



A SHOT IN COFFEE

Recruiting people from challenging backgrounds and training them for the specialty coffee industry is a win-win for employers and those who have struggled to find work, says Well Grounded founder Eve Wagg



Eve Wagg first became interested in coffee in 2005 when she was living near Borough Market in London and started going to Monmouth. “I suddenly realised, ‘this is coffee!’” she says. The discovery propelled Wagg on to a new career path. She quit her job of ten years and, in May 2015, set up a three-week pilot with Ozone Coffee Roasters. Together they trained a handful of people from various backgrounds who were interested in the coffee industry but had struggled to find work.

The pilot revealed trainees required additional support to cope with workplace pressures. “We needed a blended curriculum of sub skills – self-awareness, resilience, confidence and effective communication – that had as much weight

on employability as the technical skills required to deliver a great espresso,” Wagg says. Using start-up grants, she refined the model and ran more pilots.

Well Grounded now operates from premises attached to a youth centre in Tower Hamlets in east London. Furnished with espresso machines, a filter station and training room for soft skills (CV writing and guest speakers), this permanent base has been a game-changer for the programme, allowing her to increase staff and their trainee intake from 12 to 30 a month. “Plus our location puts us in the hub of the communities we want to work in,” says Wagg. With the support of some

of the country’s leading coffee professionals, they now work with 40 cafes and have over 100 graduates. Courses, accredited by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), include a one-week Introduction to Coffee, a three-week Specialty Barista Course and their flagship ten-week sponsored traineeship which, according to Wagg, is where trainees “stop putting eight sugars in their coffee and start tasting blueberries.”

Wagg and her team visit schools, colleges, job centres and fairs to engage people in coffee and offer taster sessions where prospective trainees get hands-on behind a coffee machine. “We find

solutions for everyone, whether they have a degree but haven’t managed to get a foot in the door, to someone who has been homeless with multiple barriers to work. We nurture and develop people so they are successful and valued in the workplace,” she says. “We ensure they understand the commitment. We can’t pretend that it’s all nine-to-five work – it’s shifts.” However, depending on clients and trainees’ needs, shorter shifts for working parents to accommodate school hours, for example, can be matched.

Developing partnerships and introducing talent to employers is key, too. “We can’t do anything without employers,” she says. “We have brilliant feedback from which we learn and improve. Our graduates become experts and their value is huge.” 84% of graduates are still working six weeks after being placed.

With the support from employers, sponsorships and non-profit funding grants with housing associations, she ensures that all profit is reinvested into the organisation. “We believe that to have social impact, you have to make a profit,” she says. “We’re identifying various revenue streams to develop and grow. It’s the most complex part of any business and especially in social enterprise because our work – developing staff – costs more.” They are currently discussing partnership options with other housing associations and plan to open three more academies over the next two years.

How does she feel looking back on what she’s achieved? “I believed there was a way I could bring together the coffee industry and people. In the beginning we were on a shoestring but the result of investment is the social impact we’re having and that’s where I get my fulfilment.”

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COLLABORATION WITH GATHER & GATHER

In 2016, corporate contract caterers Gather & Gather approached Well Grounded for support in developing and retaining talent in the speciality coffee industry. Together they devised an integrated recruitment and training programme. At the end of 2017 Well Grounded launched their flagship ten-week traineeship, sponsored by Gather & Gather, who provided paid work placements for the trainees, tailored to each individual’s needs and strengths.

Well Grounded worked with trainees for over four weeks on key strengths and technical coffee skills before sending them into four-week paid work placements, supplemented by ongoing training and trouble-shooting. The collaboration was a huge success, resulting in a batch of exceptional, skilled candidates for Gather & Gather. Their second sponsored traineeship launches this month [February].

Rob Fredrickson, MD of Gather & Gather explains, “95%

of our work is in corporate hospitality across 46 locations in London. We’d been exploring ways of supporting people from challenging backgrounds and we discovered Well Grounded. We went along to a ceremony and met graduates making amazing coffees. But the real upside was their journey of self-discovery. The programme had helped them handle situations, such as disability in the workplace, and I was captivated by their stories. I knew I wanted to be part of it, so we dived in feet first and sponsored a programme.

We ran a recruitment morning in October 2017 for people from a range of backgrounds and ages. It was the best morning at work I’d had in five years. The ten selected trainees completed

four weeks at Well Grounded’s academy, then we found them paid work

placements across our client sites. Graduates have become full-time employees with Gather & Gather and I’ve seen people transform. It’s been an eye-opener on a whole host of levels.”



HOW YOUR BUSINESS COULD BENEFIT

1

A low-risk way to access talent from your local community

2

Hire skilled trainees who are SCA accredited

3

Access ongoing support for your business and graduates

4

Have a positive impact on your community

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

1

Recruit
Partner with Well Grounded to recruit, develop and nurture staff

2

Gift
Non-profits are always in need of training equipment and coffee

3

Join
The Well Grounded community is @ wellgroundedhq

4

Contact
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