



Finding Gold: Hiring the Best and the Brightest

DO-IT

Tips for Employers to Hire Individuals with Disabilities

Many companies report their number one problem to be locating talented workers. Recruitment of quality employees comes at a high cost. Many employers have found that one way to gain an edge in recruiting is to identify talented people before they graduate from college. At their companies, internship programs are used to develop pools of individuals from which they may ultimately hire. Internships and other work-based learning programs give employers and students opportunities to “test each other out” and determine if they make good matches. This saves companies time and money in recruitment efforts. These programs also give companies opportunities to participate in student training and, for students with disabilities, allow both students and employers to test different worksite accommodations.

Corporate success depends on attracting the best minds out there, and that means focusing on ability. However, many people are nervous around people with disabilities. They’re afraid they’ll say or do the wrong thing. Many people have not had opportunities to interact with people with disabilities and are not aware of the alternative methods they use to complete work tasks. We need to look beyond our own perceptions of what people with disabilities are capable of and how they will perform in work environments.

In a world where technology is ubiquitous, physical ability is seldom a limitation. Intellect and technical capability are what count. Assistive technology and other accommodations make it possible for people with disabilities to be competitive in today’s labor market. People with disabilities represent an underutilized labor pool.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that employers with fifteen or more employees make reasonable accommodations in the workplace for employees with disabilities. Accommodations are to be made on a case-by-case basis and may not be required when costs create an undue hardship. These accommodations usually cost less than the employer expects. Dan Hodge, Recruitment Manager for AirTouch Cellular, remarked that the cost of making “accommodations for a student or for an employee are much less than we ever anticipate they are going to be in a situation. And, typically, the accommodations are easy for us to make.” In fact, the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a toll-free service that advises businesses and individuals about accommodations, has reported that many accommodations cost less than \$500.

Where can I find interns and employees with disabilities?

The first step in attracting applicants with disabilities is as simple as adding a statement in your recruitment materials that indicates your desire to receive applications from people, including those with disabilities.

Next, disseminate announcements in a variety of settings. On college campuses, there are several offices that may be able to assist you with recruitment efforts. Career services offices and cooperative education programs are used to working with employers and helping them with locating talented student interns and employees. Work with these offices to expand recruitment efforts to college students with disabilities.



Academic departments are often aware of specific students who might be good matches for your position and business environment. Establishing contacts with postsecondary faculty and staff can help you locate skilled interns and employees.

Campus disability services offices provide academic accommodations to students and staff. Many offices have newsletters and e-mail discussion groups for their students. Ask if you can advertise job and internship openings through these established methods of communication. Contact colleges, universities, and technical schools to inquire about these possibilities.

Your state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Services for the Blind, Employment Security, and Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities can also provide you with referrals for qualified candidates.

Local communities often have a number of agencies that serve people with disabilities as they pursue employment opportunities. They are listed in your local telephone directory.

Resources

The following national resources are rich with information about working with people who have disabilities.

- **AccessCareers, DO-IT** (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology)
DO-IT works to increase the successful participation of people with disabilities in academic programs and careers. DO-IT uses adaptive technology and the Internet to increase productivity, participation, and independence. It provides instructional materials (print, video, and WWW)

regarding the transition from high school to college and school to work. <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Careers/>.

- **AHEAD** (Association on Higher Education and Disability)
AHEAD is a member organization comprised of disability services officers of postsecondary institutions. This organization can provide you with contact information for offices in your area. <http://www.ahead.org/>.



- **DisabilityInfo.gov**
DisabilityInfo.gov is a one-stop website for people with disabilities, their families, employers, veterans, and workforce professionals for the purpose of helping people with disabilities participate in the workforce and in their communities. <http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>.
- **ENTRY POINT!**, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
ENTRY POINT! is an internship program for college students with disabilities majoring in computer science, engineering, mathematics, or physical science. Contact ENTRY POINT! to inquire about becoming a part of this program. <http://www.entrypoint.org/>.



- **Office of Disability Employment Policy**, U.S. Department of Labor
This office expands the previous programs and services of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>.
- **I-NABIR**, The International Association of Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation
I-NABIR is an organization of business, rehabilitation service providers, schools and universities, trade unions, and associations who are placing people with disabilities into employment using a model of partnership with community businesses and employees. <http://www.inabir.org/>.
- **Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)**
RSA programs help people with disabilities gain employment. State and local vocational rehabilitation programs are listed in your telephone directory. <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/>.
- **Employee Resource for Hiring People with Disabilities**, Social Security Administration (SSA)
SSA offers links to resume databases of individuals with disabilities and other resources for employers. <http://www.ssa.gov/work/Employers/employersources.html>.
- **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)**, U.S. Department of Labor
The Workforce Recruitment Program helps employers fill summer and permanent positions with talented college students with disabilities. The WRP database contains profiles from student job candidates from 200 colleges and universities nationwide. <http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/workforc.htm>.

How do I determine appropriate accommodations?

The employee or intern with a disability is your best resource for determining appropriate workplace accommodations. He or she likely knows what will be needed to succeed on the job and potential vendors if equipment needs to be purchased.

The college disabled student services office can assist you when determining appropriate accommodations for a student worker from that school. Their experience providing accommodations for that student in the classroom will be useful when determining appropriate accommodations on the job.

State vocational rehabilitation offices and community agencies that serve people with disabilities can also provide useful information.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) answers questions about accommodations from employers and individuals with disabilities and the ADA.

Who is responsible for providing accommodations?

The employee or intern is responsible for providing personal accommodations such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, and personal attendants.

In most cases, it is the employer's responsibility to provide on-site job accommodations for an employee. It is sometimes possible, however, for the employer to receive tax credits and incentives for doing so. Your state division of vocational rehabilitation can assist you with obtaining information about these programs.



If the worker is an intern, however, the school and the business should collaborate to provide reasonable accommodations. For example, in some cases, the school may loan the student and the employer the necessary adaptive technology for the length of the internship experience.

Video and Training Materials

For more information, consult the *Finding Gold* video and publication at <http://www.washington.edu/doiit/Video/fndgld.html>.

About DO-IT

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Grants and gifts fund DO-IT publications, videos, and programs to support the academic and career success of people with disabilities. Contribute today by sending a check to DO-IT, Box 354842, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-4842.

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