

My Dyslexia, Online Applications, and the Recession.

Seventeen years ago I was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and throughout most of that time I had no real difficulty in getting jobs, as I faxed or emailed my CV through with a covering letter or registered for an agency that would call me up and ask me for an interview.

I worked in housing regeneration as a liaison officer on big local authority projects and sometimes on private developments. Then, in September 2008, after I finished my Masters, suddenly the economic crash happened, and the combination of the global banking crisis and the new digital influx of online recruitment campaigns had a negative effect on my ability in finding work.

The reason for this I believe is because I'm one of those dyslexic people who are very comfortable with talking and communicating verbally, but processing data and completing online applications and any kind of admin will take me a tremendously long time.

I also suffer with my extreme visual stress, ([Irlen syndrome](#)) which makes completing on line forms more difficult. I found progressively that all recruiters were starting to ask for online applications which would not show my full ability or skills.

This technological change, I tackled by using my voice assisted software, but what I found that some online applications were not compatible with [Dragon](#) therefore my ability to complete forms was severely hampered. This knocked my confidence because I didn't ever have a problem in getting an interview before.

I understood that the recession meant fewer jobs, but I wasn't getting any interviews at all. This led to stress and negative thoughts about my skills as people less qualified were able to complete an application online with ease, but it took me a whole week.

I literally cheered out aloud when the [Equality Act 2010](#) came through (my first and second degree are both in law) and thought "this is a good day for all dyslexics, diverse and disabled employees and jobseekers", but alas, that has not been my experience.

I once had to explain to a HR director why an online application might not be an appropriate mode of recruitment for a severe dyslexic like myself. He said that if I couldn't complete the application form in the traditional way, then there was nothing he could do as this was the only way show my potential to do the job.

I explained I had the qualifications with my two degrees, but my learning difficulty had a negative impact on me filling out forms. All I had asked for was to have a covering letter and CV instead of online application - not much to ask for to support diversity.

So I thought, "Why, with all our digital advancement in technology e.g. Skype, video phones, why can't we have the recruiters accept job applications in technological alternative ways?". After all, recruiters are now embracing technology on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, so why does the traditional way of recruiting by application form still persist?

It would help a lot more dyslexic jobseekers towards getting over the big initial barrier of being selected for an interview from an online application form. The increased use of technology to make positive changes can enhance everyone's chances to find work especially people with disabilities.

I have been using Twitter for six months and made connections with many dyslexic people around the UK who have started Social Enterprise businesses. Some of my dyslexic Twitter followers stated to me that they had the same recruitment difficulties as myself and this aspect as well as the increase number of jobseekers going for jobs, have spurred them on to work for themselves as entrepreneurs.

HR professionals and senior management need to embrace digital technology in all ways to promote a diverse workforce so they don't lose the uniqueness of diverse cognitive profiles which can be an advantage in business.

In fact, [Cass Business School at City University](#) and [Management Today](#) have both written articles which state that a high percentage of successful entrepreneurs are dyslexic.

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