first ebook in the Openness series. Visit www.myplusstudentsclub.com for careers advice and more information on applying with a disability. Become a member on the website for free, in order to download more ebooks on topics such as writing a cover letter and requesting adjustments in the recruitment process.



BENEFITS OF BEING OPEN

BENEFIT 1:
YOU CAN REQUEST THE ADJUSTMENTS/SUPPORT YOU NEED

The overriding reason for telling an employer that you have a disability is to obtain the adjustments you require. You may require adjustments in order to demonstrate your true potential at each stage of the assessment process as well as to perform well in the role once you have secured the job offer.

James Phoenix, trainee solicitor at Linklaters, says:

"I was open about my disability during each stage of the application process. I knew my disability was going to affect me at work so it seemed best to start off on the right foot with total clarity. There was also a pragmatic point in that my slower than average handwriting and occasional need for short-notice access to a toilet could potentially affect my performance in assessment centres, so I wanted to make sure that prospective employers were forewarned and that this was accounted for."

You are the expert of your condition. What adjustments do you need in order to demonstrate your ability?

Example adjustments:

- Additional time to complete assessment tasks
- Rest breaks during the interview and assessment centre
- Interpreter
- Assistive technology

Recruiters will be able to provide you with these adjustments and more, if you inform them of your disability and what you need to perform well in the assessment, ahead of time.



BENEFIT 2:
YOU CAN DISCUSS YOUR DISABILITY POSITIVELY WITH AN EMPLOYER

When you are open about your disability, you have full control over what information you share and the way your disability is perceived by others. So use this as an opportunity to present your disability positively to an employer.

How? Managing your disability on a day-to-day basis will have enabled you to develop skills and strengths that are unique to you; identify what these skills and strengths are and be prepared to draw upon these in a competency-based interview.

Steve Bone, Careers Consultant at Leeds University, says:

*"Research thoroughly and you'll find progressive employers whom you can be open about your disabilities with. **Employers are looking to recruit individuals with diverse skills** and experiences, so be sure to provide examples of the abilities you have developed through managing disability."*

Emma Bullen, LLB Law Student at LSE, says:

*"When asked questions about challenges I have had and how I have overcome them, **using examples relating to my stammer** has always gone down well with employers. Being open with employers about your disability and giving examples of how you manage it, enables you to demonstrate the positive attributes you have developed as a result of your condition. Showing that you don't let it affect the way that you live your life presents you as a determined person; it also enables the employer to find out more about you as a person."*

What skills and strengths have you developed as a result of managing your disability?

At MyPlus Students' Club we believe having a disability gives you something extra, a positive plus, which graduate employers are looking for. Whether you've developed keen problem solving skills, expert time-management ability or steely resilience as a result of managing your disability, you should be able to communicate these confidently to an employer.



BENEFIT 3:
YOU CAN BE YOURSELF

It makes sense to be open about your disability because it is part of who you are. Rather than trying to cover it up, being open about your disability with an employer can help you to focus on being yourself and positively presenting your talents and abilities.

Ricky Vachhani, Risk Consultant at EY, says:

"Initially, I was quite tentative about my speech impediment (during the interview) as I didn't know how people would react. However, I have found that by telling people from the outset of meeting them that I do have a speech impediment really helps to clear the air when I do stammer. In addition, I always mention that the best way for the client/other person to respond is just by giving me enough to time to finish which helps to manage their expectations and also reduces the pressure on my speech.

I've learnt that if I believe in the quality of what I'm saying then, actually, it doesn't matter if I take 20 seconds longer to say it, or my speech breaks up in between.

It's definitely what I say and not how I say it."

In what ways do you work differently because of your disability and how might you explain this to an employer?

Being able to identify how your disability affects you is a sign of self-awareness. It is just as important to understand the challenges that may arise due to your disability, as it is to know your strengths. Explaining these to an employer will help them account for the differences in your approach, and focus on the quality of your work and valuable skills you bring!



POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF NOT BEING OPEN

CONSEQUENCE 1:

You could lack the adjustments and support you need

Being open allows an individually tailored support package to be arranged for your interview. By not assisting the employer with information about what you need, you are preventing them from successfully evaluating and accommodating you.

If you aren't able to perform well due to the lack of adjustments during the online assessments, for example, you may be filtered out of the process early.

CONSEQUENCE 2:

You could miss out on your dream job

Competition for jobs is very high and every applicant is determined to show the employer why they are the best person to do the job. If you don't have the adjustments or support that you require to perform well and demonstrate your potential on the day, you may risk being rejected.

If you inform an employer of your disability after you have been rejected, they are under no obligation to re-interview you.

CONSEQUENCE 3:

You could cause unnecessary disruptions in the process

Making a late request for adjustments may delay or postpone the interview/assessment causing a disruption for both you and the employer. This disruption could have been avoided by being open at the beginning.

This lack of planning may reflect poorly on you and affect your relationship with a potential employer.

CONSEQUENCE 4:

Your relationship with a new employer could be negatively affected

If you need adjustments to fulfil the role that you have been recruited to do but haven't asked for these you won't be able to do your job. This is unlikely to help you establish a good relationship with your new employer from the onset.

Your inability to fulfil your responsibilities within the role may cause delays within your team and lead to financial and reputational costs for your employer, in the longer term.

WILL YOU 'TICK THE BOX'?

More than 11% of students have a disability or long-term health condition in the UK and as such, employers are used to having conversations about disability and providing support and adjustments. Employers want you to feel confident bringing your whole self to work so it's important to be honest about who you are and how you work best with your disability from the start of the process.

Top Tips:

- Consider what adjustments and support you may obtain as a result of being open, during the application process and when you join the firm.
- Think about the positive attributes you have developed as a result of having a disability.
- Being open from the beginning will enable you to talk about who you really are and the strengths that you have developed as a result of your disability.
- Think through your needs and the potential impacts to your performance if these needs are not being met.
- Work out how you wish to be open with a potential employer.
- Practice being open with family and friends in order to build your confidence.

If you are really want the job, it is your own interest to be open about your disability and the support you require. Equally, if you don't ask for the support you need during the interview process, prepare yourself for potential failure.

AND FINALLY....

We hope this ebook has demonstrated the benefits of informing an employer of a disability early on in the process and helped you become more aware of the potential impacts of not being open.

If you have decided on being open and need advice on how to do so, become a member of **myplusstudentsclub.com**, for free, to download our next ebook 'Practical Steps to being open about your disability with an employer'.