

Minutes for Transitions Stakeholders' Advisory Network meeting #7

Theme: Recruitment Sector and business outcomes with refugee professional candidates

Date: Thursday 28th March 2013 Time: 2.00 – 5.00

Venue: The Space centre, Kings Cross WC1H 9NT

Participants: 11 colleagues present.

The key question for the meeting was: Exploring what are the key features of recruitment business models and of refugee professionals profiles that can either enable or prevent these candidates being competitive candidates for recruitment agencies and their clients.

Green = confirmed candidates (4) Purple – confirmed recruitment colleagues (4-5) Blue = Transitions

Name		Profession/Organisation
Jennifer	Davidson	TXM Engineering Partnership Manager (Equality & Diversity)
Adrian	Frapple	Reed Recruitment Account Manager (Circle Housing)
Linda	Marshall	Senior HR Consultant, Reed Global & HR Consultant. (presenter)
Quinton	Seeman	Inhouse Recruitment Adviser, Save the Children, London
Rory	White	Managing Director Flow Caritas Recruitment
F	H	Employed Telecommunications Engineer. Former Transitions candidate. (presenter)
Sheila	Heard	Director, Transitions (facilitator)
S	E	Administrator, Transitions candidate
Sibhatlab	Kesete	Accountant, Transitions candidate
E	S	International Development – Human Rights Law, Transitions candidate
Lisa	Haile	Civil Engineer, Transitions candidate

Apologies received

Sanjay	Aggarwal	Managing Director Taylor Lloyd Mason, Recruitment and Executive search agency
Alex	Hayes	Recruitment Consultant, Flow Caritas Recruitment
P	K	Accountancy in Housing
N	B	IT Engineer
Stella	Hobbs	Recruitment Adviser, Mango INGO Finance Recruitment
Nicola	Baxter	Hays Recruitment Account Manager (Camden Council)
Ben	Hutchins	Marketing Manager, Gradweb recruitment

1) Welcome and introductions.

Short powerpoint presentation by Transitions on objectives/structure/outcomes to date of Transitions and the Stakeholders' Advisory Network.

Please also see attached presentation.

- Transitions is social enterprise. Income all put back into organisation to sustain future services
- Objectives are jobs, candidate empowerment, collaborative good practice and sustainable social enterprise
- Seeking to build more partnerships in recruitment sector, for mutual business outcomes.
- No integration services provided in UK for refugees
- No jobcentre plus services
- 70% unemployment – 6 times national average
- Refugees not named in Equality Act 2010 as having a protected characteristic
- 25% of refugees are highly skilled
- Transitions achieved 79% skilled job outcomes for 2011 candidates by end of 2012 (19 out of 24)
- 2011- 2012 52 highly skilled candidates received intensive services.
- 200 on database. c 4,000 individuals given refugee status in 2011.
- Success is result of collaborative partnership building, quality advice, internships service and employment support and niche recruitment services

2) Presentation by FH , Telecommunications Engineer, now working for Telecoms Company as Senior Engineer

- 5 year Overseas Degree viewed by Naric as equivalent to UK HND
- UK MSc with distinction
- 3 years' Overseas experience
- Found no employment advice services for refugee professionals to address refugee specific issues: Recognising transferable skills, experience and qualifications, cross-cultural labour market expectations.
- Many unsuccessful graduate scheme and experienced hire applications to agencies and employers
- Most employers also refused ID and demanded UCAS points
- Eventual success via Transitions information, advice and training about effective self-marketing in the UK and advocacy with recruitment agency

Questions/Comments by range of participants

CV: Q. How were you approaching your CV? Answer: For 2 years, very stressful situation of trying to settle, negotiate MSc place with no UCAS points and low Naric opinion. No idea of the UK system for anything and no services to assist refugees to find them. Did not know about careers services and Jobcentre Plus offered no support. Focussed on recruitment agencies and websites with very little 2 way response. Took 2 years to gradually realise that a CV is not set. Gradually started to target it.

Full Time Employment Has the company that hired you learned from this? Transitions lobbied/advocated with the agency to put me forward. They did not know how difficult it had been. The agency did not put me through their books but introduced me informally, because they weren't sure. They lost their fee because I got the senior engineer job. The agency had advised me to go for the lower job.

Presentation by Linda Marshall, HR Professional in the recruitment sector.

Pls also see attached presentation.

- Exercise to demonstrate human trait of assumptions/judgements about others on first meeting
- Recruitment consultants are juggling high numbers of candidates, jobs to generate and fill, targets and time-limits
- Consultants have to work quickly, particularly for temp. jobs
- Taking on new candidates is higher risk than moving existing proven candidates around.
- Question of perceptions of person who is reading CV: consultant and client
- Consultant may advocate to client if they see value of that
- Many employers using master-vendor system (1 key agency who selects the 2nd tier agencies to include in the chain) to control costs
- Master vendor is given first choice of posts to fill
- Demand by candidates often exceeds supply
- These points result in some candidates succeeding and others not.
- Questions for recruiters to consider: what are perceptions of consultants of placing marginalised clients, what are the resulting judgements and what concerns come from that?

- Advice for refugee candidates who approach recruitment agencies: show how you fit/know your strengths/ask questions/tailor your CV/deal with objections up front.

- Advice for recruitment agencies: highlighting business strength of client priorities in recruiting talent from diverse backgrounds. Potential USP

Questions/comments by range of participants

Q. **Consultants and role of advocacy** Perhaps the client (employer) is not convinced when a consultant puts a new candidate forward?

Answer: A consultant may advocate, if they feel that the candidate strengthens their and the client's business model. Eg talent from diverse backgrounds may be a corporate aim/duty of the client.

A good consultant advocates and persuades to enable good practice to inform growth in the business.

Comment: TXM Recruit is actively promoting diversity management to its clients and taking on partners such as Transitions to put forward talent from diverse backgrounds. They now have clients coming to them to benefit from the outcomes of this USP.

Comment: Candidate Feedback versus litigation Employers and recruitment agencies are often reluctant to give detailed feedback because either they are very busy and/or nervous about litigation.

Comment: Master Vendor system has become prevalent in the public sector and involves a relatively small number of big agencies. Smaller, specialist agencies have reduced influence, lower margins or can't enter these chains.

Q. Have you worked with a refugee candidate? Don't know. It's not data we collect. We only collect 'protected characteristics' relating to the Equality Act 2010 and our duty not to discriminate negatively for those groups. Refugee status is not a protected characteristic so we don't know how many refugee candidates we have or anything about how we respond to them.

Q Pros-cons of stating 'refugee' on CV. It is much mis-understood and may be mis-interpreted. Depends on education/training of the reader. Essential is to communicate that person has no visa requirement and full permission to work. That is a legal requirement to ask/inform.

Q How much do consultants understand what the Naric opinion of equivalence of overseas qualifications means? Not widely understood by recruitment consultants. Naric opinion is often questionable too. Candidate can decide how to express the equivalence of their overseas qualifications. Equivalence opinion/exemptions for exams by professional body is sometimes more useful and clear information for employers/recruitment consultants.

Q how much do consultants know about refugee ID documents? Many don't know what they are. The REC may not know either. Most would not know where to go to find out. Yet the Government expects employers/agencies to take responsibility for doing so.

Comment: The Home Office language on their website is very negative about refugee entitlements. It is under the heading of 'preventing illegal working'. This does not give employers/recruiters confidence. There is a fine for illegal recruitment and they need to be confident of the information.

Comment: having extensive skills and qualifications can be seen as value for money rather than 'overqualified'

Refugee professionals are usually seen as either over-skilled for jobs they apply for or under-experienced in the UK for other jobs.

Candidates can self-advocate to persuade consultants that employing them is value for money – high skills/experience willing to enter the market at competitive salary.

Comment: Need for 360% education for all the stakeholders.

There is a clear business case: Working actively with refugee professional candidates opens up a unique candidate pool: no visa, international profiles, highly educated, marginalised. Clear business case, driven by diversity management focus.

BREAK

Small group discussions. Key points

Consultants' overall experience of strengths/weaknesses of providing services to refugee candidates

- Usually not aware of refugee entitlements: that refugees don't require a visa and are not part of the points based system
- Usually only aware of visa regulations – which does not apply to refugees.
- Lack of training/understanding
- Lack of clear information by Home Office or REC on refugee documents
- Common negative assumptions/generalisations about refugee candidates
- Risk aversion to authenticity of documents
- Diverse candidate pools
- Agencies are often working in international sectors
- Little connection made between diversity management/equality act/social value targets and refugee candidates.

Refugee candidates' overall experience of strengths/weaknesses of receiving services from recruitment agencies

- Questions focus on UK qualifications
- Little awareness of equivalence of overseas qualifications
- Refugee candidates often sent away and not registered
- Refugee candidates not often aware of how to promote themselves competitively to consultants

Suggested strategies for refugee candidates

- Target which employers/recruiters to approach. Focus strategically on strengths and build relationships rather than submitting huge numbers of applications across the whole market.
- Build relationships with employers and recruiters: have a linked-in account, join their linked-in groups, engage in online conversations, go to events with professional bodies.
- Getting language/presentation of targeted CV right
- Ensure permission to work is very clear in the top section of the CV
- The top 1/3 of the CV should be very specific, countable, outcomes-focussed, strengths-focussed data – no general information.
- CV language catches attention when it is specific and not generalised. Avoid lists of adjectives.
- Highlight individual achievements and specialisms and interests - using countable data to illustrate
- Find out everything you can about the employer and include some of that information in job applications
- Some refugees consider pros-cons of changing names. That contrasts with educating recruiters in diversity management.

Suggested strategies for recruiters

- Client (employer) education: provide indepth briefs of candidates
- Pre-empt client objections
- Recruitment staff training
- Understand the skillsets that refugee candidates bring to the table
- Match skillsets to skill shortages in the markets.

Suggested strategies for Transitions to assist the market to function more inclusively, with refugee candidates

- Making agencies aware that refugee candidates are eligible to work
- Make the information easy to use
- Training
- Promote success
- Target agencies that match skillset of candidates
- Lobbying/networking
- International development events
- Promote uniqueness/rarity of Transitions service