Myths about hiring and accommodating people with disabilities

A great untapped resource
We all want to hire people who are capable

• We all have our gifts.
  – We all have our difficulties.
• How many out there want to be known for their difficulties?
What if no one saw their gifts?

• Ralph Braun (founder of the Braun Corporation)
  – Muscular Dystrophy
• FDR
  – Paralysis from Polio
• Teddy Roosevelt
  – Epilepsy, Visual impairments, Asthma
• Alfred Nobel
  – Epilepsy
• Pythagoras (6th century BC) (Known as the father of numbers)
  – Epilepsy
What if all anyone saw was their difficulties?

• Abraham Lincoln
  – Marfan Syndrome and mood disorder
• Buzz Aldrin
  – Mood Disorder
• Ludwig Van Beethoven
  – Deaf and Mood disorder
• Stephen Hawking
  – ALS
Guess who had learning disabilities

• George Washington
  – He could barely write and had poor grammar

• Albert Einstein
  – Bad at school math, Didn’t talk till 3 years old, Trouble writing. May have had Asbergers

• Thomas Edison
  – Did not read until 12 years old, also hearing impaired

• Alexander Graham Bell
• Walt Disney
• Woodrow Wilson
And wait there are more

• Harriet Tubman (Underground railroad)
  – Developed epilepsy and vision impairment after being hit on head by plantation owner.
• Howard Hughes
• Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
• David Beckham
  – All had or have Tourette's.
• Winston Churchill
  – Mood disorder
• I could go on for the rest of my time.
  – But that might get boring.
People With Disabilities

• Have one of the highest unemployment rates
  – Of any group in the country
  – Consistent 70% to 80%

• It is a wonder that the people on the preceding pages were able to contribute at all.

• Imagine the huge resource if more people with disabilities were hired.
What stops us from hiring people with disabilities?

• Maybe we have bias?
  – We all have some unconscious bias.

• Perhaps we have some misconceptions.
  – It is too expensive to hire “them.”
    • Accommodations will be expensive.
    • I will have to change everything!
  – If I hire “them” and they don’t work out, I can’t fire “them”.
  – “They” are absent all of the time.
  – It is dangerous to have “them”. “They” have a lot of accidents.
  – “They” are not reliable.
What can we do about Unconscious Bias

• Study after study has shown
  – We have a bias toward hiring someone who meets our image of the profession we are hiring.
    • When given identical resumes people were much less likely to get an interview with names that did not sound like a white male.
    • Same goes for the disclosure of any disability.

• The truth will set you free!
  – Measure applicants against preset criteria.
    • This has been shown to lead to better hiring outcomes than changing the criteria for the applicants.
  – Understand the real cost or lack of cost to hire someone with a disability.
Let's look at the misconceptions (Myths)

- **Myth**
  - If I hire someone with a disability I will be unable to ever fire them no matter how poorly they may do!

- **Reality**
  - Employers can fire workers with disabilities under three conditions:
    - The termination is unrelated to the disability or
    - The employee does not meet legitimate requirements for the job, such as performance or production standards, with or without a reasonable accommodation or
    - Because of the employee’s disability, he or she poses a direct threat to health or safety in the workplace.
Myth vs Reality (Continued)

• Myth
  – People with disabilities always need lots of accommodations.

• Reality
  – Studies have shown that less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of people with disabilities need any accommodation at all.
Myth vs Reality (Continued)

• Myth
  – When I do have to accommodate someone, it will be expensive!

• Reality
  – A Sears study indicated that of the 436 documented accommodations made 69% cost nothing, 28% cost less than $1,000 and only 3% cost more than $1,000
  – Another broader study from the US Department of labor indicated that 57% of accommodations cost nothing and the typical cost of the remaining 43% was $500
Myth vs Reality (Continued)

- **Myth**
  - Employees with disabilities have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities

- **Reality**
  - Studies by firms such as DuPont show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities. In fact, these studies show that on the average, people with disabilities have better attendance rates than their non-disabled counterparts.
Myth vs Reality (Continued)

• Myth
  – People with disabilities do poorer work than those without disabilities.

• Reality
  – In several studies, including those previously mentioned, it was found that 91% of the workers with disabilities scored average or better when compared with the general workforce. Their attendance was also better.
Myth vs Reality (Continued)

• Myth
  – People with disabilities are not reliable. “They” will work for a little while and then quit.

• Reality
  – Statistically people with disabilities tend to stay on the job longer than those without disabilities.
  – Example:
    • A study by Pizza Hut found that workers with disabilities are five times more likely to stay than people without disabilities.
Myth vs Reality (continued)

• Myth
  – It is dangerous to have “them”. “They” have a lot of accidents.

• Reality
  – A study by DuPont found identical accident rates. Other studies around the world found similar results.
And wait, there are more

• Myth
  – If I hire someone who is hearing impaired or deaf, I will need sign language interpreters everywhere all the time.

• Reality
  – The ADA only requires effective communication not exclude people with disabilities, which in many situations means providing written materials or exchanging notes. The law does not require any measure that would cause an undue financial or administrative burden.
Aren’t you done yet?

- **Myth**
  - There are special requirements and skills involved in interviewing people with disabilities for a job.

- **Reality**
  - The interview would be conducted the same way for every applicant. You cannot ask **anyone** medical questions. If you want to know about an individual's ability to perform job functions, ask just like you would ask anyone.
• One more myth
  – When there are several qualified applicants for a job and one has a disability, the ADA requires the employer to hire that person.

• Reality
  – An employer is always free to hire the applicant of its choosing as long as the decision is not based on disability. If two people apply for a data entry position for which both speed and accuracy are required, the employer may hire the person with the higher speed and level of accuracy, because he or she is the most qualified.
If you are Convinced

• Lets look at some resources
  – CAP
    • Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program
  – JAN
    • Job Accommodations Network
CAP

- Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program
- [www.cap.mil](http://www.cap.mil)  (703) 614 8416
- CAP provides accommodation for multiple branches of government.
- They guide you through the request and process.
- They deliver solutions to your agency to help your employees.
- They have a brows-able database of computer and electronic accommodations.
- They have CAPTEC a center in the Pentagon where you can look at and try available technology.
• Job Accommodation Network
• [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)  (800) 526-7234
• Great resource for
  – Accommodation information
  – Legal requirements information
• Available to anyone
• Online searchable databases by accommodation and by disability
• Special section for Federal Employers
• Great phone help too
Any Questions?

Thanks for listening
Thank You

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