

**Stuart-O'Hara Inc.
Knowledge Management Services**

CLOSING THE GAP

**EMPLOYER RESEARCH
PROJECT REPORT**

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Introduction

Purposes

Employer-focused research is a key element of the Closing the Gap Project. This research and consultation program is designed to:

1. Identify issues and opportunities among employers in the Toronto region related to the workforce participation of persons with disabilities.
2. Help establish a basis for joint action by stakeholders aimed at enhancing the workforce participation of persons with disabilities.
3. Contribute to the formation of strategic initiatives to facilitate the development of a representative workforce in the Toronto region.

The employer research:

- . explores employer perspectives on the actual/potential benefits of increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in their workforces;
- . identifies how barriers and other challenges associated with the employment of persons with disabilities can be addressed; and
- . begins the process of engaging specific employers in the development of community-based strategies to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Focal issues

The Closing the Gap Project was designed to build on the findings of earlier work that is posted on the Closing the Gap website (www.closing-the-gap.ca).

The employer research focuses on three key issues:

- . the business case arguments for the employment of persons with disabilities;
- . the nature of the challenges expressed by employers; and
- . the receptivity of employers to new ideas and approaches.

The rationale for addressing these issues is elaborated below.

Business case arguments

The business benefits for the employment of persons with disabilities provide the foundations for a substantive and sustainable commitment by the corporate sector. There is also a view in the literature that employers think that employing persons with disabilities is costly, with few associated benefits.

Exploring and testing different business case arguments is a key focal issue for any research aimed at engaging the corporate sector in strategies to increase the workforce participation of persons with disabilities.

The research was designed to probe a variety of potential business case arguments, including demographic factors as well as arguments related to diversity thinking, corporate social responsibility, and corporate growth and change.

Challenges expressed by employers

While the barriers to employment of persons with disabilities have been widely researched and are generally well known, the size and complexity of the Toronto region do affect the workforce participation of persons with disabilities in the area. It is important to understand the particular regional issues, challenges and opportunities. The research provided an opportunity to explore employer perceptions about the potential impact of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Understanding employers' perceptions of the challenges also provides essential contextual information for new strategies aimed at increasing the participation of persons in the workforce. New strategies will only be effective if they address the barriers and challenges that now exist.

The employer-based research was designed to probe both supply-side barriers (i.e. barriers associated with persons with disabilities themselves) and demand-side barriers (i.e. barriers that exist within the employer). In addition, barriers related to services and agencies whose role it is to link persons with disabilities to employers were explored.

Receptivity to new approaches

One of the most important goals of this research was to explore new approaches and ideas for specific measures to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. Many effective practices have already been identified through research and practice, and the literature review which is posted on Closing the Gap website documents a number of promising practices used in other jurisdictions.

The emphasis in this work was to test a variety of new ideas and approaches with employers in the Toronto region, and assess the extent to which the business community would value them. This understanding is an essential step in designing new, community-based strategies that will be effective in increasing the workforce participation of persons with disabilities.

The research probed several different categories of possible approaches, including building the awareness and capabilities of employers, as well as measures which would strengthen the linkages between employers and persons with disabilities.

Methods

The research used interview and survey methodologies to collect data from private sector employers in the Toronto region.

Employer Sample

The employer sample was designed to reflect the diversity of the corporate sector in the Toronto region.

Specifically, the employer sample was designed to include employers of different size, economic sector, unionization, and levels of experience with persons with disabilities.

- . Diversity of size was a key criterion in constructing the employer sample. Efforts were made to ensure that the sample included both small employers (fewer than 100 employees) as well as large employers (over 1000 employees). Particular attention was made to ensure that mid-size companies (100-1000 employees) were included in the sample, as they represent an important source of jobs and employment in the Toronto region.
- . Diversity of economic sector was another key criterion. Companies in a range of industries were included in the sample.
- . Both unionized and non-unionized workplaces were included in the sample. Unionization is often identified as an issue in terms of the employment of persons with disabilities, and the sample was designed to enable better understanding of how this may affect employer perceptions.
- . Employers with different levels of experience with persons with disabilities were included in the sample. The levels of experience ranged from none to very experienced.

A total of 53 employers were interviewed during this process. All of the employers consulted in this research were private sector, for-profit businesses.

Employers were identified through a number of strategies and channels, including but not limited to members of the advisory panel, contacts of consulting team, lists of regulated employers, associations and other established networks.

The initial approach to employers was made by telephone. The project – and their potential role – was described and a request seeking their participation was made. If they were willing to participate, they were sent an email confirming their participation and also provided with a letter describing the project. The letter is included in Appendix A.

Data sources and collection

Data were collected using a combination of interview and survey methodologies.

A one-hour interview was conducted with representatives of each of the companies participating in the research.

- . The individuals who were interviewed held a variety of different positions, including senior executives and members of top management teams, human resource managers and/or supervisors, and diversity and/or employment equity specialists. In smaller companies, it was sometimes the owner and/or general manager who was interviewed.
- . In all but two cases, a single representative of the employer was interviewed. In two cases, more than one person was involved in the interview.
- . All but one of the interviews was done in person. The remaining one was done by telephone.
- . All of the interviews were conducted between April 8th and June 22nd, 2005.

An Interview Protocol was developed to gather this data. It is included in Appendix B. Three types of data were collected using a combination of techniques

- . Descriptive information was collected on the employer's corporate practices that are relevant to developing a representative workforce. Structured questions about human resource practices – particularly those related to recruitment, accommodation and flexible working arrangements – were used to elicit this information. An Employer Profile Form was completed for each employer. This is included in Appendix C.
- . Open-ended questions were used to gather qualitative data. Specifically, the open-ended questions probed for insights into employer's experiences and perceptions about the employment of persons with disabilities.
- . Survey techniques were used to gather quantitative data on the focal issues. The company representative completed the surveys during the interview process. This process resulted in a 100 percent response rate.

The surveys – referred to as “Issue Sheets” – were designed to develop quantitative data on employer perceptions on the three focal issues in this research: the business case arguments, the challenges perceived by employers, and their receptivity to new ideas and approaches. This quantitative data provided a common basis to compare and contrast the responses of different employers and/or groups of employers. The Issue Sheets are included in Appendix D.

Data analysis and reporting

All of the data were compiled and analyzed.

- . The descriptive information was sorted and tabulated. It was used to develop the employer profile, which is presented in the research findings.
- . The quantitative information collected from the Issue Sheets was compiled and analyzed. Responses to each of the Issue Sheets were tabulated by employer size. These tabulations are presented in Appendix E. Responses on the basis of employer size, as well as economic sector, were compared. Where appropriate, differences on the basis of unionization and level of experience with persons with disabilities were identified.
- . The qualitative information was transcribed and coded. Common themes were identified and incorporated into the relevant portion of the quantitative analysis as a means of enriching it and adding additional context. A particularly valuable set of qualitative data emerged from the open-ended question concerning “advice you would give to stakeholders”, namely other employers, persons with disabilities, service agencies and governments. A separate section is devoted to the responses to this question.

The research findings are presented as follows.

- . The Employer Profile section provides information about the employer sample and the practices of the companies participating in the research. Given the size of the sample, projection of this information to the general employer population should be done cautiously.
- . The chapter on Focal Issues section provides insights into employer perceptions of the challenges associated with employing persons with disabilities; information on the relevance of different business case arguments; and response to specific new ideas and approaches. Similar caveats apply to projecting these findings to the wider employer population.

This report concludes with a number of observations that flow from the research and provide the foundation for new strategic directions to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Research Findings: Employer Sample

Participation rates

A total of 109 employers were approached to participate in this research. Of these, 53 agreed to participate. Table 1 presents the employer response to being approached as a potential participant.

Table 1
Employer Response

Employer Response	Number of Employers
Agreed to participate	53
Declines:	56
- no call back (multiple messages)	32
- too busy	12
- not relevant to them	6
- telephone tag	3
- no experience	2
- no show	1
Total employers approached	109

More than half of the employers approached declined to participate. Seven of these are federally-regulated employers. Time constraints were a major issue for many employers, including for those that had agreed to participate. Often, it took more than two weeks to find a convenient time for the interview – in some cases it took up to a month. Rescheduling occurred on several occasions. These factors meant that it took 10 weeks of sustained effort to obtain 53 employers with the sample criteria established for this project.

The challenges recruiting participants for this project has implications for future initiatives geared at engaging employers in increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. Time is a critical factor, and so is the perceived relevance to the broader business issues of employers.

To be effective, future efforts must clearly situate this issue as a business issue for companies, and must take into account of the time constraints faced by all employers.

Size and sector

Size

The sample was distributed among three size categories.

- . Small employers with less than 100 employees: In these companies, it was usually the owner of the company or its general manager who was interviewed.
- . Mid-sized employers with between 100 and 1000 employees: In these companies, a range of people was interviewed. This included their owners/presidents, other members of an executive team; and human resource managers.
- . Large companies with greater than 1000 employees. In these companies, both executives and middle managers with responsibility for human resources were interviewed. In some cases, individuals with responsibility for workforce diversity were interviewed.

The size distribution of the employer sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of Employers by Size

Employer Size	Number of Employers	Percent of Sample
< 100 employees	15	28%
100-1000 employees	18	34%
> 1000 employees	20	38%
Total	53	100%

Sector

The sample was distributed among two broad economic sectors, namely manufacturing and services.

- Employers in the manufacturing sector included those involved in five different industries, including food and beverage, apparel, advanced technologies, industrial equipment and products, and publishing and printing.
- Employers in the services sector included those involved in nine different industries, including financial services, retailing, hospitality, business and professional services, transportation, commercial education and training, broadcasting, telecommunications, and recreation and entertainment.

Within the sample for each of the sectors, all three employer size groups were represented.

The sectoral distribution of the employer sample is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Distribution of Employers by Sector

Sector	Number of Employers
Manufacturing:	
- industrial products/equipment	4
- food and beverage	3
- advanced technologies	3
- apparel	2
- publishing/printing	2
Sub-total	14
Services	
- financial services	7
- broadcasting	7
- business and professional services	6
- retailing	4
- hospitality	4
- transportation	3
- recreation/entertainment	2
- commercial education/training	2
- telecommunications	
	39
Sub-total	
Total	53

Of the total sample of 53 employers, 14 (26%) were unionized. More than half (55%) of the large employers were unionized, while 16.7% of medium sized employers (i.e. with between 100 and 1000 employees) were unionized. None of the small employers were unionized. Unionized workplaces were both in the manufacturing sector and the services sector. In some cases, there were multiple unions in a single employer.

Human resource practices

Specialized staff

Human resource decisions are made in a variety of ways in different employers. Size is a key factor in how these decisions are made.

- . In smaller organizations, human resources decisions are usually made by the owner or general manager as part of his or hers overall responsibilities for the business.
- . Many mid-sized employers and most of the larger employers have specialist staff that had responsibility for human resource practices.
- . Some large employers – particularly those regulated under federal employment equity legislation or the federal contractors program – have staff dedicated to employment equity or diversity. Their work includes promoting the employment of persons with disabilities.

While specialized practitioners play an important role in the human resource decisions of their companies, line managers also play a critical role. Line managers are active participants in hiring decisions, putting accommodation measures in place, and initiatives to reintegrate employees who become disabled on the job. As such, line managers can play a key role in increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Recruitment practices

Most employers use a variety of approaches to recruit new employees.

- . The most common include advertising, recruitment and placement agencies and word of mouth.
- . Some employers – depending on the jobs – use the employment placement services of colleges and universities. There are mixed views among employers about the effectiveness of these services.
- . Co-op programs are also a source of new employees, particularly in engineering and technology jobs. Employers value these approaches because they provide a period where both the employee and employer can get to know one another and judge the mutual fit.

The internet has transformed recruitment practices.

- . Many mid-sized and large employers are turning to internet-based services such as Workopolis or Monster to source new employees.
- . Some large employers are now accepting resumés only through the internet.
- . Other large employers have developed their own, in-house internet based systems to recruit employees.

Flexible working arrangements

Most employers have flexible working arrangements. However, the type of arrangement is dependent on the job.

- . Permanent part-time is available in many businesses.
- . Flexible hours are common, as is tele-working (i.e. working from home).
- . Job sharing is much less common, in part because of the difficulties in matching two people to a single job.

Diversity initiatives

Diversity initiatives aim to increase the representation of all groups in the workforce, including persons with disabilities.

Diversity initiatives are most common among larger employers, particularly those that are regulated by employment equity legislation or the federal contractors program.

Common diversity practices include outreach to service agencies, targeted recruitment initiatives, measures to build a positive corporate culture, and identifying and promoting best practices.

In some larger companies, measures to increase diversity are being embedded into other human resources practices, such as recruitment. Also, in some larger businesses, accountability for diversity is being included in the overall performance indicators of line managers and executives.

Experience with persons with disabilities

Level of experience

There are mixed levels of experience in the employer sample. The distribution of employers by size and level of experience is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Distribution of Employers by Size and Level of Experience

Employer Size	Limited Experience %	Some Experience %	Significant Experience %
<100 Employees	67%	20%	13%
100-1000 Employees	17%	39%	44%
>1000 Employees	30%	15%	55%
Total	36%	25%	40%

In total, 36% of employers in the sample indicated that they have limited experience with the employment of persons with disabilities, while about two-thirds of the total sample indicated that they have either some experience (25% of total) or significant experience (40% of total).

Experience with persons with disabilities varies with firm size. Small employers have the lowest levels of experience, with 67% indicating that their experience is limited. Medium sized employers are more likely to have experience in the employment of persons with disabilities; with 39% indicating that they have some experience and 44% saying they have significant experience. Large employers are the most likely to have significant experience. Over half (55%) of the large employers in the sample indicate that they have significant experience with the employment of persons with disabilities.

Type of experience

Employers with experience were asked what types of experiences they have had. Commonalities and differences across employer size were found.

- . The most common type of experience across all employers is with employees who became disabled on the job.

- . Many larger employers also indicated that they also have experience in recruiting persons with disabilities into their workforces. These efforts are often part of an employment equity and/or diversity initiative within their companies.
- . Other employers – in all size groups – have ad hoc experience in recruiting and employing persons with disabilities. Often, these are the result of a personal relationship with the person with a disability through, for example, a family member or friend.

Accommodation

Employers were asked about their experience with accommodation.

- . Many employers have experience with job modification for employees who have become disabled on the job. A variety of job modifications were identified, including ergonomic accommodations as well as modification of working hours.
- . Most employers – particularly those in new buildings – said that their workplaces are accessible to persons with mobility disabilities. For these employers, accessibility did not emerge as an accommodation issue. However, for employers in older buildings, accessibility is a major issue. One mid-sized employer noted that the cost of making the workplace accessible would “put the company out of business”.
- . Acquisition of technical aids to accommodate employees with disabilities was also identified by a number of employers. Providing and/or paying for an assistant was seldom reported as an accommodation measure used by employers in the sample.
- . Few employers in the sample provide training for managers of persons with disabilities. A limited number of larger employers indicated that they are introducing programs to train managers of persons with disabilities, particularly in issues related to accommodation.

Relationships with service agencies

Employers were asked about relationships with agencies that provide services for persons with disabilities. The nature and extent of these relationships is related to firm size.

- . Larger employers are more likely to have relationship with service agencies than are either mid-size or small employers.
- . These employers usually have relationships with a variety of specific agencies serving persons with a particular disability, such as hearing impairment or mobility impairment.

- . Some also reported relationships with agencies providing services for a range of disabilities such as the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities or organizations such as Strategic Employment Services.
- . Many small and mid-sized employers said that they have no relationships with service agencies, and a number indicated that they had never been approached by any agency serving persons with disabilities.

For employers with relationships with service agencies, two key activities were identified.

- . Service agencies often provide job candidates for employers. Some employers use the service agencies to screen applicants. In some situations, employers call on the service agencies for advice and support after an individual is hired.
- . Employers sometimes turn to service agencies for advice on accommodation. They also rely on the individual with a disability to provide information as to how best to accommodate it.

Use of government programs

Employers were asked about their experiences with government programs related to persons with disabilities. A few employers used government websites to source job candidates.

Employers interviewed for this research tended to be unaware of any government programs, or unwilling to seek them out because the efforts and paperwork needed to take advantage of them were too time-consuming, providing little benefit for work required.

Perspectives on the AODA

Familiarity with the legislation

Employers were asked whether or not they were familiar with the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The majority (62.3%) of people interviewed – in employers of all sizes – are not aware of the legislation. Less than one-third (28.3%) have some awareness that new legislation was underway. A small proportion (9.4%) said that they are very familiar with the legislation. Most of these were in large employers, and were people with responsibilities for diversity.

Table 5 shows the distribution of employers by size and their familiarity with the AODA.

Table 5
Distribution of Employers by Size and Familiarity with the AODA

Employer Size	No Familiarity %	Some Familiarity %	High Familiarity %
<100 Employees	67%	33%	0%
100-1000 Employees	78%	17%	5%
>1000 Employees	45%	35%	20%
Total	63%	28%	9%

Impact

Respondents were provided with a brief description of the AODA, and asked to assess the potential impact of the new legislation on their businesses. While lack of familiarity with the legislation made it difficult for them to gauge the impact, certain key themes emerged.

- . Employers regulated under the federal employment equity legislation or the federal contractors program felt that the legislation would have little, if any impact. Their companies are already required by law to develop accessibility plans to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.
- . Other employers commented that, if there are significant costs associated with making their workplaces accessible, that there would be an adverse impact on the financial performance of their company.
- . Most employers said that they would wait and see what the government's expectations for employer action were and would, only then, be able to judge the impact on their businesses.

Sources of help

When asked where they would turn for help on implementing the AODA and managing its impact, employers indicated that they would likely turn to a number of sources for help.

- . Large employers stated that they would likely have a significant amount of knowledge and expertise in-house to deal with issues that emerged as a result of the legislation. Many noted that they could call on the advice of their human resource practitioners, legal counsel, and government relations staff to help them deal with the legislation.

- . Several mid-sized and larger employers said that they would turn to other employers in their own industry for identifying and developing ways to implement the legislation and manage its impact. The rationale for this is that employers within an industry generally face the same types of issues, particularly those involving legislation.
- . Other employers indicated that they would seek the assistance of outside legal counsel and expert consultants to implement the legislation.
- . Some employers expected that they would turn to the government for help in implementing the legislation. The Ministry of Labour was identified as a potential resource.

Expectations of government

Employers were asked what role government should play in helping employers implement the AODA.

The most frequently expressed expectation from government is for information about the new legislation. Employers want to know what is involved and what the government expects of them.

The employers interviewed also raised a number of other issues and expectations of government.

- . Some said that if the costs associated with accommodation were high, that funding should be available.
- . Some felt that politicians should provide visible leadership for this issue, as a means of making it a priority among business leaders.
- . Some noted that government should develop collaborative approaches to implementation, since confrontational approaches to enforcement would have little positive and significant adverse, effect on the willingness of employers to put the provisions of the legislation in place.

Research Findings: Focal Issues

This chapter of the report presents the findings related to the focal issues. It presents data on employer perceptions of the challenges of increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in their workforces; the relevance of different business case arguments that can underpin proactive measures to increase the employment of persons with disabilities; and employer receptivity to new ideas and approaches.

The quantitative results obtained using the Issue Sheets (Appendix D) are presented. Where appropriate, additional qualitative findings are included to elaborate and provide context for the quantitative information. Employers were also asked for their advice to each of the key stakeholder groups involved in increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. This advice is presented at the end of the chapter.

Challenges

Participants were asked to respond to a set of six statements describing potential challenges associated with the employment of persons with disabilities. In each case they were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1 = Disagree / 5 = Agree) if the challenge applied to businesses in general. The analysis compares the proportion of respondents who disagree with the statement (responding 1 or 2) with those who agree with it (responding 4 or 5).

Finding people with disabilities

There is a wide range of views among employers about whether or not it is difficult to find people with disabilities to recruit into their workforces (Table 6).

Table 6
Finding Persons with Disabilities (All Employers)

It is difficult to find persons with disabilities:	Disagree %	Agree %
- we don't know where to recruit persons with disabilities	29%	42%
- people with disabilities don't apply for our jobs	26%	43%
- we can't find people with the skills we need	45%	31%

Overall, employers are split on knowing where to recruit persons with disabilities. Small (43%) and medium sized (50%) employers are more likely than large employers (35%) to say that they do not know where to recruit persons with disabilities. This is a reflection of greater experience in large employers.

The question of whether or not people with disabilities applied for jobs with these employers raised a number of important issues.

- . Many employers say they had no means of knowing whether or not persons with disabilities were applying for jobs. Application forms usually do not ask for self-identification, and many persons with disabilities elect not to include this information on a resumé.
- . Some employers are inclined to see this as positive because it permits them to evaluate resumé's on the basis of the applicant's qualifications for the job. Issues related to disability could be addressed later, once the candidate was being interviewed or after he or she had received an offer of employment.

Almost half of the employers (45%) interviewed said that they do not have problems finding the skills they need. Large employers (40%) are more likely to express this as a problem, but one that was more pervasive issue than simply for persons with disabilities.

Several employers made the observation that having skills they want is the key to becoming employed. People with skills for the available jobs get hired.

Costs of employing persons with disabilities

There is a wide range of views among employers about whether or not it is costly to employ persons with disabilities. (Table 7).

Table 7
Costs of Employing Persons with Disabilities (All Employers)

It is costly to employ persons with disabilities:	Disagree %	Agree %
- the extra effort to recruit people with disabilities is costly	62%	19%
- re-integration of employees who become disabled is costly	50%	24%
- WSIB-related issues are costly	30%	48%
- flexible working arrangements are costly	79%	13%
- making the workplace accessible is costly	47%	28%
- job accommodation is costly	47%	21%

Most employers (79%) disagree that flexible working arrangements are costly, while the majority of employers disagree that the extra efforts to recruit persons with disabilities are costly (62%). Half (50%) disagree that reintegrating employees who had become disabled is costly. The only issue where more employers agreed than disagreed with costs concerned those related to the WSIB.

The range of perceptions on issue of making workplace accessible is a complicated issue, which has the potential to grow in the future.

- . Physical accessibility not an issue in new buildings. Retrofitting older buildings is very costly.
- . An emerging problem, however, is with the implementation of new technologies in many businesses. Current adaptive technologies are often not able to interface with many new systems coming to market, a problem exacerbated by vendors who do not live up to their promises to make interfaces work. When this happens, the cost to reconfigure corporate IT systems to make them accessible for persons with disabilities can be enormous.

Many employers noted that the perception of cost is often different from the reality.

- . Most accommodations are small, easy to do and relatively low-cost to implement.

- Employers who are not experienced in accommodation may have preconceived ideas of costs involved, and see this as a barrier to hiring persons with disabilities.

Some employers noted that the problem of costs is related to the impact on business unit performance

- Line managers will resist hiring persons with disabilities if there are extra costs that are charged to business unit, which affects its overall bottom line.
- Some larger employers have put accommodation funds in place. This fund is a corporate-level resource that can be used to pay for significant accommodation measures. The cost to the company is the same, but the disincentive is removed for the line manager who makes the employment decision.

Complexity of employing persons with disabilities

In general, employers do not agree that it complicated to employ persons with disabilities (Table 8).

**Table 8
Complexity of Employing Persons with Disabilities (All Employers)**

It is too complicated to employ persons with disabilities:	Disagree %	Agree %
- there is too much paperwork with insurance	72%	11%
- there is too much paperwork with doctors	70%	11%
- there are union constraints to re-integrating employees	63%	26%
- there is no public transport to us for persons with disabilities	60%	19%

For unionized employers, there are a variety of perspectives on working with unions to re-integrate employees. Of the unionized employers, Almost half (46%) disagreed with the statement that there were union constraints to re-integrating employees who had become disabled, while 38% agreed with the statement. Some unionized employers noted that re-integration was a priority for the union. Others said that arrangements were often made with unions outside the provisions of the collective agreement.

Transportation was not identified as an issue for most employers in the City of Toronto. Wheel Trans is readily available. However, some employers in Mississauga and in the northern parts of the Toronto region said that public transit was a problem. There is no seamless public transportation across the region and special arrangements have to be negotiated with suppliers of transportation.

Accommodating persons with disabilities

Employers generally do not agree that it is difficult to accommodate persons with disabilities (Table 9).

**Table 9
Accommodating Persons with Disabilities (All Employers)**

It is hard to accommodate persons with disabilities:	Disagree %	Agree %
- we have no experience in accommodation	62%	19%
- there is no one to give us advice on accommodation	64%	23%
- there is no one to pay for accommodation	51%	18%
- it is difficult to retrain an employee who becomes disabled	61%	16%

Most employers have experience in accommodation. Large (75%) and medium sized (62%) employers are more likely to say that they have experience in accommodation than small employers (47%).

Employers identify a number of sources of advice on accommodate.

- . The employee requiring accommodation is the usually the most important source of information on what is necessary and where to acquire it.
- . Employers – particularly large and medium sized ones – often seek assistance on accommodation from service agencies.

Employers note that while most accommodations are not costly, that if the necessary accommodation is expensive, funding may become an issue. If a line manager is required to pay for an expensive accommodation out of an operational budget, there is a negative impact on financial performance, which in turn serves as a disincentive to hiring a person with a disability. Corporate wide accommodation funds are designed to deal with this issue.

Impact on other employees

Employers generally do not agree that other employees do not find it difficult to work with persons with disabilities (Table 10).

Table 10
Impact on Other Employees (All Employers)

Other employees find it difficult to find persons with disabilities:	Disagree %	Agree %
- our managers are not trained or experienced	38%	38%
- employees are uncomfortable with people with disabilities	67%	14%
- employees resent special arrangements and/or accommodations	77%	17%

Most employers (67%) say that other employees are not uncomfortable working with an employee who has a disability. Similarly, the majority (77%) feels that other employees do not resent any special arrangements or accommodations. However, in situations where the accommodation may negatively affect another employee – for example when shifts that are normally assigned on the basis of seniority are assigned to an employee with a disability as an accommodation measures, this can be a source of resentment.

Employers were split on whether or not their managers have the training and experience to manage employees with disabilities. Over one third (38%) agree that their managers are not trained or experienced in supervising employees with disabilities. This issue is more prevalent among large (40%) and medium-sized employers (39%) than among small employers (33%).

Some employers see this as a critical issue, because front-line managers and supervisors play a key role in all employment decisions – from hiring new employees to re-integrating employees who become disabled.

A number of large and medium-sized employers in this sample are taking steps to train their managers. In many cases, this is being done as part of broader diversity awareness initiatives. In some cases, managers are receiving training to deal with specific disabilities. In a limited number of cases, just-in-time training is available to managers who are re-integrating employees who have become disabled.

Capability of service agencies

Employers have mixed views on the agencies serving persons with disabilities (Table 11).

Table 11
Capability of Service Agencies (All Employers)

Agencies serving persons with disabilities are not equipped to work effectively with businesses:	Disagree %	Agree %
- agencies don't understand the business world	37%	28%
- agencies aren't able to provide the help we need	54%	16%
- there are too many agencies and no coordination among them	33%	33%

Employers are split on the extent to which they feel that agencies understood the business world. Almost half of the large employers (42%), who are more experienced with service agencies than either small or medium-sized employers, agree with the statement that agencies don't understand the business world.

Of particular concern – mostly among large employers – is the lack of understanding of agencies about the business drivers (a good business case, profitability, performance) and constraints (time, hiring opportunities). Large employers frequently commented that agencies do not make the effort to understand the specific business needs and the types of work that was available. They also frequently expressed frustration with some service agencies that send candidates who do not have the qualifications for the jobs that are available. A number of employers blamed the service agencies for poor resumés and poor interviewing skills of job candidates who are sent to them.

Nonetheless, many employers say that the assistance that they receive from agencies is helpful. While some employers are frustrated with the candidates they receive, others value the work of agencies in helping to identify potential candidates and doing pre-screening. Many employers turn to agencies for their advice and assistance on accommodation. A few employers have contracted with agencies to provide training on specific disabilities for their managers.

There are mixed views on the number of agencies and the extent and nature of coordination among them. Almost half of the large employers surveyed (47%) agree with the statement that there are too many agencies and no coordination among them.

Other challenges

When employers were asked an open-ended question about the challenges to employing persons with disabilities, a number of recurrent themes emerge.

A number of employers indicated that they did *not* perceive any challenges in employing persons with disabilities.

- “Not a challenge.”
- “Not a big deal.”
- “No challenge – very rewarding.”
- “I don’t perceive a challenge.”
- “None.”
- “If the person can perform the task, there is no challenge.”

Many, however, indicated that finding qualified people was a challenge.

- “Finding qualified workers with the skills and experience we need.”
- “Finding the right person for the position.”
- “Finding suitable people for the business.”
- “Finding those individuals with the skill set and experience required.”
- “Fitting their abilities to the needs of the company.”
- “Can they fulfill the job requirements.”
- “Finding qualified personnel with necessary job skills.”
- “Finding persons with strong positive attitude about themselves and their capacity.”
- “Finding relevant expertise, the same as any other employee.”
- “Knowledge of how to reach them and include them in the recruitment process.”
- “How to find them and understand them.”
- “Finding individuals with the specific skills and experience required for our industry – not sure where we would go to find them.”
- “Qualifications missing – lack of funding for retraining.”

For some, the challenges related to accommodation and fitting into the workplace

- “Understanding their needs and fitting into our environment.”
- “Ensuring they have what they need.”
- “Finding them and coordinating their accommodation, funding and training.”
- “Physical limitations of office environment.”
- “Usually associated with technology.”
- “Ensuring persons with disabilities feel welcome, comfortable and accepted.”
- “Convincing them that we are equitable.”
- “Self-identification”
- “Time, effort and lack of transportation – having good support from agencies.”
- “Lack of adequate training, support and financial funding for exceptional accommodation.”
- “Many managers are inexperienced with accommodation. Some managers are not open to support.”
- “Finding the time and resources to ensure manager buy-in to hiring and integration process”.

Business case arguments

Participants were asked to respond to ten statements describing potential business case arguments for increasing the representation of persons with disabilities. For each business case argument, they were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1 = Less Relevant / 5 = More Relevant) how relevant it is to businesses in general. The analysis compares the proportion of respondents who found the business case argument less relevant (responding 1 or 2) with those who found it more relevant (responding 4 or 5).

Corporate resources and capabilities

Many employers find the arguments associated with strengthening corporate resources and capabilities as providing a relevant business case for employing persons with disabilities (Table 12).

Table 12
Stronger Resources and Capabilities as a Business Case (All Employers)

Business Case Argument	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %
Re-integrating employees who become disabled builds employee morale and trust.	6%	79%
Persons with disabilities can bring new and different skills that contribute to a richness of ideas and can be a source of innovation.	6%	77%
Employing persons with disabilities increases diversity in the workplace, which yields better-informed decisions	11%	74%
Persons with disabilities represent an important source of new employees, and can help to replace workers who are now reaching retirement age.	14%	65%
Employees with disabilities can bring knowledge that can assist corporate growth and change.	9%	64%

For all employers, the positive impact on trust and morale that comes with re-integrating employees who became disabled is ranked as the most relevant business case argument (79%) followed by the contributions that persons with disabilities can make to ideas and innovation within the company (77%).

However, there were differences by size of organization in the rating of the business case arguments. For small employers (i.e. with fewer than 100 employees) the benefits to trust and morale from re-integrating employees who become disabled is the most relevant business case argument (87%).

Both large (95%) and medium-sized (78%) employers identified the contributions that persons with disabilities can make to the richness of ideas and innovation as the most relevant business case argument.

Market position

A number of employers find the arguments associated with attaining a favourable market position as providing a relevant business case for employing persons with disabilities (Table 13).

**Table 13
Market Positioning as a Business Case (All Employers)**

Business Case Argument	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %
Making the workplace accessible for persons with disabilities improves it for everyone – other employees, customers, etc.	4%	77%
Having employees with disabilities will help companies reach and service new customers, including those with disabilities.	32%	45%
Re-integrating employees who become disabled lowers insurance costs.	27%	45%
Employing persons with disabilities helps companies access a broader range of contracting opportunities, for example as a federal contractor.	47%	32%

Among all employers (77%), the most relevant market-oriented reason concerned the positive impact of making the workplace accessible for persons with disabilities. This business case argument is consistently cited as the most relevant by all sizes of employers, including smaller ones (67%), medium-sized ones (72%) and large ones (90%).

Smaller employers do not see the other market-oriented business cases as being relevant to their businesses. Only 15% of small employers identified the potential to lower insurance costs as relevant, while 20% identified reaching and servicing employees as relevant.

Half of the medium-sized employers (50%) see the benefits of lower insurance costs as a relevant business case argument, while 44% rank reaching and servicing new customers as a relevant.

For the majority of large employers (65%), reaching and servicing new customers is a relevant business case argument. It is important to note that employers that provide consumer-oriented products and services (e.g. retailing, financial services, broadcasting, printing and publishing) were more likely to see the relevance of this as a business case than those in industries dealing with industrial customers, such as industrial products and equipment.

Social justice

Many employers (61%) find social justice to be a relevant business case argument (Table 14).

**Table 14
Social Justice as a Business Case (All Employers)**

Business Case Argument	Less Relevant %	More Relevant %
Employing persons with disabilities helps to ensure that companies meet their legal obligations to achieve social justice.	6%	61%

While this argument ranked lower than a number of other business case arguments, many employers express the view that employing persons with disabilities had a moral dimension to it. Specifically, many employers spontaneously stated that employing persons with disabilities was the “right” thing to do.

At the same time, they draw an important distinction: moral reasons alone do not provide the strongest business case. There are many other more important business case reasons for taking steps to increase the representation of persons with disabilities in their workforces. Employees with disabilities are capable of contributing the strength and competitiveness of their companies – in the same way as any other employee is. They do not need moral grounds to justify their employment.

Other business case arguments

When employers were asked an open-ended question about the business case for employing persons with disabilities, a number of recurrent themes emerge.

Many employers viewed the business case for employing persons with disabilities as being the same for any other employee.

- “Making the same contribution as any other committed, dedicated employee.”
- “Contributing ideas and talent – similar to all employees of an organization.”
- “In any way that a person without a disability could.”
- “The same way everyone else does.”
- “Doing their job well – same as anyone else!”
- “Providing knowledge and expertise.”
- “Becoming part of the company.”
- “Contributing their own voice.”
- “Opening the doors, acting the same, make the same contribution as a person with disabilities.”
- “Performing the same day to day function as any able-bodied employee. Bringing an insight that may drive innovation and growth into new products and markets.”
- “Working smart and hard like everyone else.”

Contributing to diversity was an important business benefit cited by many employers.

- “Opening our eyes to a different perspective.”
- “New and different skills: different outlook and perspective.”
- “Encouraging employers to look at things differently.”
- “Providing a diverse perspective.”
- “Ensuring a diverse workforce – better understanding of markets.”
- “Helping to create an environment of diversity.”
- “Bringing a different perspective to the work environment.”
- “Bringing a different perspectives of dealing with customers with disabilities.”
- “Allowing other employees to learn how to work with them in different situations, which strengthens all.”
- “Providing a link to new consumer markets.”
- “Being honest about experiences that could open doors to new clients, new employees.”
- “Understanding their abilities, knowing how to market them, and understanding the needs of the labour market.”

Making a positive impact on the culture of a company was identified by some employers as being a relevant business case.

- “Interacting with other employees in a positive way.”
- “Encouraging employees to look at things differently – increasing the level of compassion.”
- “Contributing the business and encouraging others.”
- “Bringing their passion, skills and creativity to the job.”
- “Helping the organization have a more inclusive perspective on a number of fronts.”
- “Showing existing employees they can become a group helping another group.”

“Assisting with morale – able-bodied employees will often be inspired by them.”

“Creating an environment conducive to being customer centred and value driven – contributes to sustainable business growth.”

“Their life experience, their intelligence and creativity if they are gifted this way, and also offer the rest of us insight into the problems they face.”

A limited number of employers identified issues related to social responsibility and reputation as providing a relevant business case for employing persons with disabilities.

“Furthering social responsibility program.”

“Good public relations.”

New ideas and approaches

Participants were asked to respond to a set of five statements describing potential new ideas and approaches for increasing the representation of persons with disabilities. For each statement, they were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (1 = Less Valued / 5 = More Valued) how the measures would be valued by businesses in general. The analysis compares the proportion of respondents who felt the measures would be less valued (responding 1 or 2) with those who felt they would be more valued (responding 4 or 5).

Employer awareness and understanding

Employers in this sample are very receptive to measures to increase employer awareness and understanding of persons with disabilities (Table 15).

Table 15
Employer Awareness and Understanding (All Employers)

Measures to increase employer awareness and understanding:	Less Valued %	More Valued %
- Information on effective employment practices	4%	75%
- information on effective outreach practices	4%	77%
- information on accommodation	2%	86%
- insights into the potential business benefits	6%	78%
- public recognition of exemplary companies	21%	58%

Overall, employers show a high level of consensus (86%) on the value of having information on accommodation. Almost every large employer (95%) identifies this of being valuable.

The majority of all employers – in each size group – would value information on effective employment practices (75%), effective outreach practices (77%) and insights into the potential business benefits (78%) of employing persons with disabilities.

Employer views on the value of public recognition are split. Some employers noted that public recognition is most valued by senior management, which in turn helps to build support for the employment of persons with disabilities in the company.

Employer capabilities

Employers are very receptive to measures that would build the capabilities of employers (Table 16).

**Table 16
Employer Capabilities (All Employers)**

Measures to build employer capabilities:	Less Valued %	More Valued %
- skill development for managers of persons with disabilities	4%	73%
- resource materials to help employers adopt effective practices	8%	80%
- Initiatives to promote positive corporate culture	8%	67%

Overall, employers show a high level of consensus having access to resource materials that can help them adopt effective employment practices (80%). Large employers (90%) are particularly likely to value these materials.

While the majority (73%) of employers of all sizes indicate that they would value having access to skill development for the managers of persons with disabilities, it is large employers (85%) that say that this would be of particular value to them.

Connecting employers and persons with disabilities

In general, employers are receptive to measures that would better connect them with persons with disabilities (Table 17).

Table 17
Connecting Employers with Persons with Disabilities (All Employers)

Measures to better connect employers with persons with disabilities:	Less Valued %	More Valued %
- development of networking opportunities	12%	61%
- development of internet-based networks	10%	73%
- strengthening the capabilities of educational placement services	6%	75%
- strengthening the capabilities of service agencies	6%	77%
- development of co-op/work experience initiatives	6%	80%

Employers (80%) are particularly receptive to the development of co-op and work experience initiatives. Many have already used these approaches with other employees (for example in engineering) and have seen the benefits of doing so. There is an opportunity for both the employee and employer to get to know one another, and see if there is a fit.

Opportunities to connect with persons with disabilities through personal networking (61%) or internet-based networks (73%) are seen as valuable by a majority of employers. The stronger preference for internet-based networks is associated with the time considerations of personal networking and the ease and flexibility of accessing internet-based networks.

The majority of employers – in all size groups – would value strengthening the capabilities of both service agencies (77%) and educational placement services (75%). For large employers (85%), strengthening the capabilities of education services would be the most valued means of better connecting them with persons with disabilities.

Reducing employer costs

The results of the survey show a wide range of views on the extent to which specific measures to reduce their costs would be valued (Table 18).

Table 18
Reducing Employer Costs (All Employers)

Measures to reduce employer costs:	Less Valued %	More Valued %
- funding for accommodation measures	16%	63%
- free expert advice on accommodation	8%	78%
- wage subsidies for persons with disabilities	28%	45%
- tax incentives for employment of persons with disabilities	20%	57%
- streamlining paperwork for insurance, etc.	27%	52%

Employers (78%) show strong consensus around having access to free expert advice on accommodation. This perspective is consistent across employer size, with 75% of large employers, 77% of medium sized employers and 86% of small employers indicating that they would value this.

There is less agreement (63%) about funding for accommodation. Many employers note that the costs for most accommodations are not significant, and can be absorbed by the business. Exceptional accommodations are another issue, which can act as a barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities.

Only about half (52%) of the employers say that they would value of streamlining paperwork. However, two-thirds of small employers (67%) indicate that this would be of value to them.

The issue of financial incentives, either through wage subsidies or tax incentives, raised a number of issues with employers.

Subsidies to lower the wage costs of employees with disabilities have very mixed reviews. Less than half (45%) of all employers would value wage subsidies. This view is strongest among large employers, with only 33% saying they would value them and 38% saying that they would not be valued.

Employers cite several factors that influence their views. In particular, they note that wage subsidies can devalue the person doing the job. Employers say that if the person with a disability is doing the job, no wage subsidy is necessary. Other – less commonly cited – factors include the perception problem of large employers receiving government handouts, and the paperwork involved, which reduces the value of any financial incentive.

Providing incentives to employers through the tax system is seen as less problematic, because a tax incentive is not attached to a specific person. However, it is important to note that there is little consensus on the value of tax incentives, with just over half (57%) of all employers saying that they would value this. Small employers (64%) are more likely to see value in tax incentives than either medium sized (56%) or large (53%) employers.

Partnership initiatives

Many employers feel that measures to build partnerships aimed at increasing the representation of persons with disabilities would be valuable (Table 19).

**Table 19
Partnership Initiatives (All Employers)**

Measures to build partnerships:	Less Valued %	More Valued %
- partnerships with other employers	18%	50%
- partnerships with service agencies	10%	71%
- partnerships with educational institutions	8%	69%
- partnerships with governments	19%	53%

Employers are likely to see more value in partnerships involving service agencies (71%) and educational institutions (69%) than those involving either other employers (50%) or governments (55%).

However, large employers (60%) are more likely to see value in working with other employers than are either small employers (54%) or medium-sized employers (35%).

Large employers say that partnerships with educational institutions would be valued (75%), while those with service agencies would be valuable (75%). A large proportion of small (77%) and medium-sized (59%) employers would value partnerships with service agencies.

Other new ideas and approaches

When employers were asked an open-ended question about other new ideas and approaches that would help them to increase the representation of persons with disabilities, a number of recurrent themes emerge.

Increasing knowledge and awareness of employers was identified as being an effective approach.

“Provide us with a step by step road map for success. We don’t know how to accomplish this, and we don’t have senior management buy-in. We need to understand the business case.”

“Learn more about accommodation – how we can create a successful work environment.”

“Show financial and production benefits to hiring special needs.”

“Information and incentives.”

“Become more aware and educated.”

“Increase employer awareness.”

“Increase employer awareness through education.”

“Education about how process works, what assistance is available, and examples of each.”

“Communicate program information and introduce candidates who meet a minimum set of qualifications.”

“Ensure that managers are provided with adequate training in diversity and equitable hiring practices.”

Some employers identified increasing relationships with persons with disabilities, and the organizations that serve them.

“Link with service agencies and educational institutions.”

“Effective outreach practices.”

“Outreach.”

“Consider people with disabilities with proper job skills for any open position.”

“To connect with all stakeholders: firms, agencies, educational institutions and persons with disabilities.”

“Actively commit to looking for qualified candidates among the disabled.”

“Partnerships with other agencies.”

“Work with schools and build co-op programs.”

“Have a ‘workable’ service.”

“Network with other agencies on an ongoing basis.”

“Create programs to allow disabled to contribute to a company’s growth.”

“Have potential employees marketed on their abilities rather than on their disability.”

“Build partnerships within the community (i.e. campus and offices for students with disabilities.”

Several employers suggested focusing on attitudinal issues as being an effective way to generate change.

“Have an open mind.”

“Be very open when recruiting.”

“Make a positive effort to hire the best qualified.”

“Being open to flexible working arrangements.”

“Being even more proactive in hiring initiatives and outreach.”

“Assess the job first, and the employee second. There are probably far more jobs open to disabled employees than usually recognized.”

Reducing time, paperwork and other costs was identified by a number of employers as being valuable to employers.

“Reduce cost of paperwork.”

“Make it easy for private sector employers to hire persons with disabilities – keep government/agency paperwork to a bare minimum.”

“Offer financial incentives.”

“Make it easy and not time consuming to inform disabled candidates about job opportunities.”

“Provide some financial and information support.”

“Limit costs of accommodation.”

“Make dealing with disability each and objective.”

“Make it easy and less scary.”

Employer advice to stakeholders

Employers were asked to provide their advice to four key stakeholder groups – other employers, persons with disabilities, agencies serving persons with disabilities, and government.

The following are verbatim answers that are grouped thematically.

Advice to other employers

Focus on ability.

“Focus on the ability.”

“Look at the person – look at what they *can* do.”

“Forget the disability – you’re hiring a person.”

“Don’t ever think about the disability – find the right personality fit and then make it work.”

“Learn what the person CAN do.”

“Be open – look at skills first, disability second.”

“Look past the disability.”

“Match the ability to the job.”

“Focus on functional ability.”

“Don’t get caught at the emotional level. Focus on abilities and attitude.”

“Don’t talk about restrictions and limitations – talk about what the person can do.”

“You have to approach the issue with an open mind and look beyond the disability and look at the qualities brought to the table.”

“Number one thing is to look at the labour pool and the qualified talent in it. Don’t employ someone because they are disabled – employ them because of their ability. Hiring a person with a disability in a token position is a lose/lose situation. It creates a bigger problem because the hiring manager will resist you in the future.”

Be respectful of persons with disabilities.

“Respect persons with disabilities – they have a lot to offer and understand their abilities very clearly.”

“Let’s not do this as a charity – but as an equal opportunity. The job challenge has to be the same – the employee has to feel self-worth.”

“Treat them like everyone else.”

“Treat them the same way and look for reliability.”

“Don’t treat them any differently.”

“Treat them equally. They often feel like they are not being treated equally, but they may need accommodation.”

Be open-minded.

“Be open to it.”

“There is a tendency to think it’s too hard to employ persons with disabilities. Sometimes it isn’t. Keep it open and find out what’s needed.”

“Don’t close your eyes to it. If you find an employee who is an asset – everyone feels good, has self-respect – and will become a long-term employee.”

“Be open-minded. Increase education to meet differing needs.”

“Great opportunities and the people work harder if it’s the right fit.”

“Just be flexible and be open to alternative arrangements. Look at the personality and make sure it fits the organization.”

“Rethink your assumptions in all the employment processes to ensure that the job requirements are essential and not unnecessarily restrictive.”

“There will be a lot of benefits that will not be obvious at first.”

“Give it a chance and just do it. It makes me feel good personally to give them a chance – and it makes the company look good.”

“Don’t be afraid.”

Make it a business issue.

“Make it a business priority. Need to ensure that you use all of the talent out there.”

“Make it a business issue – there is a difference between “nice” and “business”.”

“Have CEO and executive level leadership to show some proactive determination.”

“Need to have a commitment to diversity and support from senior managers.”

“Need to create an environment that will encourage managers to consider diversity when making employment decisions.”

“Track and report performance – see the numbers”

Get educated about disability and accommodation.

“Find out as much as possible about the disability and how to be accommodating.”

“Go through proper steps before committing to anything. Know and understand what you may have to go through paperwork-wise.”

“Get educated. There are so many areas of disability – disability training may not cover them all. It is hard to do because there are so many disabilities – employers need to be proactive.”

“Educate yourself about it.”

“Be prepared for what you’re taking on. If you are going to do it, offer assessments, make sure performance management is not tied to the position. It takes longer to do the job, so be prepared for that.”

“Understand that it’s going to take some start-up management time, then it will run OK.”

“Err on the side of what the job requires. Most of the time, the accommodation is not a big deal.”

“There is no accommodation that will bankrupt the company.”

Prepare managers and peers.

“Regardless of the person hired, provide staff education in advance so that they know what is involved.”

“People who are going to work with the person must be told and trained in advance as to how to deal with them, because there is an extra time commitment involved.”

“Provide education to management to make it work – and also to fellow employees so that they understand.”

“Prepare the managers and train them to work with diversity.”

“Do preparatory work with managers and other employees.”

“Provide awareness to managers and filter it down to the frontline.”

“Help people to understand how to deal with a person with a disability – educate people.”

“Help managers look beyond their span of control when trying to figure out where to reintegrate a person with a disability – i.e. when it is not possible to return to the original job. Get them to focus on what other work there might be – where the person could continue to add value to the organization. “

“Managers are likely to require coaching, exposure and leadership support. Senior managers often only give lip service to the need to reintegrate. They say they want to accommodate BUT at the same time, they say “don’t miss your P/L numbers”. When push comes to shove, you know what comes first.”

“Open the closed minds of an employee’s peer group – there is a perception that a person with a disability can’t do the job. Persons with disabilities enhance overall team effort and engage the team. It brings them all together.”

Remove and prevent barriers and disincentives.

“Biggest problem for HR professionals is frustration with line managers – problem of selling it internally.”

“Find a way to make it easy for the business. The business will always see a positive impact.”

“Understand what is disincenting managers from bringing people back to work.”

“Eliminate the financial impact at the line level. Enables managers to make the right skill decision – and there is no difference in the bottom line to the company.”

“Be very careful when purchasing / developing new systems. Vendors are not truthful about compliance with technical aids – e.g. JAWS. Procurement decisions need to be aware of compliance. Need to be vigilant when testing new systems. As systems become more web-based, the problem will grow in the future. “

“Get union positions on modified work.”

“You have to work hard on getting people to disclose their disabilities.”

Be proactive and persistent.

“Provide supportive policies and programs to encourage the employment and advancement of persons with disabilities.”

“Provide individualized support to make the situation work – be flexible in order to find solutions.”

“Like hiring anyone else, getting the right match and – depending on the disability – it might be tougher. Make sure you have the right support system as well.”

“Recognize that you need specific, targeted outreach measures to reach persons with disabilities.”

“Look for creative ways to bring persons with disabilities into the workplace. “

“Try a co-op student or work trial.”

“Look for opportunities to link into the community.”

“Work together as an industry – same people going after the same types of jobs – there are opportunities to work together.”

“Establish relationships with agencies and educational institutions in order to reach persons with disabilities. “

“If an existing employee becomes disabled, do your best to accommodate them. Try to work with them so that they continue to be productive for the company AND for themselves.”

“Don’t give up – persistence and perseverance pays off.”

Advice to persons with disabilities

Focus on ability.

“Go to a business and say “I have these skills – let me do the job and show you what I can do.’”

“Work with what you’ve got – there are lots of jobs out there.”

“Emphasize abilities and skills in a clear way – make yourself more competitive and marketable with other clients.”

“Focus on what you can do.”

“Do you have the skills? Focus on your skills, show how it would work for the company.”

“We should equally produce within our own capacity so that we can feel important.”

“Make sure you learn our applications. Your contribution is not measured on whether your legs work or not.”

“You should be treated equally. Be realistic and know your limitations.”

“You need to understand your abilities clearly – what you can and cannot do. Review your soft skills. Flexibility is key. “

“Understand what your abilities are. The word “disability” puts people in a certain frame of mind. Need to focus on ability – what you can do. Doing that will make it a lot easier to engage and attract a potential employer.”

“Focus on your abilities and attitude. Know where your employer can get easy advice.”

“Emphasize the positive to the organization and de-emphasize the disability.”

“Don’t self identify on your resume – you could get screened out.”

“If you put your disability before your skills, you are asking to be treated differently, which would suggest to me that perhaps you don’t have the skills for the position.”

Understand employers.

“Need to understand that employers have criteria. They will hire you if you have the right skill set.”

“Biggest misconception is that things get done through connections. For the most part, employers want smart, honest, high integrity people. “

“Recognize that there will be challenges and that employers will make assumptions – have strategies to deal with resistance.”

“Find information about employers – including their commitment to diversity and accommodation.”

“Focus on what is most important for the job.”

Look for a good match.

“Understand the environment you are going into – and look for the fit.”

“Understand our environment and is it the right position for you.”

“You have to convince me that you have the skills to do the job.”

“It’s all about the fit between the job, the person and the skill.”

“Make sure it’s a good match.”

“Apply for jobs you are qualified for.”

“Take a look at the job description and be honest with yourself.”

“Set realistic expectations.”

Get education and skills.

“Make sure you are educated – it’s a lot harder to find a job if you are not educated.”

“Have a clear idea of what you want and make sure you have the training. “

“Get some good skills because I want to hire you.”

“If you can do the job, it doesn’t matter what the disability is. Having a disability is not a sufficient reason to get screened out of a job – deficiencies in other qualifications – education, accreditation – are much more serious.”

“If you have skills and training, we would do the best to accommodate you.”

Present yourself well.

“Present your resume in a factual way.”

“Put together a high quality resume. Persons with disabilities are not presenting the same high quality resumes as other potential candidates. “

“Present yourself as well as you can so that an employer would be thrilled to have you.”

“Know how to market yourself, do research on the company, be ready and realistic.”

“Make sure you are prepared for the interview. “

“Study up on the corporation so that you interview well. Don’t show up in blue jeans.”

“Don’t show up chewing gum, and dress appropriately and be professional and honest.”

“Same as for anyone applying for a job – follow-up – establish relationships with the company.”

Be open about your accommodation needs.

“Be open about accommodation needs – be more straightforward about what is necessary.”

“Be open.”

“Don’t be in the closet.”

“Be honest about abilities and accommodations required.”

“Employees won’t disclose the disability or accept accommodation because of perceptions of discrimination. There is a lot of work to be done on both sides.”

“Be truthful – it will not impede your employability.”

“Just be open and let us know about your strengths not your weaknesses. We can work around your weaknesses.”

Help employers understand your accommodation needs.

“Be willing to help us and tell use exactly what you need. Within reason, we would be willing to help.”

“Prepare to educate your manager on what you need to do the job and be patient with them.”

“Be prepared to address questions asked out of not knowing e.g. regarding accommodation. Understand that this can be new territory – and don’t get defensive about questions.”

“Need some method to translate the capabilities of a person with a disability when dealing with an employer who is not educated or experienced in disability.”

“Have empathy for people trying to understand them. People don’t know what they don’t know. If you are aggressive, and make people feel guilty, they will run away.”

“Give feedback in a constructive way – be willing to help.”

“Need some method to translate the capabilities of a person with a disability when dealing with an employer who is not educated or experienced in disability.”

“If you can’t do the job, please let us know. We recognize that there will be limitations. Also, if you bring a job coach, please give us a day in advance to work with the coach so that they can familiarize themselves with our operation.”

Be proactive.

“Go to organizations that are accepting.”

“Tap into employers willing to hire.”

“Come on in – help us help you.”

“Apply for positions.”

“Volunteer and get some experience. We encourage our volunteers to apply for our jobs.”

“Search on your own – don’t just rely on the service organizations.”

“Manage your own career and be ethical.”

“Work with agencies – SES has lots of clients”

“Need to have advocates – pressure the service agencies to find placements – there are still a lot of barriers and it is difficult for many people to get past the disability.”

“Work to get better leverage with schools and universities. Push to get a better link between disability office and placement office.”

Be positive and persistent.

“You can be whatever you want to become. You need a positive attitude.”

“Don’t use the disability as a crutch.”

“Don’t self-select out of a job.”

“Don’t give up – keep trying. “

“Don’t let anything get in the way and don’t be afraid. “

“Push the boundaries of where you might find employment. Work diplomatically to refute myths.”

“Be vocal – push the rope.”

“Persist and offer solutions.”

“Persistence helps as we have many more applicants than we can handle.”

“Persistence pays off – if you want to work, the jobs are there.”

Advice to service agencies

Understand the business environment.

“Develop a better understanding of the business environment. Understand how business operates so that you can serve them better. “

“They need to approach employers in a way that shows they understand the business and recruitment challenge. “

“Understand the recruiting needs of business – don’t just dump resumes on me.”

“Understand what the business is looking for.”

“Understand how business works. Build the business case. “

“Need to find the business case – if not, then it is not sustainable. “

“Need to be able to speak the language of business and understand business realities.”

“Need to be able to work in the business world.”

“Social service agencies need to understand the business world. Remember, we are a business, in it to make money.”

Understand the employer’s needs.

“Service agencies need to know their customers.”

“Try to understand the businesses and the work being done. Make sure it’s a good fit.”

“Understand the unique needs of the customer. We are all living in a ‘custom fit’ world – one size does not fit all. If you understand the organization, then your agency will be more valued.”

“Define what the capabilities are on both sides. Make a communication process of the expectations.”

“Spend more time understanding the business and understand my needs.”

“Do your homework on the company you are going to see. “

“They are self-fulfilling agencies, serving their own purposes and pretend that they are accomplishing something. There should be quantified metrics to see if they are successful and achieving their goals. If I didn’t perform, I’d be out of business.”

Match the candidate to the job.

“Meet our requirements. They may be compassionate, but they may not present the right people who are fully qualified.”

“We only want people who are qualified.”

“Find out what we’re all about and what your clients can and cannot do.”

“Be patient. Make sure you send the right candidate.”

“Make sure the individual is qualified. We don’t get a lot of applicants with disabilities. Our requirements are highly specialized. Go through the education system and get the right training.”

“Have a really good knowledge of the disability you are dealing with. Find work that suits the person’s intellectual and physical abilities.”

“Do a better job at screening and get job coaching down pat to prepare the candidates.”

“Make sure there is a complete appreciation of the work. Let them send a potential applicant out and spend some time (say one day) to make sure there is a fit.”

“You have to be very clear in communicating to the employer and get to them intelligently. Be specific with resumes and candidates that can help us.”

Help candidates to present themselves well.

“Agencies need to deal with resume preparation problems. Need to highlight the positives not the negatives. A poor resume can be a barrier to success – need to have a good resume in order to get an interview.”

“Help people present a professional image. Ensure applicants have the basic social skills plus good presentation skills.”

“Help job candidates to be competitive.”

Market persons with disabilities effectively.

“Service agencies have to help sell the employer on the person – they need to be proactive.”

“Walk in and say, ‘I have someone who can do this job’.”

“Promote what the person can do.”

“Market their abilities. Provide easy access to ongoing support and evaluation.”

“Be honest about the person’s disability and be sure we know their limitations.”

Be respectful of business.

“Respect the company you are approaching and do a little research about what they do so that you can match your skill base to the company needs. Provide the candidate with information that is relevant, meaningful, and written down – so that the potential staff member can add value to the organization.”

“Please listen. Get out in front of employers. Resumes come in with nothing to do with the job – you could tell they were grasping with straws. These agencies fall short of professionalism. Please do the research. I think we would go to an agency if it had a corporate focus, because they have a private sector mentality. Increase your level of proficiency. The ones we’ve seen don’t get it, but their heart is in the right place.”

“Avoid being seen only as an advocate without any sensitivity to employer challenges. Be solutions oriented and creative in developing solutions for employers.”

“Bring a win/win approach versus a dogmatic approach.”

“Don’t be too pushy – sometimes it’s not relevant to us.”

“Don’t harass us – we don’t hire a lot of people – placement agencies call us all the time – we don’t need more calls. Recognize that there is a fine line in your relations with employers.”

“Stop leaving me messages.”

Provide and promote relevant services.

“Keep doing the good job.”

“I think they do a great job. They have been supportive and helpful.”

“When selling the candidate, emphasize the qualities and assist in the accommodation and integration process.”

“Let employers know that diversity training is available.”

“It’s all about education the non-disabled.”

“Provide follow-up assistance – help to integrate the employee with a disability into the workplace.”

“If there is an easily accessible package, make it easy. We don’t have time.”

Reach out to business.

“Be proactive – reach out to employers -- now it’s the other way around.”

“Make more of a personal visit. Phone calls are easy to brush off. Develop a relationship – come and see the nature of work.”

“Get better linkages with industry. No one from the agencies ever comes to see us.”

“Get in touch with me and I’d love to know who you are and what you do. I’d just be like a sponge. I’d love for you to do all the pre-screening and in trade, I’ll interview your candidates. We’ll find the funding for the ramps, etc.”

“Be a little more persistent. We spoke to one, and no follow up. I’m more than glad to help, but I don’t have the time to chase. Send me a nice email and follow up – if there were equal candidates, I’d side with the one with a disability.”

“It took forever to find any information. Finally HRSDC gave us the name of a private consulting firm and 20 resumes appeared immediately.”

“Advertise your presence – I’m not familiar with any agencies.”

“Look to small business – there are a lot more opportunities.”

Establish partnerships.

“Need to move from advocacy to partnership.”

“Form better partnerships – versus the shot-gun approach often used.”

“Business and service agencies need to work together.”

“Go to educational institutions – promote partnerships with education. Work with universities to get the right resources to educate people. When the person with a disability has an education, they can compete with everyone on equal grounds.”

“Coordinate and do job fairs together. Do local job fairs that get around the transportation issues.”

“Best and most effective approach is to engage business in thoughts, ideas and deeds – versus asking for funding.”

Advice to government

Show leadership.

“Governments need to play a role in bringing parties together.”

“You have everything going for you. If you can’t get people, it’s not because the employers don’t want to help, they do. Drop the barriers, put people in front of employers.”

“Keep pushing the envelope for integration of persons with disabilities. Keep an open mind.”

“Get more involved in helping the process. Make it more accessible, more up front.”

“Work together, be constructive, share best practices.”

“There is a lack of political will, just a lot of lip service.”

Provide information.

“Provide more best practices.”

“Provide education to employers about programs that are available.”

“If you have the services, continue to market them. We aren’t aware they are there and we all keep going in circles.”

“It is hard to know where to go. Be centralized with your resources and make more funding available.”

“A one-stop website would be nice if you are looking for someone – info on accommodations, info on where to attract a person with a disability.”

“Make web-based information easy and clear – as I often would access this information after traditional business hours.”

“Make us aware of where the applicants are and make it easy to hire them.”

“Make your information easier to access.”

“More information sharing.”

“Be communicative and promote your programs.”

“Make more people aware of programs like 211. Send out more information on programs that are offered.”

Fund the agencies.

“Fund the agencies.”

“Acknowledge the fact that money is necessary and that the agencies need it.”

“Stay out of it other than funding the agencies that are doing a good job. You try hard, but it doesn’t work well.”

“Get it together. Don’t cut funding for agencies like “work able” and understand the needs of business.”

“Agencies do not seem to receive regular, guaranteed funding which disrupts the recruiting process. For an agency that is acting as an employment resources centre, they must be guaranteed regular funding.”

“Increase the agencies’ budget and provide incentives to employers – employers will bite.”

“Support the agencies or organizations that effectively get community members competitive, sustainable employment. Fund the success stories.”

“Trying to be all things to all people (i.e. agencies that multi-task) is not the way to go. Employment needs to be segmented accordingly.”

“Do a better job promoting the agencies that you fund.”

Fund education and training.

“Fund education programs – get universities to support education of persons with disabilities.”

“Put money into proper training.”

“Support more government programs. You really need to support more skills training with soft skill training as well. There are not top-notch people in the positions of employment counselling.”

“They haven’t done a lot in education. Need to be publicizing and encouraging and bring on incentives.”

Provide financial incentives.

“Financial incentives help.”

“Remove all stigmatized costs.”

“It would be great to get funding for accommodation. There is little assistance now.”

“Give businesses some kind of financial incentive or tax credit. Give the new employers something to assist them.”

“Cash, incentives, subsidies and tax breaks. Society needs an incentive.”

“Government does not need to provide permanent subsidies.”

Legislate wisely and resolve persistent issues.

“Continue legislation that is goal oriented. The EE program is good – no one has a gun to their head – but at the same time, employers need to show what they have done.”

“Provide legal encouragement – Employment Equity is good because it is not quota based.”

“I think the AODA is a good thing and hope the Act is respectful of the disability.”

“Need more legislative teeth around disability – but at the same time need to understand business realities.”

“You must understand that hiring goals may be unrealistic based on the company’s availability of positions.”

“Deal with definitional issues and the disconnect between labour market availability and definition of disability for self-identification.”

“For CHRC, need better, more positive relationships – work together rather than working against each other.”

“Create an environment that is conducive to employing persons with disabilities.”

“Legislation should be the last resort – i.e. employment equity has failed miserably.”

Be responsive to the business community.

“A simple process for employers is the only way this has any chance of succeeding. May want to test “simplicity” on private sector NOT on government. Simplicity has to include getting fast turnaround on applications.”

“Don’t inflict measurements and reporting processes that are onerous and that keep businesses from doing what they need to do to get more persons with disabilities in the workplace. Time spent in reporting is NOT spent in doing the right thing.”

“Speed up proposals for funding.”

“I can’t say anything nice. There was not one step that was easy. Returning phone calls takes weeks. No internal backup in their organization – would never hire through HRSDC again.”

“Give us a number where a message could be left (not on hold for hours) and return my call.”

“I don’t need money. You have to get the information out there. But don’t make this a charity. I’m not interested in charity cases -- I need them to work.”