



# An Overview of U.S. Corporate Practices in the Employment of People with Disabilities: Spotlight on the Retail Trade Sector

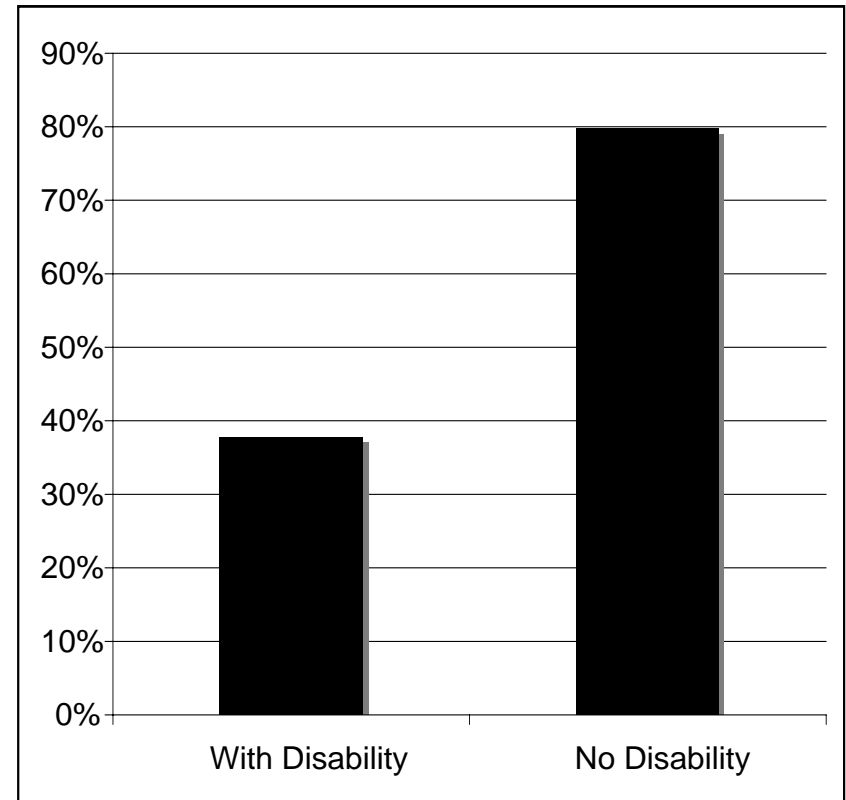
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# Introduction – The Problem

- The rates of employment for people with disabilities in the United States have not improved and remain unacceptably low



Source: Cornell RRTC, 2006 Disability Status Report for the U.S.

# Public Policy Response to Date

- Predominant attention and focus has been on the supply side (i.e., better informing and preparing PWDs for work)
- Growing interest and research on the demand side (i.e., understanding the needs and issues of employers)

## **Companies Nationwide are Embracing a Diversity and Inclusion Agenda – Motivating Factors**

- To attract and retain a workforce that reflects its current and/or future desired marketplaces
- To develop and retain a workforce that better relates to/serves its consumers
- To attract the buying power of different populations
- To enhance competitiveness by exposing workers to a wider diversity of people and cultures
- To improve productivity and reduce turnover and absenteeism
- To enhance community relations and build better public perceptions

## **For Many Employers, the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Diversity Efforts is Relatively New ~ Why?**

- Only in the past 20 years has there been a more formal expectation that people with disabilities should, can, and want to work
- There continues to be attitudes about the inability to work and/or competence of workers with disabilities
- The wide array of different abilities in the population does not lend itself easily to across-the-board solutions, practices, and strategies

# Existing Practices in U.S. Companies that Recruit, Retain, and Develop People with Disabilities

1. Corporate Interest and Organizational Readiness
2. Targeted Recruitment and Hiring
3. Workforce Awareness and Workplace Accommodation
4. Inclusive Marketplace Practices
5. Measuring Progress

## Corporate Interest and Organizational Readiness

- Developing disability networks, councils, affinity groups
- Featuring PWDs in company-wide (internal and external) publications and strategies
- Participating on national/state/local councils
- Funding national/local disability work/education programs, etc.
- Seeking public awards and recognition
- Incorporating vendors and suppliers in diversity efforts – using disability-owned businesses
- Acknowledging PWDs in corporate diversity policy statements
- Mobilizing senior corporate officers to support disability hiring policies
- Committing publicly to hire PWDs

# Targeted Recruitment and Hiring

- Partnerships with local high schools/community colleges
- Recruitment at traditional colleges serving students with disabilities
- Targeted recruitment at colleges with the goal of identifying students with disabilities
- Partnerships with local community-based organizations
- Development of a targeted recruitment pipeline using various programs/methods (internships, co-op arrangements, etc.)
- Job advertising on websites/in publications with a disability audience
- Disability recruitment/awareness training of HR and recruiting personnel
- Creation of specific programs to train, recruit, hire, and support PWDs



## Workforce Awareness and Workplace Accommodation

- Education and training of company leaders, managers, and supervisors
- ADA/accommodations-specific training for managers
- Dedicated employee training
- Involvement in disability-specific projects such as Disability Mentoring Day
- Installing assistive technology or changing business processes to accommodate workers with disabilities
- Centralizing funding for accommodations
- Creating a corporate disability resource center
- Collaborating with area transportation agencies
- Implementing more flexible work schedules
- Partnerships with community-based organizations for on-the-job support

# Inclusive Marketplace Practices

- Cultivating and marketing to the disability community and their families as consumers
- Including workers with disabilities in the development of company products, goods, and services
- Developing universal accessibility (equal access) to company products, goods, services, employment opportunities, discounted prices, and other promotional programs both through physical accommodation and access as well as Internet access

# Measuring Progress

- Challenges to collecting data and measuring progress
- Innovative practices are not generally well documented

# The Retail Trade Sector – Its Vital Role in U.S. Employment

- Retail is the nation's largest private-sector employer
- It offers jobs with a diverse range of work, tasks, and skills
- There is considerable entry-level employment that often requires lower education and skills
- There is employment for those seeking part-time and temporary work
- It offers mobility of career opportunities – the skills learned in one retail job are often readily transferable to other retail firms or other industries

# Retail Industry Trends and Workforce Challenges

- Industry Trends Affecting Employment
  - Industry Consolidation
  - Increasing Use of New Technologies
  - The Internet and Growth of E-Commerce
- Key Workforce Challenges
  - Recruitment and Retention
  - Career Advancement
  - Diversity

# Workforce Trends and Challenges – Implications for People with Disabilities

- Advantages and Opportunities
  - Labor and skill shortages mean retailers are motivated to hire and train
  - Technology changes mean some greater employment opportunities
  - Work is predominantly local and/or regional
- Disadvantages and Barriers
  - Long-term economically supportable employment in an industry characterized by part-time and temporary jobs, lower-than-average wages, and limited health/fringe benefits
  - Changing nature of the industry require higher skills, flexibility, and adaptability to a transitioning work environment
  - Challenges in navigating established career pathways or in realizing upward mobility

# Fortune 100 U.S. Retailers – How they Compare to Documented Practices and Strategies of Other Corporations

Firm	Inclusive	Non-Committal	Absent
Best Buy	X		
CVS/Caremark	X		
Costco			X
Federated Department Stores			X
Kroger		X	
Lowes			X
Safeway			X
Sears Holding			X
Target			X
The Home Depot	X		
Walgreens	X		
WalMart	X		

# Key Findings

- While the majority of top U.S. retailers have diversity programs and efforts in place, their visible activities devoted to including PWDs varies widely or are invisible to the public
  - There is considerable room for improvement in promoting and realizing employment for PWDs in the retail industry
  - There are opportunities for large retail firms to exert greater leadership
- By adopting policies and procedures in their various business units and stores, large retailers can significantly influence the employment prospects of PWDs within and beyond the retail sector



## Conclusion – What Can Be Done

- Learn from Like-Minded, Progressive Companies
- Tailor Strategies to the Retail Industry
- Make People with Disabilities Visible
- Target Recruitment Efforts and Make Hiring More Accessible
- Support Their Success
- Open Your Market to the Disability Community
- Promote Your Success

For more information:



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