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# **CLOSING THE GAP EMPLOYER'S FORUM**

**WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS**

**SEPTEMBER 7-8, 2005**

***Participants:***

*See participant list*

*In Association with:*

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## Executive Summary

**Attached are meeting proceedings from the Closing the Gap Employer's Forum held on September 7-8, 2005 in Toronto. The overall purpose of the Forum was to develop some creative approaches and innovative solutions to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.**

**The Forum included three distinct half day workshops:**

- A. Making the Match: aligning competencies through effective recruitment;
- B. Making it work: sustainable employment practices;
- C. Building for the future: creating strategic partnerships.

**Each session began with an overview of the project, input from speakers with experience on the topic or a review of the work of the previous sessions. The participants then answered and dialogued over a series of questions on the topic. The final question focused on the creative approaches and innovative solutions to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.**

**The highlights of each session are below. They are organized by the question that was asked. Detailed comments are presented in sections 1-10 of this document.**

### **Session A - Making the Match: aligning competencies through effective recruitment**

**What are you looking for from a Placement Agency when you hire someone through a recruiter?**

1. An agency that has an understanding of the company's business, environment, culture and needs at a high level.
2. An organization that can do all aspects of the hiring and find the person who is a good match (i.e. interview and pre-screen the requisite skills, experience and credentials).
3. Help employers with both long and short term employment needs... i.e. so recruiting agency understands ongoing needs of employer.
4. Quick turn around time - reducing recruitment time.
5. Follow up and support/sustainability (to ensure the hiree is successful.)

**What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the participation of PWD in the workforce? (Top six items)**

1. Mentoring, more internships, and co-op opportunities.
2. Awareness via Marketing & Education.
3. Stop piloting programs. Invest in services. Research is great, now is the time for action.
4. Pool resources. Stop reinventing the wheel - too many duplicate services in silos.
5. Establish a business leadership network where leaders of organizations would sponsor programs for PWD ... Best Practice sharing methodology (e.g. Visits Program).
6. Targeted recruitment - developing programs and linking with external sources (e.g. agencies, associations, networks) to identify candidates.

## **Session B - Making it work: sustainable employment practices**

### **What are the Keys to sustainable employment** (Top seven items)

1. Inclusive culture (Culture that seamlessly integrates PWD into the team in an inclusive way recognizing individual's strengths. Must be a cultivation of dignity and respect through understanding and dialogue.
2. Reliable transportation, parking
3. Accommodation. i.e. technology, Tools that will allow the employee to successfully do the job. Adaptive technology that is keeping pace with changing business technology.
4. Career development path and a supportive environment that provides opportunities for upward mobility.
5. Flexible work environment (i.e. work hours, lifework balance).
6. Continuous training, education and learning.
7. Good initial match between employer/job and employee. Employers should look at abilities, skills, experience and performance.

### **What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the participation of PWD in the workforce?** (Top eight items)

1. Sensitivity & Awareness training to front line and hiring managers re: value of hiring PWD
2. Establish an employee mentoring program
3. Continuous training & opportunity for advancement
4. More internships and co-op placements. Corporate tax credit for companies who are aggressive in doing so.
5. Establishing an open line of communication for on-going support (mentorship, buddy system, human resources)
6. Public awareness campaigns regarding the employment for persons with disabilities
7. Improving support systems so that current employees who acquire disabilities can stay on the job (includes awareness of existing programs/services and expand EAP). Should have an integrated system (employer, union, employee, medical professionals, other specialists) to assist in Return to Work/job retention
8. Business Leadership Network (see US state model that brings together employers and PWD to share best practices and employment opportunities)

## **Session C - Building for the future: creating strategic partnerships**

### **What are the major reasons for and benefits of partnerships?** (Top five items)

Sharing Resources/Risks/Rewards  
 Learning (from each other)  
 Effectiveness - better outcomes, payoffs  
 Understanding  
 Networking

### **What are the issues and challenges to creating and maintaining effective partnerships?**

(Top eight items)

Funding for agencies is set up on a client basis instead of a partnership/program basis.  
 There is no money to sustain, implement or develop. Employers interested in profit \$'s, unable to bring PWD's together for support.

Conflicting priorities, cultures and mandates. Difficult to find alignment and common ground on what objectives are possible for the partnership and what can/should be done outside the partnership. Differences between how employers & agencies achieve goals

Having the right people at the time in an ongoing way: Picking the right representative to partner with, a champion a decision maker, both for non profit and for profit. Turnover creates relationship/knowledge sustainment issues.

Lack of Awareness of leadership and commitment. Depends on education, understanding, and sophistication of management team.

No clear awareness of the return on investment and energy required in partnerships -> must show a payback!

Lack of understanding of employer's/business needs

Lack of coordination between the various agencies (pertaining to employment services)

Economic culture: do more with less -> negatively impacts ability to partner

**What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions to strategic partnerships that can help to improve the participation of PWD in the workforce? (Top five items)**

Central strategic coordination. Coordinate programs and agencies serving PWD for placement activities taking away a specific disability focus, and focus not on disability, but on abilities. Should have a central source to refer candidates to, from various disability groups.

Knowledge transfer tools. Create a tool to enhance shared understanding of what a partnership is, and what partnership opportunities may exist or have been implemented in other organizations and in other areas/communities. Establish template and guidelines to define strategic partnership (terms of references, documentation, to keep records, manuals etc). Also, business community could help the agencies become more business oriented (such as the development of standard operating procedures to ensure knowledge is not lost).

Coordinated resource centre for employers. Includes website of information, best practices of partnerships, share success stories, link partners. Centralized resource for employers to contact when they want to hire PWD etc.

Education. Educate employers on the various types of disabilities, and how to provide accommodation for these individuals. This work can be outsourced to agencies (of PWD) that specialize in working with PWD candidates. Might also include a public education campaign on the employment abilities of people with disabilities

Business Leadership network that champions partners, rewards and recognition, maintain high profile (business, govt's, agencies, insurance cos., labour movement. )

## Path Forward

The following is the timeline of next steps for the project. The report will be distributed to all participants in the Forum as well as the participants in the research work.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Date</b>
1. Distribute session Summary	SOH Inc / ICA / Queen's	Sept 12
2. Participant Feedback	Forum participants	Sept 30
3. Draft report	SOH Inc / ICA Associates	October 15
4. Education institution's forum	SOH Inc	November
5. Final report & recommendations	SOH Inc	December

## ***CLOSING THE GAP EMPLOYERS FORUM REPORT***

The Closing the Gap Employer's Forum was held at the Ontario Bar Association conference centre in Toronto on September 7-8, 2005.

The overall purpose of the Forum was to develop some creative approaches and innovative solutions to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. The participants were a cross section of employers, agencies and project planning committee – all of whom had participated in the research work leading up to the Forum. Participants were invited to attend specific sessions according to their expertise and experience. Thus there were new participants in each session.

### **The Forum included three distinct half-day workshops:**

- A. Making the Match: aligning competencies through effective recruitment;
- B. Making it work: sustainable employment practices;
- C. Building for the future: creating strategic partnerships.

Each session began with an overview of the project, input from speakers with experience on the topic or a review of the work of the previous sessions. The participants then answered and dialogued over a series of questions on the topic. The final question in each session focused on the creative approaches and innovative solutions to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

The detailed proceedings of each session are below. They are organized by the question that was asked. For each question, participants brainstormed individually, talked as a small group and then put their answers into a brainstorm list using the computers in front of them. Participants then reviewed the list and merged similar items. If the merged list was too long, the participants were asked to prioritize their top 5-6 items.

### **Editor's Notes:**

- a. This document contains the meeting proceedings and is not intended as a "Final Report"
- b. The symbol // indicates that two similar ideas have been merged together.
- c. Note: in some instances, there is a number in parentheses after an idea. The # in parentheses {#47} is a system generated reference number by chronological sequence

## **Session A - Making the Match: aligning competencies through effective recruitment**

The first session focused on the area of effective recruitment practices. The two speakers focused on their experiences and their learnings in gaining sustainable employment for persons with disabilities. One spoke from her experience as a person with disability obtaining employment for herself and others. The second spoke from his experience as a private placement agency obtaining employment for persons with disabilities. The participants then focused on their own experience and learnings in response to the questions posed.

### **1.0 - Presentations**

## **1.0 Presentations**

### **Presenter 1**

**FRANCE TOLHURST: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COALITION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **1. Factors Constraining Participation of PWDs in the Workforce**

The problems that PWDs face in the workforce are a reflection of the failure of key systems in society, namely the failure of the education system and the employment system.

#### *Deficiencies in Education System:*

- Money is not well spent
- School system does not give PWDs the education and training they need.
- PWDs are guided away from many education courses because of the costs of accommodation

#### *Deficiencies in Employment System*

- Employment system does not give PWDs what they need to compete
- Educational institutions, service agencies and employers all have a role, but operate in silos, not as part of an integrated system
- Not enough being done to ensure that PWDs understand an employer's requirements

### **2. Mobility/Transportation**

- Mobility and transportation are enormously important as part of solution
- Example: France would prefer to sell her house than have to forgo her van

### **3. Accessibility and Accommodation**

- Accessibility is not just a process of physical accommodation
- Needs managers and coworkers with open minds
- Needs capacity to think out of the box
- Existing PWDs in the workforce should be used as a resource to help with accommodation issues for existing and new employees
- Recognize that Persons with Acquired Disabilities have gone through a distinctive experience that needs unique accommodations: ie have suffered a loss; process is analogous to a process of mourning

### **4. Managing PWDs**

Managers should manage PWDs as they would any other employee: ie as individuals; not as a different category of employee

## **5. Key Message**

If PWDs have access to the right resources at the right time, it will improve the likelihood of becoming and staying productive members of society.

### **Presenter 2**

**TIM COLLINS: PRESIDENT, STAFF LINK SOLUTIONS LTD.**

#### **1. Staff Link's Services To Employers**

- Helps employers to identify position needs
- Searches for applicants: maintains database of potential candidates; also identifies PWD candidates through partnerships with service organizations
- Puts candidates through four part interview process, including telephone interview of potential candidates, face-to-face behavioural interview, and technical skills evaluation.
- Provides background and credential checks on candidates

#### **2. Emerging Labour Force Demographics**

- Good talent is in high demand
- Organizations are looking to new sources of skills and talent which opens opportunities for PWDs

#### **3. Business Benefits of a Diverse Workforce**

- Diversity brings new ideas and skills to the organization
- Contributes to higher retention rates
- Contributes to shareholder value
- Provides new sources of entrants for workforce
- Helps organization build better relationships with customers/suppliers and community

#### **4. Factors Contributing to Success of PWDs in Workforce**

- Ensure PWDs have opportunity to acquire education and skills that are in demand
- Respond to the individual needs of PWDs
- Hire responsibly: ensure that PWDs meet the core job requirements(ie have what it takes to be successful)
- Promote an inclusive working environment

## 2.0 – What are Employers looking for from a recruiter?

What are you looking for from a Placement Agency when you hire someone through a recruiter?

*Note: the group brainstormed ideas and then merged the similar items.*

*Below in non-bold are the merged items. These items are ordered as they were originally brainstormed (i.e. they are not ranked). The // indicates a second idea which was merged with the first idea.*

### 2.1 - Brainstorm

**1. An agency that has an understanding of the company's environment, culture and needs //understand my business/organization at a high level**

- Knows the culture of our company and filters candidates based on that knowledge
- understand my business/organization at a high level (i.e. hiring process/culture)

**2. An organization that can do all aspects of the hiring and find the person who has the requisite skills, experience and credentials // Good match. Qualified, pre-screened candidates that have been interviewed by the agency**

- Pre-screened candidates
- Qualified Candidates
- Screening for the best person to fulfill requirements of the job
- Strong ability to produce a good match
- match to skills and experience needed
- identification of candidates that clearly link to the necessary skills required (i.e. information technology)
- understanding the job requirement and good fit

**3. Help employers with both long and short term employment needs ... and so recruiting agency understands ongoing needs of employer**

**4. Quick turn around time - reducing recruitment time**

- Reduced recruitment time

**5. Follow up and support/sustainability (to ensure the hiree is successful...)**

**6. New ways to accomplish company goals (i.e. with skill sets employer may not be aware of)**

### 2.2 – How this changes with PWD?

The participants then discussed how the hiring process and their expectations of a placement agency changed if the prospective employee had a disability.

**How does this change, if at all, when hiring a Person with a Disability?**

**Note: These are notes from a discussion and are not ranked.**

1. Disclosure upon hiring of accommodations (for selection process... Interview process)
2. Ability to disclose additional candidate employment related and disability-related information prior to job interview
3. Prepare candidate for the culture of the organization and make sure clients know what they want and what they need
4. Concrete accommodations // consulting around accommodation needs /// ideas on how to ensure a smooth transition/integration. (i.e. Identification of requirements and accommodations)

### 3.0 – Disclosure and the hiring process

**Disclosure and the hiring process**

**Some people say PWD should fully disclose while others say “disclose nothing”. When as an employer do you want to know this information and how does that change your hiring process?**

**Note: These are notes from a discussion and are not ranked.**

When

- as soon as possible so that any necessary changes can be made to the hiring/selection process
  - When accommodation is required for the interview process
  - At the moment when you have a rapport with employer and you see there is a benefit for employer
1. Must be aware of the legal implications that govern disclosure of a disability (e. g. Ont. Human Rights Code)
  2. Should only be when it relates to requirements of the job
  3. It also depends on how fully informed the candidate is about the requirements of the job and how well defined the job is
  4. Organizations need to know before the selection process happens if there is a necessary accommodation for the selection process and then need to know before the person starts work if an accommodation is needed on the job
  5. Disclosure where special measures for recruitment are in place i.e. targeted recruitment initiatives
  6. Some employers have a standard practice about asking "are there any accommodations required for the candidate" to take the interview?

Challenges

- Timing. Appropriate disclosure moment for employer may not be best time for PWD.
- Perception.
- Size of company and resources available. Small & medium companies do not have the resources that larger companies do.
- Cost/Benefit analysis. There has to be a benefit for employer

- Onus is on the employee to disclose. There is a lot of reluctance by candidates to disclose.

## 4.0 – PWD presenting to an employer

### **Presenting to an employer**

**If someone has a disability, what is the best way to present themselves to an employer so as not to decrease their opportunity to get the job?**

**How does a PWD impact your hiring process?**

**Note: These are note from a discussion and are not ranked**

1. Cover letter (depending on the disability). Sometimes, if you do disclose, your resume goes to top of pile (in the case of regulated companies).
2. Varies with disability. Disclosure can be a "dangerous" thing depending on company. There are legal considerations.
3. Prior to interview if accommodation required for the interview process
4. Some companies hold networking sessions (prior to posting an open position)
5. Researching company and their needs: Company size? Regulated? Culture of company? Are there employment equity goals?
7. Avoid shock factor and disclose before interview (in event of an obvious disability)
8. Hiring process impacted by - time it make take to get PWD up and running
9. Hiring process needs to be flexible and individual
10. Perspective employee should be part of the solution

## 5.0 – Creative approaches and innovative solutions

### 5.1 – Brainstorm & Vote

**What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the participation of PWD in the workforce?  
If we could only do FIVE of these.... which would have the biggest IMPACT???**

The participants brainstormed to the question “What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the participation of PWD in the workforce?” The ideas were then merged as previously described. Then each group was asked to select the five that would have the greatest impact.

The ideas listed below are listed according to the ranking they received. The ranking is listed on the left in **bold**. There were 11 groups of participants. They chose 5 out of a list of 36 items.

#### Total

- 6** 1. Set up Mentoring Opportunities. //Formal mentoring programs // Internal mentoring or career counselling programs for employees with disabilities who work in an organization and would like to further their career advancement //mentorship and leadership programs led by people with disabilities
- 4** 2. Marketing and education targeted to employers to provide further understanding of accommodations for disabilities - particularly to small and medium sized businesses
- 4** 3. Stop piloting programs and invest in services. Research is great, time for action.
- 4** 4. Pool resources. Stop reinventing the wheel - too many duplicate services in silos.
- 4** 5. More internships, and co-op opportunities
- 4** 6. Education to dispel myths about disabilities, accommodation cost
- 3** 7. Establish business leadership network where leaders of organizations would sponsor programs for PWD
- 3** 8. Accommodation consulting for employers
- 3** 9. increase the budget for education and accommodation
- 2** 10. commitment from the top down
- 2** 11. Targeted recruitment - developing programs and linking with external sources (e.g. agencies, associations, networks) to identify candidates
- 2** 12. Best Practice sharing methodology . (Visits Program).
- 2** 13. Develop career planning and preparation starting high school level
- 2** 14. Commitment with a follow through to the line managers with the tools and understanding to achieve an appropriate cultural shift
- 1** 15. Increase public awareness using positive images in the media, public figures
- 1** 16. Stronger marketing on ABILITIES
- 1** 17. Taking some leadership in organizations by providing networking opportunities for PWD to meet employees and learn more about the organization, profession etc. (e.g., financial institutions could hold an event)
- 1** 18. Employer education regarding government programs to support PWD
- 1** 19. Using PWD as Ambassadors--get the message out.
- 1** 20. Education Coalition for Persons with Disabilities "Awareness Workshop"

- 1 21. Developmental Opportunities--Career management--need to design these programs that allow PWD to fully participate and benefit.
- 1 22. Centralized, complete and comprehensive job bank for persons with disabilities exclusively (i.e. government supported) \*well known by all employers
- 1 23. Sharing Resources (as per Tim's suggestions of 2 books: computer web resources for PWD... accessible technology in today's business)
- 0 24. Understanding what PWD CAN do and not focusing on what they CAN'T do.
- 0 25. Credit the employers who demonstrate positive hiring approaches
- 0 26. Universal accessibility standards--designed from the start.
- 0 27. Community based events i.e. co-sponsor event with CNIB
- 0 28. Raising awareness in workplaces to foster a level of comfort for all employees thus removing the fear factor
- 0 29. Need to continue to deal with the 'perception' issue. Part of the solution is in awareness programs delivered via relevant vehicles
- 0 30. Access to Job Accommodation network (US based service)
- 0 31. Target advertisement
- 0 32. Accessibility/accommodation information to hiring managers in formal recruitment training
- 0 33. Demonstrate career path for PWD within company(ies) and targeted internal career development
- 0 34. Measure satisfaction--get the input and act on it.
- 0 35. Highlight diversity recruitment best practices in company newsletters
- 0 36. free gov't service for advice on accommodation

## 5.2 - Implementation

Participants were asked to take 1 or 2 of the top 9 ideas and write what they would specifically do to implement this idea. The suggestions were not processed in any way.

### Implementation: Creative Approaches & Innovative Solutions

Choose 1-2 of our top 9 general ideas...

What specifically would you recommend be done to implement this?

#### 1. Mentoring, more internships, and co-op opportunities

**- Set up Mentoring Opportunities. //Formal mentoring programs // Internal mentoring or career counselling programs for employees with disabilities who work in an organization and would like to further their career advancement //mentorship and leadership programs led by people with disabilities**

Work with colleges and universities to identify and enable co-op programs for students WD. {#47}

Develop a template for launching programs within companies. Ensure it is scalable for small, medium, large.

Possibly use a labour market partnership to investigate a program similar to Career Bridge (successful mentorship program for new immigrants) {#49}

ALL mentoring and co-oping should have an employment goal focus - preferably in the company doing the mentoring and/or coop. {#58}

#### 2. Awareness via Marketing & Education.

**- Marketing and education targeted to employers to provide further understanding of accommodations for disabilities \* particularly small and medium sized businesses**  
**- Education to dispel myths about disabilities, accommodation cost**  
**- increase the budget for education and accommodation (for employers)**

Create a "magazine" or insert that looks at all issues related to hiring PWD - disclosure, duty to accommodate, where to find candidates, labour shortage issues, etc... and include it in all the newspapers {#52}

Awareness training tools that are available through the provincial gov't. (i.e. Accessibility Directorate), community organizations, federal gov't. need to be made more available to employers. Accessibility Directorate is currently launching a public education campaign to do so. {#56}

#### 3. Stop piloting programs and invest in services. Research is great, time for action.

Create an HRDC program in the next budget with matching funds for any employer to hire anybody with a disability(50/50 cost sharing)  
 Using EI surplus {#54}

Political will to make the issues a priority for all levels of government. P.W.D. should use political influence to make it happened. As a society we cannot afford to continue to ignore over 15% of the population. {#61}

#### **4. Pool resources. stop reinventing the wheel - too many duplicate services in silos.**

FOCUS on the client NOT government structures {#53}

Central organization set up by government and private companies. This organization would provide services for PWD, and would include an online resume database accessible to all participating companies.

This would provide PWD with direction, advise, employment counselling and a medium to 'sell' their skill sets to potential employers.

Employers would have access to a large number of potential candidates to consider. {#57}

Establish a regionally based action oriented committee/council that would pool the resources and expertise of community agencies & levels of government that provide services to PWD and that would work closely with employers on the development and implementation of programs to further the employment of PWD (e.g., mentoring programs, work placements, education & awareness of the public and employers especially small and medium ones).

An excellent model is the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council that has brought together government, community agencies, public and private employers to work together on integrating newcomers into the labour force {#59}

Create a very well marketed website, (i.e. PWDJobs.com) that provides contact information for ALL of the current organizations in one. It would be the ULTIMATE resource both for persons with disabilities and employers looking for potential candidates, (it may, as a result, also become a great networking opportunity for the sharing of resources for these organizations). The key is marketing. Everyone should know about the name of the website - in the same way we know Monster or Workopolis. The site could also expand to provide information and education for both PWDs and employers. {#62}

#### **5. Establish business leadership network where leaders of organizations would sponsor programs for PWD**

##### **- Best Practice sharing methodology . (Visits Program).**

establish top 50 best diversity employers or an index  
-that would be published annually in a national newspaper (Globe, Post, Star) {#48}

#### **6. Accommodation consulting for employers**

#### **7. Targeted recruitment - developing programs and linking with external sources (e.g. agencies, associations, networks) to identify candidates**

Proposed approach:

1) internally identify a business owner & executive sponsor responsible and accountable for advancement of PWD

- 2) set corporate goals: try to quantify current state and target state (both qualitative & quantitative)
- 3) leverage the existing recruitment strategy and identify the gaps/challenges in current practice to achieve goals ( highlight limitations and identify if external support is required i.e. agency, external network groups, associations, government programs, campus recruiting)
- 4) develop internal game plan: strategic and tactical (i.e. Strategic: set expectation from a top-down perspective that it's of strategic importance to have a diverse and inclusive work environment // Tactical: education for managers re: recruitment process to demystify PWD)
- 5) review quarterly - across the business led by business owner/exec. sponsor

## **8. develop career planning and preparation starting high school level**

Special programs for PWD to discover and develop career PATH {#50}

Career Counselors who are informed/educated in the needs and accommodations of PWD. Focus on teaching what the student CAN do, not on what they can't. Don't "slot" students into the stereotypical career goals just because ground has not been broken in their area of interest and/or ability. {#51}

## **9. Commitment from the top down ... Govt/political leadership!**

Should have national guidelines and standards for delivery of services which support the employment of PWD. {#66}

## **10. Organizational Commitment with a follow through to the line managers with the tools and understanding to achieve an appropriate cultural shift**

Compensation directly related to equitable hiring practices. Performance is linked to success to plans.

If we don't achieve success here, we won't be able to leverage the other initiatives to full value.

Tie diversity to bottom line more effectively. Build on the business case! {#67}

## ***Session B – Making it work: sustainable employment practices***

The second session focused on the area of sustainable employment practices – i.e once a person was employed, what were the keys to retaining the employee. The two speakers focused on their experiences and their learnings in dealing with accommodations. The participants then focused on their own experience and learnings in response to the questions posed.

### **6.0 – Adaptive technologies: resources & tools**

#### **6.1 - Presentations**

##### **Presenter 1**

**TONY SILLI: SALES CONSULTANT, FRONTIER COMPUTING**

##### **1. Frontier Computing's Services**

Frontier Computing sells equipment and provides technical support for people who are blind, have low vision or a learning disability. It has offices in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

##### **2. Developments in Hardware and Software**

- The evolution of hardware and software means that it is now easier and cheaper to find good adaptive solutions
- Clients are using off the shelf equipment
- Equipment is configured to work out of the box
- Miniaturization is contributing to smaller, more portable and less costly equipment
- Software is becoming cheaper
- Standardized interfaces

##### **3. Challenges**

- Need to work with the user to get systems configured right for their specific needs
- Frontier Computing is often brought in after the fact to help remedy problems, rather than at front end to anticipate them

## **Presenter 2**

**BARUCH CHAI: PRESIDENT, MICROCOMPUTER SCIENCE CENTRE INC.**

### **1. Microcomputer Science's Services**

MSC provides equipment, training and technical support for a range of special needs individuals including those who are blind or have low vision, people with learning disabilities, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and people with developmental disabilities.

### **2. Successful Solutions**

Finding the right solution involves 3 steps:

- Needs analysis: this is 90% of the solution. If done properly, the right solution will be found
- Adopt appropriate technical solution
- Ensure training and support

### **3. Role of Adaptive Technology in Schools**

- Start early: ensure that young people with disabilities get access to appropriate adaptive technology
- Key element in developing employable skills
- Use adaptive technology as part of the solution of keeping them in school until they attain the level of education and skills to be employable

### **4. New Developments**

- New devices facilitate learning on the go
- Trend to inclusive education, rather than segregated

### **5. Payback to Employers and Society from Increasing Employability of PWDs**

- More loyal workforce
- Harder working employees
- PWDs with jobs pay taxes

## **6.2 - Discussion**

Questions & Ideas from the presentations on accommodation/adaptive technologies?
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1. Planning is critical.

- need initial involvement of technology people so system accessibility issues are addressed EARLY

2. Must get IT folks familiar with accessibility/accommodation issues. very difficult b/c there are specific issues with each disability situation.

What resources & tools do you need access to in order to facilitate accommodation?
--

1. Expert advice & assistance. e.g. technology folks.

2. Interpreters for hearing impaired people

3. Accommodation for people with mental health issues (espec in union environments where "rebundling" of duties might be required)

4. Access to funding for vocational assessments

5. Transportation. especially to outlying locations

## 7.0 – Keys to long term sustainable employment

What are the keys to long term, sustainable employment of a PWD? What makes it happen? the essential ingredients?

- From EMPLOYEE perspective
- From EMPLOYER perspective

### 7.1 - Brainstorm

The participants brainstormed to the question “What are the keys to long term, sustainable employment of a PWD?” They were asked to brainstorm keys from both the employer’s and the employee’s perspective. The ideas were then merged as previously described. The ideas are listed in the order they were originally brainstormed. **Note: The items in non-bold are the merged items.** The // indicates a second idea which was merged with the first idea.

#### 1. EMPLOYEE - Reliable transportation, parking

Transportation  
 Independence/Access to transportation - 24/7  
 Transportation  
 Transportation  
 Transportation  
 Parking

#### 2. Career development path - supportive environment //Providing opportunities for upward mobility

career advancement & training opportunities  
 Providing opportunities for upward mobility  
 advancement opportunities and environment for growth and development

#### 3. Continuous training, education and learning

good education and training  
 Education/training  
 Life long learning  
 Employers need to provide training and development opportunities

#### 4. Access to cost sharing for training and education from the government

#### 5. Open communication & feedback between employee and employer/manager on needs, changes, accommodation, disclosure etc.

Communication - feedback

#### 6. Inclusive culture.

- Culture that seamlessly integrates PWD into team //inclusion and recognition of strengths // Removing attitudinal barriers
- Cultivation of dignity and respect through understanding and dialogue
- Orientation and ongoing coaching and mentoring on the culture/ environment
- Accessibility is considered in all aspects of workplace (e.g., training employees, holding meetings) becomes a "natural " part of doing business

Culture of inclusion and recognition of strengths  
Employer... change in attitude

Removing attitudinal barriers  
Employer-attitude and team player  
Being treated with dignity & respect  
Treating ee as you would treat others

**7. Flexible work environment (i.e. work hours, lifework balance)**

Employers should be flexible  
EMPLOYEE - Flexibility and adequate accommodation

**8. Social Support system e.g. family, co-workers, financial resources**

**9. EMPLOYEE - In workplace. On going access to support (Supervisor/Manager and outside support services)**

**10. Good initial match between employer/job and employee //Employers should look at abilities // Employer-skills, experience and performance**

**12. Accommodation - i.e. technology, Tools that will allow the employee to successfully do the job, Adaptive technology that is keeping pace with changing business technology**

**13. Help transitioning for newly disabled (access to services, navigating new life and lifestyle, job changes, new categories in EAPs etc)**

**14. Employer-attendance**

**15. Business case for employers highlighting the benefits to them of an inclusive workplace //Employer - cost effective**

**16. System for sharing best practices (opportunity for employers to share what else is going on re: lessons learned) //EMPLOYER - Information Network to assist with accommodation**

**17. Timely, Quick turn around time in implementing accommodation**

**18. Involvement of all stakeholders in the process of accommodation (e.g., PWD, manager, experts, other employees)**

**7.2 - Vote**

The participants were asked to select the top six keys to long term, sustainable employment of a PWD. The ideas listed below are listed according to the ranking they received. The ranking is listed on the left in **bold**. There were 12 groups of participants. They chose 6 out of the list of 18 items immediately above.

**Voting Results**

**Total**

**12** 1. Inclusive culture.

- Culture that seamlessly integrates PWD into team //inclusion and recognition of strengths // Removing attitudinal barriers
- Cultivation of dignity and respect through understanding and dialogue
- Orientation and ongoing coaching and mentoring on the culture/ environment
- accessibility is considered in all aspects of workplace (e.g., training employees, holding meetings) becomes a "natural " part of doing business

**8** 2. EMPLOYEE - Reliable transportation, parking**8** 3. Accommodation - i.e. technology, Tools that will allow the employee to successfully do the job, Adaptive technology that is keeping pace with changing business technology**6** 4. career development path - supportive environment //Providing opportunities for upward mobility**6** 5. Flexible work environment (i.e. work hours, lifework balance)**5** 6. Continuous training, education and learning**5** 7. Good initial match between employer/job and employee //Employers should look at abilities // Employer-skills, experience and performance**4** 8. Open communication & feedback between employee and employer/manager on needs, changes, accommodation, disclosure etc.**4** 9. Business case for employers highlighting the benefits to them of an inclusive workplace //Employer - cost effective**3** 10. EMPLOYEE - In workplace. On going access to support (Supervisor/Manager and outside support services)**3** 11. System for sharing best practices (opportunity for employers to share what else is going on re: lessons learned) //EMPLOYER - Information Network to assist with accommodation**3** 12. Timely, Quick turn around time in implementing accommodation**3** 13. Involvement of all stakeholders in the process of accommodation (e.g., PWD, manager, experts, other employees)**1** 14. help transitioning for newly disabled (access to services, navigating new life and lifestyle, job changes, new categories in EAPs etc)**1** 15. Employer-attendance**0** 17. Access to cost sharing for training and education from the government**0** 18. Social Support system e.g. family, co-workers, financial resources

### 7.3 – Exit Patterns

**Check the list from our "essential ingredients for long term, sustainable employment for PWD"....**

**Are there any differences in the exit patterns of PWD?**

This question was posed to see if the exit patterns of persons with disability revealed any other keys to creating long term sustainable employment. The following are notes from the discussion. They indicate some of the issues that have to be watched for.

1. Bad job matching. (despite the best intentions) ... this job is "really boring"
2. Inadequate expertise in agencies who "market their candidates" but don't properly appreciate the complexities of accommodation, accessibilities etc.
3. Political correctness. Not enough frankness upfront
4. Unmet expectations
5. In interviewing process, PWD are often "set up" by their advocates with unrealistic expectations
6. Job coach - smaller employers expect a job coach to do a lot more than is possible

**What have you learned from exit interviews about why PWD stay/don't stay.**

The employers present were specifically asked if their company conducted exit interviews and if so, what those exit interviews indicated. The following is a list of the comments made.

Employer1: most of our exit interviews show the biggest reason is Retirement  
Employer2: can't show any patterns ... anecdotally, it appears retirement  
Employer3: we don't differentiate PWD in exit interviews  
Employer4: we don't see any big differences with PWD  
Employer5: we track reasons for leaving.  
Employer6: we mail exit questionnaires.  
Employer7: we do 1on1 interviews.

## 8.0 – Creative approaches and innovative solutions

**What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the sustainable employment of PWD in the workforce? (and move towards a more representative workforce)**

The participants brainstormed to the question “What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the sustainable employment of PWD in the workforce?” The ideas were then merged as previously described.

The voting exercise was then conducted twice – once with only the agencies voting and then with only the employers voting. Each group was asked to select the six that would have the greatest impact.

The ideas listed below are listed according to the ranking they received. The ranking is listed on the left in **bold**. They chose 5 out of a list of 26 items.

### 8.1 – Vote (Agencies)

#### Voting Results for the Agencies (10 groups)

##### Total

- 7** 1. More internships and co-op placements. Corporate tax credit for companies who are aggressive in doing so.
- 6** 2. Establishing an employee Mentoring program //developing a mentorship programs/internships for potential hires //Establishing a buddy system for orientation period - 3 months or so
- 6** 3. Improving support systems so that current employees who acquire disabilities can stay on the job (includes awareness of existing programs/services and expand EAP) //Integrated system (employer, union, employee, medical professionals, other specialists) to assist in Return to Work/job retention
- 5** 4. Awareness/Sensitivity training to front line and hiring managers re. value of hiring PWD
- 5** 5. Business Leadership Network (model similar to US. each State has an orgztn that brings together employers and PWD -> to share best practices and employment opportunities)
- 3** 6. Employers open to new approaches, i.e. job sharing
- 3** 7. leveraging a one-stop job bank / or employment centre to identify and place candidates based on skill and capability // that would provide ongoing support i.e. education/training/special accommodation expertise
- 3** 8. Increased accessibility to public transit.
- 3** 9. Continuous support for managers of PWD - source of answering questions
- 3** 10. Public awareness campaigns regarding the employment for persons with disabilities
- 2** 11. Make one orgztn (e.g. the HRPAO) responsible for maintaining a comprehensive 'best practices' database which is accessible to all employers for FREE
- 2** 12. government/tax incentives to encourage business to implement and create special measures/positions with advantage to the business

- 2 13. Employer readiness/preparedness for providing accommodation (and do this a timely manner so that orientation period is not overwhelming)
- 2 14. continuous training & opportunity for advancement
- 2 15. Establishing an open line of communication for on-going support (mentor, human resources) //Open communication between employer and employee
- 1 16. accommodation & leading edge technology
- 1 17. Easy access to funds for accommodation by people with Special Needs
- 1 18. Diversity training in university/college business classes (to train future leaders)
- 1 19. Scenario planning at the management level as part of continuous training - it is in the file and ready to go in an actual case ... e.g. what would we do if we were to hire someone in a wheelchair?
- 1 20. specialized job coach support for candidates requiring specialized one-on-one coaching to help them orient, train and integrate into the workplace (i.e. individuals with significant cognitive/mental health/learning disabilities)
- 1 21. on going performance review and feedback
- 0 23. Conferences for Employees, employers, job developers and Assistive Devices providers to share ideas and information.
- 0 24. Special Needs employees to come together within the company to share and discuss ideas and issues related to employment of people with Special Needs.
- 0 25. surveys and pulse taking several times a year to gauge momentum and change
- 0 26. Clear and detailed accommodation policy that involves the employee and specialists to assess the necessary accommodation

## 8.2 – Vote (Employers)

### Voting Results for the Employers (11 groups)

#### Total

- 9 1. Awareness/Sensitivity training to front line and hiring managers re. value of hiring PWD
- 6 2. Establishing an employee Mentoring program //developing a mentorship programs/internships for potential hires //Establishing a buddy system for orientation period - 3 months or so
- 4 3. continuous training & opportunity for advancement
- 4 4. More internships and co-op placements. Corporate tax credit for companies who are aggressive in doing so.
- 4 5. Establishing an open line of communication for on-going support (mentor, human resources) //Open communication between employer and employee
- 4 6. Public awareness campaigns regarding the employment for persons with disabilities
- 3 7. Business Leadership Network (model similar to US. each State has an orgztn that brings together employers and PWD -> to share best practices and employment opportunities)
- 3 8. Conferences for Employees, employers, job developers and Assistive Devices providers to share ideas and information.
- 3 9. leveraging a one-stop job bank / or employment centre to identify and place candidates based on skill and capability // that would provide ongoing support i.e. education/training/special accommodation expertise
- 3 10. Increased accessibility to public transit.

- 3 11. Clear and detailed accommodation policy that involves the employee and specialists to assess the necessary accommodation
- 2 12. accommodation & leading edge technology
- 2 13. Easy access to funds for accommodation by people with Special Needs
- 2 14. government/tax incentives to encourage business to implement and create special measures/positions with advantage to the business
- 2 15. Employers open to new approaches, i.e. job sharing
- 2 16. Diversity training in university/college business classes (to train future leaders)
- 2 17. Improving support systems so that current employees who acquire disabilities can stay on the job (includes awareness of existing programs/services and expand EAP) //Integrated system (employer, union, employee, medical professionals, other specialists) to assist in Return to Work/job retention
- 1 18. Make one orgztn (e.g. the HRPAO) responsible for maintaining a comprehensive 'best practices' database which is accessible to all employers for FREE
- 1 19. Employer readiness/preparedness for providing accommodation (and do this a timely manner so that orientation period is not overwhelming)
- 1 20. Scenario planning at the management level as part of continuous training - it is in the file and ready to go in an actual case ... e.g. what would we do if we were to hire someone in a wheelchair?
- 1 21. Continuous support for managers of PWD - source of answering questions
- 1 22. specialized job coach support for candidates requiring specialized one-on-one coaching to help them orient, train and integrate into the workplace (i.e. individuals with significant cognitive/mental health/learning disabilities)
- 1 23. Special Needs employees to come together within the company to share and discuss ideas and issues related to employment of people with Special Needs.
- 1 24. on going performance review and feedback
- 1 25. surveys and pulse taking several times a year to gauge momentum and change

### **8.3 - Implementation**

Participants were asked to take 1 or 2 of the top 9 ideas and write what they would specifically do to implement this idea. The suggestions were not processed in any way.

#### **Implementation: Creative Approaches & Innovative Solutions**

Choose 1-2 of our top 9 general ideas...

What specifically would you recommend be done to implement this?

*Note: the # in parentheses {#47} is a system generated reference number by chronological sequence*

#### **1. Awareness/Sensitivity training to front line and hiring managers re. value of hiring PWD**

Lunch and learn awareness sessions with employees who have disabilities {14}

Sensitivity training to the leadership team to impress on the business value of employing PWD; hiring managers on recruitment and managing employees with disabilities  
Training can be done by outside organizations who may or may not be PWD - speakers with real-life experience

Can be done through half-day sessions, lunch and learns, "Fire-side chats" {#63}

Obtain sponsorship from Executives {#66}

## **2. Establishing an employee Mentoring program //developing a mentorship programs/internships for potential hires //Establishing a buddy system for orientation period - 3 months or so**

Establishing an employee Mentoring program //developing a mentorship programs/internships for potential hires //Establishing a buddy system for orientation period - 3 months or so {#50}

Toronto Board of Trade and Ontario Chambers of Commerce should support and augment Career Edge's and any other existing internship programs for persons with disabilities both in spirit and funding {#69}

Ensure that when the hiring process begins, a conversation about accommodation happens and the employee is given an opportunity to provide input re. how they can be best accommodated

When the employee starts, pair them with a "buddy" who can help them assimilate into the culture of the organization and answer any questions, provide guidance

Have a mentorship program on an ongoing basis to provide guidance for career advancement and development {#72}

## **3. continuous training & opportunity for advancement**

manager's engagement of sensitivity at the beginning of the recruitment process

ongoing awareness training - look at opportunities to engage employees

work with outside organizations to create an inclusive environment {#65}

1)from day 1 - Employment Equity Process (self-identified candidates) develop career planning/path with direct management or a division responsible for development in HR  
2) recommend cost-sharing programs with the government to provide ongoing education/training

3) identification of appropriate training material (i.e. through partners in education & training with subject matter expertise)

4) closed-loop process to review career progression/ i.e. embed it in the management system to review career plan {#68}

-continuous evaluation by employer

-employer funds for training

-training with accommodation

-attend workshops and seminars etc.

-involvement in employer mentoring program

-ongoing support if necessary {#70}

**4. More internships and co-op placements. Corporate tax credit for companies who are aggressive in doing so.**

More internships and co-op placements. Corporate tax credit for companies who are aggressive in doing so. {#51}

Added to the next federal budget. Monitored and regulated by the federal government. {#59}

**5. Establishing an open line of communication for on-going support (mentor, human resources) //Open communication between employer and employee**

Directed by senior management, and supported by human resources a policy and training need to be established. Funding would come from the company. Each new relationship would need to be monitored through HR on a regular basis. {#67}

**6. Public awareness campaigns regarding the employment for persons with disabilities**

Government of Ontario (Ministry of Community and Social Services) should promote the new Access to Ontarians With Disabilities Act relentlessly in all media and for at least two years - then sustain it. {#61}

Establish a Toronto region PWD Employment Council (similar to the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council) to do public awareness campaigns (could also take on mentoring, etc.) {#64}

**7. Improving support systems so that current employees who acquire disabilities can stay on the job (includes awareness of existing programs/services and expand EAP) //Integrated system (employer, union, employee, medical professionals, other specialists) to assist in Return to Work/job retention**

Establish policy for smooth return to work {#52}

Get insurance industry to make this a priority {#73}

**8. Business Leadership Network (model similar to US. each State has an orgztn that brings together employers and PWD -> to share best practices and employment opportunities)**

Involve Business Leaders, Enabling Change Directorate, Ministry of Community and Social Services, WSIB, HRSDC, Local govt (i.e. City of Toronto), other agencies {#62}

Institute for work and health, major educational institutions {#62}

Work with board of trade or CME to build network, strengthen with industry associations to build momentum.

Include in member fees and use base to draw funds to project initiatives. {#71}

## ***Session C – Building for the future: creating strategic partnerships***

The third session focused on the area of creating strategic partnerships that would build a new future. The session began with a review of some of the research results in this area and a review of the work from the first day. The participants then focused on their own experience and learnings in response to the questions posed.

### **9.0 – Benefits & Reasons**

**What are the reasons, payoffs, benefits of establishing strategic partnerships that lead to sustainable employment of PWD?**

The participants brainstormed to the question “What are the reasons, payoffs, benefits of establishing strategic partnerships that lead to sustainable employment of persons with disabilities? The participants reviewed the list and identified the themes that ran through the list.(See 9.2)

#### **9.1 - Brainstorm**

1. Shared risk and reward
2. Communication
3. Less duplication
4. Learning/sharing best practices
5. More resources to bring to bear
6. Sharing resources/best practices
7. Capitalize on expertise and information in order to jump-start and move ahead more quickly
8. Share resources
9. Partnerships allows you to understand each other goals ~ specifically
10. Enhance reputation will expand market, increase profit
11. Partnerships add to the sustainability of employment
12. Better understanding of all stakeholders' needs and wants
13. Developing networks
14. Building trusting relationship
15. Diverse workforce represents community
16. Shared employment pool for referral opportunities and ongoing support for candidates with disabilities
17. The more employers and organizations work together the better they can understand each other's needs
18. Right services right time
19. Shared resources to meet strategic goals
20. Robust understanding of the employer's business case, culture and recruitment process
21. Ongoing dialogue and relationship building in and of itself ensure better job maintenance and sustainability
22. Ensuring the supply of skills/experience matches the demand
23. Encourages creativity
24. Provide more efficient matching between employer and PWD candidates
25. Enhanced higher level of understanding of organizational culture(employers)
26. Sharing of good business practices

27. Each partner will have a good understanding of the other's challenges, capabilities, needs, etc. This will result greater success.
28. To make the boat float higher; expand the reach and impact to create momentum and scope for the project
29. Understanding a different perspective
30. Better connected to community
31. Better understanding of business needs, culture and recruitment process
32. PWD become productive members of society thus creating a positive influence on economic realities
33. Greater awareness, sensitivity, myth debunking
34. Avoids group think
35. Enhanced knowledge transfer between agency and employer that withstands staff turnover
36. Accelerate myth busting through dialogue and sharing solutions.
37. An effective partnership can help to shape the culture of an organization
38. With inclusion lessened alienation, better communities
39. Building of on-going synergies
40. Creation of internal advocates
41. Increases visibility of viable candidates to employers
42. The existence of partnerships increases the changes of government funding for not for profit organizations.
43. Strength in numbers
44. Supports employers' diversity goals
45. Produce better quality candidate pool
46. Enhances HR Planning

## 9.2 - Themes

**Through discussion the group identified the following themes (the \* indicates those areas most critical for PWD):**

- capacity building,
- awareness building (e.g. of needs of PWD)\*,
- shared resources & best practices \*,
- breaking down barriers,
- debunking myths,
- creates momentum,
- increased alignment,
- x-cultural understanding \*,
- shaping cultures \*,
- helps open communications,
- importance of understanding orgztl culture,
- building trust \*, better outcomes/effectiveness,
- better understanding of each other's needs \*,
- effect on bottom line economics \*,
- partnerships with PWD -> mentoring opptys \*,
- Agencies learn about success of PWD in workforce (who are making valuable contributions)

**Potential categories:** The themes seemed to fall into the following categories.

- Sharing Resources/Risks/Rewards
- Learning (from each other)
- Effectiveness - better outcomes, payoffs

## Understanding Networking

## 10.0 – Issues & Challenges

**What are some of the obstacles, challenges, problems in creating and maintaining strategic partnerships that would lead to sustainable employment of PWD?**

The participants brainstormed to the question “What are some of the obstacles, challenges, problems in creating and maintaining strategic partnerships that would lead to sustainable employment of PWD?” The ideas were then merged as previously described. The ideas are listed in the order they were originally brainstormed. **Note: The items in non-bold are the merged items.** The // indicates a second idea which was merged with the first idea.

### 10.1 - Brainstorm

**1. Funding for agencies is set up on a client basis instead of a partnership/program basis. //from all parties, shared responsibility, not a free service //no money to sustain, implement or develop. Employers interested in profit \$'s, unable to bring PWD's together for support, agencies fall victim to funding challenges,**

- Funding - from all parties, shared responsibility, not a free service
- The cost associated with utilizing the partnership (i.e. agency placement fee).
- money, no money to sustain, implement or develop. Employers interested in profit \$'s, unable to bring PWD's together for support, agencies fall victim to funding challenges,
- Need to acknowledge time and set aside sufficient resources to maintain the partnership
- Insufficient knowledge, difficulty sharing knowledge within organization - takes time and money
- Funding changes affect employment services offices (changing staff etc.)

**2. Awareness of the return on investment - energy req'd in partnerships -> must show a payback!**

**3. Conflicting priorities: // Aligning cultures/mandates of different partnering stakeholders // Determining common ground on what objectives are possible for the partnership and what can/should be done outside the partnership. //Differences between how employers and agencies achieve goals**

- The differing mandates of each organization may lead to future problems.
- aligning cultures/mandates of different partnering stakeholders
- conflicting priorities: corp's hv. business and profit orientation, agencies are oriented to success\social development,

**4. Lack of coordination between the various agencies (pertaining to employment services)**

- There is no coordinated resource that links all agencies together therefore employers are challenged to understand the players and the resources.
- Lack of coordination and untimely planning

**5. Lack of Awareness of leadership and commitment -> depends on education, understanding, and sophistication of mgmt team (in implementation) //Support needed from the top to prioritize the issue**

- Long-term commitment from all levels in both for-profit and non-profit organizations

**6. Maintaining momentum through the development and implementation of a project; avoiding being mired in program administrative rules and regulations**

**7. Lack of understanding of employer's/business needs**

**8. Having the right people at the time in an ongoing way**

- Picking the right representative to partner with, a champion a decision maker, both for non profit and for profit.

- Staff turnover and the lack of knowledge transfer between employees

**9. No "teeth" behind the EEA. many Fed contractors have little knowledge in this area.**

**10. Economic culture -> do more with less.... negatively impacts ability to partner**

### **10.2 - Vote**

The participants were asked to select the four most critical obstacles, challenges, problems in creating and maintaining strategic partnerships. The ideas listed below are listed according to the ranking they received. The ranking is listed on the left in **bold**. There were 12 groups of participants. They chose 4 out of the list of 10 items immediately above.

### **Voting Results**

#### **Total**

- 9** 1. Funding for agencies is set up on a client basis instead of a partnership/program basis. //from all parties, shared responsibility, not a free service //no money to sustain, implement or develop. Employers interested in profit \$'s, unable to bring PWD's together for support, agencies fall victim to funding challenges,
- 9** 2. Conflicting priorities: // Aligning cultures/mandates of different partnering stakeholders // Determining common ground on what objectives are possible for the partnership and what can/should be done outside the partnership. //Differences between how employers and agencies achieve goals
- 8** 3. Having the right people at the time in an ongoing way
- Picking the right representative to partner with, a champion a decision maker, both for non profit and for profit.
- Staff turnover and the lack of knowledge transfer between employees
- 6** 4. Lack of Awareness of leadership and commitment -> depends on education, understanding, and sophistication of mgmt team (in implementation) //Support needed from the top to prioritize the issue
- 3** 5. Awareness of the return on investment - energy req'd in partnerships -> must show a payback!
- 3** 6. Lack of understanding of employer's/business needs
- 2** 7. Lack of coordination between the various agencies (pertaining to employment services)

- 2** 8. Economic culture -> do more with less.... negatively impacts ability to partner
- 1** 9. Maintaining momentum through the development and implementation of a project; avoiding being mired in program administrative rules and regulations
- 1** 10. No "teeth" behind the EEA. many Fed contractors have little knowledge in this area.

## 11.0 – Creative approaches and innovative solutions

### 11.1 - Brainstorm

**What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions to addressing these issues? In what ways can we create breakthroughs?  
If we could only focus on SIX of these....  
Criteria: Practical, Doable, Concrete, And New**

The participants brainstormed to the question “What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions to addressing these issues? The ideas were then merged as previously described. The group then chose six of the most practical, doable concrete ideas.

The ideas listed below are listed according to the ranking they received. The ranking is listed on the left in **bold**. They chose 5 out of a list of 17 items.

#### Voting Results

##### Total

- 9** 1. Coordinate programs and agencies serving PWD for placement activities taking away specific disability focus, and focus not on disability, but on abilities //Focus on ability vs. disability by having a central source refer candidates from various disability groups.
- 9** 2. Create a tool to enhance shared understanding of what a partnership is, and what partnership opportunities may exist or have been implemented in other organizations and in other areas/communities. //To address the transfer of knowledge of issue - establish template and guidelines to define strategic partnership (terms of references, documentation, to keep records, manual etc.) //Supports from the business community to help the agencies become more business oriented. Example, the development of standard operating procedures. (to ensure knowledge is not lost)
- 8** 3. Coordinated resource centre for employers
  - including website of information, best practices of partnerships, share success stories, link partners, Centralized resource for employers to contact when they want to hire PWD etc.
  - Tap into mainstream recruiting channels to target people with disabilities (i.e. job boards)
- 8** 4. Education
  - Educating employers on the various types of disabilities, and how to provide accommodation for these individuals. This work can be outsourced to agencies (of PWD) that specialize in working with PWD candidates.
  - Public education campaign of the employment abilities of people with disabilities
- 7** 5. Business Leadership network that champions partners, rewards and recognition, maintain high profile (business, gov'ts, agencies, insurance cos., labour movement. )
- 5** 6. Funding available for the development of partnerships // Coordination of funding sources to alleviate competition for funding between agencies and disability organizations.
- 4** 7. Partnership with employers and educational / vocational preparation to better enhance the skills and abilities of PWD's entering the labour market //post secondary, secondary, corporate strategies, review and research successes, encourage more of the same.
- 3** 8. Set up a cost sharing program between employers, employees funded by all levels of government with the ultimate goal of placement of persons with disabilities.  
HRSDC/OW/ODSP in a 50%-50% with employers

- 3 9. Development of a disability plan. consolidated network of agencies. where should we focus \$? reduce fragmentation. then pull in the employers.
- 3 10. Develop consortium of stakeholders, . Coordinate and develop regional, local, multi stakeholder response to high level of unemployment, including odsp, hrsdc, have gov't as facilitator.
- 3 11. Involve people with disabilities in the decision making process (for consolidation of services and strategic partnerships)
- 2 12. Senior level sponsorship for all partners, agencies and employers to assure time/resources are allocated for success.
- 2 13. There are collaborative programs that exist that need to be expanded, marketed and sustained.
- 2 14. Moving the terminology from finding jobs to finding the right fit in the labour market
- 2 15. Develop ways to recognize and mobilize action on employment of PWD's (similar to other programs such as Responsible Care in the chemical industry, or recognition programs that exist for business-education partnerships).
- 2 16. technological solutions, utilize technological corporations, gov't., coordination of a variety of tech. solutions, understand benefits to those corps creating software.
- 0 18. Effective communication plan both internally and externally to the partnership.

## 11.2 - Implementation

### Step 2: Choose 2-3 actions...

- Who would be involved?
- Impact: what would be the benefits of implementation?
- Any other specific ideas to ensure success

*Note: the # in parentheses {#47} is a system generated reference number by chronological sequence*

Participants were asked to take 1 or 2 of the top 5 ideas and write what they would specifically do to implement this idea. They were asked to include who would be involved, specific ideas to ensure success and any benefits they saw of the proposed activity. The suggestions were not processed in any way.

### **1. Coordinate programs and agencies serving PWD for placement activities taking away specific disability focus, and focus not on disability, but on abilities //Focus on ability vs. disability by having a central source refer candidates from various disability groups.**

Build industry/business knowledge within the agencies to ensure job match (i.e. what are the qualifications/designations/accreditations that are unique to this sector) {#40}

Who - Employers (both small, medium and large corporations), PWDs, Non-Profit Agencies, Government (all levels), Umbrella organizations to promote trade, business and networking opportunities

Seamlessness, more quantifiable positive results, more qualitative positive results, less duplicity, costs savings "more with less", education and awareness {#42}

Demonstrations or marketing to show the abilities of people with disabilities (real success stories of people who find work on their own and others who are assisted by an agency) {#43}

- job posting area for employers
- centralized consortium of PWD agencies scan postings and forward resumes of available candidates in response to employers vacancies
- candidates represented on basis of skills and ability / suitability for job
- forwarding agency remains anonymous
- criteria for success might include community representation, networked into PWD agencies, coordinator/contact point dedicated to developing relationships with employers {#44}

This could be part of the mandate of the coordinated resource centre. Organizations or agencies with expertise in dealing with a particular client group could provide support to the employer in hiring the PWD, but the coordinated placement service would set up the link between the employee with a disability and the employer. {#67}

Concentrated focus on ability instead of disability. Included PWDs in general employment services from the design phase up so that their abilities will be the focus

**2. Create a tool to enhance shared understanding of what a partnership is, and what partnership opportunities may exist or have been implemented in other organizations and in other areas/communities. //To address the transfer of knowledge of issue - establish template and guidelines to define strategic partnership (terms of references, documentation, to keep records, manual etc.) //Supports from the business community to help the agencies become more business oriented. Example, the development of standard operating procedures. (to ensure knowledge is not lost)**

To define the concept of partnership the following individuals would be involved - CEO from all partners (or proxy), senior level staff human resources (employers) , directors and managers (employment agencies) and appropriate line staff. Ministry involvement when appropriate. To transfer knowledge - the Individuals who established the partnership are responsible for documentation and transfer. {#55}

Sharing of best practices and innovative approaches to partnerships. Stop public/private partnerships from being frowned upon.

Sharing of what has worked and not worked effectively in other partnerships.

Provides vehicle for discussion of this issue from different directions and perspectives. {#60}

Link to 1 and 3 - community consultation and information sharing - tools, events (job fairs by either/both employers and/or agencies) - more job fairs and events / geography (convenience/location), perhaps specific sector focus - online tools {#69}

With regards to helping agencies become more business oriented (creating standard procedures).

Who involved: Leadership members within the Agencies to implement, corporate members to provide input, members of the government to ensure that there is consistency across organizations

Benefits: Standard procedures for employment services areas within the agencies contributing to a business like approach (e.g. getting clients job ready based on what the employers are looking for etc.) {#70}

**3. Coordinated resource centre for employers. including website of information, best practices of partnerships, share success stories, link partners, Centralized resource for employers to contact when they want to hire PWD etc.**

**- Tap into mainstream recruiting channels to target people with disabilities (i.e. job boards)**

Governing body consisting of employers, government, agencies, representatives of disability community {#35}

One single point of contact, eliminates duplication of information and centralizes accountabilities {#36}

keys to success: ensure persons with disabilities are at the table {#37}

All levels of government; agencies; employer groups (e.g. boards of trade, industry associations). {#38}

Ease of access for employers resulting in greater number of right fits. {#39}

With regards to a centralized resource for employers to contact when they want to hire PWD:

Who involved: E.g. Person funded by the government to act as a central point of contact. The employers could contact this person and be referred to specific organizations and the right contact within each organization (for purpose of hiring, accommodation, awareness training). This person would fully understand the ins and outs of each organization.

Benefits This saves the employer a lot of time and energy and makes the hiring process much more effective and efficient. {#48}

Who - Employers, Policy and Directives Experts, PWDs, Non-Profit Representation  
Impact - Eliminates duplication, creates more efficiencies {#51}

Create a Government Funded Coordinated Resource Centre, staffed by government employees that is a centralized body who will act as the liaison between employers and their needs and organizations and agencies that support PWDs.  
PWDs would form an advisory group to the Resource Centre. {#52}

- Link to #1

- Employers have a single contact person -- i.e. relationship or "account" manager representing all agencies and their clients {#53}

Important to involve and educate educators regarding issues relating to employment of PWD's. {#71}

**4. Education**

- **Educating employers on the various types of disabilities, and how to provide accommodation for these individuals. This work can be outsourced to agencies (of PWD) that specialize in working with PWD candidates.**
- **Public education campaign of the employment abilities of people with disabilities**

HR departments and hiring managers would be involved with agency representatives. These initiatives would need to commence at the senior management level to be effective.

Benefits: Employers would have a better understanding of PWD and the ways in which to accommodate them in the workplace. Another benefit would be that the agencies would have a good understanding of the company's corporate culture/work environment. This will aid them in their sourcing and selection of potential candidates. It would also allow the agency to better prepare candidates with client interviews. {#46}

Benefit of educating employers is taking away fear/uncertainty of working with people with disabilities (employers often feel sensitive about the possibility of offending the person with a disability) {#56}

Provide incentives for educational institutions to train people with disabilities in appropriate skills. {#58}

Educate public first to make business more receptive. Involve the school system, employment forums. Develop a network of speakers. Benefit is a public used to the idea that PWD can work and want to work.

Showcase "champion" businesses who have success stories to share. Benefit is that employers have a concrete example and role model. This could be one of the roles of the centralized agency who would be in a position to access success stories. {#59}

Who - Disability Specialists, Technology and Adaptive Device Specialists, Employers, Media, PWDs

Impact - Create a cultural shift, inclusion not exclusion, barrier-free working environments

Must be ongoing, not stagnant {#62}

To ensure success, it should be communicated that the "list" of disabilities will not be exhaustive and that accommodations need to be individualized. Educate on the incidence of multiple disabilities/hidden disabilities. {#63}

Involve wide range of PWD's including visible and invisible disabilities. Include labour movement, gov't facilitation, private sector. PWD's to have majority presence. Tap into existing disability organizations, i.e. DAWN, etc. for representation. Utilize existing employers to advise on what is required to enhance knowledge. Involve media, etc.

People with disabilities would be best to speak for themselves, to highlight successes and struggles experienced. Developing the skill sets of PWD's to lead this campaign would go a long way in developing the community and reducing isolation. They would then become role models for others. This approach would help to alleviate the "charity" approach to assisting people with disabilities, and would more likely focus on issues in the community that bar access.

Research and document other effective public campaign strategies, i.e. the Economic and Business roundtable on Mental Health in the workplace. Involve those employers representing both small and large workplaces. Determine effective leadership in this campaign. Involve government at all levels. {#65}

A group of community disability agencies collaborate to develop a workshop series of disability sensitivity training for employers. PWD are involved in developing the material and presenting the material. Provide presentations to HR and front line hiring managers. {#74}

Involve reps from the newly developed advisory group (provincial) for people with disabilities, ODA related. {#75}

General information on benefits and how to's of employing PWDs by central source plus specifics of each type of disability by disability groups {#76}

##### **5. Business Leadership network that champions partners, rewards and recognition, maintain high profile (business, govt's, agencies, insurance cos., labour movement.)**

Involve high level executives members of sectoral business associations/councils, labour government, who would lead in championing employment of PWD with employers in their sector of all sizes, recognize those who do and do so successfully, disseminate/reward best practices results - this kind of initiative exists in the US , western Canada - chapters of a central coordinating, leading organization. {#41}

Need a champion: could be industry association, or head of CME, or some not-for-profit coordinating group (e.g. Conference Board of Canada; Toronto Board of Trade). {#45}

Maintain momentum. {#47}

Celebrating and recognizing success; showing role models for others. Creates good news stories. {#49}

Keeps the issue of employment of PWD's on the agenda for employers and the public. E.G. United Way approach. {#50}

Provide incentive to return employees to work rather than exclusive focus on creating new employment relationships. {#54}

Government should fund this program, coordinating the involvement of senior level executives from a broad range of sectors. {#57}

Business leader champions who will act as spokespersons - speaking engagements (to larger business community), media, awards (either nominated to existing awards or establish new award through program) and recognition opportunities {#61}

Involve educational institutions - career centres do not always work with the centres for students with disabilities therefore need more collaboration in this area.

One lead employer and one lead agency to coordinate wide range of employers and agencies. Service for employers to contact their peers for resource

information/ideas/best practices. Examples - candidate sharing, accommodation strategies.

Give awards and publicity to organizations that hire PWD. Organize an annual event to showcase employer contributions and the contribution of the PWD.

Impacts - more employers getting best practices, support = more employers hiring PWD  
- industry leadership in creating partnerships , a body that could support sustaining them, a body that could support # 2. A central access point for implementing #4

Award given to a high profile successful company will inspire others to see that hiring PWD doesn't hurt the bottom line.

## Appendices

### A – Session Agendas

#### Session 1 - Making the Match: aligning competencies through effective recruitment

- Welcome and Overview
- Presentations
  - Survey Findings
  - Speakers
  - Questions & Comments
- Break
- Facilitated Discussion
  - Employer Needs
  - Disclosure and the Hiring Process
  - PWD presenting to an employer
  - Creative solutions & new approaches
- Wrap-up

#### Session 2 - Making it work: sustainable employment practices

1. Welcome and Overview
2. Presentations
  - Survey Findings
  - Speakers
  - Questions & Comments
3. Break
  - Facilitated Discussion
  - Adaptive / Accommodation technologies
  - Keys to sustainable employment
  - Exit patterns of PWD
  - Creative solutions & new approaches
4. Reflections on the Day
5. Wrap-up

#### Session 3 - Building for the future: creating strategic partnerships

- Welcome & Project Overview
- Review of 1st day
- Discussion Questions: Partnerships
  - Why do this?
  - Issues and Challenges
  - Actions and Breakthroughs
    - Who should be involved? Impacts?
- Working Lunch
  - Reflections on the Forum
  - Wrap-up

**B – Facilitator Guide (detailed questions)****Session A – Making the Match: aligning competencies through effective recruitment****Suggested Questions / Discussion Topics**

165. What are you looking for from a Placement Agency when you hire someone through a recruiter? (How does this change if hiring a PWD?)
- Process: Brainstorm, discuss, quick vote - Which of these are “make or break”?
166. Disclosure. Some people say PWD should fully disclose while others say “disclose nothing”. When as an employer do you want to know this information and how does that change your hiring process?
- Process: Plenary discussion.
167. If someone has a disability, what is the best way to present themselves to an employer so as not to decrease their opportunity to get the job? How does a PWD impact your hiring process?
- Process: Plenary discussion.
168. What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the participation of PWD in the workforce? (Include best practices that we can make more wide spread)
- Process: Brainstorm, prioritize, discuss.

**Session B – Making it Work: sustainable employment practices****Suggested Questions / Discussion Topics**

165. Reflecting on the presentations.... How helpful is the information on accommodation/adaptive technologies from the presentations? Also, what resources & tools do you need access to so accommodation is an easy process?
- Plenary discussion
166. What are the keys to long term, sustainable employment of a PWD? What makes it happen? the essential ingredients? From employees perspective, from employer perspective?
- Process: Brainstorm, Vote.
167. Check the list from above against following: Is there any difference in the exit patterns of PWD? What have you learned from exit interviews about why PWD stay/don't stay. (Concern: many PWD leave jobs after short period of time? Does this come out in Exit interviews?)
- Process. Plenary discussion about items on screen
168. What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions that can help to improve the sustainable employment of PWD in the workforce? And move towards a more representative workforce?
- Process: Brainstorm, prioritize, discuss.

**Session C – Building for the Future: creating strategic partnerships****Suggested Questions / Discussion Topics**

165. Reasons for Partnerships. What are the benefits, payoffs, impacts of effective partnerships? Brainstorm, categorize
166. Issues and challenges. What are some of the obstacles, challenges, problems in creating and maintaining effective partnerships that would lead to long term sustainable employment of PWD?
  - Process: brainstorm, prioritize
167. Solutions. What are some creative approaches and innovative solutions to addressing these problems... In what ways can we create breakthroughs? What needs to change to address the barriers?
  - Process: brainstorm, prioritize