



The Realities of Hiring People with Disabilities

June, 2005



Many businesses ask, and are concerned about the cost of hiring someone with a disability to work in their company. There are many misconceptions on this issue and this fact sheet will allow you to have information about the realities of hiring someone with a disability.

LEARN THE TRUTH!!!!

Myths & Facts

Myth: — Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.

Fact: Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many employers believe. Studies by the Office of Disability Employment Policy's Job Accommodation Network have shown that 15% of accommodations cost nothing, 51% cost between \$1 and \$500, 12% cost between \$501 and \$1,000, and 22% cost more than \$1,000.

Myth: — 40% of employers maintain that it is difficult or costly to provide accommodations to workers with disabilities.

Fact: The majority of employers who had made accommodations found that the cost of the accommodation was only \$500 or less. The vast majority (73%) of employers report that their employees with disabilities did not require accommodations.

Myth: — Employees with disabilities will use more sick leave and won't be as productive as other employees.

Fact: Employees with disabilities have the same absentee and sick rates as non-disabled employees. Industry reports consistently rate workers with disabilities as average or above average in performance, quality and quantity of work, flexibility to demands, attendance and safety.

Myth: — Persons with disabilities are unable to meet performance standards, thus making them a bad employment risk.

Fact: In 1990, DuPont conducted a survey of 811 employees with disabilities and found 90% rated average or better in job performance compared to 95% for employees without disabilities. A May, 2002 VCU-RRTC National Research Study of Employer's Experiences found that employees with disabilities are as capable and productive (timeliness, punctuality, task consistency & work speed).

Problems & Solutions

Problem: — An assembler for a furniture manufacturer has spinal degeneration, uncoordinated gait, and balance difficulties. The limitations involve walking, carrying materials, and balancing.

Solution: Installing a plywood platform to raise part of the work station, suspending tools from the ceiling to balance their weight and using a cart to move assembly parts. **Cost: \$200**

Problem:	A greenhouse worker with mental retardation has difficulty staying on task and knowing when to take breaks.
	Solution: At no cost to the employer, a job coach provided initial training. The worker then carried a tape recorder that provided periodic reminders to stay on task and indicated break time and also carried a set of laminated cards which showed the basic list of tasks to be completed. Cost: \$50
Problem:	A worker with traumatic brain injury (TBI) is employed at a bank, processing checks and other transactions. Items must be numbered and placed into a sorting matching tray in a special manner. The problem is periodic confusion due to memory loss and weakness in one side of his body.
	Solution: A job coach/trainer supplied by the rehabilitation agency assists in special training in task sequencing, and equipment is adjusted to accommodate weakness. Cost: \$0
Problem:	A computer service technician with cerebral palsy loses function of the lower extremities. The job related problems include bending, stooping, balancing, and getting underneath the mainframe equipment to perform needed repairs.
	Solution: An automotive repair creeper is purchased and modified with back support to enable the employee to slide easily under the mainframes. Cost: \$30
Problem:	A radio broadcaster/announcer who is blind needs to read the AP wire news desk material.
	Solution: The employer connected a Braille printer to the incoming news service, and installed a switch to move from regular printed material to Braille. Cost: \$1,700

Helpful Hints

Get executive commitment -- Having commitment from the top sends a clear message to senior management about the seriousness and business relevance of this issue. Also, top-down commitment will reinforce the desired outcomes and assist in conveying the expectation of cooperation, involvement and commitment on the part of senior management and their staff.

Incorporate disability into existing diversity committees -- This group is usually composed of a vertical and horizontal cross-section of the organization and can help analyze assessment data and make recommendations to top management.

Design relevant, interactive applicable training -- The purpose of good training is to not just increase awareness and understanding about disability, but to also develop concrete skills that employees can use. Starting with awareness training and advancing to knowledge training and training that builds specific skills is common.

Ensure integration -- Integrate the concepts, skills and results of your disability efforts into the fabric of the organization.

Partnerships -- There are a number of organizations that can assist your company in the successful integration of people with disabilities into your workforce.

For more information please contact:

VCU-RRTC -- Howard Green; 804-828-9548, jhgreen@vcu.edu & Katie Thompson;
804-827-0735, kbthompson@vcu.edu

Content provided by:

Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy; U.S. Business Leadership Network; Jobs Accommodation Network; and Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention

