

ALAN AND COATES HIRE - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

It's a little known fact that over 80% of jobs are never advertised but are found through the use of friends and family networks.

Alan Rooney and his family used their contacts and the resulting job has been a win-win for everyone. Alan's father Willie Rooney had contacts at Coates Hire in Belmont and thought they might be able to offer Alan a job. "We knew Alan was capable of working somewhere. We just needed to find someone willing to give him a go," said Willie, "So I called Coates and told them about Alan and about how EDGE could support him."

Grant Morgan the Human Resources Manager from Coates Hire told INSIDE EDGE that, "We had never considered employing someone with a disability before Alan, but Alan's ability and, more importantly, his attitude has changed people's perceptions here and made a real difference."

"When our tools are returned we rely on Alan to clean and check the bar codes on them, similar to borrowing a book from a library. Without Alan doing this job our whole business would suffer".

With the support of Craig Robb from EDGE, Alan began working two days a week. Craig assisted in the early stages of Alan's training by developing strategies to help Alan to remember how to do his job safely and efficiently. "We used colour coded labels on the shelving and we have increased the efficiency, not only of Alan, but of the whole work area," said Craig "We are now talking to Grant about increasing his hours."

This story is even more remarkable when you consider that, not so long ago, Alan was given little chance of gaining employment and many had suggested he should move into a sheltered workshop. Now Alan is a valued team member at Coates Hire and is included in all aspects of company life. "At the Christmas party he had all the girls sitting with him. We didn't get a look in!" said one of his co-workers.

With his beaming smile and infectious attitude towards life it is little wonder that Alan has had such an impact on his workplace. We managed to stop Alan for a little while and asked him what was so good about having a job? He promptly said, "Everything, I just love coming to work." and with that said he went straight back to cleaning the tools.



Alan Rooney and Grant Morgan at work yesterday at Coates Hire Belmont.

EDGE AND CENTRAL TAFE LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

It has been over a year since the then Premier, Dr Geoff Gallop, launched the Accessing Abilities strategy designed to assist Government Departments to recruit, support and promote people with disabilities into their workforce. Since then we have seen a slight improvement from some departments, but overall it is still a challenge to get someone into the government sector.

One agency that has embraced this initiative is Central TAFE and the results have been outstanding for all concerned.



Tony White has settled in well to his new role with Central TAFE.

Last year, the College's Strategic Workforce Planning Committee realised that workforce participation figures showed a vast under-representation of Youth (under 25 years of age), Aboriginals and People with disabilities in their workforce.

Scott Ryan, the Human Resource Consultant at Central TAFE, was given the task of developing policy and strategies to address the issue. "We decided to utilize the expertise of external agencies that specialised in those areas. After meeting with EDGE we were confident that they could meet our needs and provide the professional back up and services we required," said Ryan. "We identified that there was a high turn-over of level 1-3 positions and we knew that people with disabilities traditionally were more loyal and had less turn-over than the general workforce population so we then sought referrals for these positions before advertising," said Scott.

This has led to three people from EDGE gaining employment with Central TAFE. "We have placed people in the call centre, in the IT department and one as a PA", said Ian Hughes from EDGE who has been overseeing the relationship with Central TAFE. "It is great to see a government agency being so pro-active in employing people with disabilities."

Tony White who is a switchboard operator within the call centre area is very happy to be working at Central TAFE in Northbridge. "It's such a central location, the facilities are very accessible and my co-workers are great to work with," said Tony, who was the first to be employed under this new program.

Another key area of Central TAFE's policy has been the appointment of Kathy Stawarz who is the Traineeship Coordinator. "Traineeships represent a great way for Central TAFE to increase the representation of diversity groups and for those people to gain on the job experience with nationally accredited qualifications," said Kathy. EDGE is currently in the process of signing up three school based traineeships and will be providing full support during this time. It is envisaged once they are completed that three students will then enter into permanent positions within TAFE.

EDGING CLOSER TO GREATER DIVERSITY

Louis has always been a hard worker, but a serious car accident in 1999 left him with damaged vertebrae, nerve damage and pain as his constant companion. Centrelink told him his disability meant he never had to work again, but he disagreed.

"I was sitting at home feeling sorry for myself. If you vegetate, you die", says Lou.

Louis submitted his resume to EDGE to join the TAFE Mentoring Program. A few weeks later BP offered him a contract position, and he hasn't looked back.

"In the morning I jump out of bed at 4:30am and hurry to work."

Instrumental to this inspiring story is Chris Hartnett, Human Resources Advisor at BP Kwinana Refinery. Chris identified a business need to employ some people for fixed term contracts, and heard about EDGE.

BP doesn't have a specific policy about the employment of people with disabilities, but like so many businesses they now recognise the intrinsic benefits of employing people with disabilities.

Chris said, "Here at BP we have a strong commitment to support the community where it operates. We'd been talking about Diversity & Inclusion for a while, and this was the right opportunity at the right time."

The result has been successful from many angles. In the last 3 years the refinery has employed five people through EDGE, with disabilities ranging from hearing impairment to cerebral palsy. These people have a chance to get experience in the workplace, learn new skills and have the satisfaction of earning a pay cheque. EDGE supports the worker and the employer, ensuring that working conditions are appropriate to the worker's needs.

OEOO RECOGNISED WITH LEADING EDGE AWARD

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity was recently presented with a Leading EDGE Award in recognition of their ongoing support of the employment for people with disabilities in the State Public Sector.

Unlike previous Leading EDGE Awards this was presented in recognition of the support and information provided by Noela Taylor and her team to assist EDGE in forging closer links with other government agencies.

"The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity focuses on trying to bring about a more diverse workforce at all levels of public employment and to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunity in employment." said Alan Barrett, Director Diversity. "We are very pleased to share a strong working relationship with such a professionally run organisation as EDGE."

Over the last year EDGE has seen a dramatic improvement in the number of people being placed in the public sector. Sue Robertson, the Managing Director of EDGE, said, "The public sector has traditionally been a challenge for us but with the assistance and guidance provided by the OEOO we are really starting to make some in-roads."

MICHAEL SCORES OFF AND ON THE COURT!

Budding young basketball player, Michael Costello was voted the MVP at the recent Ivor Burge National Championships held at Perry Lakes. The Championships, for people with intellectual disability was a great showcase for many of WA's top budding basketballers. Michael had an outstanding final, scoring an amazing 32 points for WA in a close fought loss to the highly fancied team from the ACT.

Michael now has his sights set on an AIS scholarship and the opportunity to represent Australia at the up-coming Special Olympics to be held in Beijing. Michael later said that "It was an honour to represent WA and now I am just focussed on gaining selection in the Australian team".

It's been a double celebration for Michael who this month started a part-time position as a retail assistant at Supa Valu in Cottesloe. This will allow him to continue his basketball career and to save some money, however he is also keen to look for more work opportunities, as it is an expensive exercise to get to Beijing. So if you are able to offer Michael any other employment opportunities please contact EDGE.



Michael in action at the recent Ivor Burge National Championships held at Perry Lakes.



Pictured receiving the Leading EDGE Award from left to right is John O'Brien, Julian Partridge who was recruited from the Professional Employment Solutions and Alan Barrett.