Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Employees with Disabilities: Making the Business Case

The Changing Demographic and Workplace Landscape

- The "graying office" trend continues, and the U.S. population is increasing in average age.
  - From 2010 to 2030, the number of Americans ages 65 and older will increase to 31.7 million (Purcell, 2009).
  - Employers will soon need to hire new workers as experienced and skilled workers with institutional knowledge retire from the workforce (Lee & Mather, 2008).
  - To address future hiring needs, businesses must **diversify their recruiting sources**.
- Total employment is projected to grow by 14.3% over the next decade, with 20.5 million new jobs.
  - Occupations with the fastest job growth expected between 2010 and 2020 are health care, personal care and social assistance, and construction (Bureau of Labor Statistics).
  - **17 of the 30 occupations** projected to have the **fastest growth** require some type of postsecondary education at entry.
  - Those projected to have the **largest number of new jobs** typically require **high school or less**, no related work experience, and short- or moderate-term on-the-job training.
- **Diversified and inclusive workplaces** have been shown to have **higher levels of productivity** and higher levels of satisfaction among employees (Office of Disability Employment Policy).

Recruiting and Hiring New Employees

- After a shortage of job openings, the main reason employers haven’t hired more people with disabilities in the past three years is a perceived lack of qualified candidates

![Bar chart showing reasons for not hiring people with disabilities](chart.png)

- Why do businesses hire people with disabilities?
  - Hiring qualified candidates, regardless of disability status, meets a business need.
  - Many businesses recognize that diversity in the workforce includes disability status.
  - Some employers feel it is the “right thing to do” and responds to their community.
  - Employing people with disabilities increases the opportunity to gain a lasting customer base. Customers with disabilities and their families and friends are a trillion dollar market segment.
- Employees with disabilities have **nearly identical job performance ratings** to employees without. The amount of supervision required is similar for both groups (DePaul, 2007).
  - The best strategies for hiring people with disabilities are **typical hiring processes** modified only if necessary. Do not assume that every person with a disability needs a “program.”
Employers report difficulty recruiting qualified candidates with disabilities, yet most employers do not use employment service providers to identify candidates.

- Some employers express concern about the cost of accommodating an employee.
  - However, according to the Job Accommodation Network, “Data collected suggest that more than half of all accommodations cost nothing.”

- Employers want more accurate information about accommodations and workplace strategies.
  - Most employers have hired a person with a disability in the last three years. Surveys of employers report that managers and executives estimate the percentage of employees with disabilities at 2%, but most do not know for certain.
  - People with disabilities are a diverse group. Many disabilities are non-apparent, and many people with disabilities require no special health care services.
  - It is highly likely that executives and managers are underestimating the prevalence of disability within their workforce.

Retaining Workers

- 90% of Fortune 500 companies are establishing internal subgroups, such as Employee Resource Groups, to address the unique needs and issues of a diverse workforce.
  - Diversity and inclusion policies and training should include people with disabilities.

- Creating an accessible workplace benefits not only employees with disabilities but also other employees who acquire a disability or workplace injury.
  - RAND reported that employer-driven return-to-work programs are cost effective and reduce absences for both temporary and permanent work-related disabilities.

Future Directions and Opportunities

- The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation’s National Employment Team (the NET) is a national “one company” approach to address the business needs for qualified candidates.
- Public sector employment of people with disabilities is receiving increasing attention, with major initiatives to improve accessibility, accommodations, and retention.
- Real-time labor market information strategies to match job seekers with disabilities to current employer needs need to be adopted more broadly.
- Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are beginning to play a significant role in the recruitment, management, and development of the workforce (Liska, 2012). Employers use social networks as a fast, cost-effective, and efficient way to find and recruit job candidates (Kluemper, Rosen, & Mossholder, 2012).
  - This opens up many opportunities for employers to recruit and hire a diverse workforce of qualified candidates, including persons with disabilities.