



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Disability Inclusion in the Workplace: Why It Matters

Adapted from the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion

If you're an employer new to understanding the role disability plays in workplace diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), you may be looking for guidance and background on the what, why, and how of making your organization more welcoming and accessible to applicants and employees with disabilities.

Bias Against Disabled People

Research tells us that while unconscious or implicit bias against some people has reduced dramatically over the past 14 years, unconscious or implicit bias against people with disabilities has remained relatively constant, dropping only 3% over that same period. According to Access Living, ableism is discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities. As with any form of discrimination, ableist ideas are applied to the entire group of people with disabilities. Ableism furthers harmful stereotypes and assumptions about what people can or cannot do. While many people in the disability community point to a lack of accessibility features in the environment as disabling, the ableist perspective focuses on the need to "fix" people with disabilities so they can adapt to an environment that is not accessible.

What Does It Mean to be Disability-Inclusive?

There are numerous characteristics associated with disability-inclusive organizations. What is often surprising to employers is that most inclusion practices geared

toward employees and job seekers with disabilities have the added bonus of benefiting everyone. Learn more about ensuring your organization's DEIA plan includes people with disabilities.

Disability

Building a representative workforce includes appropriately identifying talent, using multiple methods to announce vacancies, supporting a pipeline of new members of the workforce, mitigating bias in the promotion process, and addressing any potential barriers in accessing job opportunities.

Equity

Ensuring consistent and systemic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all employees includes creating equal opportunities for career advancement, mitigating barriers to professional development and promotion, and advancing access to workplace services and supports.

Inclusion

Ensuring that all employees feel supported and welcomed includes providing opportunities for growth, strengthening feedback loops for employee input, and cultivating a psychologically safe workplace culture.

Accessibility

Designing facilities, technology, programs, and services so all employees can use them fully and independently includes engaging proactively with users, reviewing existing and forthcoming accessibility guidance, making timely updates, and bringing together relevant stakeholders when making decisions affecting accessibility.

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Disability Inclusion Steps to Success

Inclusive Business Culture

Foster an inclusive business culture, starting with expressions of commitment to your DEIA plans from the highest levels and carried across an organization wide through practices such as disability-focused employee resource groups and engagement activities.

Outreach and Recruitment

Ensure disability-inclusive outreach and recruitment by developing relationships with a variety of recruitment sources in order to build a pipeline of qualified candidates with disabilities for the future.

Talent Acquisition and Retention Processes

Ensure disability-inclusive talent acquisition and retention process by establishing personnel systems and job descriptions that facilitate not only the hiring but also advancement of people with disabilities.

Accommodations

Provide the accommodations employees with disabilities may need to do their jobs effectively, whether that means assistive technology, a flexible schedule or numerous other reasonable accommodations or productivity enhancements.

Communication of Company Policies and Practices

Implement methods for effectively communicating your organization's policies and practices internally and externally to demonstrate your commitment to disability inclusion, as well as provide training on disability-related workplace issues to staff.

Accessible Information and Communication Technology

Ensure a barrier-free workplace by maintaining accessible information and communication technology, and take steps to make sure your workplace is physically and digitally accessible and inclusive and welcoming of people with disabilities.

Accountability and Self-Identification

Implement accountability and self-identification by adopting written policies, practices, and procedures and tracking their effectiveness in order to identify areas for improvement.

Conclusion

People with disabilities may also offer employers a competitive edge, helping diversify and strengthen their workplaces through varied perspectives on how to confront challenges and get the job done. They bring creativity, innovation, problem solving, and commitment to the workplace. Studies have shown that employees with disabilities stay at jobs longer, thus reducing the time and cost involved in retraining and replacing personnel. By addressing bias in the workplace, organizations help create an environment where employees feel a sense of belonging and know they are safe and valued for the perspectives they bring to the table.

References:

<https://askearn.org/page/disability-inclusion-in-the-workplace>

<https://askearn.org/page/unconscious-bias>

<https://askearn.org/page/finding-candidates-with-disabilities-2>