



Business Matters

Encouraging Diversity in the Workplace • Promoting a Positive Environment for Business Growth

Spring 2002

ENABLING THE WORKPLACE

Greg Smith is a lead software developer in Microsoft's research group, and, like millions of Americans, he uses a personal computer throughout his working day to communicate, analyze information, access the Internet, and write reports.

At one time, using a PC would have been almost impossible for Greg, who is quadriplegic and has very limited arm movement due to a football injury. But today, with a pointer attached to his right arm in lieu of a keyboard, and a "sip-and-puff" headset replacing his mouse, Greg works with his PC like anyone else.

A decade ago, PCs lacked the accessibility that today enables Greg and others with disabilities—whether visual, mobility, hearing, cognitive, or language related—to take advantage of the power of technology. Today, what makes Greg's situation so remarkable is how unremarkable it is.

As PCs play an increasingly central role in the workplace and in people's lives, accessibility features such as customizable screen magnification and alternative mouse and keyboard controls are being integrated into PC operating systems and widely available productivity software. In addition, assistive technologies such as screen readers, Braille output displays, speech-recognition software, speech synthesizers, and text-telephone software enable people with disabilities to fully enjoy the benefits of technology.

In recognition of the importance of accessible technology, a federal regulation – Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 – went into effect in June 2001. Section 508 requires that all electronic and information technology systems purchased and

maintained by federal agencies, including government-run Web sites, must be accessible to people with disabilities. It ensures that the 7 percent of the federal workforce with disabilities—more than 160,000 government employees—can take advantage of the latest advancements in accessible technology. It also ensures that, over time, Web sites hosted by U.S. government agencies are accessible to Americans with disabilities. For people with hearing disabilities, Web sites with streaming video or audio files can offer closed captions or real-time captioning. For people who can't use their hands to navigate with a mouse, Web sites can be made compatible with assistive devices such as joysticks or puff straws. And proper design of text and graphics can make sites easier to navigate for people who have vision-related disabilities.

Considering that the U.S. government is one of the largest purchasers in the world of IT products and services, the new regulation will raise awareness of the value of providing accessible technologies in the workplace.

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Helpful Tools for Making Your Company Web site Accessible:

- ✓ **Bobby 3.2** - Free service to help Webpage authors identify and repair barriers to access by individuals with disabilities. www.cast.org/bobby/
- ✓ **Triple-A Conformance to Web site Content** – Pages bearing the logo state conformance to guidelines on web accessibility to users with disabilities. www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG1AAA-Conformance

Top Talent from Top Colleges



With graduation right around the corner, why not include the talents of qualified, dedicated students and graduates with disabilities into your workforce.

The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) gives businesses nationwide FREE on-line access to more than 1,500 profiles of college students with disabilities from 200 of the nation's leading colleges and universities! Applicants are highly motivated, post-secondary students and recent graduates, pre-screened and eager to work in summer internships or permanent positions. The WRP database allows employers to search by key words, location or degree; it also provides student data including interview evaluations and qualifications.

The best students commit early, so visit www.wrpjobs.org now to find out how you can hire from this talented pool of student applicants. Free copies of the WRP database are also available on CD-ROM. See website for more details.

For more information, please call (888) 590-8808, ext. 1011 or email contactus@wrpjobs.org.

BUSINESS APPRECIATION WEEK
TRADITION & INNOVATION Powering Virginia



MAY 12 - 18, 2002

DRS wishes to thank Virginia's businesses, large and small, whose innovative hiring practices bring talented employees with disabilities into the workplace! To learn more about participating in 'Business Appreciation Week', please visit www.dba.state.va.us.

➔ "Enabling the Workplace" continued...

Today, Microsoft's Accessible Technology Group has more than 40 people working with product developers, assistive-technology companies and disability advocates to ensure that people with disabilities can use software developed by both Microsoft and other companies.

For example, users of Windows 2000 and Windows XP will find an Accessibility Wizard that helps configure important accessibility options quickly and easily. And basic speech support in the Office XP productivity suite allows users to dictate text and navigate Office applications using voice commands via microphone. Microsoft believes that Section 508 is good for industry, government and, most importantly, for people with disabilities. Microsoft is working closely with federal IT managers and technology-industry leaders to help the government prepare for and comply with the new standards.

Despite a slowing economy, there is still a critical shortage of qualified workers in high tech and other key industries. In the years ahead, technology has the potential not only to create thousands of new jobs, but also to keep breaking down the barriers that, in the past, would have prevented people like Greg Smith from finding productive and fulfilling employment. To learn more about Microsoft Accessible Technology, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/>.

source: article written by Ellen Mosner, contributing author, WeMedia, www.wemedia.com.

Everyone Benefits from Workplace Flexibility

According to *Measuring the Impact of Workplace Flexibility* - a two-year study involving more than 1,500 employees and managers - when managed effectively, greater workplace flexibility is a win-win situation for both companies and their employees. The study found flexible work arrangements have a positive effect on:

	Employees	Managers
Productivity:	87%	87%
Work quality:	87%	65%
Retention:	80%	76%



source: *Employment Review online, www.er-hr.com*

Does your Job Description include the Emotional Demands of the Job?

The ADA requires that employers appropriately incorporate into their job descriptions the relevant physical demands of a job. If a job requires lifting, pushing or pulling, the job description would contain information on how much and how often these tasks are to be performed. However, job descriptions often are silent with respect to the "emotional" demands of the job. How can employers ensure that their new hires can mentally and emotionally cope with the pressures of the job?

While it would not be practical to include in job descriptions the level of mental health that is desired from the applicants, employers can update job descriptions to include the interpersonal skills or emotional competencies (expressed in the form of behavioral attributes) required of a job.

Here are some of the emotional competencies that could be included in a job description for an executive-level position:

- Ability to make decisions on imperfect information.
- Ability in multi-tasking.
- Bias toward action.
- Decisiveness.

Once the job description has been updated to include these emotional competencies, employers can ask questions in job interviews to determine if applicants possess the emotional capabilities the job demands. But employers must do so without directly inquiring about the applicant's emotional state.

Source: section taken from *HR Magazine*, Feb 2001, article written by Jonathan Segal

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• Don't miss out on the next Disability Awareness Training •

• April 18, 2002 in Roanoke, VA! See attached flyer for more details. •

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