Diversifying Your Workforce

A Four-Step Reference Guide
to Recruiting, Hiring, & Retaining Employees with Disabilities

Introduction

Competence and Flexibility...

...they are vital skills that employers seek in new hires. Today more than ever, businesses need people with a demonstrated ability to adapt to different situations and circumstances. And perhaps more than any other group, people with disabilities possess precisely these attributes. On a daily basis, people with disabilities must think creatively about how to solve problems and accomplish tasks. In the workplace, this resourcefulness translates into innovative thinking, fresh ideas and varied approaches to confronting business challenges and achieving success.

While research shows that people with disabilities make excellent employees, not all employers know how to effectively recruit, hire and retain such individuals. That's where this booklet comes in. It's a quick reference guide outlining the advantages of hiring people with disabilities, along with four simple steps to increasing the inclusiveness of your workforce. With numerous resources and Web links, the following pages are a helpful starting point for organizations looking to benefit from the talents of qualified individuals with disabilities.

This tool was developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and reviewed by its Alliance partner, SHRM, and members of its Circle of Champions. For the business case on proactively including people with disabilities in your workforce, please visit
www.earnworks.com/businesscase
For additional information,
Please visit www.dol.gov/odep

Incentives & ROI

Why Hire People with Disabilities?

Access the resources below to learn why hiring employees with disabilities makes good business sense.

Return on Investment. Employing people with disabilities boosts your bottom line.

- **Diverse Perspectives: People with Disabilities Fulfilling Your Business Goals**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/diverse.htm

- **Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities**
  www.earnworks.com/businesscase

- **How to Improve ROI: Employment Solutions for Small Business** (video)
  http://www.dol.gov/odep/newfreedom/coc2007/videos.htm
  www.dol.gov/odep/newfreedom/coc2007/videos.htm

Tax Benefits for Private Employers. Three types of tax incentives are available to help employers cover accommodation costs for employees with disabilities and/or to make their workplaces accessible.

- **Employer Tax Incentives**
  www.jan.wvu.edu/media/tax.html

Human Capital Benefits for Federal Employers. The Federal government has specific hiring rules that allow certain flexibilities in hiring people with disabilities and certain veterans with disabilities.

- **Hiring Authorities for Federal Employers**
  www.earnworks.com/employers/tools/index.asp#hiring

Recruiting

STEP #1: Recruiting People with Disabilities

The first step in tapping this labor pool is effective recruitment. The following are practical resources to help with the process.

Be Proactive. Expand your outreach to target qualified candidates who will expand your talent pool. Visit the USBLN web site at http://www.usbln.org for ideas and resources.

Ensure Access. For personalized guidance on making your recruitment activities totally accessible, contact the **Job Accommodation Network**, a free service for employers and others, at www.jan.wvu.edu.

Build Tomorrow's Talent Pipeline. Mentoring activities and internships targeting youth and college students with disabilities can help you cultivate talent for the future.

- **Career-Focused Mentoring for Youth: The What, Why, and How**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/cfm.htm

  - **Cultivating Leadership: Mentoring Youth with Disabilities**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/cultivate.htm

- **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)**
  www.wrp.gov

- **Private Sector Internships for Students with Disabilities**
  http://www.earnworks.com/wrp/
  http://www.aapd.com/disabilityinternships

Utilize New Resources. Seek new avenues for publicizing job opportunities and identifying qualified candidates with disabilities.

- **Strategic Connections: Recruiting Candidates with Disabilities**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/connect.htm

- **HireVetsFirst/REALifeline**
  www.hirevetsfirst.gov/realifelines/index.asp

Interviewing & Hiring

STEP #2: Interviewing & Hiring People with Disabilities

The successful employment of people with disabilities requires accessible hiring processes and an understanding of the legal environment in which hiring takes place. The following resources can help.

General Guidance. As always, the goal of the interviewing and hiring process is to identify individuals who have the best mix of skills and attributes for a particular job. For more information on how to ensure that all qualified individuals can participate in this process, review *Opening Doors to All Candidates: Tips for Ensuring Access for Applicants with Disabilities* at www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/opening.htm.

Job Advertisements & Applications. For wording tips and samples of accessible online applications, check the following resources:

- **Employers' Guide to Reasonable Accommodations for Job Advertisements and Applications** www.jan.wvu.edu/Erguide/Two.htm#A
- **Making the Online Application Process Accessible** www.jan.wvu.edu/corner/vol02iss05.htm

- **Tips for Designing Accessible Web Page**s www.jan.wvu.edu/media/webpages.html

Interviews. To be qualified job candidates, individuals with disabilities—like all other applicants—must have the necessary qualifications for the job (i.e., education, training, experience, skills, and/or licenses) and be able to perform the essential functions or duties of the job. When interviewing candidates, keep in mind this basic rule: *Ask applicants about their abilities, not their disabilities*.

- **Focus on Ability:** Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/focus.htm

- **The Employer's Guide to Reasonable Accommodations for Interviews** www.jan.wvu.edu/Erguide/Two.htm

- **Disability Etiquette Tips for Interviews and Speaking Engagements** www.jan.wvu.edu/media/etipresent.html

- **Interviewing Resources for Employers** www.earnworks.com/employers/tools/index.asp#recruit

Achieving Workplace Success

STEP #3: Helping Your Employees Achieve Workplace Success

Once an employee with a disability is a part of the team, there are many resources available to help employers ensure workplace productivity, health, and safety.

Effective Communication. Employers and co-workers may be concerned that they will say the wrong thing, ask an inappropriate question, or unintentionally offend an applicant or colleague with a disability. Here are two resources with some excellent tips:

- **Effective Interaction: Communicating With and About People with Disabilities in the Workplace**
www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/effectiveinteraction.htm

- **Disability Awareness Information Kit** (an Australian publication)
http://www.openroad.net.au/access/dakit/disaware/disawarecontent.htm

Accommodations. All employees need the right tools and work environment to effectively perform their jobs. "Reasonable accommodations" are modifications or adjustments to jobs, work environments, or workplace policies that enable qualified employees with disabilities to perform the fundamental duties of their jobs and have equal access to benefits available to employees without disabilities. The following resources can help you understand reasonable accommodations, which are often easier and less expensive to implement than commonly believed:

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
http://www.jan.wvu.edu/pubsandres/list.htm (JAN's List of Publications)

- **Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR)**
www.jan.wvu.edu/soar

- **Employer's Practical Guide to Reasonable Accommodation**
www.jan.wvu.edu/Erguide/Three.htm#D

- **Federal Accommodation Programs** (for Federal employers)
www.jan.wvu.edu/cgi-win/typequery.Exe?294

Office of Disability Employment Policy

- **Investing in People: Job Accommodation Situations and Solutions**
www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/misc/invest.htm

- **The Job Accommodation Process: Steps to Collaborative Solutions**
www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/misc/job.htm

- **Maximizing Productivity: Accommodations for Employees with Psychiatric Disabilities** www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/psychiatric.htm

- **Advancing Opportunities: Accommodations Resources for Federal Managers and Employees** www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/misc/advance.htm

- **Welcoming Returning Wounded & Injured Military Veterans**
  www.americasheroesatwork.gov

Safety & Emergency Preparedness for Employees with Disabilities. A number of helpful resources can help employers ensure workplace safety and implement emergency management procedures that include people with disabilities, such as the following:

- **Emergency Preparedness and People with Disabilities**
  www.dol.gov/odep/programs/emergency.htm

- **Preparing the Workplace for Everyone: Accounting for the Needs of People with Disabilities – A Framework of Emergency Preparedness Guidelines for Federal Agencies**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ep/preparing2.htm

- **Effective Emergency Preparedness Planning: Addressing the Needs of Employees with Disabilities**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/effective.htm

- **Employers' Guide to Including Employees with Disabilities In Emergency Evacuation Plans**
  www.jan.wvu.edu/media/emergency.html

Retention

STEP #4: Retaining Valued Employees

Finally, employers must take steps to keep their employees happy, healthy, and professionally fulfilled. The resources below address career development for people with disabilities, disability-related leave, and return-to-work issues.

Career Development. One of the main reasons workers leave their jobs is lack of career advancement opportunities. To learn how to ensure the inclusion of employees with disabilities in training and professional growth opportunities, read *Career Development for People with Disabilities* at www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek00/career.htm. ODEP also funded the inaugural UCLA Leadership Institute for Managers with Disabilities. For information on the Institute go to http://www.anderson.ucla.edu/EEPlimd.xml

Medical- and Disability-Related Leave. The following are useful resources to help employers and human resources professionals sort out which leave laws apply when employees have a disability, injury, and/or chronic illnesses:

- **Employment Laws: Medical and Disability-Related Leave**
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/employ.htm

- **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) elaws Advisor**
  www.dol.gov/elaws/fmla.htm

Return-to-Work. Consult the following for information on transitioning ill, injured, or disabled employees returning to work:

- **Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities**
  www.earnworks.com/businesscase

- **Job Accommodations for Return-to-Work**
  www.jan.wvu.edu/media/rtwfact.doc

Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Act (USERRA). Visit the following web site for an on-line course and general information on this law that details your rights and responsibilities for reemploying employees who were called for active duty.
http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/

Links & Resources

Additional Employer Resources

DOL Resources on Employing People with Disabilities

- **Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor** (www.dol.gov/odep) ODEP is a policy agency that provides national leadership by developing and influencing disability-related employment policy and practice affecting the employment of people with disabilities.

    o **Employer Resources**
      www.dol.gov/odep/categories/employer

    o **Publications**
      www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/pulicat.htm

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)** (www.jan.wvu.edu) JAN is a free service of ODEP that provides productivity tools and strategies for hiring, accommodating, and retaining employees with disabilities:

    http://www.jan.wvu.edu/empl/index.htm

- **Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN)** (www.earnworks.com) Funded by ODEP, EARN provides recruiting, hiring, and business case resources for employers, service providers, and individuals with disabilities.

- **DisabilityInfo.gov Employer Resources Page**
    http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/digov-public/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=11

- **Customized Employment Strategies**
    www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/CustomizedEmployment/what/index.htm

- **HireVetsFirst.gov**
    www.hirevetsfirst.gov

General Employment Resources
Additional employer resources directly or indirectly related to employees with disabilities:

- **elaws Advisors**
    www.dol.gov/elaws/

- **FlexOptions**
    www.we-inc.org/flex.html

- **Innovative Workplace Safety Accommodations for Hearing-Impaired Workers**
    www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib072205.html

- **Ergonomics Resources**
    www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/index.html

- **Safety, Health And Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative**
  www.dol.gov/esa/owcp/share/

- **Career One-Stop: Resources for Business and Human Resources**
  www.careeronestop.org/Audience/Businesses/Businesses.aspx

- **Nondiscrimination notices and posters**
  www.dol.gov/esa/ofccp/

- **WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development)**
  www.doleta.gov/wired/

- **DBTAC (Disability & Business Technical Assistance Center)**
  www.adata.org

Related Initiatives & Employer Networks

- **Workforce Excellence Initiative** - ODEP's overarching outreach program to corporate America, which engages leaders of business and industry in the creation of an inclusive corporate culture that welcomes and attracts top talent among candidates with disabilities.
  www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/WorkforceExcellence.htm

- **ODEP Alliance Initiative** - A cooperative program that enables organizations committed to improving disability workplace practices to work with ODEP to develop and implement model policies and initiatives that increase recruiting, hiring, advancing, and retaining workers with disabilities.
  www.dol.gov/odep/alliances/description.htm

- **Circle of Champions: Innovators in Employing All Americans** - A group of U.S. businesses that have been recognized for best disability employment practices by the Secretary of Labor.
  www.dol.gov/odep/newfreedom/coc2007/brochure.htm

- **US Business Leadership Network (USBLN)** - A national organization that represents employers using a "business to business" strategy to promote the business imperative of including people with disabilities in the workforce.
  www.usbln.org

- **Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)** - The world's largest professional association devoted to human resource management.
  www.shrm.org/

- **America's Heroes at Work** - A web based resource that focuses on the employing returning wounded and injured military who sustained Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
  www.americasheroesatwork.gov