

## ***Department of Labor Promotes Employment Services for Disabled Individuals***

Despite the recent slowdown in the economy, the U.S. job growth is projected to swell by 55 million by 2008; however, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics believes only 20 million workers will be available to fill those jobs.

Other sources of high quality employees are and will be needed for the future. One excellent place to look is the Employee Referral Assistance Network, a free service sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. EARN puts employers in touch with qualified candidates who also happen to have a disability.

People with disabilities represent the single largest and most diverse minority in the United States and are a major untapped source of qualified candidates. Experts in the field of workplace disability believe that employers have not tapped into this workforce because they are unaware of the range of their skills and/or do not know how to identify the individuals as potential employees.

Employers are missing out on a golden opportunity to hire well-trained, qualified people who also bring to the job unsurpassed loyalty, dedication, and commitment. Aside from having equal or higher performance ratings compared to workers without disabilities, workers with disabilities have the lowest attrition rates of any employee group in this country. In other words, they get the job done, and they stay on the job.

Through a public outreach effort, The U.S. Department of Labor is informing employers about this untapped workforce through EARN and the Job Accommodations Network (JAN), which provides employers with information about how easy and inexpensive it is to accommodate people with disabilities at the workplace.

The best reason to hire a person with disabilities is because he or she is qualified. Employers also benefit in other ways by:

- Reducing training and recruitment costs. People with disabilities have equal to or higher performance rates and are less likely to resign and move onto another job.
- Increasing productivity in work groups. People with disabilities motivate other employees.
- Diversifying your workforce to appeal to a diverse customer base. One in five Americans has a disability, representing \$1 trillion in purchase power.
- Receiving tax credits by hiring people with disabilities.

For more information, employers should call, (866) 4-USA-DOL, or visit the [EARN web site](#) or the [JAN site](#).

## **The Facts About Employing People With Disabilities**

### **People with disabilities are trained**

- People with disabilities work or are trained to work in all kinds of professions. Of the 120 million employed Americans, 16 million of them have a disability. They are executives, machines operators, managers, sales workers, mechanics, teachers, accountants, and health care workers. (Americans With Disabilities: West Virginia University, McNeil, 1993)
- 72% of working-age people with disabilities have high school diplomas or a higher education. Yet, of those with a college degree, 55% are unemployed, compared to 14% of college-educated people without disabilities. (National Organization on Disability, Harris Poll of Americans with Disabilities, 2000)

### **People with disabilities want to work**

- Most people with disabilities want to work. 2 out of 3 people with disabilities who are unemployed (67%) say they would prefer to be working. Of those people with disabilities who say they are able to work, 56 percent are working, and the rest are looking. (N.O.H, Harris, 2000)
- A strong commitment exhibited by top management and a positive attitude among co-workers and supervisors are the best ways to remove employment barriers for people with disabilities, according to a Cornell University survey of human resource and equal employment opportunity personnel from the private and public sectors. (Susanne M. Bruyere, March 2000)

### **Employers Need & Will Need Their Skills**

- The U.S. job growth is projected to swell by 55 million by 2008, compared to a growth of only 20 million in workers, of whom 3.6 million will have a disability. Employers will need these 3.6 million people to fill vacant positions. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections, 1999)

### **People with Disabilities & Their Families Have Purchasing Power**

- One in five Americans (49 million people) has a disability. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1994) An estimated 20.3 million families or 29% of all families have at least one member with a disability. (Family Resource Supplement to the National Health Interview Survey, 1990)
- Marketing research shows that families with one or more persons with disabilities are significantly more likely to do business with a disability-friendly company, and consumers, with and without disabilities, are more likely to buy from those companies. (National Family Opinion, Inc., Survey for 1996 Paralympic Games, 1994)

## **Employers Benefit From Hiring People With Disabilities**

- Washington Mutual, a financial services company, reported an 8% percent attrition rate in 1999 among people with disabilities working at its call centers, compared to an overall rate of 45 percent. Cost to recruit, train, and develop new employees was \$15,000. Washington Mutual saved money by hiring more people with disabilities because they had better attendance and were more committed to their jobs. (National Organization of Disability, Craig Gray, Director of EmployAbility, 2001)
- Tax incentives are in place to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities, including the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides a tax credit of up to \$2,400 per individual hired. Small businesses also can receive a tax credit for the cost of accommodations, covering 50% of eligible expenditures up to \$10,000.

Source: International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) website

<http://www.ipma-hr.org/>

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