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# Diversity at work

## A guide for SMEs



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## SME employers and Diversity

It is designed to make SME employers think smarter about how and from where they recruit people and about the markets they access.

**The basic idea behind this smarter thinking is 'Diversity'.**

'Diversity' is about teaching businesses to exploit differences in the labour market and customer base to improve competitiveness and deal with changes.

**Four things you should know about Diversity:**

- It is sometimes referred to as 'Diversity Management', 'The Business Case for Diversity', 'The Diversity Journey', 'Equality and Diversity', or 'Diversity and Inclusion'.
- It is not about: forcing businesses to employ people they do not want or need, enforcing legislation or increasing regulation.
- It is about getting businesses to think smarter about what they do and adopt a more logical business management approach, rather than using 'gut instinct' which exposes them to unnecessary risk.
- It is for any size of business and can be as simple and quick as you need.

- The traditional pool of labour that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) recruit from is in decline.\*
- Migration from outside the EU will be the main source of population growth.
- People over 65 set against the number of 'working age' is due to double.
- There are growing groups of skilled but unused labour.
- Cultural and demographic changes are driving diverse customer demands.

The challenge for all businesses in Europe is that **labour supply and customer demands are set to change dramatically.**

This publication will help your business deal with these changes and as a result make you and the EU more competitive – a key aim of the European Commission.

\* Due to demographic, cultural and migratory shifts affecting also the local labour supply, which is the main source of recruitment for SMEs.





In the following sections we will look at what other **SME employers** think and do about 'Diversity' and suggest some **simple tips** to help you adopt a 'Diversity' approach in your business, as well as offer some advice on **recruitment, employee management and marketing**. Finally, if you are interested in learning more you will find some useful organisations and publications in the **Resources** section.

## What do other SME employers think and do about 'Diversity'?

In 2008 the European Commission funded a study to find out what 'Diversity' means to SMEs.

This study covered all 27 EU Member States and consisted of **questionnaires and interviews** with SME owner/managers from all sectors and sizes.

### What SME employers think and do about 'Diversity'

- They mostly **do not recognise the language** used by government organisations to describe the idea of 'Diversity'.
- They do however **do a great deal of things 'Diversity' means**, such as flexibility around working hours, to promote productivity and get the right employee.
- They can be under the **misconception that 'Diversity' is a government agenda** to get them to employ people they do not want or need just because they are 'Diverse'.

- They, particularly smaller SMEs, often **do not realise the benefits 'Diversity' can bring** them and stay vulnerable by relying on 'gut instinct' and informal business management.
- They, particularly larger SMEs, have **already started to implement 'Diversity' management** and are realising the benefits of improved competitiveness.
- They, particularly the smaller SMEs, may wrongly think **'Diversity is only for the larger firms** and is very complicated and will take a great deal of time (which they do not have!)
- They, particularly smaller SMEs, who had not heard of 'Diversity' **quickly realised they could benefit** from its basic business sense approach by learning how to avoid or tackle previous problems they had encountered.

*'It is there to make sure we go through each stage of hiring and employing someone in a business-like and professional manner, not to make sure we meet any target or quotas for employing a type of person and it helps us avoid making mistakes on the way.'*

## What can I do?

This section provides some **simple tips and advice** about what to do if you are thinking about adopting a more business-like approach to recruitment, employee management and marketing: all part of 'Diversity'.

The first section presents **8 quick tips** on what can be done. The tips, based on the experience of owner/managers, are designed to give you the best chance of getting things right and avoiding any issues that usually cause SMEs problems.

The second section offers more **detailed advice** on what can be done in relation to making sure **recruitment, employee management and marketing** are carried out in a business like manner by applying some basic 'Diversity' activities.

You may already do some of these things but not call them 'Diversity' or have no way of showing that you actually do them (**formal evidence**). Following through some of the suggestions here will allow your business to get the **maximum benefit** from the effort you make.



## Top 8 tips

The 8 points do not need to be considered in order but the first point is a natural introduction to the others that follow.

### 1. Look at your business

Take time to consider the strengths, threats, weaknesses and opportunities facing your business in relation to:

- ✓ **Workforce** – skills, experience, knowledge, culture, age, gender, and ethnicity – new ideas (innovation) and talent emanate from a diverse input.
- ✓ **Recruitment** – how do you do it, if at all, are you missing out on the right person or employing the wrong person – do you just rely on ‘word of mouth’ and ‘gut instinct’ or do you have a more formal and logical approach?
- ✓ **Training** – does it happen, should it happen, get the most out of employees and boost morale, are there (state) programmes that could help you?

- ✓ **Communication** – how do employees know what they are doing or how to behave towards each other and customers, can everyone contribute ideas?
- ✓ **Management style** – who has responsibility, could it be different or better organised – what is the best use of your time and your employees?
- ✓ **Customers** – do you want to have a larger more diverse base and do clients have a chance to contribute their ideas – what sort of a relationship do you have with people who buy from you or sell to you?
- ✓ **Worker regulations and the law** – do you want to avoid problems, get free help and win new public sector contracts by showing you are proactive because you have some good approaches in place?

Start small, this does not take long, and when you are thinking about these things **think about what you would like to change**. Set some **goals** (e.g. improving customer feedback and getting custom from people who do not normally use your business) and the following **tips** will help you achieve them.

### 2. Recruit from a more diverse pool of talent

The key concerns are not being able to find the right person or employing the wrong person. This is because owners mostly use ‘**word of mouth**’ and make recruitment decisions based on whether they ‘**like**’ the person or not (‘gut-instinct’).

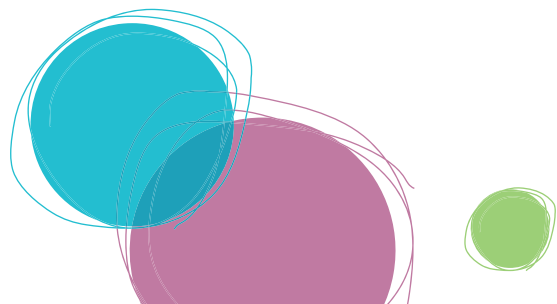
Making a decision based on personal values, attitudes and beliefs will cause problems. It can lead to getting the **wrong person and discrimination**.

But, get the process right and it is more likely you will get someone who you can trust, who can do the job, and who will make a **valuable contribution** to the business. And if you want to win contracts from larger (especially state) organisations, they will require you to take this ‘Diversity’ approach anyway!

#### How to do it

- ✓ Decide on the **skills, knowledge and experience** that the business needs to fill the specific job.

- ✓ From these, produce a ‘**job description**’ (what the person will be expected to do and achieve, day to day tasks and responsibilities) and a ‘**person specification**’ that outlines the skills and experience needed – if you are uncertain get help (e.g. from your chamber of commerce, local business support, other members of staff, your craft or professional association, local government or just search the web).
- ✓ Check that the job description **does not exclude anyone** from applying because you specified they must be from a certain background, location, age, etc. There are certain requirements you can specify depending on the work, which the law will allow if essential to the job. If uncertain get help.
- ✓ Avoid ‘word of mouth’ recruitment processes. Make sure your approach will allow (and encourage) as **many people to apply as possible**, (e.g. use different languages, websites that are accessible to blind and partially sighted people, local papers, shops used by a range of communities, trade or professional organisations/magazines, government institutions etc.).





- ✓ State that you **welcome applications from all sections of the community** and offer to talk informally about the job to potential candidates.
- ✓ When selecting applicants, make sure you judge their application based on the job description and personal specification, score them and avoid making personal judgements (e.g. about where they are from, age, time taken off, etc.) and instead just **focus on experience, competencies and skills**.
- ✓ The interview is the most common way to make a decision, think about how this happens (e.g. time, place, access). You could also set the person **a task or problem related to the job**. Have some kind of scoring system: numbers 0-10 or grading. Use this to make an **objective assessment** of who is best suited for the job. Get everyone to do the same and try to have more than one person from your firm involved in the process (if possible).

### 3. Get new customers and access new markets

To reach a **diverse customer base** requires employee diversity or at least an understanding



of how diverse customers can be. This could be in terms of age, gender, faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation or ability, and an understanding of different consumer needs.

Big firms have done this for a long time, **targeting different markets** by using employees who have an affinity with a particular customer base and **tailoring services and products** to them. This provides access to new markets, builds customer loyalty and increases turnover within an existing customer base.

**Don't be constrained** by just dealing with a fixed, known, market (often based on a good personal relationship with clients), which leaves you vulnerable if this changes or declines.

#### How to do it

- ✓ **Recognise the diversity and scale of the potential market place** you can appeal to (e.g. age range, sexual orientation, ethnic range, disability issues, cultural habits of different communities) – could your product or service be adapted to appeal to different niche markets or are you doing anything that could turn people away from your business that you could

change without losing your existing customers? Are you putting potential customers off with something they might not be comfortable with?

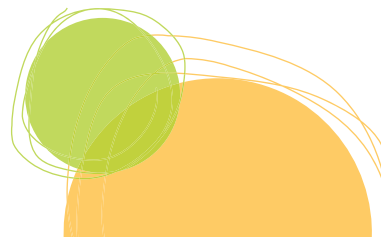
- ✓ **Research the needs of potential new customers**; this could be as simple as looking at websites dedicated to these communities, asking friends or family with specific knowledge of other cultures or asking your own employees. Make sure advertising materials are accessible and acceptable to all.
- ✓ Micro and smaller businesses tend to have a much more intimate relationship with customers than larger firms. Exploit this relationship and **get feedback from customers**.
- ✓ **Recognise the benefits** in matching personality, age, background and style of employee with customers. Or at least develop some personal knowledge of the people you are dealing with (if it is your responsibility) so that you know how to relate to them. You need a hook that will catch them and bring them back.

- ✓ **Discover and use new media opportunities** (e.g. local magazines, radio, social groups, websites) or use areas where people gather (e.g. parents outside schools) to focus marketing on new groups, rather than pushing leaflets through doors!
- ✓ **Get some basic training** to help you and employees deal with a diverse customer base. This could range from simply finding out about customs and activities of certain groups, to qualifications and awards related to dealing with specific groups (e.g. Sign Language or using technology to communicate).

### 4. Plan the business based on demand

You can take the activity of feeding customer information into the way the business operates further, by linking customer needs to a business strategy: **putting customer needs at the heart of your business planning**.

This will ensure that the **diversity of customer need** is reflected within any planning to improve the business; requiring your business to consider how to respond (in terms of employee profile, creativity, attitudes, training and development needs).





This can be as sophisticated as you wish and can range from using customer opinion (gained through informal conversations) to improve access to a product or service, to conducting structured market research through a customer database to inform future product or service diversification or a training strategy for employees.

### How to do it

- ✓ **Find out from a diverse range of customers (and potential customers) their requirements** – through informal discussions or more formal survey approaches (possibly using an external survey organisation or develop your own – there are free survey websites if you have email access to customers).
- ✓ **Feed this information into the planning and development of the business:** try to deliver what people want (within economic reason) from a range of different perspectives so that changes to your business are in line with a diverse range of market demands and do not exclude (where possible) potential customers.

- ✓ **Try to maintain this type of feedback into your plans on a regular basis**, some firms will have a formal accessible external communications system based on customer feedback through the internet, but some may just rely upon regular conversations and maybe an annual questionnaire that allows feedback and new ideas from customers (both existing and new).

- ✓ **If you review your business on a regular basis build this feedback into it**, or consider it when you undertake other regular procedures (e.g. after dealing with annual accounts or quarterly cash flow assessments) so that it becomes part of your routine.

## 5. Improve communication with employees

While most SMEs, and particularly micro businesses, benefit from an informal and flexible approach towards how employees are managed, **this informal style can also be a problem** for some staff who might not be able to get involved. This can go unnoticed if not tackled in a more formal way, but this does not have to be complicated, just structured and logical.

Even though managers of small and micro businesses often have the opportunity to communicate with their employees on a daily basis, **a structured approach for allowing communication is beneficial**, as clear internal communication promotes the exchange of ideas, knowledge, information, and avoids problems developing.

### How to do it

- ✓ **Regular employee meetings.** These can have a business or social focus, but make sure they do not exclude people either by time or location. Where possible it is important to have structured meetings, with an agreed agenda (circulated beforehand), that are managed to allow **fair and equal contribution**. If these procedures are not possible, then at least try to designate a regular time, even if only for a few minutes when staff can meet and provide an input on a particular issue.
- ✓ Where formal employee meetings are not feasible, **encourage staff to suggest ideas**, anonymously if necessary, either verbally or in writing (e.g. bulletin boards, 'drop box').

- ✓ If employees already meet formally or informally on a regular basis, such as appraisals or social gatherings, **use these opportunities for employee feedback**.

- ✓ Always ensure that where sensitive issues are being dealt with, or where employees require it, that **confidentiality is protected**.

## 6. Get a better image and reputation

**Use your commitment to these 'Diversity' approaches** (e.g. more customer-sensitive) as a business tool to improve reputation and win business, particularly from larger firms and public sector organisations. For micro firms this part of 'Diversity' means showing you are a good employer (even if you are already) by having a small amount of documentation in place as evidence, which will raise your profile and reputation.

Large private sector firms and public (government) organisations increasingly require micro businesses and SMEs to submit information on their '**Diversity' policies** (approaches) when tendering for contracts. Having these policies (approaches) in place has been proven to assist firms in winning contracts.



## How to do it

- ✓ **Develop formal, if basic, 'Diversity' policies** (approaches). This means, even though you may already do many of the things suggested here, it is important to keep a record of what you do: but keep it simple. This could be a small sign stating your commitment to dignity at work or a one page list of the things you already do in recruitment or training. If you do it have some evidence to show it.
- ✓ You can take it further by **setting some goals of what you want to achieve**. Maybe a brief list of things you want to do over the next year (targets) produced with the help of employees (e.g. dealing with the issue of flexible working around religious holidays).
- ✓ If you have any **training** planned show how this includes some **'Diversity' issues** (this could simply be learning about the different cultural habits of potential new customers) and make a note of this for your records.
- ✓ If you have **recruited** or are thinking about recruiting people write down what you have done to follow some of the **'Diversity' approaches**, this is for evidence but you can also see what has worked and simply repeat it or improve it.

- ✓ If you have a **handbook or general guidelines** you can include 'Diversity' statements in it. Micro firms can produce a brief statement that 'Diversity' and promoting dignity at work is being undertaken in the workplace. This can be worded to fit the workplace and be part of your evidence base.
- ✓ SMEs can **monitor and record information on employees and customers** to track the range of people employed and served. This can act as a baseline for a strategy, together with an annual review to assess progress. However, for micro businesses it would be just as useful to state that you are aware of the **range of people** you deal with (e.g. old, young, background, male, female, etc.) and of what they contribute. It is not always possible or legal to have detailed records on everyone.

## 7. Evaluate what you have done

As with anything you do that affects your business it is important to **think about what impact it has had and for what cost** (time, effort, resources). The same is true for these tips; otherwise you may not be able to see the benefit of what you have done or maybe even realise that you have tried to do too much too soon.

**Evaluation should be a joint process** (where possible) to help owners, managers and employees to understand why these approaches are being undertaken. Assessing what has gone on is also good for keeping people involved, encouraging any future approaches and changing attitudes.

## How to do it

- ✓ Before and after you adopt any of the approaches listed here, **think about what you want to get out of it for yourself and the business** (e.g. better staff relations, increased productivity, a happier workplace, larger customer base etc.). Then you can make a judgement on its impact in relation to your expectations. This can be done in a very specific way with a **clear set of targets** related to turnover and demographics of your markets or simply by getting **feedback from staff** at different times to get an impression of their morale.
- ✓ **Think about what you have put into the process in terms of time and resources**. This could be as simple as a few minutes reading these tips and deciding to have a discussion with staff, to adopting a complete package of 'Diversity' assessments and baselines for your business.

- ✓ You can then think about the **benefits set against the resources** you have put in. Benefits may include: solutions to filling a vacancy, dealing with absenteeism, access to new markets, improved performance in existing markets, access to talent, getting the most out of existing staff, increased innovation/creativity or improved reputation.

## 8. Get help and support

Throughout this brochure there are a **range of suggestions** as to what can be done to achieve some form of approach towards 'Diversity', but inevitably it will not provide all the answers. Where people feel they are struggling to understand what they can do or want to take issues further then it is essential they get help and there is plenty out there.

- ✓ For trusted advice most owners tend to refer to their **accountant, financial advisor, solicitor or a close relation**. However, there are many other public and private institutions that offer professional help; mostly for no cost or a minimal fee.



- ✓ **Municipalities, trade organisations, chambers of commerce, business owner networks, unions and professional associations** are very useful sources of information, particularly if you already pay for their services and you have regular contact.
- ✓ In many cases you will be able to **search the internet** and find the material you need (for free) and there are some key links to start you off in this brochure.
- ✓ Some SMEs have used a **business advisor** from their financial institution (bank or sponsor) and **other business owners and managers** can be a useful source of advice.
- ✓ Start with a contact you trust and find out who is **best placed to help you** or look at the **resources** at the end of this brochure and find a contact for your trade association or chamber of commerce in your area. There is a lot of free information available, which you should use first!
- ✓ At local business meetings or trade fairs you can **discuss your views with other owners, managers or potential contractors**. Seek out business to business networks in your area or use your supply chains to gain knowledge from other businesses.

- ✓ You might find it useful to discuss the needs of your business with someone who is **external to the business** (e.g. a local business support network) who will be able to see your business through new (and independent) eyes’.
- ✓ For micro businesses and those without a formal Human Resource role, make sure you seek help that does not just talk about ‘Diversity’ approaches, but makes the **link between the approaches and the benefits** it can bring to your business through practical specific advice.
- ✓ If you use a specific person outside the business to offer support, get them to **follow through the process** in terms of implementing any changes (e.g. being part of an interview process) and providing an assessment of how successful the approach was.
- ✓ **Discuss approaches and issues** with employees and friends.

## Further advice

For those firms who need or require more **detailed information** on how to approach ‘Diversity’ or maybe continue what they are doing (‘The Diversity Journey’) the following **Diversity check list** and **pointers for key areas** will take you further along this path and expand on the 8 top tips described previously.





## Diversity check list

This is a basic template you can use if you need to review your business in relation to specific 'Diversity' issues which will help you understand what you are already doing and what needs to be done. It is sometimes referred to as a 'Diversity Needs Analysis'.

Introduction	
1. Outline your aim to achieve a more diverse workforce	
2. Create a strategy or plans to achieve diversity	
3. Involve employees so they can appreciate them and have an input	
4. Collect and monitor information about what you are intending to do	
Marketing	
5. Promote your aims about diversity to existing and new customers	
6. Train employees to deal with a wider group of customers	
7. Adopt tactics necessary to reach a broader customer base	
8. Get customer feedback and evaluate opinions and information	
9. Find out how the law affects your responsibility to customers	
Recruitment	
10. Outline your aim and plan to recruit from a broader labour pool	
11. Explore the support you can get to support your recruitment plan (e.g. state or public organisations)	
12. Create, assess and change (if necessary): Job descriptions/person specifications Job advertisements Application documentation Selection and interview approaches Contracts and terms of reference	
13. Provide training on recruitment for all those involved in the process	
14. Undertake necessary workplace changes for new employees	
15. Collate and assess information about applicants	
16. Find out how the law affects your responsibility to employees	
Retention	
17. Make sure employees are represented in the business	
18. Ensure that opportunities (e.g. training, promotion) are open to all	
19. Promote respect and dignity amongst employees	
20. Gather and assess information on employees in relation to positions	
21. Act against harassment and discrimination	
22. Where possible work with employees to allow flexible conditions	

Company Name	
Signed by	
Position	
Date	
Signature	

## Pointers for key areas

### Job description

Set out the main roles and tasks of a vacancy to help you to recruit the right person.

- ✓ List the tasks that you think the job will involve (but keep this to 10 at the most, do not include every detail and go overboard with 20).
- ✓ When listing the main tasks, **focus on actions rather than general terms** such as 'take responsibility for' etc.
- ✓ **Keep language simple** and free from vague terminology.
- ✓ **Avoid anything that might discourage someone** who is capable of doing the job from applying.
- ✓ Rather than stating in detail how the job should be done, **be clear about what it is you want the employee to produce.**
- ✓ **Be clear about the position of the vacancy,** including any management responsibility and who the person will report to.
- ✓ If appropriate, **define results and outputs required.**
- ✓ **Don't put in very specific issues,** such as employment grades or work times, that

might change and affect the whole workforce, because this will mean you have to change everybody's job description. These should be kept instead in a **separate document** (handbook), so you only have to change it once.

### Person specification

Use this to define the characteristics of the employee required.

- ✓ **Keep language simple** and free from vague terminology.
- ✓ **Avoid anything that might discourage someone** who is capable of doing the job from applying.
- ✓ Be clear and **define key skills, knowledge and experience** rather than specific qualifications – only specify these if the law requires it for the position.
- ✓ **Request evidence of successful experience** and not necessarily when it was gained.
- ✓ **Be rational about requirements needed.** Do not raise false expectations about the nature of the job or undervalue the complexity of the tasks involved.
- ✓ Avoid general statements that you think **characterise the type of person you**





need but which are based on personal interpretation, such as: 'a good sense of humour' or 'reliable, able to deal with stress.'

- ✓ **Avoid mentioning an age or type of person** (e.g. mature, outward-looking).
- ✓ Consider that **mobility** does not just have to rely upon an ability to drive.
- ✓ Allow people to offer **relevant experience from any part of their life**, not just previous employment.

Make sure you specify which of the requirements are 'Vital' and which would be 'Useful'. If an applicant does not possess the 'Vital' criteria then they can be rejected.

Make sure applicants can **easily access and understand** all this information; otherwise you will have wasted your time.

### Advertising a vacancy

Make sure it links directly with the job description and person specification.

- ✓ **Keep language simple** and free from vague terminology, only use terms that are relevant to the job and **avoid language that will discourage someone** who is capable of doing the job.
- ✓ Place the advert where it is most likely to attract the **right level of applicants in the job market** (e.g. professional, graduate level, trade, etc.), but **does not restrict** it to just one section of the community.
- ✓ **Explore all free opportunities to advertise**, including public forums and state organisations.
- ✓ **Advertise through local community networks**, including those directed at specific groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, people with a disability).
- ✓ If using a recruitment agency, check that their actions **don't exclude anyone** your description is designed to attract.
- ✓ Include a **general statement about your recruitment intentions**, such as 'we welcome applications from all parts of society.'
- ✓ Unless it can be justified (on a legal basis) **avoid terms that specify a certain gender,**

**religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, age, or health condition.**

- ✓ Stick to the **skills, competences and experience** needed for the job.
- ✓ Provide **relevant information** related to the position: e.g. pay, location, management responsibilities, as in the job specification.
- ✓ Clearly define **how applicants should apply, closing date and interview dates.**
- ✓ Give the advert a **strong text**, make it enticing and uncluttered: think about what would attract you?

### Selecting the 'right person for the job'

A good application form should allow you to make a **clear judgement** on the candidate set against the job description and person specification. It is best if it is done on a standard form, which means you **do not need a Curriculum Vitae (CV).**

- ✓ Where possible it is useful to **record the types of people applying** (e.g. age, ethnicity, disability, etc.) but keep this separate from the application process and make it clear it is only for your records.

- ✓ If you need to make a short list, make sure you do this **only based on the specifications you outlined**: avoid any personal judgements.
- ✓ **Review your short list with employees and colleagues**, but remove any personal details before you do so: make it as anonymous as possible.
- ✓ **Avoid making assumptions** and assess each quality of the candidate in an objective manner (e.g. focus on the skill required to gain a qualification, not how recent or where from).
- ✓ **If interviewing, try to have at least two people present** and ensure that both have all the relevant information and have agreed on the approach beforehand.
- ✓ **Make sure you are aware of any requirements the applicant might have** with regard getting to and going through with the interview. This can be done from the information they provided or an informal discussion prior to the meeting.
- ✓ **Decide upon the interview questions** beforehand, and discuss with colleagues and employees. Make sure they identify the skills, experience and competences of the applicant in relation to the job description and person specification.
- ✓ **Develop a scoring system** to judge the applicant's responses set against the

specifications you have defined. Do not judge the candidates against each other.

- ✓ **Consider what needs to be done** to enable you to employ the best candidate, e.g. language training, access requirements or new equipment.
- ✓ **Implement an 'objective testing' approach** if the candidate is required to possess a specific skill or knowledge to do the job and score their results.
- ✓ **Discuss the interview and test results** with all who were part of the process.
- ✓ **Inform people as soon as possible** on the decision and provide, or at least offer, feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

### Employee retention

- ✓ Induction should include **job training, orientation, policies and a guide to the types of behaviour** accepted in the workplace.
- ✓ **Provide access to career training**, including personal development opportunities.
- ✓ **Provide 'Diversity' training**, which can be just some basic ideas about dealing with different cultures in relation to work colleagues and customers.

- ✓ **State your belief in maintaining dignity at work** and that harassment or bullying of any sort is not good for anyone including your business.
- ✓ **Where possible adopt flexible working** with employees to accommodate different needs, even if this is only temporary to keep skilled and loyal staff.
- ✓ **Make sure it is possible for employees to communicate** within the workplace (provide an input or express an opinion, ideas or problems). This can be through formal or informal discussions and keep confidential where necessary.
- ✓ **Assess and implement ideas** that can improve the working procedures of employees and therefore improve productivity.
- ✓ Write down (where possible) **disciplinary and grievance procedures** and let everyone know about them.
- ✓ **Monitor and assess information** on the activities of staff, performance, position, targets, responsibilities, absenteeism and sickness.
- ✓ **Find out which institutions and public organisations** can help support your business when trying to make changes for people in the workplace.

### Marketing the business

Think about what you are offering: when **price, product or service** are similar to your competitors, you need something else to attract and maintain business.

- ✓ **Exploit the diverse skills and qualities of your employees** as your competitive advantage.
- ✓ You can maintain business and **improve your market share through your reputation as a good employer** and by showing that you are aware of the diverse needs of your customers.
- ✓ **A workforce that reflects its customer base** is likely to be (or at least appears to be) familiar with and prepared to meet the needs of its customers.
- ✓ **Use and exploit the 'Diversity' activities** you do by advertising them to customers.
- ✓ **Keeping evidence of the activities** you do will also be very useful material for bids to contracts/tenders (e.g. newsletters, adverts, press releases, notices on premises, policies, strategies, company reports, web sites etc.).
- ✓ **Employees provide essential advertisement** for the business if their personal experience in the workplace is good.

- ✓ **Understanding the backgrounds and needs** of different elements of a diverse workforce, means you will be more likely to attract a similar customer.
- ✓ You can respond to different market demands by **discussing how to change your product or service** with employees and customers.
- ✓ **Small changes can make a difference to customers**, e.g. interior design, pictures (non offensive), colours, layout, seating – what makes them feel welcome?
- ✓ Rather than seeing difference as problem for your business **understand how your products and services can exploit them**, different groups have huge spending power.
- ✓ **Think about the diversity of your markets** (consider the demographics) and develop a strategy to reach them. Do some homework!





## Resources

### Publications from the European Commission

*Guide for Training in SMEs (2009)*

*The SME Business Case for Diversity (2008)*

*Turning 'Diversity' into Talent and Competitiveness for SMEs (2008)*

*Continuing the Diversity Journey, Business Practices, Perspectives and Benefits (2008)*

*The Business Case for Diversity – Good Practices in the Workplace (2005)*

These publications are available on the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities** website – <http://ec.europa.eu/social/>

### Useful links and contacts

'For Diversity. Against Discrimination.' information campaign – <http://www.stop-discrimination.info>

'Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance' – Toolkit for SMEs – <http://www.businessandgender.eu/products>

European Portal for SMEs – [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme/index_en.htm)

UEAPME – European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises – <http://www.ueapme.com>

#### Malta

GRTU – Malta Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises – <http://www.grtu.org.mt>

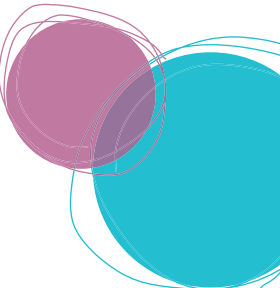
#### Ireland

Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association (ISME) – <http://www.isme.ie>

#### United Kingdom

National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses Ltd (FSB) – <http://www.fsb.org.uk>

EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry – <http://www.eurochambres.be>



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