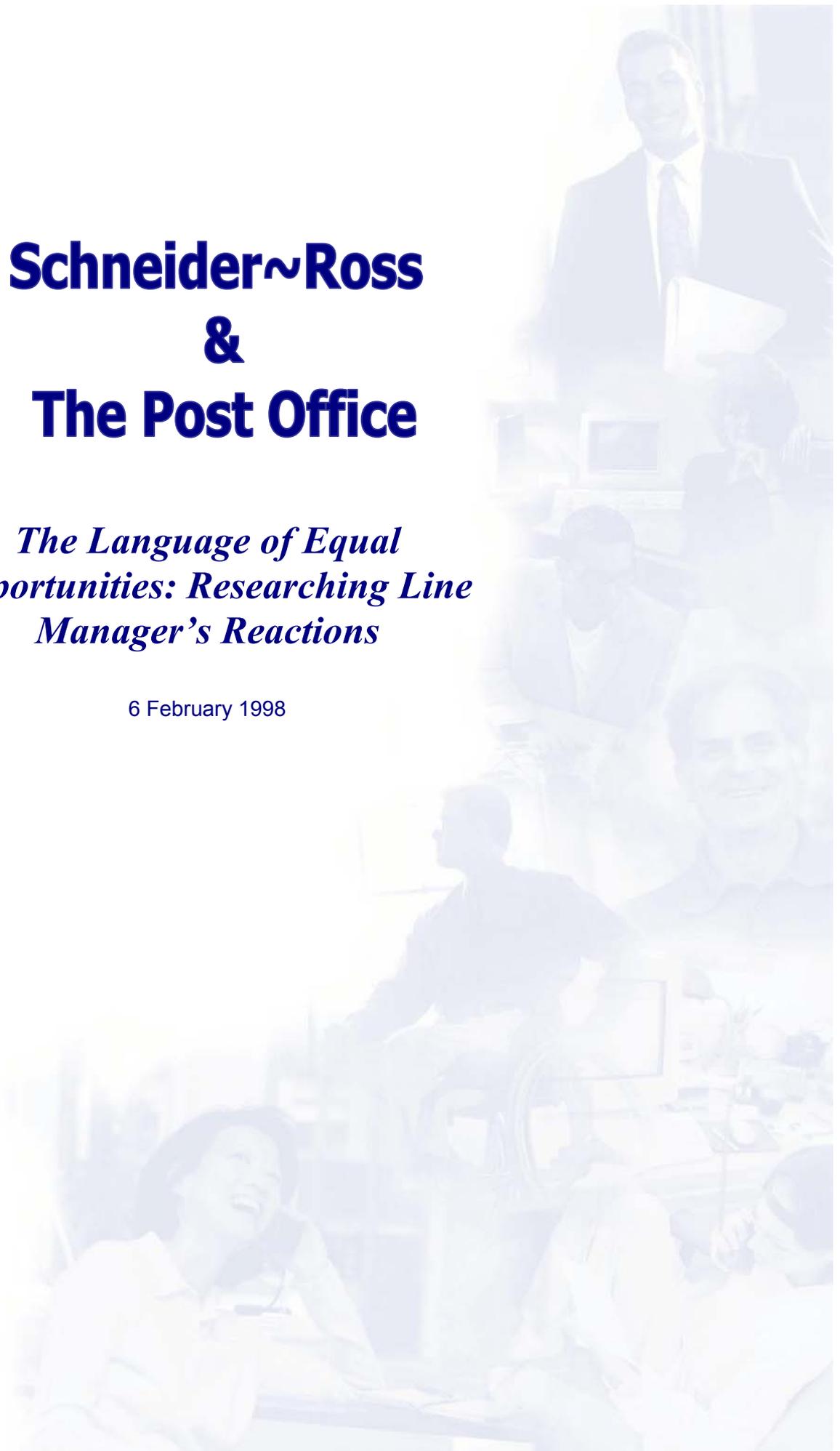


Schneider~Ross & The Post Office

*The Language of Equal
Opportunities: Researching Line
Manager's Reactions*

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by
Rachael Ross, Sandra Sanglin-Grant, Robin Schneider of Schneider~Ross
&
Jessica Rose of Conway Smith Rose.

This document is divided into two main parts - the overall report which seeks to highlight the key findings of the research and the Appendices which include all the "source" material. In particular, Appendices 4, 5 and 6 include a lot of quotations which give a flavour of the research findings.

The views and conclusions in the report are those of the authors Schneider~Ross.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research is about finding out what line managers really think about arguments and phrases used by those seeking to advance equal opportunities in organisations. There is a danger that specialists, in something of a world of their own, do not check their communications with the very people - line managers - who are critical to the success of their undertaking.

1.1 The Organisational Context

There is a sense amongst many of the leading organisations who participated in this research that, despite some very real progress, their work on equal opportunities has reached a plateau. They have good policies and procedures in place but they struggle with getting these good intents translated into the reality of daily life in their organisations.

According to the people responsible for developing their programmes (see Appendix 2):

70% of participating organisations believe they have the appropriate policies in place, but 80% think their culture needs to change "completely" or "to a large extent".

If the commitment of front line managers is vital to moving off the plateau (and the participating organisations are convinced that it is) then this research suggests we should not be surprised by the lack of progress.

At best, many of the arguments advanced by organisations to-day leave front line managers cold. In appendices 3, 4 and 5 we cover line manager reactions to a whole stream of different arguments. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, in the main, they are disengaged. "Equal opportunities" and "diversity" are things for personnel to worry about.

90% of those responsible for developing programmes within organisations expressed the view that **the level of line ownership is "not very high"** (see Appendix 2.)

1.2 Research Findings

A detailed description of line manager reactions to particular arguments and phrases is to be found in the Appendices. What we have sought to do in the rest of this report is consider what these reactions actually tell us about line managers and how they are best encouraged to "engage" with this subject.

There are a number of assumptions about communications on this issue that have been challenged by this research: (1) that the arguments that are used at Board level are those that will gain the commitment of front line managers and (2) that it matters whether an organisation labels its approach as being about "equal opportunities" or "diversity".

In practice (see Sections 7.0 and 8.0) we found that some of the arguments that seem to gain commitment at the top can actually be perceived by front line

managers to be too narrowly commercial (or, at worst, exploitative). Line managers are interested in the broadest "business case" .

Also (see Section 5.0) whilst the term "equal opportunities" has a lot of "baggage" (most of it unhelpful) "diversity" needs a lot of explanation before it becomes meaningful - and both are seen as jargon. Both terms are better avoided in communicating to line managers - what really helps is finding every day language to describe the underlying concepts.

The main lessons that seem to emerge from the feedback from the line managers involved in this research (see Sections 7.0 and 8.0) are:

- **phrase arguments so that they include everyone** - do not divide people up into different groups;
- then, within this context, recognise that some groups of people are more likely to suffer from discrimination at work - but **move beyond simply promoting compliance with the law**;
- convey that in essence **this is about treating all people with decency and judging them on their merits** - there can be a role for strong language about "rights" and "values";
- **use every day language and appeal to managers' common sense** - avoid jargon and abstract concepts;
- all of the above applies to all areas traditionally associated with equal opportunities (gender, race, disability) - but **disability was not immediately associated with equal opportunities in the minds of line managers** and they had more assumptions about disability that could get in the way of effective communication;
- **ultimately, what front-line managers will really take notice of is the behaviour of their bosses** - however good the communication is, it will be undermined if they see that their managers don't appear to believe in it.

1.3 Implications

Some of the implications of these findings are straight-forward - for instance, about **the words to use and those to avoid**. In the glossary we have attempted to capture what line managers actually understood by particular words or phrases.

There are phrases and arguments that organisations are using ("becoming an employer of choice" "taking our corporate responsibility seriously") that have little, or no, credibility with line managers.

It is also clear that because this is a complex issue, it needs **face to face discussion** to get the right messages across - it is not enough to rely on brochures or memos. Moreover, there is a need, above all, to work on getting the right behaviours at senior levels. This is about **leadership** (see Section 6.0.)

For, as far as organisations are concerned, there is clearly no more powerful communication tool than the overt behaviours of their leaders. Getting directors involved in campaigns, providing financial support, taking time out to consider progress and review strategies are the best ways of building the commitment of front line management.

We believe that the research also carries significant implications for those most closely involved in shaping public policy with regard to equal opportunities.

The very strong message from this research is that front line managers respond well to arguments and proposals for action which are "inclusive" - overtly about everyone not just particular groups of people. (This may well be highly personal - that individuals want to feel that they themselves are being included.)

Similarly, they are (at best) uncomfortable with arguments or actions which seem to be about preferring one group of people over another.

Not surprisingly, line managers responded instinctively warmly to the idea of bringing all the Commissions under one umbrella organisation (see Appendix 3, Question 3 item 1) - it fits exactly with this desire for an approach which overtly includes everyone.

The challenge, therefore, is whether a shift towards this sort of "inclusive" approach - which looks like it is a pre-requisite to getting a hearing amongst front line management - can at the same time ensure that the palpable inequalities that do exist between groups of people at work get addressed.

Perhaps we should take comfort from the findings of this research which suggest that we have consistently underestimated the good sense (and fair mindedness) of the majority of front line managers.

If organisations can find ways of involving, rather than lecturing, line managers, there is every reason to suppose that the move to an "inclusive" approach could provide the platform for achieving the long-awaited breakthrough of women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities at work.

2.0 RESEARCH AIMS

It is widely recognised that the commitment of line managers is critical to achieving real change within an organisation - without them, policies just remain good intents.

Not surprisingly, therefore, over the years, equal opportunities practitioners and other advocates of change have advanced a whole range of arguments that they hope will convince line managers of the "business case", and the need for change.

What hasn't happened until now is line managers themselves being asked which arguments they think work and which don't. That is the fundamental purpose behind this research and its broad aims are as follows:

- Identify the "messages" and "arguments" that campaigns and organisations are either currently using (or thinking of using) to promote equal opportunities and/or diversity.
- Test these out on a set of target audiences and establish how they are actually received.
- Gain some input from these audiences as to the sort of "messages" and actions which are likely to gain their commitment and convince them that an organisation takes these issues seriously.
- Describe the possible implications of these research findings for organisations, campaigners and public policy makers.

3.0 PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS & LINE MANAGERS

3.1 Participating Organisations

We are delighted to have had the following organisations involved in the research: **Boots The Chemists, British Steel plc, BP, BT, The Co-Operative Bank, Department for Education and Employment, McDonald's Restaurants Ltd, The Post Office, Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd and Slaughter and May.**

These 10 organisations are not intended to be "representative" of UK employers as a whole. They are all members of the Employers' Forum on Disability and as such, are likely to be more progressive than some (and indeed they all have eo/diversity as a priority). In addition, they are large employers and are likely to have more resources at their disposal than many.

However, the participating organisations do cover a wide range of employers - both public and private, including industrial and service sectors - and they have considerable experience in persuading line managers of the benefits of equal opportunities.

3.2 Line Managers

The research involved 90 front line managers. Overall, we were seeking to ensure that the representation of managers involved in the research was broadly in line with the UK profile. Although we asked some organisations to provide, for instance, just men or just women, the overall sample was very representative - mostly men (65%) mostly white (80%) and middle aged (70% aged 30 - 49.)

There was, however, some diversity in the sample, 35% women, 20% ethnic minorities and 7% who declared a disability.

4.0 OUTLINE OF METHODOLOGY

There is a more detailed description of methodology in Appendix 1 of this report.

The first stage was obviously to find some organisations who were interested in participating in this research - and our thanks obviously go to them, because without them we would not have been able to get started.

The next step was to identify the messages and arguments that were to be tested out. After an extensive trawl of material provided by the participating organisations and by the Commissions and campaigning organisations, we grouped the arguments into a number of distinct categories and chose 16 of them for the research.

Participating organisations were asked to nominate line managers who then took part in:

- 8 focus group discussions, or
- 23 1:1 discussions.
- completing an individual questionnaire (see Appendix 3)

8 focus group discussions (involving 67 people) were held between April and August 1997 - 1 involved people from a mix of organisations (BT, British Steel plc, Royal Mail and Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd) the other 7 were each held with managers from only one organisation. This proved both easier logistically and a better guide because it was clear that organisational context was an important factor in determining how particular messages were received.

In addition 23 individual discussions were held during this same period. This was particularly helpful in encouraging managers to open up and talk about why they felt as they did about particular arguments.

The questionnaires, which were completed at the end of the focus groups or during the course of the individual discussions, gave the opportunity to get a reaction from each line manager to every argument (whereas the focus groups could only tackle some of the arguments.)

The research fell into two distinct phases - a pilot phase to mid May with some initial focus groups and interviews and then an in-depth phase which completed the work.

The research was co-ordinated by a Steering Group - comprising researchers, advisers, funders and EFD - who commissioned the work. This was chaired by Robin Schneider and involved: Walter Brady (The Post Office), Bob Niven and Michael Pope (DfEE), Jessica Rose (Conway Smith Rose), Rachael Ross and Sandra Sanglin-Grant (Schneider~Ross), Susan Scott-Parker (EFD) and John Williams (Fishburn Hedges).

5.0 SOME COMMON QUESTIONS: LABELS AND POSITIONING

5.1 What To Call The Policy Or Programme?

One of the issues that organisations inevitably face when they seek to communicate is to decide what to call their policies and programmes.

Over the years, there has been some movement away from using the "equal opportunities" label. "Equal opportunities" is seen to provide focus on members of groups protected by the law (for instance, regarding race, gender and disability) but "diversity" is seen as focusing on everybody, as individuals, irrespective of whether or not they happen to be protected by legislation.

Amongst participating organisations in this research 60% used "equal opportunities", whilst 40% have introduced "diversity" (sometimes as an alternative and sometimes in partnership with equal opportunities).

What was particularly noticeable from our research with line managers was that they had reservations about both of these terms. In essence, "equal opportunities" was well-known, but had a lot of "baggage" (see the glossary in Appendix 6) and was seen as legalistic and political.

"Diversity" as a term seemed to convey a sense of "wideness" and choice (to some it could be very liberating **"You don't have to be part of the mainstream"**) but to many it was just another jargon term that was relatively meaningless in its own right.

What was encouraging was that (in most cases) line managers could readily see that discrimination was a problem in organisations: **"Discrimination goes on all the time, we've spoken about examples that hit the press, there must be lots of others that don't hit the press"**.

Whilst there were some indications that phrases using "plain English" (eg the use of the word "fair", or the phrase "valuing difference") worked better than either "equal opportunities" or "diversity", there was no one term that seemed successful for everyone. This reinforces the need for each organisation to make its own decision about how to "tag" its approach - based on an accurate understanding of how their people respond to different terms.

5.2 Separate Focus Or Inclusivity?

A related issue to the "equal opportunities"/"diversity" debate is the question of whether campaigning organisations will have most impact if they go for a narrow focus or a wider approach.

It is important to remember that this research is concerned with line managers - who are only one audience (albeit an important one) for campaigning organisations.

Disability is a good issue from which to consider these issues. In Appendix 5 we have specifically included line manager reactions to the different arguments used to promote a positive approach towards disability.

Disability is also particularly relevant because meaningful legislation has appeared relatively late in the UK (1995) - so it is a "newer" area of "equal opportunities" - and on 1st October 1997 (after the completion of our field research) the Government announced its intention to establish a Disability Rights Commission; and on 3 December included in the priorities for the newly established Disability Rights Task Force, the requirement to make recommendations on the role and functions of a Disability Rights Commission by March 1998.

The following are the key points from line managers:

- Disability (unlike race and gender) did not spontaneously arise in discussion - this would, in itself, suggest that there is "more of a communications job to be done" (that the terms "equal opportunities" and "diversity" are not understood by many to include disabled people) and would favour having an organisation focused on disability;
- Line managers had a set of starting assumptions about people with disabilities - eg about skill levels, using wheelchairs, a disposition to "help", the expense of changes - which are inaccurate and again suggest the need for specific communications focused on disability;
- However, an over-riding message from line managers was a preference for an approach which talked about "everybody" (therefore, including themselves) and didn't split people out into groups (which was perceived to be about "preferential treatment");
- The same logic about arguments that do or don't work with line managers (see Sections 7.0 & 8.0) are applicable to the area of disability.

Without getting into the detail of the arguments here (see Section 10.0 of this report on specific "Implications for Commissions & Campaigning Organisations") the feedback from line managers reinforces both the need for focus and the need for "inclusivity".

The point being, of course, that the one need not preclude the other - and we believe that any new Disability Rights Commission will need both to help raise awareness and understanding about disability in particular, as well as to use arguments to advance this case which are "inclusive" in nature.

Clearly, line managers need good quality communication to help them overcome the assumptions they are likely to hold about disability. At the same time, the arguments that are most likely to persuade them to do something are the same "inclusive" arguments that work for other, more traditional, areas of equal opportunities.

6.0 THE RIGHT WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH: THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

There is a temptation, particularly where the focus of research is on communication, to look in great detail at WHAT is communicated, but to skim over HOW the communication occurs.

Before we look in detail at WHAT is communicated (which is the focus of Sections 7.0 and 8.0 of this report) we should turn our attention to the ways in which organisations seek to get their messages across to their line managers.

A fundamental finding from this research is that face-to-face communication is likely to be much more effective than any circular.

A major reason for this is that it provides the opportunity for interaction. As one line manager said: **"You can get people's opinions, their feedback and that is the most important thing ...You want them to ask questions and tell you what they are thinking"**.

Many of the participating organisations have thought quite deeply about what they mean by equal opportunities and/or diversity. All of our participating organisations have issued brochures that outline their commitment, and 80% have put articles in their in-house newspaper.

Not surprisingly, however, this all seems to cut little ice with the line managers. What matters to them is the signal they are getting from the top of the organisation.

Their top three communication mechanisms as rated in their questionnaires (see Appendix 3 for the full results) were:

Senior management behaviours.

Team talks.

Management memos.

Clearly, what matters to line managers is what their own management say and do. The important point is that one (eg saying) without the other (eg doing) has no real impact - it is the combination that seems to convince line managers that they need to take these issues seriously.

This is about the primacy of day-to-day behaviour - the sorts of informal interactions that happen all the time in organisations. Conversely, where senior management slip up and behave in a way that is not wholly consistent with policy, this is likely to devalue significantly worthy words in brochures and policy statements. As one manager put it: **"Everyone's a caring employer on paper"**. As another argued: **"The company could make the best statements in the world but if the individuals within the company don't believe them, or don't implement them, then it's not worth the paper it's written on"**.

Moreover, it is clear from the questions asked about strategy, that line managers also expect senior management to take the lead in more formal ways - for instance, by getting involved with (and financially supporting) relevant external campaigns and by taking time out to review internal progress and set strategy.

Communication without leadership is like just showing the trailer for a film - it may whet the appetite, but not much more.

Any communication strategy therefore needs to consider the way in which leaders are going to demonstrate their seriousness about these issues (which assumes of course, that they **are** serious).

7.0 MESSAGES & ARGUMENTS THAT WORK

"Equal opportunities" and "diversity" were not subjects to which many of the people involved in the research had given much thought.

What was interesting, however, was that as the line managers got involved in discussions, they warmed to the topic - and they happily stayed in groups that comfortably overran the original two hour slots.

What they responded to most positively were arguments that were:

- "inclusive" in nature (eg "people" rather than particular groups);
- positive, emphasising the benefits (rather than compliance/social obligation);
- clear and straight-forward (rather than ambiguous, wordy and full of jargon);
- business related (rather than abstract or grandiose social arguments.)

The top 5 arguments rated by line managers in their questionnaires (see Appendix 3 for the full results) were:

1. People from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas & perceptions.
2. People have rights in the workplace.
3. Age discrimination leads to loss of experience, skills, corporate memory and empathy with your customers.
4. Best person for the job.
5. An open workforce culture based on trust and mutual respect.

7.1 "Inclusive" arguments

This means arguments that can be applied to everyone at work and (specifically) did not exclude white men. Indeed, line managers consistently preferred terms that were deemed to be more "open".

"People" was a popular term. **"Well that's better because it's talking about me as well, not just black people or the disabled".**

Similarly, "family friendly" was liked (at least by some) as a term because it did at least include men as well as women. Interestingly, one of the reasons line managers did not like the argument about "tapping into new sources of talent" was because it was seen to exclude (and therefore threaten) existing employees.

As one manager argued: **"If you can get terms that are more all encompassing and less exclusive then...you might take more people with you"**.

It seemed to be the same rationale that saw line managers highly resistant to proposals for quotas or numerical goals. Of all the 14 actions that they were asked to rate (see Appendix 3) the lowest two were: (1) setting numerical goals for people in management positions and (2) setting numerical recruitment goals.

Actions which were seen to be helping specific groups of people were often seen as being unfair **"That's not equal opportunities that's preferential treatment"**. **"The fear I have around equal opportunities ... you've got to have certain numbers of certain groups, in that case...it's no longer equal opportunities"**.

This comes back, therefore, to the point that line managers want an "inclusive" message - that embraces all, and is not divisive (other than on the sensible, business ground of "merit").

7.2 Positive

There was lots of muttering amongst line managers when it came to discussing the argument that organisations "have" to do these things in order to meet legal responsibilities. People found the fact that this argument needed to be used "sad" (**"It's very grudging, only doing it because we have to"**, **"It's not very inspiring"**) or unduly directive **"It sounds like you're being told off and someone is saying don't do this or else!"** In the same vein, language associated with problems - eg "prejudice" "discrimination" is somewhat alienating. **"You usually come across the word 'prejudice' when something bad has happened"**.

Similarly whilst line managers understood the need to avoid bad publicity (and it was something they felt their directors were very keen on) they could see limitations to this argument: **"It sounds as though we're only not discriminating because we don't want bad publicity, not because we think it's the right thing."**

Line managers found positive reasons for making progress useful. These seemed to be business-related, but not narrowly commercial. Talking about the highest rated argument (eg "people from different backgrounds") a manager commented: **"If you've got a whole range of different people in to discuss something, I could just imagine the sort of ideas that would be flowing"**. Also **"What a stimulating thought ... it fills you with a sense of optimism, people from all walks of life pulling together to make things better"**.

7.3 Clear and straight forward

The line managers involved in the research didn't have much tolerance for "jargon", what they liked was simple words used in a straight forward way.

For example, **"It's good, it's very straight forward. No jargon, you know exactly what they're saying 'lose your old people and you lose all those other things'"**.

It was also interesting that, in responding to the questionnaire, the argument "People have **rights** in the workplace" was so highly rated by line managers. There were some concerns expressed in focus group discussions about the possibility (and undesirability) of formal "**Rights**" conjuring up confrontation, tensions between management and unions, involvement of the law and written-down formal agreements. On the other hand, this high positioning in the questionnaire results of the concept of people having "**rights**" at work seemingly reflects line managers' comfort with the common sense notion that people have a **right** (or legitimate expectation) that they be fairly treated.

This level-headed appreciation of what does, or does not, appear "fair" or "right" seemed typical of the line managers in this research. It was also perhaps for the same reasons that some managers were keen on the use of words such as "openness" and "mutual trust" - which reflected for them the sort of "values" they wanted at work (as an ideal).

7.4 Business related

The managers were not keen on overt social or political arguments. No one seemed very convinced (or motivated) by the argument that companies employing more people with disabilities might reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

"Social justice?... surely something a Government would tackle, not a company". For the same reason, some managers preferred the term "fairness" to "equality".

On the other hand, the line managers were passionate about getting a wide choice of people and making decisions about who to employ on merit. They saw this as basic to their role. **"The key component of good management is recognising what skills your people need to have to do the task and then to select the right people who have those skills."**

Moreover, line managers involved in this research could appreciate very well themselves that an organisation of people who all look and think alike is unlikely to prosper in a turbulent economy where customer responsiveness, creativity and the ability to change are at a premium. As one stated: **"If you're good then you realise you need diversity"**.

8.0 MESSAGES & ARGUMENTS THAT DON'T WORK

In many cases, of course, the arguments that didn't work are themselves the reverse of those that did. The key points appeared to be:

- avoid jargon;
- avoid perceptions of preferential treatment;
- avoid perceptions of exploitation;
- beware statistics.

The 3 lowest ranked arguments were:

1. Becoming an employer of choice.
2. Reduce staff turnover and absence rates.
3. Taking our corporate responsibility seriously.

8.1 Avoid jargon

That could begin with the very way in which organisations chose to describe their programmes. For instance, "Equal opportunities sounds as if it's a written down statement whereas fair treatment, it's an every day term".

For some people many of the arguments were "mamby pamby, the sort of thing you might expect to come in a corporate document or something, what does it mean?"

There clearly can be a tendency at a high-level to reach for the copious cupboard of management jargon in order to clothe their new found commitments in progressive terms "we aim to be an employer of choice", "an inclusive organisation", "a family-friendly *employer*".

None of these seem to cut much ice with line managers particularly where organisations appear to have self-awarded themselves these distinctions - these phrases are either received in baffled silence or guffaws of derision.

The worst example of this was "becoming an employer of choice". To some (including some organisations where this phrase was actively used) it actually seemed to mean putting the employer in a position of choice (as opposed to attracting applications because people wanted to work there).

8.2 Avoiding perception of preferential treatment

Managers were adamant that equal opportunities (or diversity) should not mean that they recruit less able people. It is perhaps revealing that some white and male managers did have a view that women, ethnic minorities, or people with disabilities might struggle to compete on equal terms.

"It shouldn't matter who gets the job as long as everyone has had an equal chance".

Taking the example of disability, it was interesting to explore with managers where they felt unfair positive treatment starts. They were happy (as shown with the ranking of arguments) with providing employees with disabilities with specific additional facilities **"If they are the right person for the job"**. Their antipathy to setting numerical goals (either for recruitment or management representation) illustrates their sensitivity to ensuring that they still choose on merit.

Indeed, some of their negative reactions to community-based arguments for recruiting people with disabilities were that this was **"Patronising ...it's like, bless you, you've got a disability so come in ... we're not employing you because you're any good"**.

In other words, line managers seem to have a common sense notion of the difference between what the law would call "positive action" (steps before the selection, which are lawful) and "positive discrimination" (which is, in the main, unlawful).

8.3 Avoiding perceptions of exploitation

It has been assumed that the arguments that need to be made in the Board room in order to get commitment to the release of resources are the same arguments that will engage front line managers.

The Board may be particularly concerned to protect their organisation's image and therefore avoiding tribunals and associated press coverage is an important factor. Equally, they may be impressed by a financial analysis that shows, for instance, the cost of additional turnover.

To the average front line manager these arguments seem to smack of too narrow a commercial view - at the extreme they are seen as exploitative.

This is shown by the low ranking of the more obviously money saving arguments. An interesting comment on the argument about turnover:

"It would be better if it said 'make it a better place to work for everyone, then people won't leave and go sick'".

A specific argument that managers felt was very exploitative was the suggestion that employees with disabilities offer greater loyalty: **"Yes, but that's because they don't have all the opportunities that everyone else has"**. **"It's more likely to be through fear of not being able to get another job"**.

As we argued in Section 7.0 it is clearly important to line managers that arguments are couched in business terms (and the pragmatic benefits that they are likely to experience) but what they do not seem to respond warmly to is a too narrow, exploitative commercial message.

8.4 Beware statistics

Numbers can be helpful in getting people to question assumptions. For instance, the argument "Out of every four customers, one is disabled or has a disabled person in their immediate circle" encouraged some line managers to think positively.

All too often, however, the use of statistics provoked a negative reaction ("**I don't believe it**") or a cynical response (along the lines that you could prove anything with statistics, "**8 out of 10 cat owners...**").

Relevant statistics can be helpful, but they are unlikely to be compelling with line managers. Board Directors may thoroughly appreciate a highly statistical presentation, line managers seemed to prefer a less abstract, more personal (and human) argument.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

There is clearly detailed advice in other parts of this report which should enable employers to look again at the content and delivery of their communication strategy.

The following points appear to be the main "building blocks" upon which such a review could be based:

9.1 Common Sense Of Line Managers

Employers should be very encouraged by these findings - whilst line managers may not be particularly well-informed, they do seem to be "warm" to some of the key principles underlying equal opportunities and diversity.

They understand the need for organisations to recruit (1) on merit and (2) from a wider pool. In this sense, so long as organisations don't compromise the merit principle, they could well have the active support of their line managers.

Work undoubtedly needs to be done on increasing awareness amongst line managers, but these are NOT issues to which line managers inevitably come with hostility.

In the first few minutes of our discussions in the research, when the participants learnt what we were talking about, there was often humour - and some trepidation. But as the discussions proceeded it was quite noticeable that understanding and support increased and defensiveness eased.

There is a danger that line managers are portrayed as the "enemy" (because they are in the hot seats, for instance, when selection decisions are made) - but they need to be seen as allies.

We should not let the rogues (and, whilst not particularly evident in those involved in the research, there are line managers who are bigots) tar everyone with the same brush.

9.2 Organisational Context

One of the earliest findings from this research was that words and phrases take on particular meanings in particular organisations. For instance "flexible working" in one organisation **"It's what our company says when they want you to work until midnight"**.

Similarly, in organisations that had a direct interface with the customer, the line managers rated customer arguments highly, for others they appeared to be less relevant.

Each employer needs to determine, for themselves, what to "tag" their approach. For some, "equal opportunities" has built up a lot of credibility over a prolonged period of time. For others, a change in tag is actually one of the main signals that there has been a fairly fundamental change in approach - and it is a good way of making a break with the past.

We believe that every employer should check out communication with line managers - they won't be backward at coming forward with their views!

9.3 The Need For Leadership

The issue of leadership is fundamental - and it's not something that external campaigning organisations and Commissions can do much about. The action here has to be with employers.

Ensuring that top management behaviours are in line with espoused philosophy is vital - in particular, as a way of overcoming the cynicism felt by line managers who might see this as yet another issue that the organisation simply wants to be seen to be doing.

Therefore, as part of any communication strategy, there needs to be thought given to how leaders are going to: (1) understand and communicate their concern as individuals and (2) as a team show they are genuinely behind this.

Without this sort of action, it is unlikely that line managers will see any programme as anything more than "a flash in the pan".

9.4 Inclusive And Focus?

Employers will need to communicate that these issues apply to everyone. Line managers, the majority of whom generally are white and male, need to know it is recognised that they also can be discriminated against and that they too are protected by their employers' policies.

On the other hand, it is evident from the work (for instance) that we did on disability that line managers need time to question assumptions and consider their attitudes. Presumably this will also be the case with regard (for instance) to gender and race.

In other words, it is the core "philosophy" that needs to be inclusive and then managers can go on to consider what this actually means for particular groups of people.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMISSIONS & CAMPAIGNING ORGANISATIONS

Clearly, Commissions and campaigning organisations may be interested in any of the findings concerning which arguments line managers do - and don't - find convincing.

In addition, the following are some more general points.

10.1 Credibility

In talking with line managers about Commissions and campaigning organisations, there was a universal cynicism - the logic seemed to be that if say like the CRE (Commission For Racial Equality) they had a focus on race, then they would already have "pre-judged" such issues.

It is interesting, that this also applied to organisations that were outside the particular field of equal opportunities - for instance, the IPD: **"Their agenda is to improve the role of personnel managers"**.

Clearly, therefore, any Commission or campaigning organisation has barriers to overcome to win credibility in the eyes of line managers. The questions for them are therefore:

- How important are line managers to them?
- What could they, or supporting employers, do in order to build credibility?

10.2 Inclusivity & One Commission

This lack of credibility is partly due to the underlying theme, which has been mentioned a number of times, that line managers prefer an "inclusive" approach. As soon as the name of a Commission or campaigning organisation identifies a particular focus, there seems to be some resistance to what it has to say (this may be an advantage held by the "Equal Opportunities Commission" - rather than the Commission For Racial Equality).

Arguments using the word "people" tended to be highly rated and that was consistent with the feedback from 1:1s and focus group discussions: **"It shouldn't matter who gets the job as long as everyone has had an equal chance...what equality means to me is that everyone is on an even playing field", "positive discrimination is discrimination"**.

All this might support, for instance, considering the possibility in the longer term, of bringing together the functions of current and any future Commissions under one umbrella body. Having one organisation, with an "inclusive" human rights approach and name, was ranked highly by many of the line managers involved in this research. (Appendix 3, Question 3, 43% "strongly support", 46% "might support", 11% "not support".) However, this is a complex issue that was not debated in depth and it would need much fuller consideration before the Government could make a decision.

10.3 Need For Relevant Advice & Information

On the other hand, it was abundantly clear from the line managers involved in the research that they needed access to good quality advice.

Clearly, each employer will have views about from where in their organisation this advice is provided - often within personnel departments - but there is undoubtedly a role here for Commissions and campaigning organisations in providing the information to organisations in the first place.

For example, one of the reasons why organisations join the "Employers' Forum On Disability" is so that they gain access to their pragmatic, business-focused publications.

Therefore, at the same time as any movement towards greater "inclusivity", there needs to continue to be high quality information available - about gender, race, disability, age and sexuality - which enables line managers to challenge their assumptions.

11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

We know that the Government states that it is committed, through legislation on disability, race and sex, to the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunity. On behalf of the Government, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) has responsibilities for:

- aspects of disability and sex legislation; the employment, education and training aspects of race legislation;
- the National Disability Council; the Equal Opportunities Commission;
- and the funding oversight and delivery of a wide range of programmes to promote and support equal opportunities.

Government therefore is a significant communicator of information, advice and guidance on equal opportunities and diversity. We believe that our findings regarding line managers' reactions to these messages are relevant to Government and should be of interest to DfEE and other government departments who have to communicate on these issues.

In addition, the following are some additional points:

11.1 Support For Existing Legislation

It is interesting that the feedback from line managers very much supported the distinctions drawn here in the UK (for instance in race and gender, between positive action and positive discrimination). Preferential treatment was a real concern as it was felt to be unfair to others and (at the same time) was seen as patronising to members of disadvantaged groups. Similarly, there was no support for quotas.

11.2 Role Of Legislation In Shaping Perceptions

Whilst line managers did not see "compliance" as a particularly important argument for change, there is no doubt that legislation sets an important context.

There was a real sense of a hierarchy of issues when discussing "equal opportunities". Line managers thought first about race and gender - areas where there has been legislation for the longest - and only then about disability (where new legislation has been introduced only recently to replace increasingly ineffective earlier statutes.) Age, religion and sexuality did get discussed (particularly when line managers were thinking more broadly than about "equal opportunities") but they were mentioned by a few, not by the majority.

The fact that this hierarchy mirrors the legal situation may tell us something about the role of legislation in raising awareness and shaping perceptions.

11.3 Human Rights Commission

The Government made clear its commitment to the protection of basic human rights by the introduction of its Human Rights Bill into the House of Lords on 23 October 1997 (expected to become law early in 1998.) When passed, the Act will give people easier access to their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights by

allowing them to enforce those rights against public authorities directly in the UK courts.

It will not cover employee rights to non-discrimination, although we believe from our research that many will expect it to.

As far as this research is concerned, it is significant that line managers instinctively supported the notion of a Human Rights Commission - which is highly consistent with their preference for an "inclusive" approach.

11.4 Provision Of Information & Advice

As we have argued in the previous section of this report, there is a key role for the existing Commissions in providing information and advice.

However, one of the difficulties about this area is that these same bodies have regulatory and communication responsibilities.

Nonetheless, even under present arrangements, there is scope for the existing Commissions to improve their provision of information and advice in the light of our findings.

It may well be that any future repositioning, if associated with a Human Rights Commission, would provide both an opportunity to stress the "inclusive" philosophy of the organisation and to separate more clearly its regulatory from its promotional and consultancy roles in the minds of people outside of it. This may be a particularly powerful way of increasing credibility.

12.0 DEVISING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The purpose of this Section is to use the key findings to provide employers, Commissions and campaigning organisations with a step-by-step tool that they could use to review their existing communication strategies.

1. **Review coverage of line managers** - look at existing communications and see how much is explicitly aimed at line managers? Is this appropriate given the important roles line managers have? Is what there is in every-day language? Does it enable interaction?
2. **Ask line managers what they think** - in our experience, line managers were very happy to offer their views and we believe that what they had to say was quite different from the specialists involved in their organisations. Indeed, it would be possible to have a line manager involved in reviewing and developing a communication strategy.
3. **Work up an overall communication strategy** - clearly words on paper (brochures or memos) are an important element of the strategy but only one part. It was interesting that line managers were more positive than organisations about the use of posters. Moreover, finding ways to involve line managers is one of the keys - videos, team talks and training sessions seem likely to be most influential. In addition, the developing IT tools - intranets and CD Roms - certainly represent an important (and perhaps increasingly important) element of a communication strategy.
3. **Clearly, there will also be good and bad times to mount a campaign** and there will be topical issues that are best avoided, and others where a tie in is very helpful. All this needs taking into account in a communication strategy.
4. **Detailed work on communication content** - ensure the philosophy is explicitly "inclusive", advance arguments that reinforce this, and are business-related, positive and straight-forward. Use the glossary in this report to review any particular words or phrases.
5. **Work on leadership** - clearly this needs to be an integral part of any employer's communication strategy. It may also be an area where Commissions and campaigning organisations can give some more (and welcome) advice.

APPENDICES:-

- Appendix 1:** Detailed Methodology
- Appendix 2:** Participating Organisation's Questionnaires
- Appendix 3:** Line Manager Questionnaires
- Appendix 4:** General Arguments: Line Manager's Views
- Appendix 5:** Disability – Specific Arguments:
Line Manager's Views
- Appendix 6:** Glossary

APPENDIX 1 DETAILED METHODOLOGY

This was primarily an exercise in qualitative research - in other words, it involved exploring people's views in focus groups and one-to-one discussions.

The outcomes from this work are recorded in Appendices 4, 5 and 6.

In addition, this was supported by some basic quantitative research. A line manager questionnaire was devised and focus group participants, and people involved in 1:1 discussions, were asked to complete a form. The results from this work are to be found in Appendix 3.

The rationale for using a questionnaire to support the qualitative work was to ensure that we had a reaction from each line manager to each argument (due to time pressures, discussions in the focus groups did not cover every argument.) In addition, the questionnaire provided an opportunity to explore, and compare, reactions from line managers to some specific issues - for instance, preferred communication mechanisms and proposals for action.

It is also worth pointing out that the research itself was divided into 2 phases. The first, or pilot, phase took place in April and May 1997. This involved running 4 focus groups and 2 days worth of 1:1 discussions. The second phase took place in June, July and August and involved a further 4 discussion groups and 3 days of 1:1 discussions.

As a result of the pilot phase, changes were made to the focus group discussion guide and the questionnaire. For instance, both now specifically explored issues around disability. The reason for this was that disability had not proved a "top of the mind" issue for line managers and the research was an opportunity to see whether line managers responded differently on disability-related arguments.

In addition, the questionnaire for the second phase also asked managers to rate particular actions and to indicate the extent to which they were aware of different campaigning organisations. These issues were added in order to help explore some of the potential implications of the research for employers, government and campaigning organisations.

Also, as a result of the work in the pilot phase, a decision was made by the Steering Group to focus exclusively on first-line line managers (rather than extend it to include front line workers) and to organise focus groups for specific organisations rather than to try to get cross-company groups together.

Participating Organisations

All the participating organisations are members of the Employers' Forum on Disability - and the initial approach to the organisations was in the form of a letter from EFD's CEO Susan Scott-Parker.

It was ensured that the organisations approached were from a wide range of industrial sectors and were perceived to be at different stages of their approach to equality and diversity.

A representative from each participating organisation completed a questionnaire to show the current position on their equality/diversity policy and its communication within the organisation. The results of this are to be found in Appendix 2.

Identifying Arguments To Be Discussed

Many organisations kindly provided copies of brochures, policies, in-house magazines and videos - all of which had been used to try to get the message across to line managers about equal opportunities. In addition, this material was supplemented by brochures from the EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission) the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) EFA (Employers' Forum on Age), and EFD (Employers' Forum on Disability) itself.

Schneider-Ross undertook a trawl of all this material in order to identify the arguments being used. As part of the consolidation of all this, the various arguments that were being used were categorised into one of the following 5 areas:- employment-related, customer related, reputation based, legal/compliance based and social/rights based.

Arguments were then chosen because they were particularly commonly used, or because they were particularly illustrative of their category. This process arrived at the list of 16 arguments used in the research.

These arguments were listed in the questionnaires and inspired the focus group and one-to-one discussions.

Line Managers

Line managers were defined as the first layer of management who had other people reporting to them (this could be a few as one person - although most of the people taking part had several people reporting to them).

Organisations were discouraged from nominating people who worked in personnel and therefore might have strong and particular, knowledge about this topic.

They were drawn from a wide range of departments - including for instance operations, projects, customer service, IT, accounts and finance.

Some steps were taken (eg a focus group for just male or female managers) to ensure that the sample was both relatively diverse (in order to see whether there

were any difference of views related, for instance, to gender or ethnic origin) and yet also broadly consistent with the actual representation of line managers in the UK.

Focus Groups

8 Focus Group discussions were run by Jessica Rose of Conway Smith Rose - 4 in Phase 1 (April & May) and 4 in Phase 2 (July & August).

The majority of the groups were two and a half hours in length and involved between 6 and 13 people (with an average of 8 per session).

A discussion guide was produced for the focus groups and covered: introduction, exploring key concepts, exploring the arguments and then rating the arguments. At the end of each discussion group participants completed a questionnaire.

The groups were made up as follows:

Organisation(s)	Participants	Location
Royal Mail	Mix of male & female managers (8)	Birmingham
BP	Male managers (10)	Grangemouth
Mix - BT, Royal Mail, Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd, British Steel plc	Admin, secretarial workers (11)	London
Slaughter and May	Mix of male & female managers (6)	London
Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd	Female managers (10)	London
DfEE	Mix of male & female managers (7)	Sheffield
Boots the Chemists	Male managers (6)	Nottingham
BT	Male managers (9)	Hemel Hempstead

One To One Discussions

23 individual discussions were held, involving employees from : McDonald's Restaurants Ltd, The Co-operative Bank, Slaughter and May, Royal Mail, and Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd.

These discussions were designed to complement the focus group discussions - for some organisations it proved easier for them to organise interviews rather than focus groups.

Each discussion lasted approximately an hour and worked through the line manager questionnaire. The discussions were conducted by Schneider~Ross consultants - Sandra Sanglin-Grant, Rachael Ross and Robin Schneider.

**Communications Research:
CONSOLIDATED SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE
TEN PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS**

Perceptions Of Progress On Equality & Diversity

1. Please indicate which of the following descriptions best fits the prioritisation of equality (and/or diversity) within your organisation by ticking the relevant box:	
This has consistently been a high priority for us over a number of years	[5]
Over the last few years we have started to make this more of a priority	[5]
This is not yet a priority within the organisation	[0]

2. How satisfied are you with progress made within your organisation with regard to equality and diversity issues			
Highly satisfied	[0]	Quite satisfied	[7]
Not very satisfied	[3]	Not at all satisfied	[0]

3. To what extent do you believe that your organisation has the appropriate policies and procedures in place in order to support equal opportunities and diversity?			
Completely	[1]	To a large extent	[6]
To a limited	[3]	Hardly at all	[0]

4. To what extent do you believe the organisational culture (ie prevailing attitudes and behaviours) need to change in your organisation for equal opportunities and diversity to flourish?			
Completely	[1]	To a large extent	[7]
To a limited extent	[2]	Hardly at all	[0]
Don't know	[0]		

5. In general, what level of line management "ownership" do you perceive in your organisation currently?			
High	[0]	Quite high	[1]
Not very high	[9]	Not at all high	[0]

Positioning Of Equality & Diversity

6. Please indicate which label(s) you tend to use to describe your policies and programmes in this field:			
Equal opportunities	[6]	Diversity	[1]
Both terms linked together	[2]	Both terms used separately	[1]
Other terms	[0]	Which? (please supply details)	

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

7. In general, how are you seeking to position your work on equality and diversity? Please rate the following factors using this scale:				
<i>0: "Something we don't emphasise"</i>				
<i>1: For "subsidiary theme"</i>				
<i>2: For "main theme"</i>				
	0	1	2	RATING
An issue of organisational effectiveness	1	2	7	16
About legislation & compliance	1	6	3	12
An issue of competitive advantage	4	1	5	11
An ethical issue	3	4	3	10
A social issue	3	4	3	10

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

8. Please rate the following arguments for equality and diversity using this scale:				
<i>0: This is an argument we have not and do not plan to use.</i>				
<i>1: This is an argument we haven't explicitly used but will/might in the future</i>				
<i>2: This is explicitly part of our communications to line managers and/or front line workers</i>				
ARGUMENT	0	1	2	RATING
(a) "Best person for the job"	0	1	9	19
(c) "People from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions"	0	3	7	17
(k) "Taking our corporate responsibility seriously"	0	3	7	17
(b) "Tapping into new sources of talent"	1	3	6	15
(f) "An open workforce culture based on trust and mutual respect"	1	3	6	15
(i) "A diverse organisation is better able to sell to a diverse world"	1	3	6	15
(j) "Our workforce should reflect the community we serve"	1	3	6	15
(l) "Becoming an employer of choice"	1	3	6	15
(m) "Discrimination does not pay, creates bad publicity and damages the image of the organisation concerned"	1	3	6	15
(d) "Improving staff motivation"	2	3	5	13
(h) "Out of every four customers, one is disabled or has a disabled person in their immediate circle"	2	3	5	13
(n) "People have rights in the workplace"	2	4	4	12
(g) "Age discrimination leads to loss of experience, skills, corporate memory and empathy with your customers"	1	7	2	11
(o) "We believe that this is a moral issue - it's the right thing to do"	3	5	2	9
(p) "A fair and just society"	4	3	3	9
(e) "Reduce staff turnover and absence rates"	4	4	2	8

Communication Mechanisms

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

9. Please rate the following mechanisms for communicating your policy regarding equality and diversity to line managers and front-line workers using this scale:				
<i>0: We have not tried this and do not plan to</i>				
<i>1: We will/might try this</i>				
<i>2: We have tried this</i>				
ACTION	0	1	2	RATING
(j) Workshops/training courses for managers	0	0	10	20
(d) Management memos	1	1	8	17
(f) Articles in in-house newspaper	1	1	8	17
(h) Team talks	0	3	7	17
(i) Workshops/training courses for employees	0	3	7	17
(e) E-Mail notes	2	1	7	15
(g) In-house video	1	4	5	14
(b) Short leaflets	1	4	5	14
(k) Senior management behaviours	1	4	5	14
(c) Specific brochures	2	3	5	13
(a) Posters on notice boards	3	2	5	12
(l) Management behaviours at all levels	1	6	3	12

APPENDIX 3

Communications Research: CONSOLIDATED SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR LINE MANAGERS

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

1. Please rate each of these arguments for pursuing equality and diversity using the following ratings:					
<i>0 Points:</i>		<i>This argument has no impact on me</i>			
<i>1 Point:</i>		<i>I find this argument quite persuasive</i>			
<i>2 Points:</i>		<i>I find this argument very persuasive</i>			
	ARGUMENT	0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	RATING
(c)	"People from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions"	8	19	63	145
(n)	"People have rights in the workplace"	15	28	47	122
(g)	"Age discrimination leads to loss of experience, skills, corporate memory and empathy with your customers"	13	42	35	112
(a)	"Best person for the job"	21	27	42	111
(f)	"An open workforce culture based on trust and mutual respect"	17	36	37	110
(m)	"Discrimination does not pay, creates bad publicity and damages the image of the organisation concerned"	16	37	36	109
(j)	"Our workforce should reflect the community we serve"	20	27	40	107
(o)	"We believe that this is a moral issue - it's the right thing to do"	21	36	32	100
(p)	"A fair and just society"	23	39	28	95
(i)	"A diverse organisation is better able to sell to a diverse world"	30	27	33	93
(b)	"Tapping into new sources of talent"	28	34	28	90
(d)	"Improving staff motivation"	24	47	19	85
(h)	"Out of every four customers, one is disabled or has a disabled person in their immediate circle"	32	37	21	79
(k)	"Taking our corporate responsibility seriously"	36	30	23	76
(e)	"Reduce staff turnover and absence rates"	43	28	19	66
(l)	"Becoming an employer of choice"	41	34	15	64

No Responses - (j) = 3, (k) = 1, (m) = 1 and (o) = 1

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

2. The following is a list of actions that organisations could take in order to communicate their policy regarding equality and diversity. Please rate each, using the following ratings:
0 Points: This argument has no impact on me
1 Point I find this argument quite persuasive
2 Points: I find this argument very persuasive

ARGUMENT	0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	RATING
(j) Senior management behaviours	7	26	57	140
(h) Team talks	9	37	44	125
(d) Management memos	13	35	42	119
(a) Posters on notice boards	17	29	44	117
(k) Own boss' behaviours	13	40	37	114
(g) In-house video	17	39	34	107
(i) Workshops/training courses	23	29	38	105
(c) Specific brochures	28	45	17	79
(f) Articles in in-house newspaper	37	35	18	71
(b) Short leaflets	38	42	10	62
(e) E-Mail notes	57	28	5	38

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

3. The following are actions that could be taken to promote equality and diversity at work. As a manager, please indicate your degree of support for each, using the following ratings: <i>0 Points: I would not support this</i> <i>1 Point: I might support this</i> <i>2 Points: I would strongly support this</i>				
ACTION	0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	RATING
(f) Employers asking employees what they think - using surveys and focus group discussions	2	13	31	75
(d) Directors/senior managers getting involved with and lending their weight to relevant external campaigns	4	16	26	68
(c) Employers financially supporting relevant external charities and campaigns	3	20	23	66
(k) The Government setting up an advice line on all aspects of the Disability Discrimination Act - ie including all employment and customer service dimensions	2	25	19	63
(b) Employers encouraging managers to take on students for a few weeks in the summer from diverse backgrounds - e.g. ethnic minorities, people with disabilities	8	15	23	61
(l) The Government bringing all the Commissions under one umbrella organisation - eg a Human Rights Commission	5	21	20	61
(e) Employers instituting annual reports on equal opportunities and diversity and publishing the results	6	20	20	60
(g) The Board/top management dedicating a day-out to exploring equality and diversity	7	18	21	60
(j) Employers investing in an active campaign to recruit more women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities	11	18	17	52
(m) The Government setting up a new Commission regarding disability discrimination	12	28	6	40
(a) Employers linking managers' pay partly to their performance on equality/diversity issues	14	25	7	39
(n) The Government setting up a new Commission regarding age discrimination	16	22	8	38
(i) Employers setting numerical goals for numbers of women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities recruited	23	16	7	30
(h) Employers setting numerical goals for numbers of women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities in management positions	26	14	6	26

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

4. Please rate each of these arguments specifically related to disability using the following ratings:				
<i>0 Points: This argument has no impact on me</i>				
<i>1 Point I find this argument quite persuasive</i>				
<i>2 Points: I find this argument very persuasive</i>				
ARGUMENT	0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	RATING
(a) "Disabled people have the same right to work as anyone else"	1	8	37	82
(d) "Discriminating on the basis of disability is the same as discriminating on the basis of someone's gender or ethnic origin"	2	14	30	74
(j) "It is worth going to extra trouble to accommodate disabled people's needs so that they can work there"	4	13	29	71
(g) "We ought to retain the skills of employees who become disabled rather than lose them to retirement through ill health"	4	18	24	66
(h) "Having employees with disabilities will help us to understand customers with disabilities better"	5	25	16	57
(k) "Employing people with disabilities is part of our commitment to the community"	12	26	8	42
(i) "We have to comply with the legislation"	20	16	10	36
(f) "People with disabilities are good at solving problems as a result of dealing with their daily lives"	24	13	9	31
(c) "People with disabilities are more loyal and likely to stay longer than other employees"	24	17	5	27
(b) "Getting more people with disabilities into work will reduce the burden on the tax payer"	30	14	2	18
(e) "People with disabilities deserve to be given preferential treatment"	33	9	4	17

The following results are ranked in order of rating calculated by x0 for 0 points, x1 for 1 point and x2 for 2 points.

5. The following are all campaigns or organisations concerned with equality and diversity at work. Please identify which you have heard of by indicating Yes (Y) or No (N) in the first column. For those that you have heard of, please score them using the following ratings in the second column: <i>0 Points: I would not be impressed by their views</i> <i>1 Points: I might take note of their views</i> <i>2 Points: I have a lot of respect for their views</i>						
ORGANISATION	Y	N	0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	RATING
(a) The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)	44	2	2	20	23	66
(b) The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)	40	6	4	24	16	56
(i) The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)	43	3	4	28	12	52
(k) The Confederation of British Industry (CBI)	38	8	4	22	15	52
(m) The TUC	45	1	13	17	16	49
(c) The National Disability Council	22	24	4	24	10	44
(j) Institute of Personnel & Development (IPD)	31	15	8	24	8	40
(n) Business in the Community (BITC)	32	14	7	29	5	39
(l) Institute of Directors (IOD)	34	12	10	24	7	38
(d) Opportunity 2000	27	19	8	22	5	32
(f) The Employers Forum on Disability (EFD)	16	30	4	23	4	31
(o) National Advisory Council for Employment for People with Disabilities (NACEPD)	12	34	8	16	7	30
(g) The Employers Forum on Age (EFA)	7	39	7	18	5	28
(h) Stonewall	17	29	16	13	4	21
(e) Race for Opportunity (RFO)	5	41	10	14	3	20

APPENDIX 4 GENERAL ARGUMENTS: LINE MANAGERS' VIEWS

Below is a rank-order list of the specific arguments we tested with line managers - with the most popular at the top (and the least at the bottom). The rank order is determined by the line managers' response to the questionnaire, and the quotations are from focus group and one-to-one discussions. For each argument, we have tried to indicate why the managers reacted as they did and what they actually understood by the phrases.

1. People From Different Backgrounds Can Bring Fresh Ideas And Perceptions

This was easily the popular argument amongst line managers - in their questionnaire returns, 70% found it "very persuasive" and 21% "quite". It was also one of the few arguments to generate real enthusiasm: "Yes, I like that one, I think it's really good" "put like that it sounds exciting" "That probably matches people's experiences as well...if you've got a whole range of different people in to discuss something I could just imagine the sort of ideas that would be flowing from that." Interestingly, people read into it a highly inclusive (and often personal) message: "It accepts that you can have a working class background but still have perceptions that are as good as someone from a better background, you can still be positive and bring something good into the company. That's very positive".

2. People Have Rights In The Workplace

This was rated highly on the questionnaires (52% finding it "very persuasive" and 31% "quite") - in the main, because the language is particularly straight forward and seems to capture a fairly common sense point "It reminds people that they have obligations to meet and stops those obligations being breached." (additional quote) On the other hand, it didn't generate universal support, with some managers finding it too confrontational: "It sounds very militant and as if it's dealing with a problem, it's not very positive".

3. Age Discrimination Leads To Loss Of Experience, Skills, Corporate Memory And Empathy With Your Customers

Most people agreed with this statement - with 39% finding it "very persuasive" and 47% "quite". Although there were negative reactions to jargon (eg "corporate memory") most people liked the focus - and age, of course, is very "inclusive" because it is relevant to everyone - and also liked was the fact that there were clear reasons why not to discriminate.

4. Best Person For The Job

This was a highly familiar phrase - indeed, one that managers often used themselves when talking about these issues. "That's what we always try to get". It was well supported - 47% finding it "very persuasive" and 30% "quite". But managers recognised that the definition of "best" could be highly subjective. In particular, people felt that there was a link with "best man for the job" and therefore "To me it gives a more masculine image".

5. An Open Workforce Culture Based On Trust And Mutual Respect

Well supported by many - 41% rating it "very persuasive" and 40% "quite" - although for some it was considered unrealistic, and rather the sort of thing managers expected to hear in "mission statements." For some line managers on first hearing, it was not self-evident that there was any link with, for instance, equal opportunities.

6. Discrimination Does Not Pay, Creates Bad Publicity And Damages The Image Of The Organisation Concerned

This worked for many managers - 40% rating it "very persuasive" and 41% "quite". People liked the fact that it gave a concrete reason "why" and was seen as very direct. "It is very direct, it spells out the consequences of a particular course of action" - although for some people this was not the "right" reason: "It's just doing it for the image, not because you really believe in it". Interestingly, in talking about it, some managers recognised that a lot of discrimination was actually relatively subtle and not the sort of thing that would end up in court: "Most discrimination is just below the surface, it's not enough to be obvious"

7. Our Workforce Should Reflect The Community We Serve

This was strongly supported where managers worked in organisations with a direct interface with the public. In total - 44% rated it "very persuasive" and 30% "quite". For those who were not supportive, they disliked the notion that this might lead to "positive discrimination which, in itself, is discrimination no matter how you look at it".

8. We Believe This Is A Moral Issue - It's The Right Thing To Do

Managers disliked the use of the term "moral" (qv glossary) and it seemed to absolve the organisation of responsibility by focusing on the personal. "It's about you personally not about work". On the other hand, they liked "it's the right thing to do" - mainly for its simple language. 36% rated this argument (the two clauses linked together) "very persuasive" and 40% "quite".

9. A Fair And Just Society

Whilst this was an aspiring ideal, something that politicians would say, it was not particularly strongly associated with equal opportunities. 31% felt it was "very persuasive" but almost as many (26%) felt it would have "no impact". "Disneyland, Never Never Land. It doesn't get over a serious message."

10. A Diverse Organisation Is Better Able To Sell To A Diverse World

This was inspiring and motivating to some: "Diverse organisation means being flexible, able to go with changing trends, fashion around the world. They're dynamic because they take a few chances". For others the term "diverse" was perceived as jargon and a turn-off : "It smacks of a mission statement". Particularly where diversity is linked with customers, there is a danger of potential confusion with "diversification" and to do with company products rather than people. Again, almost

as many managers felt it would have "no impact" on them as felt it was "very persuasive" (33% v. 37%).

11. Tapping Into New Sources Of Talent

For some this worked - suggesting that there were pools of talented people not being utilised. But for many there was a strong implication of getting rid of "the old guard and bring in loads of fresh people". It is not "inclusive" because it talks about other people and managers would have felt much more comfortable with the notion of "developing" everyone. There were also specific comments that "tapping into" felt like it was jargon and "talent" "makes me think more of going out on a Friday night to pull". The same percentage of managers (31%) felt this was "very persuasive" as those who felt it would have "no impact".

Not surprisingly, therefore, where we had time to explore different wording, managers in focus groups much preferred "Using everyone's talents fully".

The crucial factor here being the greater "inclusivity": "Well, that's better because it's talking about me as well, not just black people or the disabled".

12. Improving Staff Motivation

In isolation, this was not seen as specifically relevant to equal opportunities and it was also seen as a company, rather an individual, benefit. "It's well worn" "It seems to go along with that one that talks about cutting down on staff and turnover and absences".

13. Out Of Every Four Customers, One Is Disabled Or Has A Disabled Person In Their Immediate Circle

For some this had a positive impact - making people think that disability is an issue for more people than they might have thought - and they liked the highlighting of the business opportunity. "That's interesting. I didn't know that." For others it actually provoked a challenging reaction: "I can't believe that figure...I don't know anyone who is disabled". This was closely related to the cynicism that people felt in general about the use of statistics: "I think it loses its impact for me, you might as well have said '9 out of 10 prefer Whiskas'".

14. Taking Our Corporate Responsibility Seriously

This statement lacked meaning to many and people were uncomfortable with the "heavy" or "oppressive" feel of language like "responsibility" "seriously" and "corporate". "It's not talking to you. It's management, corporate."

15. Reduce Staff Turnover And Absence Rates

Most people did not see any immediate link here with equal opportunities although there was a feeling that this might be helpful with some audiences: "It's a trigger to get managers to look at why there are high absence rates". But this argument was not well liked and 48% (the highest percentage) felt it would have "no impact" on them.

16. Becoming An Employer Of Choice

This statement was familiar to a few, but was very much seen as "jargon". To others it was relatively meaningless and/or confusing: "It's badly worded. Does it mean the employer chooses us or that we choose the employer?" With discussion, people could work out what it meant, but there was no great enthusiasm for this message.

APPENDIX 5 DISABILITY-SPECIFIC ARGUMENTS: LINE MANAGERS' VIEWS

In Phase 2 of this research we decided to include some specific arguments relating to disability. As with the more general arguments, the disability-specific arguments are listed below in rank order. Excluded from this list is the statement concerning "one in four customers" that was included with the more general arguments.

1. Disabled People Have The Same Right To Work As Anyone Else

In their questionnaires line managers rated this argument highest with 80% rating it "very persuasive". They liked the every day language and the simple straight-forwardness of the message. "It needs to be said because society tends to forget about disabled people". It worked at confronting people's perceptions head on. On the other hand, when they first heard the argument they were quick to follow up with "In an ideal world, yes. But there are obviously jobs that..." and there would follow a stream of assumptions about people with disabilities. Hand in hand with this argument, therefore, there is a need to give people an experience where they can challenge their own preconceptions regarding disability.

In some focus groups the more general phrase "the right to work/to contribute" was explored. This was perceived to refer to unemployment in general, with preference being given to the wording regarding "contribution" because this was also perceived to extend to existing employees.

2. Discriminating On The Basis Of Disability Is The Same As Discriminating On The Basis Of Someone's Gender Or Ethnic Origin

This was also highly rated by managers in their questionnaires - with very few disagreeing and 65% finding it "very persuasive". As one said: "discrimination is discrimination". On the other hand, it "flushed out" a lot of line manager perceptions of how disability differs from other traditional areas of discrimination: "If you have a job for a car mechanic, you can't employ someone in a wheelchair as they won't be able to get in or under the car. If they're female or black it doesn't matter, so disability is different."

3. It Is Worth Going To Extra Trouble To Accommodate Disabled People's Needs So That They Can Work There

There was support for this in concept - with 63% finding it "very persuasive". Essentially, this was seen to be about providing the "right facilities" and something organisations (particularly large ones) would be expected to do. This was not seen as preferential treatment. Indeed, managers were quick to point out that the term "trouble" was considered inappropriate and discouraging: "It's like it's saying people are trouble".

4. We Ought To Retain The Skills Of Employees Who Become Disabled Rather Than Lose Them To Retirement Through Ill Health

This was broad support from managers for this - with 52% finding it very persuasive and 39% "quite persuasive". On the other hand, they didn't appear to know of

employees who had been encouraged to retire on medical grounds - so they did not really perceive this as a problem.

5. Having Employees With Disabilities Will Help Us To Understand Customers With Disabilities Better

There was some, but not total, support for this argument. One of the reasons this was not liked so much was because it has an implicit suggestion that people without disabilities cannot understand those who do have. "It says the only way you can understand disabled people and their needs is to have a disabled person there and that's not true."

6. Employing People With Disabilities Is Part Of Our Commitment To The Community

This wasn't liked so much by managers because it seemed to smack of quota filling and PR speak. "That says X percent to me". Moreover, it was seen as patronising and diverting attention from the real issue which was seen to be appointing on merit. "It gives the impression that you're doing it because you have to rather than because you want to".

7. We Have To Comply With The Legislation

Whilst most managers agreed that this argument might lead to action being taken, many personally claimed (43%) that it would have "no impact on me". "It's very grudgingly, only doing it because we have to".

8. People With Disabilities Are Good At Solving Problems As A Result Of Dealing With Their Daily Lives

For some this presented an interesting perspective "It's a positive thing, their life skills" and could be personalised: "David Blunkett...doesn't read a lot but he has got a phenomenal memory.. and you can't put one over on him". But for many others it was deemed to be patronising - both to people with disabilities and those without. "Everyone has to solve problems in their lives at some point".

9. People With Disabilities Are More Loyal And Likely To Stay Longer Than Other Employees

This argument was lowly rated and provoked quite an emotional discussion in focus groups. Line managers felt the statement might well be true but that it reflected the prejudice that people with disabilities were likely to face in the labour market. "It could also say that people with disabilities are more "grateful" for their jobs".

10. Getting More People With Disabilities Into Work Will Reduce The Burden On The Tax Payer

Whilst some people could see that there might be financial savings, the argument was strongly rejected, with most people feeling that this was a distasteful argument: "I don't like this because it's apportioning blame to people who are basically hard strapped".

11. People With Disabilities Deserve To Be Given Preferential Treatment

Whilst a few people could support this, this argument was overwhelmingly rejected and rated lowest by line managers. This was in line with their feelings across all areas of "equal opportunity" that merit was the over-riding factor. "It's positive discrimination, which is wrong if they're not the best person for the job".

APPENDIX 6 GLOSSARY

The following are words or phrases that were used in the various arguments and we have attempted here to capture what line managers actually understood by each term.

The following words or phrases have been included in the glossary: background, caring employer, discrimination, diversity, equal opportunities, equality, equity, ethical, family friendly, fair play, fair treatment, flexible working, inclusive approach, institutional discrimination, moral, prejudice, rights, social justice, social responsibility, workforce.

Background	Used in statements such as "people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions". The term was often seen by line managers as having class associations - and, perhaps as part of that, education.
Caring Employer	A familiar term, but one which evoked extremely high levels of cynicism. Terms such as these tend to suggest that the company is actually altruistic, whereas line managers tended to take a more "robust" view. "It's just lip service to make you feel good and you know they're lying." "I laughed because I don't think there are too many caring employers...At the end of the day they are interested in sales and keeping shareholders happy."
Discrimination	This was a familiar but negative term, often associated with newspaper coverage. It had lost any of its original positive associations regarding the skill of making distinctions (ie discriminating). "Discrimination is a vindictive word." "It's a bad word because if someone uses the word something negative has happened."
Diversity	The term was much less familiar than equal opportunities. To line managers it conveys a sense of width and choice. "I think it is recognising the differences between things". Once raised in the context of equal opportunities, the term was interpreted as meaning "lots of different types of people" which was an exciting concept to many. However, the term is seen as jargon and/or as currently fashionable, and this devalues it: "One of those words that's banded around just now, it won't be long before it's old hat".

Equal Opportunities	Familiar to everyone, often found in formal documents, interpreted as "everyone having a fair chance". To this extent, it was seen as a positive term, although many line managers felt it also could have connotations of "political correctness" and preferential treatment: "It is usually to do with minorities" "It is a well-known phrase. It has loads of things behind it" and therefore it made them "suspicious". It also has clear associations with the law: "It is something imposed on you from outside".
Equality	This too was familiar and generally considered to be positive in that it means "everyone being treated the same". It also has associations outside of the workplace and is recognised as a political term.
Equity	Not seen to be relevant to equal opportunities, but linked to financial issues.
Ethical	Was not seen as immediately relevant to the workplace, but more to do with the medical world and, in general, was seen as "a bit lofty".
Family Friendly	Not universally familiar, but evoked high level of cynicism from some - particularly where organisations linked the phrase to "employer" and seemed to have self awarded themselves this distinction. "A lot of companies want people to work part time so they call it being "family friendly." "It's like mothers who want to come back to work. They are grateful for a job and they'll accept any wage." To some, more likely to be women, it was a more positive term. One of the benefits of the term "family friendly" itself is that it does at least include men.
Fair Play	Understood well, but women, in particular, felt it excluding because it is a sporting phrase "makes me think of sweaty men and team games".
Fair Treatment	Not as familiar as "equal opportunities" but uses recognisably every-day language. Strongly associated with a basic sense of justice and "common decency". "It's self explanatory." "Everyone wants to be treated fairly."
Flexible Working	Fairly familiar term, but it evoked high levels of cynicism. "It means working when it is good for your company .. so you're the one having to be flexible."

Inclusive Approach	Not a familiar phrase and many people felt it smacked of jargon. Could be rationalised by some managers who saw it as "a company that encourages different types of people to work there". Also some associations with a very involving management style: "It makes me think they're actually trying to involve everyone in decision making". The notion of personal inclusion, and of not excluding people, was very important to managers but it was not best described by this term.
Institutional Discrimination	Both "institutional" and "discrimination" were perceived as being very negative, alienating words - and the term itself lacked meaning. Some could work round to "a company recruiting the same type of people" but for others "I don't really know what that means".
Moral	People associated this with personal morality and were concerned that their organisations might bother with this - they did not see business choices as being more or less moral. "I think your moral views are a personal thing".
Prejudice	Familiar, every-day language. "It's a bad thing but it's a good word for describing it." More often associated with race than sex or disability "I first thought of racism". If managers themselves raised "prejudice" it was most likely to be in a defensive way ("we're not prejudiced".)
Rights	Out of context this word is associated with unions, people making demands, confrontation and disagreement. "It's aggressive and confrontational. It has a "them and us" feeling." On the other hand, the word comes up in a number of statements that line managers favoured and this seems to be more a matter of common sense and doing what was "right" by others. "Your staff under you, they need respect and fair treatment" "People have the right not to be harassed at work". .
Social Justice	Lacked familiarity and lacking in meaning "sounds like a lynch mob". Also was seen as something with wide (and particularly political) ramifications.
Social Responsibility	The term clearly refers beyond the realm of "work" and was felt to be political. In addition, the word "responsibility" was seen negatively by some "something you have to do. I think it's very bossy". For others it did have more positive connotations "It might mean putting something back into the community, not just taking out all the time".
Workforce	Use of this term was seen by managers to imply a very traditional relationship between an organisation and its employees and/or a very industrial setting.

About Schneider~Ross

Schneider~Ross is a team of specialist consultants, who advise organisations on developing equality systems and a diversity culture. We advise clients in the UK and internationally across all aspects of equal opportunities including race, gender and disability.

Our work focuses into three areas :

- ***advising boards on their vision, strategy and leadership***
- ***helping organisations measure progress***
- ***facilitating long-term cultural and systemic change***

The consultancy was established in 1989 by partners Rachael Ross and Robin Schneider, co-authors of "From Equality and Diversity". Our full team of consultants offers wide ranging equal opportunities and organisational experience from a variety of backgrounds. Our clients include BP, Mobil, Royal Mail and Texaco.

In addition to client specific work, Schneider~Ross also advises cross-company organisations and campaigns, such as the Employers' Forum on Disability and Runnymede Trust.