

The Netherlands



Co-funded by the European Commission

Place of action:

Web Design and Graphic Design company

Storyteller:

Nadia, owner of the company

Synopsis:

Dennis, and Margot, employees with a disability, working respectively as web designer and graphic designer

We do it together!

People like me

"I myself am using a wheelchair, which has not hindered me in no way during my life. It only challenged me more to do things differently. And that is also the essence why I choose to give a chance to people who are competent and, at the same time had one chance too few in the labour market. I include them in my company and we all together develop beautiful things. Like, me, they have something to offer, they have qualities and I need these qualities in my company and if we combine both aspects, we have it all!"

They find us

"We never advertise. Potential candidates find us via Internet or 'hear about us'. People come to us. And, if I need somebody, I inform my network. I have a huge professional network as well as a private network. I might contact the local social security service; I might also inform my private network. There is always somebody, a niece or a cousin looking for a nice job. Active recruitment is not needed for me, we are easily visible and well- findable."

The insights of a day of working together

"Then, when people come for an interview, I just ask them to come for a day and work with us, carry out an assignment, together with us and show us what you can do."

"In one case, we did this whole 'try out' working day online. Dennis is blessed with Agoraphobia and finding a job on the open labour market was quite challenging for him. He was an experienced web designer and send out letters to companies offering himself as a web designer. He has sent more than hundred letters; I think I was number 165. And we invited him for a digital coffee and an online working day. There was a click and we offered him a trial period of three months, during which we both concluded we would possibly be a beautiful match. The thing is, you can be a web designer while lying in your bed, if that's the way you function best, that's okay for me."

"Let me also give the example of Margot. She was incredibly nervous for her first 'try out' working day. I really had to take quite some time to make her feel relaxed. Even for me, it was a real challenge to comfort her. She finally did and she proved her capacities quite well that day. We hired her and I must admit, she is an asset. Because of her excellent work as graphic designer, we have two magazines extra for whom we do the design".

The bed as a working place

"Adaptations specifically for them were not needed. People can start until 09.30 in the morning and can work until 18.00 in the evening, during a max of six hours per day. They both work a limited number of hours, that is the only adaptation, one could say, but I never had the wish to let them work fulltime. Dennis' working place can also be seen as an adaptation, not for us, we consider it quite hot he works in this way, at home and sometimes in his bed."

Creating a respectful team

"They experienced problems finding a job on the open labour market. I have given them the opportunity to work here, I am pleased with them, and they are glad to work here. It makes them loyal, involved, and trustful employees. Dennis' hyperfocus leads to a decrease of the work pressure of his colleagues, and our total results increase with alle employees keeping the pleasure in their work. Margot's competence and commitment leads to more customers and better results. Both are completely accepted in the group. Because of their skilled and trustful way of working, their 'habits' are accepted; it creates a high level of tolerance among all employees."

Finding out what works best

"Once I hired Margot and Dennis, I realised I needed extra support how to communicate and work with them. For me, it meant becoming a jobcoach myself, I followed the certification program and now I am a certified jobcoach. For me this means I now have the opportunity and the capability to tune in to the needs of Dennis and Margot and others like them; it is all tailor-made support. For instance, Dennis' wish is to work with a solid structure in relation to our meetings and our agreements. I have to keep my appointments with him as planned, I should not change them, which for most employees would not be a problem. We communicate via Whatsapp, which is for him the best way to communicate. If that's the case, I just do it, it's not always easy, but still, this is how he functions best. I try to treat others as I would like to be treated myself, I understand his choices and accept them. And it works out well."

Being responsible in equality

"We are all equal and we do it all together. Being complementary to each other also brings you further. We work together with an emphasis on each other's qualities, which leads to fine results. At the same time, things like rent or any other challenge or problem; it is me who needs to solve it. Still, I see it like this: my people do not work for me, I have people with whom I have the honour to work with. I believe in being equal and making the most beautiful things when working together. When things do not work out well, it is me that needs to find out, that has the responsibility to solve things, together."

Support that works

"We work closely together with the national social security office; we have good contacts with one of their relation managers. I know, hiring persons with 'special needs' means completing much paperwork. No fun, but if you calculate, you find out how much you benefit from completing them; it's worthwhile spending your time. There is one insurance available for us that I like, it is no-risk insurance for your employees with a disability. This no-risk insurance guarantees receiving the salary of your employee when this employee drops out of work because of an illness or a disease. It might be just this extra support you need when thinking of hiring a person with a disability. I have such an insurance; my experience is I hardly ever make use of it."

On the long term

"I have seen both Dennis and Margot grow in the time they work here. They now have the power and the freedom to stand for their own ideas, their own opinion. For me that is the biggest compliment you can get as an employer; when your people feel safe to comment on your ideas, to provide you with their own, different opinions."

A classical win – win – win

"Having colleagues with a special challenge in your team makes your world bigger; it creates a larger circle of customers, because your customers also differ. In fact, hiring employees with a disability increases the turnover. Although making impact is important for me, in the end I need to make a good turnover. Without a positive turnover, without making a profit, I wouldn't last long as a company. I am in the first place a human being, and in the second place an entrepreneur. It is a classical win – win – win situation. Our customers expect quality of us, that's what we give them. And, at the same time, our customers make the world more beautiful for somebody else, somebody with a disability working in my company. Which customer wouldn't want that? And for me, for us, having colleagues with a disability opened my mind, decreased the stress within the team, and increased my turnover. This is what sharing brings us!"

To my fellow employers, I recommend

"If my story stimulates my fellow owners of companies, I recommend them open their doors and act. First recommendation: keep your vacancy texts short, the longer you make them, the more people you exclude. Second recommendation: Offer possible candidates one day in your company, and do not worry about privacy. Enable your candidate and yourself to explore the match. And then last but not least; put your ego on the disabled parking space and ask for help, do not invent the wheel yourself. We, employers, can do it together, with a little help of my neighbour. And one more thing, be honest about the capacities of your employees. Only compliment them when there is a reason, otherwise your compliment doesn't mean anything."

Dare to leave the beaten track

"According to me, it is not about hiring a person with a disability; it is about hiring somebody with the skills you need, hiring somebody that brings added value to your company. It only asks to have an open mind, to give yourself the opportunity to go off the beaten track. You will be pleasantly surprised once you do."



Inclusion simply makes great enterprises



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