



Creating a disability-smart
world together

Identifying and meeting employer needs

Diane Lightfoot, CEO, Business Disability Forum
BASE Conference, November 2021

Who are we?

- Business Disability Forum is a not-for-profit membership body that supports organisations to get better at employing disabled people and serving disabled customers.
- We want to transform the life chances of disabled people as employees and consumers through equality of opportunity
- Our 400+ members employ c. 20% of the UK population and 8 million people worldwide
- We deliver practical advice and support plus thought leadership, rooted in the experience of our members

Our Quality Framework: Disability-Smart Suite

1. Leadership



2. Learning & Development



3. Workplace Adjustments



4. Recruitment



5. Retention



6. Customers and Service Users



7. Procurement



8. Communication



9. Built Environment



10. Technology



Poacher turned gamekeeper!

Our Members want to employ more disabled people – but don't know how to reach or attract them!



Changing the narrative

- It's about talent! **Why wouldn't you** want to access the widest possible talent pool?
- Awareness of the breadth of disability – not just wheelchair users, most not from birth
- Understanding adjustments plus awareness of Access to Work
- Fear of getting it wrong = do or say nothing
- Don't have to be an expert – confidence to have the conversation backed up by practical process and action
- The Brexit effect...

#SkillsShortages



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Taking a step back

- What do you really need? Outcomes focus - **what**, not **how**
- Could the job be done differently, flexibly, from home?
(WFH most frequently requested adjustment pre COVID!)
 - Do people already work with adjustments? Then say so!
- Messaging and brand – does it reflect “someone like me”?
- Is the recruitment process accessible?
 - End to end from application to tests to interview
- Testing the right skills – including awareness of work trials
- Onboarding – especially communicating adjustments

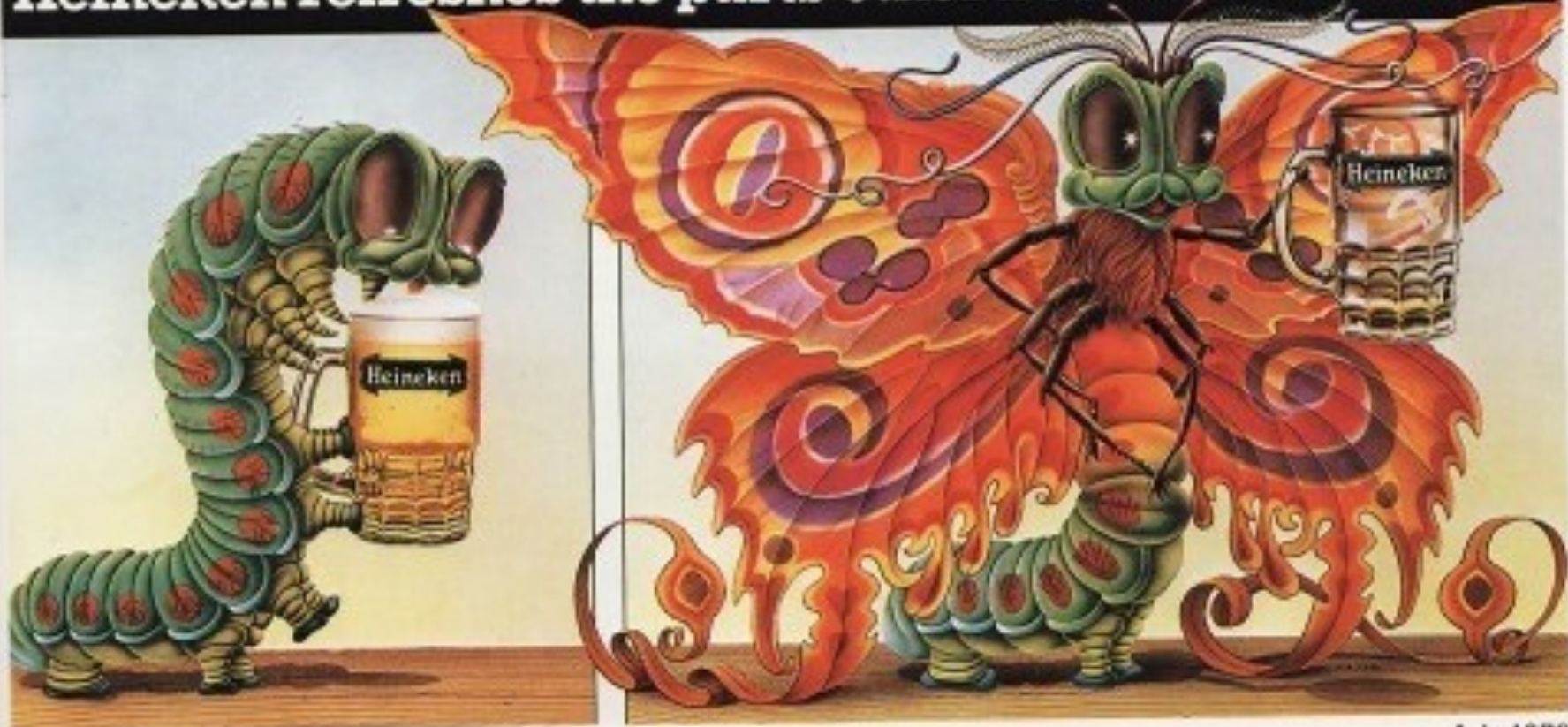
Getting the language right

- “Tell” or “share” not “disclose” or “declare”
- Language of adjustments and accommodations
- Wider organisational messaging – support or undermine?

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Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach.



July 1978

Beyond cherry picking

- Reaching people further from the labour market
- Many employers want to do more:
 - It's the right thing to do – responsibility as a large employer
 - Good for team morale – and customer value proposition
- Need dedicated programme, outside standard HR process
- Many “entry level” jobs outsourced - influence supply chain
 - Include in tender process
 - Support to suppliers to develop and get it right
- Link to DWP Access to Work Plus pilots

Making* policy work for employers

*(or trying to)

Increased ambition

- Our members want to do more!
- A more ambitious goal than 1 million more disabled people in work by 2027 – halving the employment gap
- Organisational reporting - mixed views but some already doing it. Draw on what works when designing a framework
- Current consultation on flexible working as a default
- Reform to Disability Confident to drive change – with an information portal to support employers to progress
- Disability Employment Charter to build on NDS

Transforming Access to Work

- For job **seekers** (rather than having to wait until they have secured an interview)
- Join up from DSA to support graduates and school leavers
- “In principle” agreement to de risk for employers
- Route for employers to get in touch direct
- Compatibility with employer systems (especially IT)
- **Removal of the support cap as particularly disadvantaging people who need BSL or job coach support**

Reform to Statutory Sick Pay

- SSP does not engage until the fourth day off sick = people going into work unwell
- ‘All or nothing’ – doesn’t support phased returns
- Often runs out before people are well or have even had a diagnosis so people go back too early and before they are ready
- Some people return to work before they are well, and we get a call from their manager to say they have died while at work. Three cases this year.

Get involved

- Join us! Membership, Partnership, Events, The Forum
- Advice Service
- Knowledge Hub
 - Mental Health Toolkit
 - Neurodiversity Toolkit
 - Inclusive Comms Toolkit
 - Getting Started Toolkit
- L&D – PD workshops and bespoke
- Networks – including employment - and peer support

Contact us

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