

Building a great place to work

Objective

Oxford University Press (OUP) formed a project team to review their policies and practices relating to Diversity and Equality in order to combat any discrimination, ensure legal obligations were fulfilled, promote inclusion in employment and increase the talent pool from which the Press draws.

Solution

Research by Steps confirmed that there wasn't a 'problem' that needed fixing: it was more about raising people's awareness of how they behave in all their interactions with others. The desired effect was to ensure OUP remains a place that people *want* to work because managers and staff promote equality, value diversity and respect the rights and dignity of each other.

OUP has one of the most established brands in the country, with a worldwide reputation for excellence. Its competitive advantage relies on the skill, knowledge, and adaptability of its employees. Steps created tailored programmes for all staff at OUP starting with the senior leadership team - acknowledging that senior-level buy in was essential at the outset, and positive behaviours had to be modelled by leaders in order to cascade the change. Each programme used a combination of drama based techniques and facilitated group work to challenge delegates, asking; What part do you play in creating an inclusive environment? How do you ensure you are creating a culture of respect?

Celia Clark, L&D Programmes Manager, explains: "We wanted to engage people in a debate about the issues, rather than simply present their legal responsibilities around diversity and inclusion. We felt drama based training would help people 'see' the situations more readily, it would be memorable and it would get the messages across in an imaginative, thought-provoking way."

"The programme was a huge success. Because people got caught up in the drama, they connected to the subject at an emotional level, which is more likely to effect changes in their behaviour, rather than simply connecting on an intellectual or theoretical level."

"Steps weren't the cheapest option. We chose them because I enjoyed talking to them and they clearly know their stuff when it comes to Diversity issues. From the very first conversation, they were friendly and interested in OUP, and very good at managing our relationship: keeping in contact, checking we had all the information we needed, making it clear that plans could be re-jigged and negotiated to ensure we were happy with the end result. It has felt like a partnership from the very start."

"Steps are friendly and working with them is fun. Whoever you talk to on the phone is just as friendly and informed as those in the immediate project team. They are generous with their time and expertise - striving for a programme that was absolutely right for us, even if that meant challenging our thinking and remaining flexible to last minute changes to the programme. They also have an ability to get under the skin of an organisation remarkably quickly, picking up on the nuances of the culture - and the accuracy of the end drama scenarios proved this."

Outcome

"We've had a fantastic response to this programme. We only had once chance to successfully engage staff in this issue and Steps helped us ensure we did that. Workshops have been consistently rated good or excellent by over 90% of staff, individuals and teams enjoy the training and can see the immediate relevance to Oxford University Press" said Celia Clark.

Steps programmes have been running at Oxford University Press since 2010 and form part of ongoing induction for all new employees.