

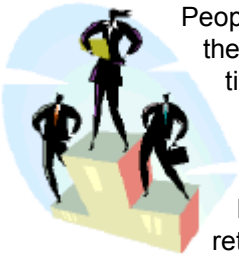


Business Matters

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

Summer 2003

Career Development for Employees with Disabilities



People with disabilities are like other employees; they want to do a good job, appreciate constructive supervision, enjoy new challenges and want to get ahead. Businesses that successfully recruit and retain qualified employees maintain a competitive edge in the global marketplace. One way for employers to retain employees is to establish career development plans for all employees, including those with disabilities. The following strategies contribute to the professional and personal growth of employees.

✓ Career Planning

Employers must recognize that people with disabilities have aspirations and career goals. Supervisors should discuss career expectations with each employee, including an evaluation of the employee's interests, talents and skills in relation to the requirements of available jobs. If an employee's career goals seem unachievable, the supervisor should provide constructive feedback and try to reach an agreement with the employee on appropriate goals and paths to achieving them. However, the supervisor should not assume an employee's disability will be a barrier. Employers should encourage career lattice movement or provide job rotations so employees can gain new experiences and recognize the transferability of skills and abilities to other positions.

✓ Team Building

Team building opportunities give employees chances to solve problems and develop solid working relationships with co-workers. Employers should ensure that employees with disabilities have leadership opportunities and are assigned to special projects, planning sessions, off-site projects and assignments requiring travel.

✓ Networking

Employers should include employees with disabilities in both formal work groups and informal employee gatherings. People with disabilities enjoy the same types of social and recreational activities as employees without disabilities. Frequently, important business is discussed at these events and interpersonal relationships are developed. Employers should arrange events in accessible facilities and arrange transportation to accommodate staff with disabilities.

✓ Mentoring

All staff can benefit from the guidance of a more experienced employee. Employers should encourage employees to

find mentors, whether or not the mentor has a disability. When the younger employees become more experienced, they should be encouraged to mentor other new employees, who may or may not have a disability.

✓ Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisal procedures vary among companies. Some companies use formal, written documents; others use less formal, often oral, procedures. Employers must treat employees with disabilities the same as all other employees. If a position has been restructured to accommodate a person's disability, evaluate the employee only on those tasks he or she is expected to perform, but apply the same performance standards to employees with disabilities that are applied to all employees. Supervisors should discuss the evaluation with the employee prior to the final write-up. After the discussion concerning the job performance in the current job is completed, it is important to have a career development discussion.

✓ Training

Training opportunities should be available to employees with disabilities. Management and leadership training should be among the options available, in addition to specific skills training. Formal classes must be held in accessible facilities. Materials should be available in large print for persons who are visually impaired; interpreters should be provided for participants who are hearing-impaired; and other accommodations should be made as needed.

✓ Self-Development

An employee with a disability must take responsibility for his or her career development. Employees should continually seek out new education, training and information. They should keep up on the latest information in the field, network and volunteer for new assignments.

**source: JTPR Workplace Connection, www.impact-publications.com*

A Matter of Fact...

Whenever possible, let employees choose the projects they would like to work on. Even though it may involve a little orchestration, allowing people to choose their jobs gives them the greatest opportunity to succeed.

source: "Communications Briefings", July 2003, www.briefings.com

