

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

CLOSING THE GAP

LINKED ANALYSIS

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Closing the Gap Linked Analysis

The Closing the Gap Project gathered quantitative data about issues related to the employment of persons with disabilities. Three groups were surveyed. A total of 53 for-profit employers provided their perceptions of the issues for the business community. Fifty-four service agencies offering employment support to persons with disabilities provided their perceptions of the issues for the business community. An additional 104 community and service organizations provided their views on the issues for not-for-profit employers.

This analysis shows the perceptions of the three groups, and the similarities and differences among them. Findings relate to this sample only, and projections to the wider population should be made with caution.

Challenges for employers

All three groups were asked to assess the challenges associated with the employment of persons with disabilities.

Finding persons with disabilities

There is no consensus about the difficulties that employers face in finding persons with disabilities.

There is divergence on whether employers know ***where to recruit*** persons with disabilities. For-profit employers and service agencies are more likely to see this as a challenge than not-for-profit employers.

There are also divergent views on whether persons with disabilities ***apply for jobs***. For-profit employers are more likely to say that people with disabilities don't apply for their jobs. Service agencies do not share this perception.

Perceptions about finding ***people with the necessary skills*** are also divided. Service agencies are more likely to cite this as a challenge than either employer group.

Costs of employing persons with disabilities

All three groups tend ***not*** to see the costs of employing persons with disabilities as a challenge. Overall, for-profit employers are less likely to see cost as an issue than either service agencies or not-for-profit employers.

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Most for-profit employers do not see the *extra efforts to recruit* persons with disabilities as being costly. Service agencies are more likely to cite this as a challenge than either for-profit or not-for-profit employers.

For-profit employers generally do not see *re-integration* of an employee who has become disabled as costly. Service agencies and not-for-profit employers have divided views on this issue.

WSIB-related costs are an issue for almost half of the for-profit employers. Service agencies and not-for-profit employers are less likely to cite this as a challenge.

In general, none of the three groups sees *flexible working arrangements* as being costly. For-profit employers are the least likely to identify this as a challenge.

There are divided views on the costs of ensuring *workplace accessibility*. For-profit employers are less likely to see this as an issue than either service agencies or not-for-profit employers.

Similarly, there are divided views on the costs of *job accommodation*. For-profit employers are less likely to see this as a challenge than either service agencies or not-for-profit employers

Complexity of employing persons with disabilities

There is no consensus on the complexity of employing persons with disabilities. Employers – particularly the for-profit employers – are less likely to see complexity as an issue than service agencies.

The majority of for-profit employers do not see *paperwork with insurance* as making it complicated to employ persons with disabilities. Service agencies have divided views on this issue.

Similarly, the majority of for-profit employers do not see *paperwork with doctors* as making the employment of persons with disabilities complicated. Both service agencies and not-for-profit employers are more divided on this issue.

The majority of for-profit employers do not identify *union constraints* as an issue. Service agencies are split on whether they feel that unions make it complicated for the business community to employ persons with disabilities.

While most employers do not see the availability of *public transit* as an issue, service agencies express a more divided view about whether or not this contributes to the complexity of employing persons with disabilities.

Accommodating persons with disabilities

There is no consensus on whether or not it is difficult for employers to accommodate persons with disabilities.

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There is a notable difference in perceptions of ***experience in accommodation***. Many employers, particularly for-profit employers – indicate that they have experience, whereas service agencies perceive that they do not.

Most for-profit employers disagree that there is no one to provide ***advice on accommodation***. Almost half of the service agencies, on the other hand, felt that this was an issue

There are divided views about the ability to ***pay for accommodation***. Service agencies and not-for-profit employers are much more likely to identify this as a challenge than are for-profit employers.

There are also divided views about how difficult it is to ***retrain an employee*** who has become disabled. Service agencies are more likely to see this as an issue than either for-profit or not-for-profit employers.

Impact on Other Employees

There is no consensus on how other employees find working with persons with disabilities.

All three groups are split on the question of the level of ***training and experience of managers*** of persons with disabilities. Service agencies are more likely to perceive this as an issue than for-profit or not-for-profit employers.

There is marked divergence in views as to whether ***other employees are uncomfortable*** working with persons with disabilities. The majority of employers – both for-profit and not-for-profit – disagree that this is the case. About half of the service agencies feel that this is an issue.

There is similar divergence about whether ***other employees resent special arrangements or accommodations*** for persons with disabilities. The majority of employers – both for-profit and not-for-profit – disagree that this is the case. Over half of the service agencies feel that this is an issue.

Capability of service agencies

There is no consensus on the capabilities of service agencies.

All three groups are split on the question of whether the service agencies ***understand the business world***.

About half of the for-profit employers say that agencies are able to ***provide advice*** they need. About one-quarter of service agencies feel that employers think that they are not getting the advice they need from them.

There are divided views on the whether there are ***too many agencies and no coordination*** among them. Service agencies are more likely to indicate this is an issue than are either for-profit or not-for-profit employers.

Business case arguments

All three groups were asked to rate different business case arguments in terms of their relevance for employing persons with disabilities.

Employer resources and capabilities

There is a widely shared view among all three groups that the business case arguments associated with strengthening employer resources and capabilities are relevant.

Each group perceives a positive impact on ***trust and morale*** from re-integrating an employee who becomes disabled. For-profit employers and service agencies show very similar perspectives on this issue.

Each group sees a positive contribution to ***ideas and innovation*** that comes with employing people with new and different skills. Again, for-profit employers and service agencies show consensus on this issue.

Each group also sees the contribution that diversity makes to ***better decision-making***. Not-for-profit employers find this argument particularly relevant.

Each group feels that persons with disabilities can bring knowledge that facilitates ***employer growth and change***.

For-profit employers and service agencies are more likely to see persons with disabilities as a source of new employees who can ***replace workers who are retiring***. Not-for-profit employers are less likely to see this as a relevant business case.

Market position

There are divergent views about the extent to which employing persons with disabilities will help them attain a better market position.

Each group sees the positive impact of ***workplace accessibility*** for everyone, including other employees and customers. However, service agencies are likely to see this as more relevant than employers, particularly for-profit employers.

For-profit employers are split on the relevance of the business case argument that employing persons with disabilities will enable them to ***reach and service new customers***. Service agencies or not-for-profit employers are more likely to cite this as a relevant business case argument.

There is marked divergence in the perceived relevance of the argument that employing persons with disabilities will provide greater ***access to contracting opportunities***. Service agencies tend to see this as a relevant argument, but many for-profit employers do not share this view.

Service agencies also are more likely to think that the business benefits of *lowering insurance costs* through re-integration of employees are relevant than are either for-profit or not-for-profit employers.

Social justice

There is a shared view among all three groups about social justice and the employment of persons with disabilities.

Each group finds *social justice* to be a relevant business case argument. Service agencies feel more strongly about this than either for-profit or not-for-profit employers.

New ideas and approaches

All three groups were asked to assess the new ideas and approaches to increase the representation of persons with disabilities.

Employer awareness and understanding

There is a clear consensus on the value of measures to increase employer awareness and understanding about the employment of persons with disabilities.

All three groups see the value of providing information on *effective employment practices*.

All three groups see the value of providing information on *effective outreach practices*.

All three groups express a very high level of interest in information on *accommodation*.

All three groups would value *insights in the business benefits* of employing persons with disabilities. Service agencies feel that this would be particularly valuable for the business community.

There are mixed views on the value of *public recognition* for exemplary companies. Service agencies are much more likely than for-profit employers to say that this would be valuable to the business community.

Employer capabilities

All three groups feel that employers would be very receptive to measures that would increase employer capabilities.

Each group says that *skill development for managers* of persons with disabilities would be valuable.

Each group sees value in having *resource materials* about effective employment practices.

Measures to promote ***positive corporate culture*** are perceived by all three groups to be of value to employers. However, receptivity to these measures is lower than receptivity to either resource materials or skill development for managers.

Connecting employers and persons with disabilities

All three groups see value in measures to better connect employers with persons with disabilities.

All three groups see value in developing ***networking opportunities***, not-for-profit employers express the greatest level of interest in this.

For-profit employers are more likely to value ***internet-based networks*** than other types of networking opportunities.

Employers – both for-profit and not-for-profit – would value measures to strengthen the capabilities of ***educational placement services***.

All three groups show a consensus on the value of strengthening the capabilities of ***service agencies***.

Co-op initiatives would be highly valued by all three groups.

Reducing employer costs

There are diverse views on the value of measures to reduce employer costs.

There is no clear consensus on how valuable ***funding for accommodation*** would be. While a very high proportion of not-for-profit employers would value funding, for-profit employers do not express a similar interest in this. Furthermore, service agencies perceive this as more important than the for-profit employers do.

However, there is much more consensus on the value of ***free expert advice on accommodation***. All three groups say that this would be valuable.

There are mixed views on the value of ***wage subsidies*** for persons with disabilities. For-profit employers express a much lower interest in this do either service agencies or other public sector organizations.

Similarly, there are mixed views on the value of ***tax incentives*** for employing persons with disabilities. Again, for-profit employers indicate that they would be less valuable than service agencies perceive them to be.

There are divergent views on whether or not there would be value in ***streamlining paperwork for insurance***. For-profit employers are split on this question. Service agencies perceive this to be of more value than the for-profit employers do.

Partnership initiatives

There is consensus around the value of building partnerships to increase the representation of persons with disabilities. Some types of partnerships would be more valued than others.

While there is a measure of interest in *partnerships with other employers*, for-profit employers are less likely to see the value of these than service agencies perceive.

Both for-profit and not-for-profit employers express greater interest in *partnerships with service agencies*. The service agencies share this perspective.

Similarly both for-profit and not-for-profit employers express interest in *partnerships with educational institutions*. Again, the service agencies share this perspective.

There are mixed views on the value of *partnerships with government*. For-profit employers see this as being of lesser value than either service agencies or not-for-profit employers.