

Alfie's Interview

How to Use This Case Study

This case study has been designed as a reflection exercise for hiring managers, HR teams, and anyone involved in recruitment. It can be used in two ways:

- **Individual reflection:** Review Alfie's experience and consider how similar situations might affect your recruitment processes. Think about what worked, what didn't, and how an inclusive approach could change the outcome.
- **Team learning:** Share the case study in team meetings or training sessions. Use the reflection questions to spark discussion, encourage different perspectives, and identify opportunities to strengthen inclusive practice.

Case Study

Alfie reached the stage where he was invited for an interview. The company, BeYourselfByYourself, was his dream company for years. When he was offered an interview, he was ecstatic. Almost so excited that he nearly forgot to ask about access. He asked just-in-time, explaining that he was a wheelchair user. Alfie asked if the building where he would be interviewed had step-free access. He assumed that BeYourselfByYourself would recognise that if he needed access to the interview, he would also need access to his workplace. His interviewer assured him there was a lift to take him to the first floor, where the interview would be held.

Upon arrival, Alfie signed in at reception and was informed that the lift was broken and that his interviewer had moved the room to one on the ground floor. The interviewer arrived five minutes after the interview was scheduled to begin. She led Alfie through to an area aside from the main reception/foyer area. Whilst somewhat quiet, Alfie could still hear the low murmur of the workplace community hustling and bustling around the foyer and reception area.

He told himself to "pull himself together, " ignore everything around him, and focus purely on the interview and the questions being asked. As he moved closer to the table set aside for his interview, he realised he could not get his legs underneath as his foot plates kept smashing against the chair 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 was in an interview situation

and felt that this was inappropriate as the interview was already running over schedule.

There were three interviewers in Alfie's interview: Sara Jane, Lewis and Robbie. As Alfie waited for the interviewers to settle their papers and commence the interview, he could see out of his eye that Sara Jane was looking at him. He looked up and smiled at her, and she looked away. Noticing the awkward interaction, Lewis said, "I don't think I've ever interviewed a wheelchair-bound person. I wonder if it's going to be weird." Alfie smiled.

"Tell us about a time you succeeded against all odds in your last post". Alfie took the recommended two minutes to digest the question before answering. "As I explained in my application", Alfie began, "this will be my first formal position. I have found it difficult to secure employment up until this point. However, I am eager to succeed in this post and think 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, saying they would move on to the next question.

As part of the interview, Alfie was asked to prepare a presentation outlining how he would, if successful, lead and galvanise his sales team to generate an extra 35% revenue in the following year. As he needed to get under the table to use his laptop to present to the group, he asked if the table could be moved around so that he could get under it in a comfortable position.

Sara Jane pointed out that the table was stuck to the floor and could not be moved. After a quick survey of the area, Alfie realised he could not move to another position and remain in the optimal position to see the presentation and make eye contact with the interviewers. He asked the interviewers if they would mind swapping positions with him. They told him this would not be possible as this would give him an unfair advantage over the other interviewees. They informed him that if he could not present where he was, he could leave the presentation with them, and they would read it after the interview.

When explaining the ethos of BeYourselfByYourself, Robbie told 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." Robbie continued telling Alfie about the "mandatory" Wednesday night drinks, where everybody is expected to stay until they

are no longer safe to drive home. Alfie quietly worried about the fatigue side-effect of his impairment and wondered how his fellow colleagues and employer would perceive this.

They asked Alfie if he had any follow-up questions. Although he came prepared with four or five questions he would like to ask, tired, a little overwhelmed, and concerned about the answers, he responded, “No.”

Alfie attempted to shake the hands of his interviewers as a goodbye, but the table was in the way, so he could not reach them, and no one offered to meet him halfway.

While signing out in the reception area, the receptionist asked him if he was there on a work placement. He answered no and said that he was there for a job interview. The receptionist looked surprised, tilted her head, and said, “Oh bless you. You’re really inspiring. You are.”

Alfie left BeYourselfByYourself resigned to the fact that he didn’t get the job and to the fact that this is probably what it will be like in every other interview situation.

Reminder Of Key Points

- Alfie asked about step-free access and was told there was a lift.
- On arrival, Alfie was informed that the lift was broken and the room had been moved.
- The interview took place near the reception, which was not fully quiet.
- Alfie was asked about previous work experience and tried to share personal examples.
- He was asked to present using his laptop, but he could not because the table could not be repositioned.
- Alfie requested an adjustment in seating, which was not agreed to.
- He prepared several follow-up questions but chose not to ask them.
- Alfie could not shake hands when leaving because the table was in the way.

Questions To Consider

1. Why might this 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 learn from this experience to ensure disabled candidates have equal job opportunities in the future?
4. What impression of the company do you think the interview left on Alfie?
5. Based on Alfie's interview experience, do you think he got the job, and why?

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