

Social Enterprise Recruitment Agencies – The Business Case

22 April 2016, 10am – 1pm, Centre for Social Impact SE1 2HZ

Participants (A-Z)

Femi Awoyemi, **Elevation Networks** NEET
Engagement Co-ordinator
Odette Beattie, **Cola-Cola** Head of Talent
Acquisition
John Blackmore, **Action West London** CEO
Kevin Bowsher, **Network Rail** Diversity & Inclusion
Manager
Keziah Bramble-Chapman, **Elevation Networks**
Project Officer
Tom Brundage, **SpecialistsUK** General Manager
Hugh Chamberlain, **Johnson & Johnson**
Procurement Lead UK & Ireland
Marika Chaplais, **Breadwinners**, CEO

John Chesters, **Blue Sky** Commercial Director
Pranav Chopra, **Chaigaram** CEO
Charlotte Deruyver, **Social Enterprise UK** Business
Development Officer
Sheila Heard, **Transitions** Managing Director
Jon Hull, **Carillion** Head of Resourcing
Vicky Johnson, **Transitions** Employment Advisor
Tara McArdale, **Coca-Cola** Senior Recruiter
Liz Minns, **Social Enterprise UK** Membership
Officer
Margaret Phillips, **Move On Up Recruitment**
Manager, Action West London
Michele Rigby, **Well Organized Biz** CEO

Introduction

Liz Minns and Charlotte Deruyver introduced Social Enterprise UK as a membership body which aims to help members develop their customer base. Membership is available at different rates according to income. It's also a think-tank and advocates on behalf of social enterprise. Three main aspects:

- Providing social value to public authorities
- Work with the general public: awards for social enterprise hotspots, organising "Social Saturday"
- Private sector: embedding social enterprise business within private sector supply chains, for example the recent launch of [Buy Social](#).

Presentation #1: Kevin Bowsher, Network Rail Diversity & Inclusion Manager

Post-presentation discussion re. ways of increasing workforce diversity of large corporates:

- Research shows 70% of roles in the UK are filled as a result of networks. Need to extend existing, and create new, networks to ensure equality of access for under-represented groups (e.g. refugees, young black men.)
- Need corporate buy-in from top to bottom.

Presentation #2: John Blackmore, Action West London CEO

Post-presentation discussion:

- Partnerships are crucial if social enterprises are to compete for corporate business. Consider partnering with current (private) providers on Preferred Supplier Lists. Work with these partners to present a value proposition to a corporate customer: why they shouldn't just buy at the lowest cost. Likely to need active support from the corporate customer (for whom the provider is a Preferred Supplier) due to the fine margins in recruitment

- Corporate customers will not make a decision just on the social case; must be on the business and social case together.
- Find out which agencies corporates are using for recruitment and partner with them.
- Partnering with social enterprises can demonstrate a corporate's commitment to embedding diversity throughout the recruitment process.
- Use the [Social Value Act](#) to bolster the business case for using social enterprise in the procurement process.

Slides for both presentations available shortly at <http://www.transitions-london.co.uk/events-reports-income/events>.

Small-group discussions

Q1. What are some of the similarities and difference between the social enterprise services in your group? (For example, training services, structured work experience, recruitment service, other commissionable services)

- SpecialistsUK and Action West London each have a focus on recruitment and placement, while Breadwinners focuses on training.
- Elevation Networks and Transitions support groups who are under-represented in the workplace, and who lack access to networks.

Q2. What challenges do you face (as social enterprises)?

- Sourcing sufficient number of clients
- Managing client expectations
- Changing the mindset of businesses
- Lack of resources
- Funding

Q3. What are some of the challenges for corporates who are exploring the use of social enterprise in their supply chains, and/or for corporates who are looking to help social enterprises more generally?

- How to embed diversity in the supply chain
- The need to be sustainable, in all senses
- Recruitment agencies all about money
- Recruitment tests used by corporates may be biased and exclude certain demographics
- Social enterprises too small – not large enough scale for corporates
- Social enterprises' expectations are too high
- Need to offer supported employment – employers depend on it

Q4. How can the challenges above (Q2, Q3) be addressed?

- Positive media coverage
- Mentoring schemes with corporates; allows clients/candidates to build networks and learn about the corporate culture
- Social enterprises to combine resources so economies of scale can be achieved

Final discussions

- How to compete with private, high-street, recruitment agencies? Corporates will be willing to bear extra cost of intensive employment support if the added value to their company is demonstrated.
- Is the [Social Value Act](#) having an impact? It's in its infancy, and has no teeth. However, some companies are using it in their bids, so awareness of it is increasing. Application of it is patchy and inconsistent at present. More info on the [Social Enterprise UK site](#).