The manager's role in hiring and integrating disabled employees

Anthony works in the Product Support Engineering (PSE) department of Safran Landing Systems Landing Gear division. For the last year and a half he has tutored a young apprentice with a disability.

What was behind your decision to recruit somebody with a disability?

In fact, that didn't factor into our decision: we simply hired the candidate who was the most qualified and motivated! When we identified a need for an apprentice on a work-study scheme, my immediate supervisor contacted HR, who sent him several candidates. Among them was a candidate with a motor disability, proposed by the association Hanvol*. We interviewed him to assess his skills, knowledge and interest in the job. Other disabled persons were already working at the facility, so we knew that the logistics aspects could be adapted. As for the other factors, there was no difference between him and the other candidates.

How did his integration in the team go?

When we made the decision, our office was in the process of being renovated. We took advantage of this to adapt it for an employee in a wheelchair, including access to the premises and circulation. We also asked him if he needed an adapted workspace, or anything else. All of these points were reviewed with the Disability and Facilities Management managers, and we were able to finalize these arrangements in time. But I have to admit that some common sense adjustments were made later, such as clearing out the printer room to make it easier to get around. Integrating him in our team went very smoothly. When a new employee is so joyous, motivated and open, everything naturally goes very well indeed.

What advice would you give managers who are considering hiring employees with a disability?

Above all, to give them the same chance as for any other candidate. Next, to ensure that access to the building and circulation inside are appropriate. If any problems or questions arise, to talk with their contact at Human Resources or Facilities Management, or in the Health-Safety-Environment department concerning security instructions (in case of fire, etc.). There's also a one-day course at Safran University, which I took, giving useful recommendations for managing employees with disabilities. Over and above the role of managers, I believe that the company plays a decisive role in defining a proactive policy in this area, forming partnerships with associations, deploying the AFNOR standard for disability-friendly organizations, etc.

* Hanvol is a Safran partner association that supports the hiring of disabled persons in the aerospace industry.

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