

Case Study

Alfie's Barriers

Alfie asks his interviewer if his interview room will be wheelchair accessible. His interviewer assures him that there is a lift to take him to the first floor. Upon arrival, Alfie is informed that the lift is broken and that his interviewer has moved the room to one on the ground floor. The interviewer arrives five minutes after the interview was scheduled to begin. She leads Alfie through to an area aside to the main reception/foyer area.

He tells himself to “pull himself together” and to ignore everything around him. As he moves closer to the table set aside for his interview, he cannot get his legs underneath as his foot plates keep smashing against the table legs. Under normal circumstances, Alfie would have either asked for the table to be repositioned or moved himself to a more accessible area around the table. However, he's in an interview situation and feels that this it's not appropriate as the interview is already running over schedule.

There are three interviewers in Alfie's interview. He can see out of the corner of his eye that one of the interviewers is looking at him. He looks up and smiles at her and she looks away. Noticing the awkward interaction, another interviewer steps in, “I don't think I've ever interviewed a wheelchair-bound person before, I wonder if it's going to be weird.” Alfie smiles.

“Tell us about a time you succeeded against all odds in your last post”. Alfie considers his answer: “As I explained in my application, this will be my first formal position. I have found it difficult to secure employment up until this point. I am really eager to succeed in this post and I think that I have all the relevant skills. I can give you an example of when I have overcome a tough situation in my personal life if that's okay?” The three interviewers looked at each other and responded with a no and that they would move onto the next question.

As part of the interview, Alfie was asked to prepare a presentation. As he will need to get under the table at this point to use his laptop to present to the group, he asks if the table could be moved around so that he can get under it to a comfortable position. The panel points out that the table is stuck to the floor and cannot be moved. After a quick survey of the area, Alfie realises that he cannot move to another position and still be in optimal position to both see the presentation and have eye contact with the interviewers. He asks the interviewers if they would mind swapping positions with him. They say that this would not be possible as this would be giving him an unfair advantage over the other interviewees. They say that if he cannot present where he is, he can leave the presentation with them and they will read it over after the interview.

Whilst explaining the company ethos, they tell Alfie that it is a very relaxed atmosphere with a lot of office banter because “we are like a family and you won't

survive if you take it too seriously”. They continue to explain about the “mandatory” Wednesday night drinks where everybody is expected to stay until they are no longer safe to drive. Alfie quietly worries about the fatigue side-effect of his impairment and wonders how this will be perceived.

They ask Alfie if he has any follow-up questions and although he has come prepared with four or five questions, tired and a little overwhelmed, he is concerned about what the answers might be. So he simply says “no”.

As he goes to give his final goodbyes, he attempts to shake the hands of his interviewers but as the table is in the way, he cannot reach and no one offers to meet him halfway.

In the reception area, whilst signing out, the receptionist asks him if he was there on a work placement. He answers no and that he was there for a job interview. The receptionist looks surprised, tilts her head and says “oh bless you, you’re really inspiring you are”.

Alfie leaves, resigned to the fact that he didn’t get the job and that this is probably what it’s going to be like in every other interview situation.



Questions

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1. Why do you think this may have been Alfie’s first professional work opportunity?
 2. What could the interviewers have done differently to ensure Alfie had a better interview experience?
 3. What could the company do to ensure disabled candidates have an equal opportunity to job roles?
 4. Thinking about the barriers listed above: physical barriers, structural barriers, psychological barriers and attitudinal barriers, which barriers did Alfie face and how did they prevent him from showcasing his skill?
 5. From the information in the case study alone, do you think Alfie will be offered the position?

Sample Answers

Why do you think this may have been Alfie's first professional work opportunity?	Detailed Answer
What could the interviewers have done differently to ensure Alfie had a better interview experience?	Detailed Answer
What could the company do to ensure disabled candidates have an equal opportunity to job roles?	Detailed Answer
Thinking about the barriers listed above: physical barriers, structural barriers, psychological barriers and attitudinal barriers, which barriers did Alfie face and how did they prevent him from showcasing his skill?	Detailed Answer
From the information in the case study alone, do you think Alfie will be offered the position?	Detailed Answer