

# BENEFITS OF HIRING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## People with disabilities make great employees

As the American workforce ages and technical jobs proliferate, many employees are finding it hard to hire and retain good employees. Can we really afford to ignore an entire population of people who are ready and willing to become valued employees? By tuning in to workers with disabilities, employers are discovering scores of qualified job applicants that bring unique qualities and traits to the table. At the same time, employers who hire people with disabilities are often recognized for exemplary employment practices — just another edge in this competitive business world.

## Shattering myths about hiring people with disabilities

**Myth: People with disabilities do not have the right skills for business.**

**Fact:** People with disabilities often work harder to develop valuable traits that will make them attractive to employers. They bring unique characteristics to the workplace, sometimes *because* of their disabilities. (Example: Job retention may be higher in high noise areas where deaf employees are working.)

**Myth: Supports in the workplace would be too costly.**

**Fact:** 73% of employers reported that their workers with disabilities did not require accommodations. (March 2003, Work Trends)

**Fact:** Statistics show that 15% of accommodations cost nothing, and 50% of accommodations cost less than \$500. (ADA & IT Information Center for the Mid-Atlantic region)

**Myth: Saying the wrong thing in the workplace will offend workers with disabilities and lead to lawsuits.**

**Fact:** People with disabilities know that others don't speak the lingo. Just use "people first" language, putting the person first and the disability second. This means referring to workers as "people with disabilities" not "the disabled" and describing an individual as a "person who uses a wheelchair," not one who is "wheelchair bound."

**Myth: Hiring people with disabilities makes businesses vulnerable to litigation.**

**Fact:** Rarely do businesses experience disability-related claims. In a recent survey of employers regarding their experiences with the ADA, the vast majority of respondents reported that they had experienced no disability-related claims against their companies.

**Myth: Getting information on how to hire people with disabilities is time-consuming and complicated.**

**Fact:** Help is easy to get. Local agencies in Northwest Indiana are here to assist you at little or no cost. Additionally, Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACS) also provide employers with information, training, and technical assistance. Visit [www.Disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.Disabilityinfo.gov) for more information.

**Myth: Serving people with disabilities will negatively affect my bottom line.**

**Fact:** Consumers with disabilities represent an enormous market niche. People with disabilities have a combined income of more than \$1 trillion, with \$220 billion in discretionary income.

**Fact:** In 1995, people with disabilities spent more than \$81 billion on travel, excluding expenditures of family, friends, and escorts.

**Fact:** Customers with disabilities have the same preferences, perceptions, attitudes, habits, and needs as customers without disabilities, and they want the same quality of products and services.

## Incentives and technical assistance for hiring people with disabilities

Employers who hire people with disabilities may be eligible for tax credits, tax deductions and technical assistance. A good source for technical assistance is the expertise of local agencies who can provide supports such as job matching, on the job supports and disability awareness training. Employers can use financial incentives — tax credits or deductions — to help create disability-friendly environments for workers and customers with disabilities. Frequently used employer incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities include the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, the Veterans Job Training Act, and the Disabled Access Credit. For more information go to: [www.usbln.com](http://www.usbln.com)

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