



**100**  
**YEARS**  
OF LEADING HR  
INTO THE FUTURE

November 2013



# **SOCIAL MOBILITY – TOP TIPS FOR HR PROFESSIONALS**

Today's Young People, Tomorrow's Workforce

# SOCIAL MOBILITY – TOP TIPS FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

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Social mobility is a complex concept, but in a nutshell it's about a person being able to do well – career and otherwise – irrespective of their background and upbringing.

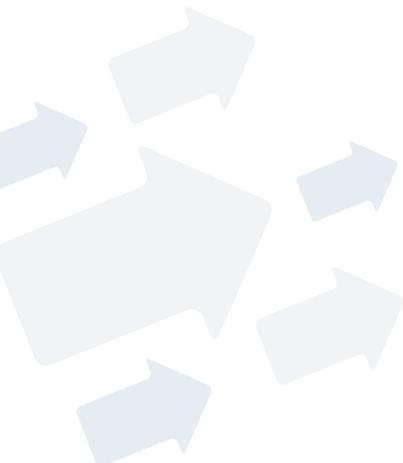
The business case for improving social mobility is clear: there is a growing need for skilled professionals in the labour market and organisations find that there are significant benefits in having a diverse workforce that mirrors the customer base and different markets. We also know that having a more diverse workforce helps with new ideas and innovation.

But despite this, organisations still struggle with this agenda and overall the UK continues to fare badly, with mobility getting worse. Young people,

for example, find it increasingly difficult to access certain jobs and sectors (law, journalism and medicine, for example), while at the same time employers miss out on the skills they need in the talent pool they're fishing in.

The vast majority of HR professionals know they can play a key role to address this. Indeed, when we asked our members whether HR have a role to play in promoting social mobility, more than nine out of ten agreed. But many organisations find that these good intentions are difficult to translate into action. This is why we would like to help. Our eight practical tips below aim to help you and your organisation to get the skills you need and to attract and retain good people from a wide range of social backgrounds.

**SOCIAL MOBILITY CAN'T BE SOLVED BY EMPLOYERS ALONE, BUT EVERY ORGANISATION CAN DO THEIR BIT BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS.**



## 1 RAISE AWARENESS OF YOUR PROFESSION OR SECTOR AND POSSIBLE CAREER PATHWAYS INTO IT

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Many young people, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, don't know about all the jobs on offer within the professions and, even if they do, they may not know how to access them. You can help build aspirations and highlight pathways by:

- Engaging with schools and colleges – a growing number of employers we've spoken to are increasing their 'outreach' activity, including attending careers fairs, open evenings and school events, as well as hosting assemblies which give them a chance to talk about their industry. For example, Apex Hotels, based in Scotland, hold workshops where members of their HR team talk to young people about recruitment and selection processes to ensure they're better prepared for interviews.
- Encourage your staff to go into a local school for one day a year to deliver career insight talks, CV workshops or conduct mock interviews via Inspiring the Future – an easy and free CIPD-endorsed initiative that matches schools and employers: [cipd.co.uk/inspiringfuture](http://cipd.co.uk/inspiringfuture)
- Avoid using jargon – in a recent CIPD survey we asked HR professionals what they could do to improve access to the professions. The most popular suggestion recorded was to eliminate the use of unnecessary technical terminology, which can act as a barrier to accessibility. Instead, they recommend using communications that are open, clear and transparent.
- Make information about your profession and routes into your organisations easier to find – this can take the form of a dedicated section of your website which signposts individuals to further resources or your professional body, or simply providing a contact email address and telephone number for individuals to submit enquiries to.
- Offer more opportunities to try your profession – an easy way to do this is by providing work experience placements and internships. Read our easy-to-use guides for more information on setting up and running these programmes: [cipd.co.uk/learningtowork](http://cipd.co.uk/learningtowork)

## **2 PROVIDE A VARIETY OF ROUTES INTO YOUR ORGANISATION**

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Many organisations still only recruit graduates because they believe it's the easiest way to access talented individuals. But if you still think you need only graduates, think again...

- Offer more than just graduate routes – apprenticeships and school-leaver programmes are just some of the ways to reach those who may not have otherwise applied to your organisation. Capgemini, for example, now offer apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships.
- Work with your professional body or council to promote cultural diversity in your profession – the Random House Group has successfully delivered two year-long traineeships advertised to black and ethnic minority audiences.
- Partner with organisations that provide financial support to internship and work experience programmes.

And finally... if you do wish to recruit graduates, make sure you consider those from a variety of universities and don't prioritise those who belong to the Russell Group. You could also consider offering a sponsored degree route.

## **3 ENSURE RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES ARE FAIR AND ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS**

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- Advertise opportunities widely – and use a variety of methods, including local and national newspapers, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website, local and national newspapers and professional and social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) to ensure you reach the widest audience possible.
- Avoid recruiting by 'word of mouth' alone – relying on this method limits the effectiveness of your search and means groups outside of existing networks never hear of opportunities.
- Use recruitment agencies committed to improving social mobility.
- Work with your local Jobcentre Plus to achieve a diverse selection of potential candidates.

- Be more flexible when considering qualifying criteria, including grades, training and educational background, as focusing on these formal requirements can create unfair barriers.
- Provide line manager training aimed at tackling potential bias/blind spots in candidate selection – in many organisations responsibility for recruiting new staff lies principally with line managers. Therefore, line manager training and guidance is key to ensuring that prospective candidates receive equal treatment and that everyone is assessed on ability and potential rather than background.
- Be less focused on formal qualifications and look for skills and potential – Nestlé switched their interviewing technique from competency-based interviewing to strengths-based interviewing, where capacity – not experience – is tested.

## 4 DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND PROGRESSION

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- Invest in staff at all levels – research shows that those who are already well qualified receive more training than those who are less so. Ensuring individuals aren't overlooked when it comes to development opportunities will raise the overall standard of your workforce and help diversify the talent in your organisation.
- Begin by looking at your organisation's socioeconomic composition at each level – does one group dominate at the top, or bottom? Know your starting point and use it as a benchmark as your diversity projects develop.
- Provide a range of training programmes and make sure training budgets don't favour certain socioeconomic groups, for example graduates or those in more senior positions.
- Communicate clearly and transparently all opportunities for training, development and progression and offer guidance on how to apply.
- Provide training and support for line managers on identifying ways of developing their team – line managers need to be trained in performance and development reviews and the implementation of personal development plans, as well as coaching and performance management.
- Support employees while they train – including providing personal support and advice, flexible study and working arrangements.



**MANY YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT ALL THE JOBS ON OFFER WITHIN THE PROFESSIONS AND, EVEN IF THEY DO, THEY MAY NOT KNOW HOW TO ACCESS THEM. YOU CAN HELP BUILD ASPIRATIONS AND HIGHLIGHT PATHWAYS.**

## **SOCIAL MOBILITY**



## **5 PROVIDE MENTORING, COACHING AND SUPPORT**

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- Focus on building confidence and self-esteem – the CIPD report, *Employers are from Mars, Young People are from Venus: Addressing the young people/jobs mismatch*, found low self-esteem and a lack of confidence to be a particular issue for younger workers, who often lack prior experience of the working world. For this group, and others, support, guidance and effective management is crucial in ensuring their success (report available at [cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/mars-venus-jobs-mismatch.aspx](http://cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/mars-venus-jobs-mismatch.aspx)).
- Establish visible role models – these can be people who have achieved successful careers from less privileged backgrounds or through alternative routes.
- Provide employees with mentors in and outside of the organisation – mentors can help boost confidence, raise aspirations and encourage individuals to identify and expand their talents. Try running a scheme in your organisation, and ensure both mentor and mentee receive advice and training on how to use the relationship most effectively.

## **6 HIGHLIGHT THE BENEFITS OF A TRULY DIVERSE WORKFORCE AND CONFRONT DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AND VIEWS**

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- Challenge perceptions, existing practices and attitudes amongst employees, in particular line managers who have responsibility for recruitment, training and progression decisions.
- Demonstrate how diverse teams achieve better outcomes for business by mobilising support from business leaders and others in the organisation.

## **7 MONITOR AND ASSESS THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR WORKFORCE**

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- Employers and professional bodies should collect and analyse data on the backgrounds of their workforce every three years to help achieve a socioeconomically diverse and representative workforce. This should act as an indicator of possible issues, barriers or areas for improvement.

- The Social Mobility Toolkit provides a template questionnaire which will allow employers to gain insights into an individual's upbringing and secondary education, as well as their entry route into the profession. The questions (below) have been selected by experts and are robust enough for employers to gain insights into an individual's background while being easy to analyse.

**Questions:**

- 1 Did any of your parent(s) or guardian(s) complete a university degree course or equivalent? (for example BA, BSc or higher?) (range of tick-options available)
- 2 What type of school did you primarily attend between the ages of 11 and 16? (range of tick-options available)
- 3 Which of these qualifications do you have to do? (range of tick-options available)
- 4 At any point during your school years, did either (or both) of the following apply?
  - Your household received income support (Yes/No)
  - You received free school meals (Yes/No)

For more information on the employee questionnaire and for guidance around its use and data protection, please see the section of the Social Mobility Toolkit entitled 'Monitoring Social Mobility' (please see 'Other sources of support').

## **8 PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORKING PRACTICES**

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- To increase greater participation, employers should offer flexible working practices to all staff, including those in senior positions, and encourage its take-up amongst employees.
- Make sure you state that you offer this arrangement on the recruitment pages of your website and on any job adverts, and discuss with each employee during their induction.
- Ensure flexible working is supported by the culture of your organisation so that employees feel comfortable to request it.

## OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

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**For further information on social mobility:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/socialmobilitysurvey](http://www.cipd.co.uk/socialmobilitysurvey)  
[www.professionsforgood.com/the-social-mobility-toolkit-2014/which](http://www.professionsforgood.com/the-social-mobility-toolkit-2014/which)  
[www.professionsweek.org](http://www.professionsweek.org)  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-and-child-poverty-commission](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-and-child-poverty-commission)

**For information on recruiting young people:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/mars-venus-jobs-mismatch.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/mars-venus-jobs-mismatch.aspx)

**To engage with schools:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/inspiring-future.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/inspiring-future.aspx)

**For further information on engaging with young people:**

[www.workingforyouth.co.uk](http://www.workingforyouth.co.uk)  
[www.Plotr.co.uk](http://www.Plotr.co.uk)

**For advice on mentoring:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/mentoring-steps-ahead-initiative.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/mentoring-steps-ahead-initiative.aspx)

**For further information about apprenticeships:**

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)  
[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work.aspx)  
[www.apprenticeshipvacancymatchingservice.lsc.gov.uk/nams/Forms/Candidate/Apprenticeships.aspx](http://www.apprenticeshipvacancymatchingservice.lsc.gov.uk/nams/Forms/Candidate/Apprenticeships.aspx)

**For advice on how to set up and run high-quality internship placements:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/internships-employers-guide.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/internships-employers-guide.aspx)

**For advice on work experience placements:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/work-experience-placements-work.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/work-experience-placements-work.aspx)

**For information on the business case for investing in young people:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/employer-investment-in-young-people.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/employer-investment-in-young-people.aspx)

**For wider information on youth unemployment:**

[www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/engaging-employers-youth-unemployment.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/engaging-employers-youth-unemployment.aspx)





Learning to Work is an action-focused programme led by the CIPD to promote the role of employers in reducing youth unemployment. It falls within the CIPD charity objective is to champion better work and working lives. The overall aim of Learning to Work is to promote the business case for investing in the future workforce and increase the number of opportunities available for young people to engage with the world of work. We encourage HR professionals and employers to recognise and champion their role as key players in tackling youth unemployment by taking part in and promoting youth volunteering schemes, offering a wider range of access routes into their organisations and making their recruitment and management practices youth-friendly. We also lobby policy-makers to ensure that the education system is doing enough to prepare people for the workplace, and, via our HR volunteers, directly promote employability skills among young people.

[cipd.co.uk/learningtowork](http://cipd.co.uk/learningtowork)



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