

Webinar #3 Employer Engagement and Retention for Persons with Disabilities: Breaking Down the Barriers

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The Foundation

The foundation for assisting an Employer to recruit and retain an employee and to assist with the appropriate match between the employer and the employee is rooted in the practice of excellence we all strive to deliver to our clients, regardless of age, ethnicity, race, language, gender or disability.



Facts


According to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, Canadians with disabilities were employed at a rate of 47 percent compared with 74 percent for Canadians without disabilities. The survey also shows that there are more than 400,000 people with disabilities who have the potential and willingness to work but who are not employed.




Government of Canada highlights National Disability Employment Awareness Month October 2016

While the Government of Canada continues to work to ensure equal opportunity for all Canadians in their communities and workplaces, there is still a gap in the employment of Canadians with disabilities. This evidence confirms that employers are not fully engaging Canadians with disabilities.





Approximately 14% of Canadians aged 15 years or older reported having a disability that limited them in their daily activities.



A 2013 study for Employment and Social Development Canada found that there were 795,000 working-age Canadians who are not working but whose disability doesn't prevent them from doing so. Almost half of these people had postsecondary education, the study found.



The Canadian Mental Health Association, through research and experience, has proved that people who experience mental illness can be employed successfully. Persons with mental illness can and do hold responsible jobs and make significant contributions in their work, home and leisure lives. However, not all persons who could be employed are working because they, potential employers, professional caregivers, and the public emphasize their disabilities, not their capabilities.

FEBRUARY 3, 2012



Rethinking

The report *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector* was released January 16, 2013 by the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

This report makes a good case for rethinking disability in the private sector. It is valuable information for businesses and makes the case that hiring people who have disabilities makes good business sense.



It is also a helpful tool for employers on how to go about hiring people who have disabilities. The research from this report challenges many negative myths and assumptions about people who have disabilities, such as the assumption that they are not capable or that the cost of accommodation is high. The report quoted research showing that there is a large pool of untapped talent in people who have disabilities who are eager for employment, noting many benefits:



Retention

Employees who have disabilities have a dramatically better record on staff turnover than employees without disabilities, thereby reducing retraining costs.



Accommodation

It is noteworthy that in 57 percent of cases no workplace accommodation is required for people with disabilities.

In the 37 percent of cases reporting a one-time cost to accommodate an employee with a disability, the average amount spent is only \$500.



Fifty-seven per cent of participants who hired persons who have a disability had no accommodation costs at all.



You're already making accommodations for your team letting people leave for personal appointments, taking lunch at different times, working from home, flex time, letting people have their morning coffee before talking to them, etc. We do this often and frequently without even thinking of it



Many employees may do their jobs differently than others based on their experiences and working with their disability in the workplace and do not require any further accommodation from their employer. You are likely unaware of these self-accommodations as they often don't impact anybody on the team



If a more formal accommodation is required, many accommodations don't involve any costs from the employer, just minor tweaks can make a big difference

Sometimes, changes made to accommodate one employee's needs can benefit others through a new process, etc.

Champions can help employers work through the accommodation process to understand best practices, what qualifies as an accommodation, and case studies outlining what has worked for other employers.



Employers experience multiple direct and indirect benefits to making accommodations for employees who have disabilities; this includes increased employee productivity, improved overall company morale

http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking_disabilities.shtml



Performance Management

Regular performance process & guidelines apply to all employees whether they have a disability or not

Having disclosure and accommodation processes and guidelines can help all members of your team with the performance discussions and what to do when/if an employee discloses

If after you have taken all reasonable measures to support an individual in being successful in their position they still aren't able to do the job, you can take the measures needed to terminate their employment



TD Bank

“I don't focus on the person's disability. I focus on what abilities they have, what skill sets they have and finding the right person for the job,” said Laura Smith, External Recruitment Manager for TD Bank. “It's what they offer as a person and what they can add to the team. It's [important] to bring about awareness,” said Smith. “There's a whole population out there that has skills and abilities they are eager to contribute to the workplace.”



Making the Case

As organizational culture reflects the values of a company, many are moving towards a more inclusive culture that promotes greater teamwork and employee involvement.



Demonstrating more creativity and innovation, improved communications, better work/life balance, respect for employee interests and needs, on-going learning and continuous improvement and diversity strengthen your workplace. An inclusive work culture improves the morale of all employees, which in turn improves quality, productivity and service



Persons with disabilities are an underutilized and often overlooked pool of talent with the skills and abilities to do the job

Evidence shows that a diverse workforce makes a positive impact to your bottom line.

Through the development of new hiring conversations, you increase the retention of people already on your team who have a disability but may have not felt comfortable disclosing



What's the value of Diversity & Inclusion to our bottom line?

- Increase competitive advantage
- More diverse perspectives
- Enhanced public image
- More inclusive (and accepting) organizational culture
- Retain your key talent and your knowledge capital



Being reflective of your client/customer base people are attracted to companies and are more likely to spend their consumer dollars if they see themselves reflected in the workforce

Diverse and Inclusive workplaces enhances and taps the potential of everyone leading to more committed employees



The commitment to hiring persons with disabilities identifies your organization as a corporate leader in the workplace and as a leader in our community

Demonstrating social awareness within hiring practices also creates a positive image for your company as a progressive employer



Mark Wafer, Owner, Tim Horton's

- “I am deaf, I have about 20 per cent hearing and have since birth. I could not keep a job as a young man but became a successful business owner. I began hiring people with disabilities in my first Tim Hortons in 1995,” he wrote.
- To date he has hired 82 people with disabilities, including 33 currently in his workforce of 210, spread over six locations.
- “Why did I do this?” Wafer continued. “Simply because I saw a business benefit as time went on. Of course, it was the right thing to do, but that isn't reason enough for business owners to hire PWDs (people with disabilities.)”



Mark Wafer (cont'd)

1. Good qualifications.

- More of the disabled have a trade certificate, 11 per cent, than the regular population, nine per cent. As well, 17 per cent of adults with disabilities have a college degree or diploma, exactly the same as the general population.



Mark Wafer (cont'd)

2. Innovation.

- Many years ago, I flew with Rick Hansen, the renowned wheelchair athlete, to an event. Before we left, I happened to see him get out of his van by himself, collect his briefcase and a large suitcase. It was an impressive exercise using the minimum of effort to do something that looked very difficult. For example, he had a cable attached to the van's hatchback door so he could pull it closed, because when open it was well out of his reach.
- "A person in a wheelchair has to be innovative just to get through the day," Wafer pointed out. "Imagine how that mindset helps a pod or team at a workplace."



Mark Wafer (cont'd)

3. Low maintenance.

- Contrary to popular belief, disabled people require very little accommodation in the work place. According to the Conference Board of Canada, only 20 per cent require any accommodation at all on the job and the cost for doing so in 65 per cent of cases was between \$1 and \$500.
- My daughter Quinn, for example, worked in a testing lab one summer as a technician. The government-supported Ontario Interpreting Service provided an interpreter for two hours on her first day, while she learned about the complex tasks she had to perform. Thereafter, she managed fine without one.



Mark Wafer (cont'd)

4. Motivation.

- The disabled are very motivated employees. Research studies on this are sparse but there is plenty of anecdotal evidence.
- Wafer maintains that “employees who have a disability work 97 per cent safer, have attendance records 86 per cent greater, stay on the job up to five times longer (and) increase morale to the point that non-disabled staff stay longer (huge win for me).”



Mark Wafer (cont'd)

5. Untapped labour pool.

- There are clear indicators that there's going to be a shortage of labour in Canada as baby boomers age.
- Representing 12.5 per cent of the population, the disabled are ready, willing and able to fill the gap.



Mark Wafer (cont'd)

6. Everyone benefits.

- When the disabled have meaningful employment (or any employment, for that matter) the burden on the taxpayer is lessened. Looked at another way, every dollar not needed for social assistance is a dollar available for something else.
- As Wafer pointed out, there is tremendous opportunity for both employers and the disabled.



Large or Small...it matters

- At Toronto-Dominion Bank, about 6 per cent of its roughly 90,000 employees have some form of disability. Paul Clark, executive vice-president and chair of the bank's people with disabilities committee, said the costs of accommodating those employees were minimal – about \$500 or less per person, one time. Often, it “doesn't cost a dime,” he added, and it can be as simple as offering a brief afternoon break.
- “What we typically find with people with disabilities is that the accommodation requirements on average are actually quite minimal. And I don't even mean monetarily. I mean to put in place – the complexity is actually quite straightforward,” Mr. Clark said, stressing that this only works if there is open dialogue between the worker and employer. “People get uncomfortable having the conversation around disability. But if you get comfortable with it, most of the issues can be very easily resolved.”
- The benefit for the bank, he added, is that it has a work force that more closely resembles its customer base. And its workers can give insights into how to reach different customers and keep them happy.



Change of mindset

In the United States, drugstore giant Walgreen Co. has hired more than a thousand people with disabilities – from those with Asperger’s to obsessive-compulsive disorder, mobility challenges and schizophrenia. The company began targeting disabled workers in 2007 with a pilot project at a distribution centre where a third of its employees had a disability. The chain soon discovered that job performance was just as high among those with disabilities, while absenteeism was half that of typical workers and retention was twice as high. Workers with disabilities now comprise 10 per cent of the staff in Walgreen’s supply chain alone.



Tapping in to the talents/assets

SAP, the world’s third-largest software company, has pledged that 1 per cent of its global work force will be made up of people on the autism spectrum, mirroring the number affected by the disorder in society. At SAP Canada, nine people have come on board with the expectation that a dozen more will join the company by the end of this year.



The company has found “that the special talents of individuals affected by autism fit very well into the IT industry, especially in the areas of software testing, programming and data quality,” said spokeswoman Carole Beatty. SAP Canada is working with a specialized recruiting company to help it reach its goal. That recruiter, Specialisterne, has a target of finding 25,000 jobs for people on the autism spectrum in Canada.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/working-wisdom-how-workers-with-disabilities-give-companies-an-edge/article23236023/>



Best talent - period

“Ernst & Young seeks the best talent- period. To find the specialized skills we need, we have to tap the broadest available talent pools, including people with a wide range of physical, cognitive and mental health abilities. We know that diverse teams produce better solutions, so there’s a clear performance advantage to bringing together people with all kinds of differences - in gender, ethnicity, orientation, age, background, and abilities. Employees with disabilities have higher retention rates, so for many businesses, there can be a real cost savings through reduced turnover. Studies show that consumers prefer doing business with companies that employ people with disabilities, so there’s brand value. Research has also found organizations employing people with disabilities have higher morale and employee engagement, which we know drives profitability.”



Finally, people with disabilities often have well-honed problem solving skills and a degree of adaptability that are especially valuable in today's fast changing business environment. At Ernst & Young, we learned this early in our history, as our co-founder, Arthur Young, was deaf and had low vision. Unable to successfully practice as a courtroom lawyer because of his disabilities, he turned to the emerging field of accounting, where he became an innovator and entrepreneur."

-Lori B. Golden, Abilities Strategy Leader, Ernst & Young, LLP

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-blahovec/why-hire-disabled-workers_b_9292912.html




Federal Funding Initiatives


The Government of Canada continues to support Canadians with disabilities in developing skills and accessing training to help them prepare for, find, and maintain meaningful employment through programs such as the Opportunities Fund for People with Disabilities and the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities.

The Government also helps improve opportunities for Canadians with disabilities through the Enabling Accessibility Fund and the Registered Disability Savings Plan.





The Government of Canada provides \$222 million each year through Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities to improve the employment situation for Canadians with disabilities.



Since 2005, the Opportunities Fund has helped over 48,000 people with disabilities across Canada.


In 2014-15, the OF served 3,473 Canadians with disabilities, of which 1,455 found employment, 192 were able to return to school and 3,075 had their employability enhanced.







Since the creation of the Enabling Accessibility Fund, the Government of Canada has funded over 2,300 projects, helping thousands of Canadians gain access to their communities' programs, services and workplaces.





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m. Recognizing the valued existing and potential contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty,

A shift towards increased levels of employment can radically alter income levels and increase social capital, thereby reducing poverty and isolation, and supporting more active citizenship.

(Keenan Wellar, Co-Leader and Director of Communications at LiveWorkPlay presentation to the Standing Committee On Human Resources, Skills And Social Development And The Status Of Persons With Disabilities April 16, 2013)



Resources

- http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/consultations/rethinking_disabilities.shtml
- <http://disability.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Blueprint-for-Action-March-2014.pdf>
- <https://cnsc.novascotia.ca/programs>
- <http://novascotia.ca/works/>



Nova Scotia

This and other disability fact sheets can be found on the Disabled Persons Commission website. Go to:
<http://disability.novascotia.ca/content/disability-facts#overlay-context=content/dpc-research-and-statistics>

