

Best Practices

Inclusive Economic Strategy For People With Disabilities: Proactive Management, Organizational Change: A Reasoned Approach to Disability

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Abstract: The answers to the problem of employment of people with a disability in businesses have often focused on social issues. However, the context which determines the inclusion process mainly depends on project management within organizations. Our purpose is the analysis of favorable factors in management strategies and approaches to people with disabilities.

Keywords: effective management, managing inclusion, social model

Introduction

For any organization, managing people with disabilities involves the setting up of a strategy to manage the diversity of the productive potential of every individual (Allen, 1994). First, this requires the development of a reasoned approach to disability, by understanding its nature and identifying its possible consequences, both positive and negative, in order to implement appropriate techniques and expertise to compensate for the disability in the context of any given job. Secondly, it is important to analyze the set of tasks entailed in a job, both to measure the compatibility of a person's skills with these activities, and to highlight ways in which the employee with a disability may cooperate with his/her able-bodied colleagues. An example of this process would be identifying exchanges of work tasks to allow the person with a disability to reach the same level of productivity as other members of the team. A deliberate effort is needed within the team to develop strategies aimed at the inclusion of people with disabilities, avoiding their isolation. For this purpose, the measures needed to ensure accessibility and inclusion within an organization require the involvement of managers, since they must be put at the center of inclusive processes for people with disabilities. Disabled people's skills and potential productivity must make up the core of any action plan to reach the goal of genuine inclusion.

The advent of new technologies (Burgstahler, Comden, Lee, Arnold, & Brown, 2011), namely the ergonomic adaptation of working tools (assistive ware, ergonomic desks, computing braille display) allows specific tasks to be carried out by workers with disabilities. For example, the fact that people with disabilities in management positions bring added value, both for productivity and innovation, is already well established (Mitra, 2006). Colleagues with a disability in managerial positions have proved their worth in many organizations. They work at all levels, develop their own strategies for compensation, with or without technical support. Their disability often forces them to develop additional skills to balance the disability, whether physical or sensory. Hence physically colleagues with disabilities might

dynamically optimize their concentration and acquisition of new skills in relation to their work. Similarly, visually impaired colleagues might reorganize work methods with perhaps more emphasis on abstract concepts. In the workplace, people with a disability, backed with their differences, directly or indirectly bring richness in methodology across organizations.

In-Work Training and Promotion

In-work training is seldom used as a leverage tool to promote the inclusion of employees with disabilities in managing strategies (Allen, 1994). There are many obstacles to this possible path to promotion. For example, the burden of legal and administrative regulations creates a micro-market of training specially designed for people with disabilities, in which choices become far too limited (Schur, Kruse, Blasi, & Blank, 2009). Failure to develop continuing education or training is a hindrance to career development. The lack of strategy with respect to recruitment of persons with disabilities in typical work situations (conventional labor market) is obvious. The vast majority of people with disabilities who have higher education qualifications come late to a full-time professional work, whether in the private or public sector (Schur et al., 2009). According to the European Union Eurostat statistics published in 2011, 47% of people with disabilities are working, compared with 66% of people without disabilities. In most countries of the European Union, 24 out of 28, (see Eurostats) the lack of fundamental equal rights such as the disability discrimination legislation for education and employment (Mitra, 2006) is a key explanatory variable.

Analysis and Suggestions

In the context of policies based on voluntary choices rather than legal enforcement, it would be wise to carry out an audit on the management of human resources with respect to the inclusion of employees with disabilities. It is worth analyzing organizational procedures in relation to the application of legal regulations (Mintzberg, 2013). This evaluation must take into account the following points:

- Recruitment mechanisms which consider the specific needs of the person with a disability;
- The approach of management towards disability (differentiated management or management integrated into the global strategy);
- Involvement of employees with a disability at the heart of all services;
- The benefits of dynamic management strategy of people with disabilities for all employees (Riddell, Edward, Weedon, & Ahlgren, 2010);
- Ergonomic approaches to work settings and equipment (defined by productivity or limited to the adaptation of equipment);
- The role of the workplace doctor (compulsory in France although optional for most European countries), its involvement in recruitment processes and redeployment must

only focused on health aspects;

- The redeployment process (based on medical diagnosis or skills assessment);
- The impact of perceptions of employees with a disability on the behavior of their peers.

The findings from this evaluation will be used to identify the strands of work needed to achieve the goal of employing people with disabilities at the heart of organizations in the best possible way: to meet labor needs effectively and to develop an efficient managerial strategy in relation to abilities (Mintzberg, Lampel, Quinn, & Ghosha, 2003). The framework for carrying out such an audit must take into account, the elements making up a global strategy for managing human resources, as well as, changes of approach that will help integrate employees with disabilities and avoid any possible isolation. In this way, the inclusion initiative can effectively pay off, and bring genuine progress to a global strategy. The central leverage points on which the project must rest upon are:

- Methods used to recruit employees with disabilities;
- Know-how with regard to redeployment and re-training of employees;
- Systems to support in-work training;
- Ergonomics that are truly integrated into the work organization;
- A policy consisting in predicting needs before they arise;
- Subcontracting to the specialized disability sector (associations, cooperatives, specialized companies).

Objectives of the Management Initiative

The targets in this dynamic management process are multiple and convergent:

- Setup a policy based on voluntary rather than legal action, whilst making an effort for the short-term to meet national legal requirements and, consequently, to comply with those regulations which promote positive action for the employment of people with disabilities (Jones, 1997).
- Balance recruitment and redeployment to introduce real equity in career development and establish the principle of non-discrimination inside organizations, to avoid all discrimination on grounds of disability (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). So managers must achieve a greater presence of employees with a disability in each social and professional categories (Barel & Fremeau, 2013).
- Change behaviors towards people with disabilities by bringing appropriate know-how to bear in the fields of management systems for disabled employees (Burkhauser, Schmeiser, & Weathers, 2012).

- Consequently, by being of fundamental importance, these organizational techniques should hold a high priority in job retention initiatives.
- Create active cooperation between all the players to allow each one to participate effectively: Human resources management, direction and services, social partners and external specialized organizations involved in systems for inclusion in training: associations of rehabilitation, training centers, universities, job-seeking organizations...

Critical Factors

Recruitment, in-work training and career development.

It is important to restore the balance of representation of social and professional categories "workers, technicians, management" (Sen, 2002, pp. 659-666) within work organizations by recruiting employees with a disability.

In-work training, known as an employees' right, is one essential tool for improving promotion of workers with disabilities. Whether specialized or mainstream, in-work training is also a tool for integration that will benefit all aspects of an employee's career progress. It is one of the success factors of integration.

Redeployment

Qualitative and ethical redeployment requires a job-retention procedure which takes into account the employee's status and previous career. In order to facilitate the roles redesign, an Integration and Redeployment Unit must be created in the Human Resources Department. This unit must have a high priority in accessing the budgets controlling the resourcing of workplace design and equipment, in-work training and skills assessment.

Workplace Design and Accessibility

Workplace design is a new specialization which arose from a study of ergonomics. It has gradually grown to include other disciplines such as computing, technical support, human assistance, etc. Working interfaces adaptation for employees with disabilities is necessary to achieve an autonomy similar to that of their colleagues without disabilities (Feldman, 2004).

Experts have agreed on a definition of needs for workplace design (Florey & Harrison, 2000) based on an analysis of the tasks to be carried out, leading to a set of specifications for a given role (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997). The practical strategy, experimentally developed by these experts, resolves technical problems and has led to a positive evolution of technical, mechanical, electronic and computer-based supports. It requires a mutual agreement and a sharing of experiences, through a formalized procedure using an organization's intranet, particularly between employees with a disability and internal technical support staff.

In short, the success of the managers' undertaking, depends on the ability of improving technical accessibilities but also on the capability of keeping employees with

disabilities regularly informed about technical assistance in relation to their work tasks. Accessibility, and the mobility of employees with disabilities at the heart of the work environment requires two complementary approaches: one based on the respect of regulations on building and workplace design, the other linked to an organization. The convergence of these two approaches meets the global needs of freedom of movement, security and comfort of all employees.

Education of employees in work environments and the role of Health and Safety committees.

The success of disabled people inclusion and integration depends on the perceptions of all the players in the working environment. Human Resources Departments must inform and raise awareness among operational services and trade unions to contribute to the development of a positive culture (Schur et al., 2009) about the social representation of people's differences. Training modules and education about the best ways of creating welcoming environments for employees with disabilities must be in place across an organization. In the same way, information and education of those in charge of apprentices must be ensured.

Conclusion

There are several categories of factors that further integrate people with disabilities into work organizations integration into work organizations. First, there is a need for establishment of a strategic management policy on employment and abilities, which would take into account the specificities of each employee category (women, men, young people, experienced and over 50 ...). Without this proposal, i.e. the creation of a management principle linking overall human resources and their potential, the management initiative for integration of people with a disability is at risk of falling into social welfare or even into charity.

It is crucial to establish education and information targeting all groups with responsibility within the organizational structure. This education must emphasize the abilities and potential of disabled people. Similarly, information about disability must be rationalized, to avoid any confusion with sickness or stages of illness. The players in this mission could be a member of the Human Resources department, a service director or somebody in charge of maximizing productivity. These stakeholders are more likely to create an inclusion initiative based on a productive capabilities system. In addition, the role of the workplace doctor (where applicable) must be strictly limited to diagnosis and identification of incompatibilities linked to impairments (for instance making decisions on behalf of people with disabilities or the managers). Counseling not decision-making. So if the organizational structure is well defined, regarding those who are involved in the process, then the inclusion initiative will be anchored into the culture and central concerns of the organization.

The obstacles to this process are often psychological, and linked to fear of the unknown. They can easily be overcome if those in power show a genuine will to change. Depending on what strategy is adopted, i.e. social, charitable or managerial, able-bodied

colleagues will react either one way or the other. Often, people facing ignorance tend towards imitation (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). So when we come face to face with employees with a disability we must above all avoid falling into a special behavior, often based on pity. In the long-term, we would run the risk of causing them to lose their dignity. It should be obvious that this type of relation is not natural, and long experience, study and observation on the ground, have confirmed its damaging effects (Colella, 2001). It has been especially well demonstrated (Kuznetsova, 2012), in English-speaking countries and Northern Europe, that behaviors, inherently linked to competence, mutually benefit employees with a disability and those working with them. Good practice begins with a successful implementation of the in-house integration initiative, even if all the necessary know-how is not yet in place. Initially, cooperation may work only in one direction, that is, from the specialized partners to the organization, and not the other way. This way, the work organization will acquire all the necessary techniques to apply the initiative. It is worth noting that this initiative must be turned into dynamic action in order to achieve a real evolution either social, economic or technical. Above all, a fundamental mistake to avoid is not to create a parallel system for recruitment or redeployment. That will isolate employees with disabilities and keep them tied into medical or social models whose effectiveness has never been proven. Advice to managers would be the following: remember that the inclusion of employees with disabilities is part of the global strategy for any organization. It must be part of any framework for high quality organizational management. From a process perspective, in terms of productivity, this approach will improve the performance of systems such as formal management, as a lever for change and proactive strategy. Consequently, both recruitment and job-retention plans for people with disabilities must be embedded in social and economic framework.

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