

Employable Me Option Information

Original Format

3 X 60' for BBC2. Production Company Optomen Television

Format Description Series 1

It's hard enough finding a job nowadays, but when you have a disability it can be almost impossible...especially when those disabilities are 'hidden'.

If you have a neuro-difference, a learning difficulty or a mental health disorder finding work can be almost impossible. People with Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, Tourette's, Dyspraxia and a host of other conditions affecting the brain are less likely to be employed than any other disability group. The employment rate for people with autism in Britain, for example, is only 15%, which means a huge proportion of the country's workforce – and their talent - is wasted.

This uplifting, warm, and insightful series draws on science to uncover those hidden skills and to match some of Britain's most extraordinary jobseekers to roles which can finally harness their strengths.

At the series' heart is a radical new emerging idea in science: that neurological conditions shouldn't always be looked at in negative terms. Many conditions may mask talents and skills that employers would find invaluable if they only took time to discover them, or took a more inclusive approach to people with neurological disabilities.

Just because your brain might be affected negatively in one area, it doesn't mean that it isn't working normally in other areas, or even enhanced in other ways. Enhancement in other areas might be because of the condition – due to the way that their brain is wired, it may be because the brain has been forced to compensate for deficits. It may be that due to a disability, individuals have been forced to explore other aspects of their skillset.

Take people with Asperger Syndrome (an autism spectrum condition) – as they often benefit from a meticulous attention to detail, excellent memory for facts and figures, and preternatural ability to understand patterns and systems, they'd be exceptional in information technology or as software testers, forensic specialists or archivists.

This series is about finding work when no one will give you a chance. What if instead of seeing only problems, potential bosses had the opportunity to see the skills and benefits that come with hiring people who think differently? Not just in the dedication, loyalty and enthusiasm that these employees would show, but in the actual measurable skills and qualities that could benefit their business if they gave them a chance.

This series takes you through the ecstatic highs and excruciating lows of the job hunt, of the long journey to discover what you're really good at and the search for someone who will appreciate what you have to give. We're going to meet people who don't need charity or pity – they just need a chance for people to see what they can do, rather than concentrating on what they can't.

Format Structure

Employable Me is a lightly formatted documentary series which should feel authentic and organically motivated.

Each episode intercuts between 2 contributor stories.

Every story starts at point A: Contributor can't get a job because of their perceived disability. They are desperate for help. We see how the problems affect their daily life. The viewer should think 'this person can never get a job!'

Every story ends at point C: Contributor either has a job offer or a positive appraisal/feedback from an employer directly relating to their skills.

Getting from point A to point C will involve 2-3 interventions (point B):

1. Meet expert in their condition to uncover hidden strengths and to help them focus on what they can do, rather than on what they can't. Find out about the strengths associated with their condition, not just the challenges.

And / Or:

2. Meet recruitment specialist to help them see how, in the right job context, traits that have traditionally been seen as weaknesses could be assets.

Followed by:

3. An opportunity to shine / prove their potential. Either in an interview or an 'on the job' interview. i.e. a 'work trial' or 'work experience'.

There is usually a point of disappointment or failure before or during the opportunity to shine – this could be a failed interview or a work trial where the individual can't overcome the challenges posed by the condition. This provides important twists and turns in the journeys which make for more interesting – and realistic – narratives. A disappointment or failure is often followed by a morale boost – in the form of a pep talk from a member of the family, a mentor who has the same condition or a specialist.

Some contributors will have less work experience than others and therefore their aspiration may be lower. I.e. for someone who has never done a day's work in their life, to get through one working week, may be a massive achievement and the majority of screen time might be spent on watching them on a week's work experience, culminating in a positive appraisal. While some people may have lots of work experience, so it's getting a real job that is going to make the difference. So the majority of screen time is spent on preparing for the interview with specialist coaching and the interview itself before the ultimate 'job offer' moment.

Format Description Series 2

In series 2 we took a 'pan disability' casting approach and sought individuals with a range of physical disabilities and conditions. Our more diverse cast gave us the opportunity to explore the challenges faced by job-seekers across the whole spectrum of disability. Pan-disability group training is rapidly being recognised as the most effective way of getting disabled people mentally ready for the world of employment and both The Work Foundation and Disability Rights UK back the idea as one of the most effective ways of getting disabled people back to work.

As part of the pan disability training we introduced a job training hub run by our series occupational therapist Nancy Doyle and brought all our job seekers together for training and job matching according to their own specific needs.

The hub enabled our contributors to meet not just the experts, but other jobseekers with different disabilities and challenges, to share their past experiences, learn from each other and offer each other honest advice.

Format Structure Series 2

As with series 1, each episode featured the job search stories of 2 contributors and as part of that journey they would visit our training hub, where with the help of Nancy and a team of experts - and also each other - they will transformed their job prospects.

At the hub each contributor had group-training sessions as well as one on one coaching depending on their need. We also featured a further catch up at the hub later in the process to find out how each contributor was faring.

After visiting the training hub, our contributors went back to their lives and applied what they had learned to their on-going job search.

Casting Information

- Casting team consisting of casting producer and 2 casting assistant producers
- UK casting lasted 18 weeks for 3 shows but could be done in less
- 7 contributors cast for 3 shows to allow for 1 drop out.
- Allow for a period between casting and filming for all psychological/health and background checks to be completed.
- Casting the experts- the leading authorities on Tourette's and Autism in the UK were approached as a starting point
- The Content producer was responsible for finding all the job placements and interviews. Generally we were looking for work trials and job interviews. Companies were very keen to take part after the positive response to the first series.
- Finding the jobs can be time consuming as they need to suit the contributors skill set and be local to them.

Filming

The filming team was comprised of 2 units – each with a shooting Producer/Director and an Assistant Producer. The main camera was a Canon C300 on a shoulder rig and with 2 radio microphones or top microphone. When cross shooting was necessary (for any interviews or appraisal meetings) the second camera we used was a canon 5D.

It took on average 13 filming days spread over approx. 15 weeks to film each contributor's story from start to finish.

The filming team were also heavily involved in finding employment opportunities for the contributors – as they knew so much about the contributors and, because they were often in the right geographical location, they could.

Post Production

Each individual story was rough cut before being paired with another story to form an episode.

It took roughly 3 weeks to rough cut each story.

The stitch and fine cut took approximately 10 days per episode