new directions

...offering information & inspiration to individuals with disabilities and their families as they direct their own supports and services

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Hiring People with Disabilities

Its Good for the Bottom Line

"American consumers are responding positively to companies they consider socially responsible, and increasingly consider those that hire workers with disabilities among that group, according to a recently published national public survey. Conducted by the University of Massachusetts' Boston Center for Social Development & Education in collaboration with the America's Strength Foundation and published in the January issue of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, it is one of the first studies to examine the attitudes of consumers toward companies that hire people with disabilities.

The study, *"A National Survey of Consumer Attitudes Toward Companies that Hire People with Disabilities,"* reports overwhelmingly positive attitudes among consumers toward socially responsible companies, and in particular toward those that hire individuals with disabilities.

Ninety two percent (92%) of consumers surveyed felt more favorable toward companies that hire individuals with disabilities and eighty seven percent (87%) said they would prefer to give their business to such companies. Among those surveyed, 'hiring people with disabilities' ranked third behind 'offering health insurance to all employees' and 'protecting the environment' as an indicator of a company's commitment to social justice.

"The uniqueness of this research is its focus on the consumer," said Dr. Gary Siperstein, Director of the Center for Social Development & Education and lead author of the study. "In business, consumer interests drive corporate decision making. With this study, we've been able to demonstrate that the majority of consumers favor companies who hire individuals with disabilities. Companies who respond to these findings will not only help individuals with disabilities lead more fulfilling and productive lives through employment, they will also improve the company's brand image."

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- Dr. Gary Siperstein
The Center for Social Development & Education

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JOB CARVING: Finding Goodness of Fit

Job carving involves melding the unique contributions of a job seeker and employer needs through systematic workplace analysis and person-centered career planning. It does not begin with the employer or the worksite - rather, it uses a job- seeker's unique *contributions* and matches them to an employment setting.

Contribution relates to the sets of skills (present and potential), personality traits and potential assets an applicant offers. These contributions can be skills, tools, personality or other valued attributes that create profit, increase efficiency, and/or offer psychological or cultural enrichment in the workplace environment.

Job carving is generally reserved for those who are not likely to succeed, even with support, when seeking work through a typical competitive employment process. Job carving should not be used to pull undesirable tasks from other workers' duties. This simply creates a job description fashioned from the refuse of others, and devalues the worker with a disability. Job carving should always highlight an employee's gifts and interests, not the tedious tasks of others.

While employers may not recognize the term "job carving," they constantly create new job descriptions or rearrange duties based on customer needs, new equipment purchases or changes in product/service specifications.

Consider these examples:
A young man with health limitations enjoyed visiting a local department store, but even with support, was unable to fulfill the duties of the warehousing job description. A part time job was carved for him unloading trucks using a dolly. Although no such position had existed before, his loyalty to the company and hard work was obvious to the store manager and his co-workers.

A woman with a significant disability had a deep interest in the medical field. A local clinic needed a medical records clerk and a job that centered on filing patient charts was negotiated and adapted for her. But the woman wanted to be working alongside doctors and nurses. A new job, carved from nurses's duties, involved sprucing up each exam room following use; refilling supply containers and changing the paper cover on the exam table. This re-engineering relieved the nurses of a duty they felt detracted from their real purpose of assisting patients and increased efficiency. It also increased staff morale (which possibly decreased turnover), and it highlighted the new employee's contribution while taking attention away from her disability.

In conclusion, always begin the job carving process with the person. Find their talents, contributions and desires; perform an analysis of the work routines and corporate culture; and negotiate employment that is mutually satisfying to the employer and the worker.

The Job Carving Process...

1. Identify and highlight the person's skills, contributions, gifts and talents.
2. Seek out employment opportunities that use or highlight these resources.
3. Perform a written job analysis to determine task sequencing and natural supports; identify those parts of the job that may require additional instruction, modification, alternative production methods, or that may need to be performed in partnership with or by another worker.
4. Engage in interest-based negotiation that highlights the individual's contribution to the workplace; and offers a reasonable and understandable re-arrangement of work tasks in order to employ the individual.
5. Provide quality consultation to the employer and co-workers so that they can teach the individual the job.
6. Provide on-going support to the employer

Edited for length from an article by the same name written by Cary Griffin and Dave Hammis

> "Employers across the U.S. are finding that there are many business benefits associated with the employment of people with disabilities and the marketing of products and services to customers with disabilities. People with disabilities have much to contribute, and businesses are taking notice by proactively and successfully including disability as a diversity strategy."
>
> - Katherine McCary, President of U.S. Business Leadership Network.

Participants in the study were 803 adults randomly selected across the continental United States. Most respondents drew upon personal experience in their answers, as seventy-five percent (75%) reported that they had either worked directly with someone with a disability and/or received services as a customer by a person with a disability.

Ninety-one percent (91%) of those with a coworker with a disability said that the job performance of his/her coworker was "very good" or "good." Ninety-eight percent (98%) of those who had been served by a worker with a disability said they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the services they received.

"Hiring individuals with disabilities is, in fact, good for business," says CT Hill, chairman, president & CEO of SunTrust Banks Mid-Atlantic, whose company is a member of the U.S. Business Leadership Network. "The return on investment to SunTrust can be measured in several ways. One, it helps our diversity initiatives, building a strong workforce; two, it helps us develop products and services, thus expanding our customer base; and three, it enables us to reach out to our entire community. It's good for our shareholders and it's good for business."

About the research and the journal that published it:

The Center for Social Development & Education (CSDE) founded in 1976, is a multidisciplinary, multi-service institute seeking to improve the quality of life of children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities. The research conducted by CSDE informs practice, guides the design and development of professional development activities, and is used in the formulation and evaluation of policies at the state and national levels.

The Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR) provides a forum for discussion and dissemination of information about the major areas that constitute vocational rehabilitation. The Journal's primary aim is to publish rehabilitation articles that have immediate application for helping rehabilitation counselors, psychologists and other professionals in providing direct services to people with disabilities.

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Your letters and stories are welcome. Program participants and/or their families who submit published stories will be paid $100.

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2006 'Guide To Employment Supports' Now Available Through The Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration has released the 2006 edition of the "Red Book," a summary guide to employment support for individuals with disabilities under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplementary Security Income (SSI) programs.

The Guide Book contains useful information that will assist people with disabilities in knowing how to go to or return to work in such a way that helps maximize economic self-sufficiency. This publication may be a useful tool to enable people with disabilities to enter the world of employment as part of their overall life approach of fulfilling career dreams and aspirations and striving to reach their greatest potential as they continually seek to enhance their own economic productivity.

The publication includes: amount adjustments for 2006; summary of recent and current activities; basic information on SSDI and SSI eligibility and benefits; an overview of employment supports, including SSI and SSDI programs. Online versions are available both in PDF and HTML formats.

To view a copy online and to download it please visit:
http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/redbook.htm
Or contact the Social Security Administration
(800) 772-1213 [voice] or (800) 325-0778 [TTY].

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