Employer Perspectives on Employment of People with Disabilities

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In the first survey of its magnitude, 3,797 businesses representing 2.4 million companies, across 12 industry sectors and various company sizes, reported on their beliefs about and strategies for recruiting, hiring, retaining and advancing employees with disabilities.

Employer Concerns

Can an employee with a disability get the job done?

Employers indicated the nature of the work or the skills and abilities of people with disabilities are an issue. It is well known that every person is not right for every job, but many employers don't realize that people with disabilities represent a diverse labor pool with a wide range of backgrounds and experience, capable of meeting or exceeding performance standards. A Virginia Commonwealth University survey of 250 supervisors in 43 businesses indicated that supervisors were satisfied with the performance of their employees with disabilities, rating their performance similar to that of their non-disabled peers.

How will supervisors manage employees with disabilities?

Managing employees with disabilities is really no different than managing any other employee: provide them with the tools and procedures they need to get their job done and then evaluate and reward them based on performance to expected standards. Disability awareness training and other learning experiences can help to alleviate this concern.

Are accommodations expensive?

According to the Job Accommodations Network (JAN), a free, confidential service funded by ODEP, 46 % of employers report that accommodations needed by employees and job applicants with disabilities cost absolutely nothing (i.e., simple, no cost adaptations). For those accommodations requiring a cost, the typical one-time expenditure was $500 (www.jan.wvu.edu/media/LowCostHighImpact.doc). JAN has provided expert consultation on cost-effective accommodations, the ADA, and assistive technologies for more than 25 years.

Will my organization's worker's compensation and health care costs increase?

Most large- and medium-sized businesses report no significant increase in costs. Employers also report that any costs are outweighed by the value that workers with disabilities bring to the workplace. The benefits of hiring workers with disabilities are demonstrated in the ODEP Business Case available at www.earnworks.com/businesscase.

Tools & Resources Employers Can Use to Hire, Retain and Advance Employees with Disabilities

- **Employer tax credits and incentives**
- **Disability awareness training**
- **Visible top management commitment**
- **Mentoring**
- **Assistive Technology**
- **Using a specialized recruiting source**
- **Flexible work schedules**
- **Training existing staff**
- **On-site consultation or technical assistance**
- **Disability targeted internship program**
- **Short-term job assistance through a job coach**
- **Developing a targeted recruitment program**
- **Centralized accommodations fund**
- **Reassignment**

Survey of Employer Perspectives on the Employment of People with Disabilities Domzal, C., Houtenville, A., and Sharma, R. (2008) Prepared under contract by CESSI, Division of Axiom for The Office of Disability and Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor.

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For copies of survey reports referred to in this document, please visit http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/research/

Ways to Recruit Talented Workers with Disabilities

- Postings at job service or workforce employment centers
- Contacting college and university career centers
- Partnerships with disability-related advocacy organizations
- Including people with disabilities in diversity recruitment goals
- Postings at disability-related publications
- Postings at disability-related websites
- Postings or tables at disability-related job fairs
- Postings at Vocational Rehabilitation
- Establishing summer internship and mentoring programs
- Postings at Independent Living Centers

Services and Information

The following **cost-free** *programs and organizations assist employers to better understand the value and capabilities of people with disabilities, to develop pragmatic strategies to expand employment of people with disabilities, and to help navigate the resources available in your community.*

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN)**
  Provides guidance and assistance to help recruit, hire, retain and advance employees with disabilities, including students and disabled veterans. www.earnworks.com 1-866-EARN-NOW (1-866-327-6669) (V/TTY)
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
  Provides free, expert confidential consultation on cost-effective accommodations, the ADA and assistive technologies. www.jan.wvu.edu 1-877-781-9403 (V/TTY)
- **Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs)**
  Offers information about your responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. www.adata.org 1-800-949-4232 (V/TTY)
- **US Business Leadership Network (USBLN)**
  Brings businesses together to learn about and share disability hiring initiatives. www.usbln.org
- **Disability.gov**
  Provides information on national, state and local disability-oriented programs.

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