



“Shaping the Future Together”

Autumn 2009

CONTENTS

Page 1 – Quote of the Season and Newsflash

Page 2 – Frogs! Or the advantages of being deaf

Page 3 – Member story – Jason Anderson

Page 5 – **Attitude change in the workplace starts with training.....**

Page 6 – Dr. Work

Page 6 – Employer of the Year Awards

I have put together this season's newsletter with a positive bent – I think we all need some positive thinking to help get through the tough times. Enjoy and let me know if you would like to include anything of interest in the next newsletter.

Kathy Leitch, Editor. Enquiries via website: www.adde.org.au

– **QUOTE OF THE SEASON:**

Remember, job interviews are just unnatural acts between two consenting adults done in public. They are not the Spanish Inquisition.

Jim Bright, Career management consultant.

– **NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH:**

Fantastic news for ADDE : we have received a two year grant from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to provide a sustainable office and staff support to enable us to work on implementation of the "Leading from the Front?" key research findings.

HMS Trust contributed to the research project and realized the value in progressing the key research findings into the not-for-profit sector in Victoria. The research shows that while there is some good practice in this sector there

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

is a long way to go to say the sector is "Leading from the front". Many Local councils, State, and Federal Government Departments also have a long way to go in employment of people with disability.

There certainly seems to be a willingness to turn this around, so by working together lets hope we can all make a measurable difference.

Peter Rickards
ADDE President



Above: Photo of Geoff and Edward in our office, 86 Herbert St. Northcote 3070

FROG – **I LOVE THIS STORY - HOPE YOU DO TOO....**

Once upon a time there was a bunch of tiny frogs....they arranged a running competition. The goal was to reach the top of a very high tower. A big crowd had gathered around the tower to see the race and cheer on the contestants...The race began.... Honestly: No one in the crowd really believed that the tiny frogs would reach the top of the tower. You heard statements such as:

"Oh, WAY too difficult!!

"They will NEVER make it to the top.

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

"Not a chance that they will succeed. The tower is too high!"

The tiny frogs began collapsing. One by one....Except for those, who in a fresh tempo, were climbing higher and higher....The crowd continued to yell, "It is too difficult!!! No one will make it!" More tiny frogs got tired and gave up....But ONE continued higher and higher and higher....This one wouldn't give up! At the end everyone else had given up climbing the tower. Except for the one tiny frog who, after a big effort, was the only one who reached the top! THEN all of the other tiny frogs naturally wanted to know how this one frog managed to do it? A contestant asked the tiny frog how he had found the strength to succeed and reach the goal? It turned out....

That the winner was DEAF!!!! The wisdom of this story is:

Never listen to other people's tendencies to be negative or pessimistic.... because they take your most wonderful dreams and wishes away from you -- the ones you have in your heart! Always think of the power words have. Because everything you hear and read will affect your actions!

Therefore:

ALWAYS be....

POSITIVE!

And above all:

Be DEAF when people tell YOU that you cannot fulfil your dreams!

- **MEMBER STORIES:**

My name is **Jason Anderson**. I am a 38 year old man with a 13 year old daughter named Jessie and a 10 year old son, Bailey. Unfortunately MS was a contributing factor in our marriage breakdown so I now reside in Williamstown, an hour's drive from my children.

In my early days, everything that was of interest to me was physical. Sports, driving and working on cars and carpentry.

At the age of 23 I married (1994), had our first child the following April, and was busy with family life, painting our first home. Then in August (95) Jessie was only four months old when I was diagnosed with MS and my life was forever changed. Straight away I quit my work and so Rita was now the breadwinner.

Slowly but surely, bit by bit, I walked less and less, first a cane, then two and after about 7 years succumbed to giving up my license, and finally a wheelchair/scooter.

Our home had to be severely modified as the house was split level (was only

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

four steps but it may as well been four flights). Ramps were made, bathroom was changed and our marriage was starting to take its toll.

I have been fortunate to find a place to live that is run by the MS society. It comprises of two units, each with 5 people, with the majority being 50 years of age and under.

I say fortunate because I am currently on a committee that is dealing with approx 210 people in this state who are under 50 years of age and living in nursing homes.

I am currently on a committee (my future, my choice), that is dealing with this very problem.

I have many frustrations in my life (not counting my own), and dealing with this committee is just one of them.

I go to these meetings, not knowing much of politics, but to represent MS, speak for the people who are unable to voice their opinion (often literally). There is money from the Commonwealth to build some places that would get these people out of nursing homes and into accommodation units that would be far more appropriate for them, but there is no urgency (it would seem in their thinking, I am telling you this is a joke) ...it makes me so mad!

I have now turned my attention to advocacy work, as 'the face of MS'. To further my abilities as an advocate, I recently completed a Leadership course. Doing this course has given me the tools to promote the issue of disability among the community- challenging people's beliefs.

And what are my aspirations? To be the face of MS – giving a voice to those that are unable to do so .

Doing the 'Leadership plus' course last year has shown me that not being able to walk, does not mean I have no options. 'As one door closes, another door opens' rings very true.

To me, this is an excellent opportunity to make the most of what I have to offer, that is to speak honestly and openly about disability and have a chance to make real 'change' to people's lives when it comes to employment and disability.

I personally am looking for some paid part-time work this year, knowing what a change to my life it is going to make. It will only re-enforce for me that paid employment is possible to a disabled person and that I am a worthy part of society.

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

– Attitude change in the workplace starts with training.....

Disability@Work - Dis-Labelled not Dis-Abled

This experiential and practical training program has been designed to empower organisations to feel more confident in working with or assisting people with disabilities.

By the end of the program, participants will have a better understanding of the individual needs and challenges of people with disabilities. Participants will become aware of individual differences that exist between each disability group best practice communication methods, access issues and engagement of people with disabilities.

It will also look at the common myths and misconceptions associated with people with disabilities. This highly interactive and activity based program will certainly provide each participant with a practical insight into the needs of people with disabilities within your workplace, customer base or community.

Learning areas

- Importance of disability awareness
- Myths and stereotypes commonly held about people with disabilities
- Experience what life is like for someone with a disability
- Key issues to accessibility in servicing people with disabilities
- Effective communication techniques in work with people with a disability

Who should attend?

- HR Professionals
- Recruitment Specialists
- Managers and Line Managers
- Diversity Specialists
- Employment Providers

For any queries in relation to this program, please contact Donna de Zwart on (03) 9608 0900 or via email: donna@diversityatwork.com.au

Please note: By mentioning ADDE when making a booking, a DISCOUNT will apply and a percentage of your purchase will directly go towards supporting ADDE in their current endeavours.

Diversity@Work also offers an extensive range of programs that can be delivered in house, co-branded and customised to meet your specific organisational requirements.

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

- **DR. WORK**

This letter is a reminder that there is a lot more to us than our disability.

Dr Work, Mycareer, The Saturday Age, 7/3/09, page 6

Q. *I'm in my 50's and I'm about to start training to get back into work. I have a lot of previous experience working in offices.*

I have a disability, a neuropathic joint disease, and I have to stay off my feet as often as possible.

I'm being helped by the vocational rehabilitation department and my doctor recommends I use a mobility aid to move around.

Would it be difficult for me to fit into the workplace? Would I be discriminated against? I am all right otherwise.

A. *I once employed a woman who had brittle bone disease. She was three foot nothing, used crutches and was often at risk of injury. It was a very busy office and in a few short weeks she took over the place. At times I thought I was working for her.*

In her mind there was no disability. That was her starting point to get back into work, win over people and shine in her job. Don't be defensive about your disability, or aggressive in trying to prove yourself.

Trust yourself. Smile a lot and give people the chance to get to know all the good things about you.

If you're good enough to do a job, a smart boss will employ you.

- **EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

The award presentations were held at the Crown Palladium late November 2008, and Sir Bob Geldof was the keynote speaker.

Peter Rickards, representing ADDE, was asked to be one of the judges for the disability employer of the year categories for small and medium employers (up to 1,000 employees), and in the large (over 1,000 employees) categories. This was a great honor and opportunity to see what was happening in "good practice". The most interesting aspect to observe was that there were many more good applicants in the small and medium employers, than in the large employer category. In fact the three of us on the judging panel could not

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

recommend a runner up from the large employer applicants. I hope this is not symptomatic, as one would expect better-resourced organizations to have the capacity to achieve relatively more than smaller organizations. This may mean that a champion for disability employment needs to be close to the “coal face” to get good results, while large size replaces passion with a loss of the big picture perspective. The policies have to be translated into components which mean something tangible to those lower down such as measurable targets or need to be part of line managers KPIs .

Winner small and medium employer

People with a Disability

Employment and Inclusion Award 2008 Diversity@Work Awards

Master Instruments Pty Ltd

Master Instruments) is a key manufacturer, assembler and distributor of portable batteries, battery packs and test equipment, with a team of over 70 employees

To increase employment opportunities for people with a disability, Master Instruments worked with CRS Australia to adopt an on-the-job training program, allowing trainees with a disability to gain skills, experience, and improved confidence and self esteem to manage paid employment.

Since 1999, Master Instruments has trained over 30 people with a disability, and employed 16 people with a range of physical and psychological disabilities such as back and shoulder injuries, depression, lupus, cancer and arthritis.

The on-the-job training program includes training specific to manufacturing and distribution such as packaging, electronic assembly, despatch and stores work, and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). In addition, trainees develop work conditioning soft skills such as communicating with others, problem solving, showing initiative, teamwork and Information Technology.

The key requirements for this program are to be flexible and supportive for the trainees with a disability, which reflects the employment philosophy that Master Instruments has embraced. The company individually tailors the training modules to suit the ability and needs of each trainee.

A particular strength of the program is the regular feedback and encouragement that the team give to all participants. This individual support has proven to significantly boost trainees' confidence and help them to successfully complete the program and gain employment.

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

Runner up Small and medium employer

People with a Disability

Employment and Inclusion Award 2008 Diversity@Work Awards

Connecteast

The ConnectEast Group is an ASX listed top 150 company and is the owner and operator of EastLink, a 39 km tollway extending from Mitcham to Frankston in the south-east of Melbourne.

ConnectEast recognises that developing an increasingly diverse workforce is critical in building their organisational capability. They also realise the importance of reflecting the diversity of their customers and markets in their workforce. This view underlies ConnectEast's Guiding Principles, their current policies and Human Resource strategic plans. In light of this, ConnectEast has endeavoured to provide a number of individuals with a hearing impairment the opportunity to join their increasingly diverse workforce in a capacity which would enable them to best utilise their skill set.

The initiative involved the engagement of eleven deaf staff in the role of Image Processing Operators. It was determined that the ability to hear was not an inherent requirement of this role.

Briefly, the Image Processing Operator performs correction processing of characters and verifying that the text output from the Optical Character Recognition scanners; confirming or amending the licence plate number, vehicle class and/or State and ensuring that the correct volume of transactions is charged to appropriate customers during manual consolidation.

Their eleven deaf staff have now been employed for just over two months.

The opportunity presented itself to work with outside organisations to offer placements to individuals with a disability. They engaged with deaf candidates for the role of Image Processing Operator with the encouragement and support of The Deaf Institute and Sign On. The initiative was strongly supported by the organisation as it is consistent with their commitment to fair and reasonable outcomes in employment actions and equal employment opportunity.

The recruitment and selection process which followed was founded on values based assessment, merit and the requirements of the vacant position in order to find the best available people and to develop an employee profile representative of their local community. While ensuring the integrity of their recruitment and selection process, some activities were modified slightly to accommodate those with the inability to communicate verbally. Upon their appointment, in line with ConnectEast's Equity and Diversity

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

Policy, they have actively managed the diversity that exists in their workforce to ensure the eleven new deaf employees did not face unnecessary barriers to participating and realising their potential in employment.

Consequently, ConnectEast has taken necessary steps to modify the Mt Waverley Office to ensure the health and safety of these employees. For example, flashing lights for emergency evacuation and additional signage has been introduced.

Work station modifications have also been made with mirrors being placed on each deaf employee's computer so that they can see who is approaching them at their work station. A TV with captions has also been placed in the Tea Room. Mobile phones have been supplied to the Image Processing Team Leaders for the purpose of contacting deaf staff out of hours by SMS. They have also ensured their Employee Assistance Program can be utilised by these employees.

Further, this group have been appointed across the three Image Processing teams and are exposed to the same shift arrangements as the other Image Processing Operators to encourage integration into the workforce. In actively seeking to accommodate the unique needs of these employees, they have also enhanced their inclusion in the workplace by conducting weekly Auslan classes so employees can learn sign language of the deaf community. These classes better enable all employees the opportunity to communicate effectively and work efficiently as a team.

This initiative has had a clear impact on ConnectEast's culture. The attitude and reaction of staff has been extremely positive. It has provided all employees with a greater awareness and respect for others' differences and has further ensured an inclusive work environment for everyone. All employees directly working with deaf colleagues or subordinates have enthusiastically attended Auslan classes. A number of employees who are also indirectly working with these employees have also expressed a strong interest in attending.

Winner large employer

People with a Disability

Employment and Inclusion Award 2008 Diversity@Work Awards

Peregrine Corporation

(Peregrine) is Adelaide's largest convenience retailer and the operator of On The Run, Smokemart and GiftBox retail sites across the country. Its unique and diversified convenience centres are located in more than 48 locations around Adelaide. The company employs some 1200 staff.

The equal opportunity employer has partnered with CRS Australia since 2006. Through their employability preparation workshops, Peregrine has benefited

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*

from quality job matching and securing enthusiastic staff with the right attitude for the job. The workshops are a way for Peregrine to short-list potential employees for on-the-job training appointments, and typically last for two weeks, which allows both the job seeker and Peregrine to determine the right 'fit' for the job.

The company currently recruits almost every week and has found this approach to recruitment is working well. Through this process, Peregrine has employed job seekers with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, people with mental health conditions, mature age workers and those who have been out of the workforce for a long period of time. They offer a flexible and supportive work environment and train all staff in workplace safety to ensure they work safely and within their capacity. There are currently 30 people with a disability working with the company.

Shaping the future together

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia
For people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*