Advice from the study's employers to hesitant employers

Seek Education
Seek education on disability and inclusivity as well as seek contact with persons with disabilities. Employers discussed how the fear could be diminished by talking to employers like themselves, who have had success in retaining employees with ID.

> "It's just that one connection to that special person and you're hooked."

Shift your perspective
Shift how you view workplace operations and accommodate all employees, as every staff member, regardless of ability, has challenges and strengths.

Access Support
Employers should access support, whether for hands-on support in hiring (assessment), training and retaining, and/or financial support.

Promote strong management
The employers interviewed stated that effective leadership is evidenced by continual assessment, clear communication, transparency, approachability, patience, and flexibility. The employers interviewed stated that employers should provide concrete expectations and clear instructions. They should ask relevant questions and provide constant encouragement and positive reinforcement. This should be for all employees, regardless of ability.

Try it!
Some employers explicitly stated that hesitant employers should hire people with ID, because after you try it, you'll begin to learn their value.

> "His attendance is impeccable. He's never sick. He never complains and…he's like the perfect employee."

> "[They have] diversabilities and what [that means] is people that are challenged by certain parts of their intellect. That doesn't mean they are stupid, it just means that they have a challenge in learning things, they have a challenge in how they approach things, they have a challenge in their memory. Whatever they have a challenge with, it doesn't mean that they have a disability. It just means that they learn or they speak or they communicate in different ways; so I always try to look at it that way…if you can find what they do, what they want to do, what their strength is, then that's what they need to do, is find tasks that embrace their strengths."

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Canada

THE BENEFITS TO HIRING INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES: EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES

Final Brochure 2018

Employment is for everybody! People with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) often face employer discrimination when searching for work. This brochure summarizes interviews with 13 employers (15 managers/supervisors) who have 1.5 to 30 years' experience hiring workers with ID.

The goal of the study was to learn about the benefits associated with hiring people with ID, and to obtain advice from experienced employers to provide information to hesitant employers. Negative stereotypes about people with ID can be challenged with knowledge on how people with ID contribute to the workforce. The findings from the study can be used to educate hesitant employers on the benefits to hiring people with ID with the hope of improving employment rates for people with ID.

What are the benefits to hiring people with Intellectual Disabilities?

1 Workplace Environment

Employee Personality
Employees with ID were described by their employers as kind, caring, passionate, social, dedicated, humourous, thankful, hardworking and appreciative. Some employers described their employees' constant positive attitudes and energy, in that they are always smiling and having fun. These characteristics influence their other employees.

Team-Buildling
Employers discussed the sense teamwork their employees with ID brought to the workforce. Many employers discussed how their staff is willing to work together and help each other. This sense of teamwork provides employees with greater purpose and greater responsibility. Many employers also discussed the increased respect staff members have for their colleagues.

> "It would be nice to see if we had somebody like [the employee with ID] in every program, because there is a lot of affection attached to [him]: [it's] relationship [building]."

Perspective Shift
Company operation was often seen through a different lens. Many employers saw the benefits to job customization (employment that involves carving out a position within a company that may not have previously existed), and the importance of flexibility. Some employers posited that when all employees are given tasks that are suited to their strengths, workplace operations run more smoothly. Regarding flexibility, some employers stated that it is worth investing the time in hiring and retaining employees with ID as they are hard-working and dedicated.

2 Business

Filled roles
Employees with ID are filling roles and are completing tasks that need to be completed. They were cooks, cashiers, cleaners, early childhood educators, dishwashers, courtesy clerks, sales representatives and much more. Some of the employees with ID had the same job descriptions as employees without disabilities. Some of the employees with ID had more customizable positions where they were filling a gap in service and/or completing certain tasks so other employees could focus solely on completing their tasks.

Employee work ethic
Employers spoke about their employees with ID in terms of their dedication to work, and their job ownership. Many of the employees with ID requested a challenge and were excited to take on new tasks. With dedication, also comes employment longevity.

Colleague work ethic
Some employers discussed a change in staff members' work ethic with having a co-worker with ID. These changes were two-fold: 1) colleagues demonstrated emerging leadership and supervisory skills, and 2) colleagues' work ethics were challenged due to the strong work ethic of the employees with ID.

Diversity
Some employers noticed that customers enjoy seeing the diversity in their workplace. This can draw customers to the company/organization and increase business. An employer explained how customers are drawn to their particular company because they hire inclusively and/or because the customer identifies with the diverse group that works there.

3 Employer Job Satisfaction
Employers experienced greater job satisfaction in knowing that they were making a difference by hiring inclusively and connecting to the community. Employers themselves also reap the benefits of a more positive workplace environment. When employers shift their perspectives, it can also promote greater job satisfaction and happiness not only at work but also outside of work.

Community Connection
Employers voiced job satisfaction related to the fact that their company/organization is connected to the community by demonstrating diversity. Many employers interviewed were also connected to community employment support services and accessed their expertise to ensure the most successful employment for their employees with ID. When employers and social service providers come together, each bringing their expertise, they work towards building a sense of community.

> "[I get] to celebrate [diversity] every day…I'm not supposed to feel this much joy at work!"

4 Community Support and Expertise

Hiring Support
Community support professionals provide their expertise in assessment and match employer and employee needs.

Training Support
Community support professionals provide complimentary hands-on support and expertise in training individuals with different learning and communication styles.

Retaining Support
Community support professionals provide retaining strategies and long-term support if needed.