

FACT SHEET - BUSINESS BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

When organisations employ people with disability, they benefit from having employees who have the skills and aptitude to do their job effectively and efficiently. Low absenteeism and staff turnover, low incidence of workplace injury and employee loyalty create productive and cost effective businesses.

The principles of employment are the same for people with disability as those without disability. The main focus should be on whether the individual has the skills and aptitude to do the job.

When employing people with disability, organisations can benefit by:

- attracting and retaining the best of the talent pool
- improving customer service
- strengthening workplace morale and productivity
- being a good corporate citizen
- complying with legislative requirements and meeting international standards.

Research has found that there is a strong business case, as well as an ethical case, to support the employment of people with disability.

Statistics

- Over 90% of employers who had recently employed a person with disability said they would be happy to continue to employ people with disability;
- 78% of employers described the match between their employee with disability and the job as good;
- In relation to the cost benefit of workplace accommodations for employees with disability, 65% of employers rated the financial effect to be cost neutral and 20% identified an overall financial benefit;
- The average recruitment cost of an employee with disability was 13% of the average recruitment cost of an employee without disability;
- Employees with disability averaged one-sixth the recorded occupational health and safety incidents of employees without disability;
- 90% of employees with disability record productivity rates equal or greater than other workers;
- 98% have average or superior safety records;
- 86% have average or superior attendance records.

A study conducted on behalf of Telstra Australia in 1999 found that:

- People with disability worked on average 4.1 years in a call centre, compared 3.2 years for people without disability;
- Over a 15-month period, people with disability had 11.8 days absent, compared to people without disability who had 19.24 days absent;
- There were no significant differences when comparing people with disability to people without disability in the areas of performance, productivity and sales.

Creating a Diverse Workforce

One in five of your customers is likely to be a person with disability. Knowledge of this growing market segment can assist your business to meet your customers' needs effectively and grow your business.

Australia has an ageing population, which will impact on all major industries and occupations. Research has shown there will be prospective shortfall in employees between 2006 and 2011 of as many as 195,000 people.

This shrinking labour market means that employers will need to recruit from a wider and more diverse population pool, including people with disability, to ensure they remain productive and economically viable.

There are a range of Australian Government incentives available to assist businesses create a more diverse workforce. Further details can be found at www.jobaccess.gov.au.

Case Studies

Physical disability

Ben* was born with cerebral palsy and used a wheelchair to get around. He found that no employers were willing to give him a go because of his disability, despite having excellent qualifications and previous work experience. Ben eventually found employment within an electronics company who were willing to make the required workplace adjustments – installing a ramp at the entrance to the workshop – and now works five to six days per week testing and designing electronics equipment. The electronics company has found that Ben is also an excellent trainer, and he now imparts his extensive skills to others.

Intellectual disability

Mary* was born with an intellectual disability, and has been working at a busy fast food restaurant as a Dining Room Attendant for over two years. Mary received free on-the-job training from a Disability Open Employment Service provider, and a staff buddy-system was implemented by the business to assist Mary perform her daily tasks. The business has benefited through Mary's loyalty and commitment, and she has been recognised by winning an Employee of the Month award.

Mental illness

Sarah* had worked as an editor on a newspaper for over ten years when she was diagnosed with depression. Sarah took leave from work when her symptoms were most severe and with professional treatment, including medication, Sarah became confident she could once again do her job. After disclosing her disability to her manager, she was able to come to an agreement about her work schedule that suited both her and the employer. This included being able to work from home

when necessary, and the flexibility to attend some professional treatment sessions during work hours. The business benefited by retaining a hardworking and dedicated employee with ten years of knowledge and experience.

** Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

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Related hyperlinks:

Employers Forum on Disability (UK)

www.efd.org.uk