



DISABILITY INCLUSION - GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Disability inclusion promotes a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where the talents and skills of different groups are valued, and where productivity improves because the workforce is motivated.

Employer: The law says that we have to hire persons with disabilities, but how do we do it?

Human Resources: It's not as difficult as you might imagine. More and more employers are now coming up with solutions that an **inclusive workplace**, in order to maximize their productivity, attract new talent and increase employee commitment.

There are many steps you can take to create a workplace environment where people with disabilities can contribute. For example, lowering shelves or raising the desk. You might want to undertake a 'disability audit' of your work environment, assessing factors such as whether your premises are accessible to disabled workers.

Employer: What do you mean by '**inclusive workplace**'?

HR: An inclusive workplace is one where all employees have equal access to opportunities and resources. It's a place where all employees – regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language or poverty - are seen and heard by those around them. It's an environment without physical, social and cultural barriers.

Employer: How do we make our office more inclusive?

HR: By adjusting negative attitudes and perceptions about recruiting persons with disabilities, and providing them with '**reasonable accommodation**' when they need it.

Employer: What is **reasonable accommodation**?

HR: Reasonable accommodation aims to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise human rights and fundamental freedoms equally with others. Reasonable accommodation means necessary, appropriate modifications or adjustments that don't impose a disproportionate or undue burden on the employer.¹ These will be

WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES ARE GOOD FOR PRODUCTIVITY

Industry reports confirm that hiring people with disabilities makes good economic and business sense. Reports* confirm that disabled workers:

- make **good, dependable employees**
- are more likely to **stay on the job**
- increase workforce **morale** and improve **teamwork**
- are an **untapped resource** of skills and talents
- represent (with their families and friend) an overlooked, **multibillion-dollar market**
- have a positive effect on overall **productivity, quality** and workplace cooperation
- reduce **worker turnover**

*Employers' Forum on Disability:
www.realising-potential.org/six-building-blocks/commercial/what-researchers-say.html

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008 [Article 2]

adaptations or other forms of support, tailor-made for an individual, according to their specific impairments and the job requirements. This might include not just physical adaptations but changes to a job application process, modification of work schedules, providing or modifying equipment, or assignment of a job coach. Disabled persons themselves know their needs – the individual concerned should be consulted.²

Not all persons with disabilities require accommodations. What's more, the costs for those who do is much lower than many employers expect, and can be minimal.

WHAT IS REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?

When changing the work environment or the way a job is performed, to allow a disabled worker to enjoy equal employment opportunities, it may be reasonable that the employer:

- Obtains new equipment, e.g. voice recognition software for visually impaired persons.
- Adjusts or modifies machinery or equipment, for example raising or lowering a chair.
- Provides support measures such as more time for a slow learner in training.

SOME INEXPENSIVE EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION



As a result of a work-related accident Mr. Wasan now uses prosthetic arms. He currently works in the Hot Line Computer Department at the Provincial Electricity Authority of Thailand. In order to reduce the muscle fatigue of the arms while working on his computer **he needs reasonable accommodation in the form of a chair that supports the weight of his arm.**



Esoftflow in Viet Nam specializes in professional visualizations for the real estate sector. In line with its policy of a diversified workforce, it employs people with disabilities. The **reasonable accommodation provided to one graphic designer is a platform** that allows the employee to adjust to the height of the computer desk.

For more information visit www.ilo.org/asia or email BANGKOK@ILO.ORG

Similar issues of discrimination in the world of work: Stigma doesn't discriminate; a reflection on World AIDS Day , Disability and HIV/AIDS – common causes of workplace discrimination

² US Department of Labor, <http://www.doleta.gov/disability/htmldocs/myths.cfm>.