“THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES”

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“The only disability in life is a bad attitude.”
Disability Facts:

- 1 in 5 people have a disability. (54 million Americans with disabilities)
- 4 Million+ Texans
- 30% of families with one or more member with a disability

- Chance of developing a disability increases dramatically with age.
  - 11% prevalence in ages 21 to 64 (TX)
  - 55% prevalence in age 65 and up (TX)

- In 2011, the employment rate of working-age people with disabilities in TX was 37.5 percent. (76.1% without disabilities)

- 1 in 4 individuals who are 21 years old will become disabled by the time they retire.
What is a Disability?

- **Americans with Disability Act Definition:**
  - has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more **major life activities**;
    - Walking, seeing, hearing, etc.
  - has a **record** of such an impairment; or
    - Past treatment/diagnosis; also, episodic or in remission
  - is **regarded** as having such an impairment.
    - “fired” because they were thought to have a disability that prevented them from doing the job.

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Definition:**
  - have a physical and/or mental condition that **affects your ability to work**
  - Person must **need** vocational rehabilitation services in order to help you get and/or keep a job
  - Person must be able to get and keep a **job** after receiving services
Disabilities in the Workplace

- **Mental Impairments**
  - Cognitive (learning, thinking, processing)
  - Psychosocial (interpersonal, behavior, coping, anxiety)
  - Psychiatric (depression, mood disorder, bipolar)

- **Physical Impairments**
  - Mobility/Orthopedic (spinal cord, amputations, muscular dystrophy)
  - Neurological (cerebral palsy, spina bifida, traumatic brain injury)

- **Sensory/Communication Impairments**
  - Deafness/Hearing Loss
  - Blind/Visually Impaired
The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program helps people with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep jobs.

HHSC State agency (75% federal funded/25% state funded)

For every dollar spent, VR consumers generate $9+ on taxable income.

13,000+ Consumers Successful Employed/Year

VR Program serves the “Dual Customer”

- **Consumers (Clients of VR)**
  - Individualized Services (counseling, job placement, assistive technology, training)

- **Businesses**
  - Partners to Retain Disabled Workers and Cultivate New Opportunities
VR Services for “Business”

- Access to Qualified Applicant Pool
  - Applicant Pre-Screening

- Worksite Consultation/Job Analysis
  - Accommodation Recommendations/Strategies/Solutions

- Job Retention Services for Injured/Disabled Workers
  - Return-to-Work Transition,
  - Functional & Transferable Skills Assessments

- Customized Training Programs
  - Diversity Training & Attitudinal Barriers

- Access to Resources & Follow-up Services
Disability Etiquette 101

- Use **Common Sense**.
- Extend basic courtesies to ALL people
- Offer to help before assisting
- Do not ask people *how they acquired* their disability, how they feel about it, or other personal questions unless it is clear that they want to discuss it.
- Be sensitive about physical contact
- Think before you speak
- **Don’t make assumptions**... accommodate only for disability
- Relax
Mobility Impairments

- **My Chair, My Body** - People who use a wheelchair, walker, or cane often consider this technology to be an extension of their body.

- Talk face to face/**Eye Level** when possible.

- Check surrounding for accessibility. If barriers cannot be removed, alert persons with mobility impairments before the event so that they can make decisions and **plan ahead**.

- Keep Ramps and Walkways **clear of objects**.

- Consider **“Reach Height”** when storing objects.
There are a wide range of hearing losses and communication methods. If you do not know the individuals preferred communication method, ASK.

Deaf people utilize their vision skills for communication

Not all people who are deaf can read lips

Speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips

Do not exaggerate your speech

People who read lips only understand 20 to 25% of what is being said

If you are asked to repeat yourself several times, try rephrasing your sentence.
Deaf & Hard of Hearing

- When using an interpreter:
  - Always address your comments, questions, and concerns directly to the person with whom you are talking, never to the interpreter.
  - Always face the individual, and not the interpreter.
  - Always look directly at a person who has a hearing loss. Use eye to eye contact.
  - Use facial expressions and body language to communicate the emotion of a message, such as displeasure or approval.
Blind & Visually Impaired

- Blind doesn’t necessarily mean blind
- Don’t assume that people with vision disabilities will remember your voice.
- Identify yourself by name when you approach a person with a vision disability and tell them when you are leaving the conversation or area.
- Use a normal tone of voice (for some reason, people with vision disabilities are often shouted at).
- It is okay to use vision references such as see or look.
- Mobility Assistance=Sighted Guide
- Guide dogs are working animals and should not be treated as pets.
- Do not assume what communication format an individual uses or prefers. (Braille, large print, audiotape)
Mental Impairments

- Not all mental disabilities are apparent
- Behaviors may seem strange, but are related to disabilities
- Do not assume that people with psychiatric disabilities are more likely to be violent than people without psychiatric disabilities; this is a myth.
- Do not assume that all people with psychiatric disabilities take or should take medication.
- Do not assume that people with psychiatric disabilities do not know what is best for them, or have poor judgment.
- If someone with a psychiatric disability gets upset, ask calmly if there is anything you can do to help and then respect their wishes.
- Do not assume that a person with a psychiatric disability is unable to cope with stress.
Cognitive Impairments

- Adults with cognitive impairments should be treated and spoken to in the same fashion as other adults.
- Don’t “Talk Down”
- Avoid Stereotypes
- Don’t Assume they lack skills, abilities, ideas, knowledge, or experience
- Give clear instructions
- Use a variety of communication tools (pictures, photos, written instructions, etc.)
Benefits of Diversification...

- **High Return on Investment**
- **Increase Revenues**
  - Access new markets.
    - Survey Stat: 87% of the public would prefer to give their business to companies that know to hire people with disabilities.
    - Stat: People with disabilities, as reported by the US Census, represent $1 trillion dollars in spending.
  - Improve productivity through innovative and effective ways of doing business.
    - Accommodations are usually universally effective...
    - Cooling Vest
Benefits of Diversification...

- **Recruiting**
  - Workforce shortage within the next five years.
  - 79% of companies reported a big gap in their talent pipeline.
  - Many employers are finding success with an often overlooked talent pool — candidates with disabilities.
  - Nearly 2.2 million (11%) of graduating college students have a disability.
  - There are over 24 million disabled veterans — a number that continues to rise.
Benefits of Diversification…

- **Retention**
  - Employees with disabilities have been shown to be productive employees who tend to remain with their employer.
  
  - Stat: A recent DePaul Study of 314 employees across several industries indicates participants with disabilities had fewer scheduled absences than those without disabilities, and that all participants had nearly identical job performance ratings.
  
  - Stat: Marriott employees experience a 6% turnover rate versus the 52% turnover rate of their overall workforce.
Commonly Asked Questions...
How do I Accommodate for a Disability?

Reasonable accommodation:

...change in the work environment or in the way a job is performed that enables a person with a disability to perform the essential functions of the job

Adjustments vs. Accommodations

- Job Analysis
- Most accommodations cost between $500-$600
- On the average: “For every dollar spent, company received $30 in benefits”
- Usually Benefit Everyone
What performance standards should I have for my employees with disabilities?

- You should hold all your employees to the same established **performance standards** for their positions.

- People with disabilities have the same skills as people without disabilities – the only difference is that they might do things differently.

- Job Match Success: Analysis-Accommodation
Can I fire an employee with a disability who is not doing their job?

☐ Yes.

☐ The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that as long as an individual with a disability has been provided with an accommodation, if requested, that individual can be treated the same as other employees when evaluating performance.

☐ This includes taking disciplinary actions for those who are not performing their essential job functions.
How do I make my business more “disability friendly”?

- **Initiate a Plan**
  - Disability Resource Guide
  - Applicant Protocol

- **Develop Written Policies & Procedures**
  - Accommodation Request Process
  - Monitor & Update Accommodations

- **Create a “Disability Friendly” Culture**
  - Train Staff
  - Advertise Success
Questions/Comments???
“Do you have the ability to look past the disability?”
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