



Elmhurst
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Hope

THE HOPE HANDBOOK: A GUIDE FOR DISABILITY HIRING

A new outlook on employment

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(This page can be torn out and used as a check-list of topics addressed)

H (Hiring)

- Self-diagnostic
- Analyze Current SOPs
- Streamline and Simplify SOPs
- A Current State Analysis
- Evaluation of Employee
- Fact-based Research and Outside Company Contact
- Consult a Professional for Advice or Guidance
- Sensitivity Training

O (Opportunity)

- What is the Position?
- Minimal Cost Impact
- Turnover Cost Impact
- Productivity
- Increased Applicant Pool
- Simplified SOPs
- Social and Community Involvement

P (Preparation)

- Self-Diagnostic
- Establish a Hard and Soft Timeline
- Accountability of Responsibility
- Finalize the Simplified SOPs
- Coordinate and Implement Necessary Accommodations
- Awareness Training
- Performance and Success Metrics
- Type of Employment
- Identifying the Correct Applicant
- Organizational Changes
- Partnership Agreements, if Any
- Overall Understanding of Applicants
- Onboarding

E (Execution)

- Clear, Concise Communication of Objectives
- Employee Engagement
- Motivate and Encourage
- Evaluation
- Check and Adjust

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Executive Summary

The HOPE Handbook was created to help you and your organization on a journey to reduce turnover and increase productivity by looking at an untapped portion of the population: adults with disabilities. The purpose of this handbook is meant to be a high-level guide; every company is unique and there isn't a complete step-by-step process to help you in deciding to go down this path. You will find that many of the issues, complications and roadblocks are impossible to plan for. The goal of this handbook is to provide thought-provoking milestones that we thought necessary to guide change, raise questions in your organization and provide a foundation toward implementation.

Instituting a program like this will mean taking a deep look at your organization's culture. Culture is defined as a system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs that govern how people behave in organizations.¹ Finding the right individuals to carry on your organization's message and ideology is becoming increasingly difficult. The mechanism that companies use to hire and train individuals focuses almost exclusively around the needs of the position they are seeking to fill. Accounting, warehousing, stock keeping and mailroom services, for example, all have specified tasks and specific requirements needed to perform job duties effectively, i.e. "Can the applicant lift a 50lb box with both hands?" In looking to fill open positions, companies may approach hiring needs with a narrow-minded mentality, considering candidates that solely fit the traditional hiring model and disregarding all other applicants that do not fit. This creates a limited pool of applicants from which to choose. The challenge is to approach the potential position without restrictions by changing how we view and create the hiring pool. Potential applicants need to be able to communicate how they can get the job done. Finding those potential employees who can perform consistently will provide companies crucial pieces in meeting the increasing demands of customers industrywide.

Some of these demands have been intensified by Amazon and its ability to deliver and change its supply chain to meet consumers' expectations. The 'Amazon Effect' has started to affect companies all over the world. There are some companies that rely on Amazon for their ability to source and distribute products as their logistic expertise has grown. Sectors like manufacturing and consumables (MRO, personal, technological) are having to speed up deliveries and manufacturing timelines to meet the demands Amazon is facilitating on behalf of consumers. Amazon gives some companies the ability to avoid MOQ (minimum order quantities) and piece out their orders while saving on shipping. Suppliers need more manpower to either meet the needs of individual piece orders or lose sales to Amazon and companies like it. This is causing strain on the supply chain.

Companies need to efficiently and effectively find better talent to deliver these tight deadlines while maintaining accuracy and consistency throughout the supply chain. Finding and retaining the right talent to grow and succeed is becoming a larger issue. This puts pressure on an organization's Human Resources Department and management to find and utilize the best talent available to them to meet these increasing expectations. The traditional hiring model

¹ <http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-organizational-culture-definition-characteristics.html>

encompasses an incomplete view of the available workforce that are willing to help companies meet this demand.

The ADA uses a definition of “disability” drawn from the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that had proved both broad and inclusive: “A mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities [of an individual.]” This definition reflected the ADA’s authors’ belief that “disability” is not inherent in the individual. Rather, “disability” arises only when some human condition comes into contact with an environment – a workplace, for example – that will not accommodate it. The problem is that human variation is endless, and workplaces take many varied physical and organizational forms.² The federal government has not been able to achieve its goal to hire a higher percentage of workers with disabilities, and the private-sector has followed its example. Instead of providing abundant jobs, employers offer excuses for not hiring workers with disabilities. The most common reason is the misinformed thought that hiring workers with disabilities would increase costs (training, accommodations³) and be too difficult to integrate into their culture.

Looking at the entirety of the employment cycle, as opposed to just the beginning, selecting people to perform the task at hand should not be limited to a narrow minded mentality. Like all individuals, a person with a disability, whether it be mental or physical, can perform tasks as assigned like any other individual with the proper training and coaching. Local, statewide, and national programs exist that are designed specifically to help facilitate the learning and coaching for these individuals. There is an abundant amount of resources available to anyone that wants to get started down this path. State agencies or the local Chamber of Commerce can assist most companies with community partners and can help to answer any questions an organization may have in the beginning of this type of cultural change.

HOPE Defined

HOPE is an acronym developed to highlight the specific areas of a business this handbook will highlight.

- **H** is for hiring.
 - This section will have you take a look at the business as a whole at the start of the employment cycle. Current hiring trends/philosophies need to be visited and addressed.
- **O** is for opportunity.
 - This will have more impact on the overall operations than just specific departments and people within. Highlighted will be improved productivity and simplified SOPs.

² <http://ucp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/state-of-disability-in-america-an-evaluation-of-the-disability-experience-by-the-life-without-limits-projec.original.pdf>

³ <http://ucp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/state-of-disability-in-america-an-evaluation-of-the-disability-experience-by-the-life-without-limits-projec.original.pdf>

- **P** is for preparation.
 - This will outline what you need to set up for the implementation of your plan.
- **E** is for execution.
 - This will outline communication objectives, and the beginning of the journey.

There are many different areas of the business that need to be addressed before implementing a disability hiring program. Though it may seem like a daunting task, the overall vision of this handbook is to create an environment that benefits workers everywhere and not just cater to any one particular individual. A rollout similar to this has been instituted in a variety of companies, Walgreens with the most notable success. One of this handbook's sponsors, Tim Engstrom, a former Walgreens executive responsible for implementation of this strategy, was an intricate partner supporting their program. He has partnered with the authors to develop this handbook for ease of implementation in any company or environment. This handbook is a framework for anyone to use within the confines of their operations to help streamline a process to simplify the overall environment.

Sections of the handbook will be laid out with tools and suggestions to implement a strategy in your company. This is not a step-by-step instruction, but more of an open guide for implementation. There will be questions that you will need to ask about your company and processes. Addressing these questions will help guide you through the journey. An understanding needs to be made up front that no two companies are alike and each journey is individual to the company that embarks on it. The HOPE Handbook will provide stops and checkpoints along the way, but ultimately it is up to you and the company as a whole to travel it. **NO ONE INDIVIDUAL WILL TRAVEL THIS PATH ALONE.** The **ENTIRE** company will need to be onboard from top to bottom and it starts with hiring.

H (Hiring)

Often, the initial roadblock most individuals encounter when they decide to start this path relates to costs. To debunk a common myth, hiring people with disabilities is not expensive. In fact, it is usually far less than many people think. Two of the most common myths that arise are the cost of accommodations and overall costs.

- **Accommodations:** In most cases, an appropriate, reasonable accommodation can be made without difficulty and at little or no cost.
 - According to ergonomic and job accommodation experts, the amount of money employers would need to pay to accommodate a particular worker's disability is surprisingly low. 31% of accommodations cost nothing, 50% cost less than \$50, 69% cost less than \$500 and 88% cost less than \$1,000.⁴
- **Costs:** A study of Walgreens' distribution centers by the American Society of Safety Engineers found that workers with disabilities had a turnover rate 48 percent lower than

⁴ <http://askjan.org/media/lowcosthighimpact.html>

that of the non-disabled population, with medical costs 67 percent lower and time-off expenses 73 percent lower.⁵

There are many benefits to hiring adults with disabilities. According to a 2005 study published in the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 92% of Americans view companies that hire people with disabilities more favorably than those that do not.⁶ There are also a variety of State and Federal tax credits and incentives available for companies and corporations who hire the disabled.

The only question now is where to begin. You're convinced that this is something positive and you want to start this journey, but don't know where to start.

A critical part of the journey, and a good starting point, is to select a champion for the project. Someone who has the ability to remove any roadblocks and help keep the team on track if they come across any issues. This person may not be the only person responsible for the entire endeavor, however, they need to be the sponsor. The champion of the project will delegate responsibilities needed to complete the planning stage. Gantt charts and process flow charts can be used to delegate responsibilities.

Hiring Self-Diagnostic

- Does your company need to hire or recruit new employees?
- Is there an area of your business that has a higher turnover rate than average?
- How much are your turnover costs every year?
- Have you done any benchmarking with your industry and market for hiring practices?
- Where do you stand in the results?
- Are their results different than yours? What can you do to improve on them?
- Do you think you have inclusionary or exclusionary hiring practices?

Analyze current SOPs.

- Are your work operations clearly defined?
- Are there SOPs by process or job function?
- Who updates SOPs? Are they easy to follow?
- Are there clearly defined tasks and duties defined for each role within the organization?

If there are not, there should be moving forward. Without these, there are no guidelines that dictate the roles and tasks of the position. How can hiring the right person be possible if the duties and responsibilities for the job are not clearly defined and known by everyone?

⁵ <http://www.americantraininginc.com/hiring-people-with-disabilities-for-assembly-distribution-jobs/>

⁶ <http://askjan.org/landingpage/NILG2014/Siperstein%20Romano%20Marketing%20Study.pdf>

Streamline and Simplify SOPs

- What is your process to evaluate SOPs?
- Does your organization have a regular cadence for reviewing and updating SOPs?
- In reevaluating current processes, can they be simplified or streamlined?

This was the case for Walgreens when implementing their employment strategy. They renamed areas and sections after animals and this simplified the overall training process.

For example, instead of aisle numbers in a warehouse, they can be named after types of animals or categories familiar to everyone. As opposed to part numbers, they can be assigned locations with easy to remember locations like Hippo (aisle), 1 (facing), green (shelf) 3 (location), ‘Hippo 1, Green 3’. Any combination of these can work, with simplification as the key focus. Tim Engstrom used this strategy, making it easier for a person with certain disabilities to understand and the overall training process faster and easier for the enabled workforce.

A Current State Analysis

- Does the structure of your company facilitate change and if so how easily?
- How do you define successful implementation of change?
 - Change management will be a key factor along this journey and should be communicated to employees so they know what to expect.
- Is there an easy means of communication and feedback throughout all levels within the culture?
 - If there is not, one should be and needs to be initiated, if not for this than for the overall performance of the company.

Evaluation of Employees

- Are they willing to work with someone who may require some additional attention?
- Are they willing to work next to someone who may have disabilities?
- Are they willing to help a fellow coworker in need?

If you are unsure of these answers, getting your organization engaged early in the process will help guide you. It also may be necessary to create and complete a survey with individuals looking for key characteristics that you think would occur. There are a variety of tools online if you do not have a survey service or are not currently completing engagement surveys. Survey Monkey bills their premium package with data analytics and unlimited surveys at \$85/month and can be billed annually. This is a basic service that includes a user interface that anyone can use and has analytics built in. More advanced intricate programs or services and companies are available and they can range in the tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Outside companies, 3rd party partners, and research.

- Are you a member of your local chamber of commerce?

- A local chamber of commerce is a great resource to use when beginning the selection process of a partner.
- Are there local companies that assist with job training with adults with disabilities?
 - An extensive list of organizations is provided in Appendix C. It presents statewide options you may have in starting this process.
- Do you have a local school or college that has training programs? See **Spotlight: Local Colleges**

Once you begin, you can narrow down the search for regional or local options that best suit company needs. These will specialize in facilitating the transition and most of the needs that your company may require. Some are free and others look for compensation based on the scope of work. There are also other organizations that are available to answer questions that you may have along the way.

Spotlight: Local Colleges

Local college programs, like ELSA at Elmhurst College, have undergraduate programs designed for helping young adults with disabilities. Programs like these can be partners for internship opportunities or initial roll out programs to transition these young adults from the classroom to the working environment. Elmhurst offers job coaching and preparation as part of the program at no additional cost.

- Consult a professional for advice or guidance.

There are many organizations that can assist with setting up training or onboarding programs from beginning to end. These organizations aren't necessary, but they can be used to outsource all hiring. That could be a direction your company might take. Companies like Aspire in Hillside, Illinois specialize in job coaching and preparing adults for transitions into different companies. They provide expert on site and in facility job coaching to prospective employees to prepare them to succeed in different environments. There are many organizations that specialize in assisting companies with initiatives like these.

- Awareness Training

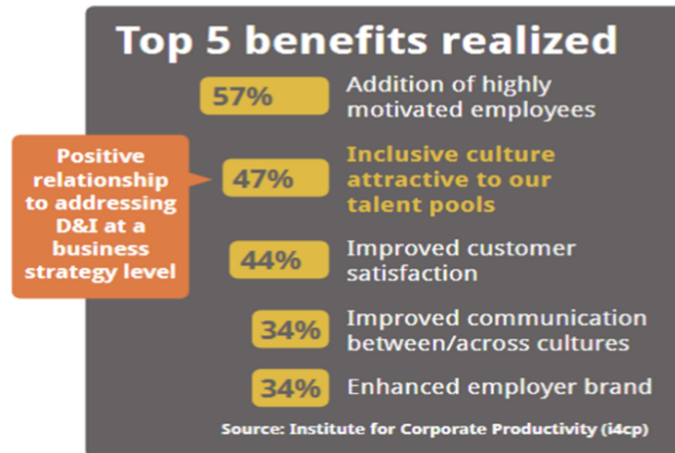
- Does your company have awareness training to deal with the differences in the workplace?

This may be one of the more critical items on the list. When instituting a new program, there is a possibility that training needs to be completed for the entire company. This would be to inform employees of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. If there is not an existing program, there are many outside organizations that are available to administer training onsite and be able to assist with any internal questions.

It is critically important that the organization realizes that this journey is not charity. It is about hiring the right people for your organization who can add value. The individuals you will encounter along the way will have the same abilities as most of the workforce and will often provide better results.

O (Opportunity)

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2015 that 17.5 percent of persons with a disability were employed. In contrast, the employment-population ratio for those without a disability was 65.0 percent. The unemployment rate for persons with a disability fell to 10.7 percent in 2015, and the rate for those without a disability declined to 5.1 percent.⁷ In a workplace filled with people and unemployment rates at record lows, there is still a vast market of untapped potential that is increasingly being ignored. Below are five additional benefits for hiring employees with disabilities:⁸



All new or current operations should not have accessibility issues as most are designed with those in mind. However, if older businesses do not, government tax discounts and incentives exist for companies and organizations that hire the disabled. This also applies to disabled veterans. In order to maximize the opportunity hiring the disabled will give your company, a few questions may need to be answered first.

What is the position?

- Are the tasks and responsibilities clearly defined?
- Are they (tasks and responsibilities) easily coachable?
- Is there room for advancement?
- Is there room for growth?

Coaching and training will be required for any position for any employee, that is a given. Hiring any individual into a specified responsibility with no room for advancement or growth destroys a workplace culture. The disabled deserve the same rights and responsibilities as the able-bodied workforce, and their advancement and growth should not be ignored. Aptitude tests and placements can be arranged and made through agencies like Aspire.

⁷ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.nr0.htm>.

⁸ <https://bestbuddies.org/imintohire/files/2017/01/Employing-People-with-Intellectual-and-Developmental-Disabilities-i4cp-2014.pdf>

- Can the facility accommodate on-site coaching or a mock training set up?
 - Set up space does not need to be extensive or elaborate. It needs to simulate the actual working conditions an employee will encounter on a day-to-day basis. A small 10x10 section of a warehouse backroom equipped with racking for sorting or boxes for simulated lifting or packing would suffice for warehousing needs.

Minimal Cost Impact

A question that may arise in the development of a program relates to costs of accommodations or lost work. One specific example might be insurance costs. Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.⁹ A study conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers showed that 90% of the 279 companies surveyed reported no effect on insurance costs as a result of hiring workers with disabilities.¹⁰

Implementation costs are another myth. The JAN study has been ongoing since 2004 and concluded the following: Of the employers who gave cost information related to accommodations they had provided, 410 out of 700 (59%) said the accommodations needed by employees cost absolutely nothing. Another 256 (36%) experienced a one-time cost. Actual costs were not provided. Only 25 (4%) said the accommodation resulted in an ongoing, annual cost to the company and 9 (1%) said the accommodation required a combination of one-time and annual costs. A typical one-time expenditure by employers was \$500. When asked how much they paid for an accommodation beyond what they would have paid for an employee without a disability who was in the same position, employers typically answered around \$400.¹¹

While decreasing internal costs overall, hiring can increase market position. 87 percent of consumers prefer to give their business to companies that employ people with disabilities.¹² A Walgreens location operates with 40 percent of the distribution center's 400 employees having disclosed physical or cognitive disabilities. Yet the facility's efficiency rose by 20 percent since opening. This happened after technology and process changes originally intended to accommodate workers with disabilities impacted and improved everyone's efficiency. At full capacity, the center will employ 800.¹³

Turnover Cost Impact

- Do you know where the highest level of turnover occurs in your facility?
- Do you know your current turnover costs? (see Appendix A)
- Where would you like to be in regards to turnover costs and percentages?

⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy

¹⁰ 2006, CSD at Michigan State University, 441 Union Building, E. Lansing, MI 48824

¹¹ <http://askjan.org/media/lowcosthighimpact.html>

¹² <http://www.hrps.org/blogpost/1347089/240656/Disability-Inclusion-Pays-Dividends>

¹³ <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/4wells-the%20demographics%20of%20disabilities.aspx>

Statistics prove that hiring someone with a disability will lower turnover costs. In San Mateo County a study was conducted and concluded that inclusionary acts of hiring led to 85% employee retention rate on jobs that typically have the highest turnover.¹⁴ As time passes within the company, an individual will become more comfortable with the surroundings and process. This will enable them to become more efficient and faster at the designated task/responsibility.

Social and Community Involvement

The HOPE Handbook is providing a roadmap to guide a traveler along this journey. The HOPE Handbook aims to open company mindsets on inclusionary hiring practices that will provide better long-term results and better overall bottom line impact. An additional benefit is the social and community involvement this brings. Consumers appreciate companies who hire employees with disabilities. According to a 2005 study in the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 92% of consumers felt more favorable toward those companies that hire individuals with disabilities.¹⁵ Positive brand identity and awareness will result through this journey. Though this is not the focus, as word spreads about the impact a disability hiring program is having, it is inevitable. This also will be an opportunity for the organization to become more involved in areas that impact the lives of their own employees. According to the U.S. Census, 1 in 5 people had a disability in 2010. More likely than not, employees in your company know an individual that has some sort of disability. There might be local organizations that deal with certain disabilities, such as blindness, hearing loss, or disabled veterans, that can help with implementation of this program and can also be assisted by the company helping with fundraising or volunteer work.

Improved Productivity

“A study was conducted by the Institute for Corporate Productivity, a company that analyzes the practices of high-performance organizations. Among some of the striking findings are just how many employers believe that their employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities offer specific benefits to their workplaces. More than 75% of employers surveyed ranked their employees with disabilities as good or very good on work quality, motivation, engagement, integration with co-workers, dependability and attendance.”¹⁶ These individuals are highly motivated and eager to perform tasks and responsibilities as assigned. Some individuals have worked in sheltered workshops in the past that pay substantially less than minimum wage. The obstacles they face in getting a job, and the fulfillment and gratitude they will demonstrate for the opportunity, will show itself in productivity. Their productivity will drive others around them and can increase productivity throughout the operation.

¹⁴ <http://www.gatepath.org/The-Benefits-of-Unlocking-Workplace-Opportunities>

¹⁵ Gary N. Sipersteina, Neil Romanob, Amanda Mohlera, and Robin Parkera. A national survey of consumer attitudes towards companies that hire people with disabilities. IOS Press. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 24 (2006) 3–9

¹⁶ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/27/hiring-people-with-disabilities-isn-t-just-the-right-thing-to-do-it-s-good-for-business.html>

Increased Applicant Pool

Not only will hiring the disabled be better for overall operations, it will give your company a more robust applicant pool. Changing the philosophy in which your company hires will let the applicants prove to you they can perform the tasks as assigned, not have the decisions made for them. While proving they can, the disabled may show you newer, more simplified ways to perform tasks and functions that better suit their needs and very well may better suit current employees also. This will allow your company to be more stringent on the standards and qualifications you are choosing to look for in individuals, and can allow you to make the right choice for the position - not make a choice based out of necessity to fill the position.

Simplified SOP's

The most critical step that an organization needs to take is to look at internal processes.

- Does your company have its SOPs documented?
- How do they get updated?
 - How often?
 - By whom?
 - How detailed are they?
- Have you received feedback that your processes are complicated? (internal survey)

In analyzing the SOPs and streamlining them, the overall intricacy of the process becomes less intense. By simplifying the processes that everyone uses, all employees benefit. The time to train all employees moving forward will decrease. Lingo and terminology will change but become easier to pick up on and understand. The explanation process will take less time. Further implementations moving forward should consider the advancements made from this journey and be incorporated into further decision making.

P (Preparation)

In deciding to change the process of hiring people with disabilities the preparation before execution can be a daunting task.

- Does your organization have a change management department?
- Has your company had a major change in the last few years?
 - Who was involved?
 - How did it get communicated?
 - What were some key takeaways from that change?

Having the best ideas in the world is only as good as the preparation process that is used to implement them. Preparing for the execution is the second to last step in the journey. At this point, a lot of the daunting responsibilities have been completed. Having an excellent preparation plan for this journey will make the journey itself much easier and the execution seamless. There will be obstacles to overcome as are in all processes, but preparing for them makes them easier to handle. The first step in any preparation planning begins with collection of data and diagnostics.

Self-Diagnostic Analysis

The same first step in hiring needs to be done in preparation: gathering information. Pooling it all together will help to gain an understanding of the desired outcome and what goals are important. What is the company striving to accomplish? The goals should be to open the scope of hiring individuals for positions in the business to meet the needs of operations. Gather all necessary cost and analytic figures pertaining to cost, ROI, time, any legal requirements, Human Resource changes, and training to name a few. All of this will be needed as planning for change commences. Communication throughout the business and about the change is highly encouraged. All research up to this point will contribute to the company's preparedness for next steps.

Establish a timeline – hard and soft

Establishing a timeline will be critical. A hard timeline of what you need to do and processes that need to be done to begin. For example, simplified SOP's, agreements and contract negotiations, all forms of training, roll out date, and type of employment (full time, part time, internship, etc.) to name a few. Soft timeline items can range, but are not necessary to the completion of the rollout and can be considered 'parking lot items'. There are some tasks that will need to wait to complete at a later date so there is time to complete the urgent items. The journey will be on-going for the companies that are willing to commit to the plan. There will always be a need for hiring, and constant adaptation and refinement is a part of it.

Accountability of Responsibility

Another critical part of the journey is to select a champion for the project. Someone who can remove any roadblocks and help keep the team on track if they experience any issues. This person cannot make this implementation a success alone. They will need assistance from co-workers within the organization. In delegating responsibilities, accountability needs to be established for the tasks assigned. It is critical that the effort is from the entire team to change and better the processes and culture moving forward. The benefits will touch every member of the organization as they interact with new team members and immerse themselves in the changing culture.

- Will your company outsource or develop a partnership with a company to help formalize the training process for the disabled workforce?

Insourcing the training means a current trainer can work alongside an individual job coach through a partnership and learn how to adapt their current coaching methods to suit the needs for the disabled. A job coach or process coach is highly recommended, but insourcing leads to the ability to customize the experience for the employee being hired.

Outsourcing leaves the responsibility to another organization that will use your finalized documents to prepare your new employee to be ready to work on day one. This alleviates in-house responsibilities for training but relies upon an outside agent to interpret the organization's expectations and performance standards. Outsourcing responsibility for training or coaching to another organization like Aspire can have numerous benefits. Some of these organizations

charge extra fees for their expertise which should be mentioned in the contract agreement. Having an outside perspective can always help the simplification process of the SOP's of an area or job function. All responsibilities should gradually be transferred back to your organization and a plan for how that will go will need to be outlined in the contract.

Finalize the streamlined SOPs

The SOPs should be finalized in such a way that they are ready for a job coach or a current job coach to utilize during training. Modifications can be made and should continue to be made as time progresses. New employees bring new challenges but also bring new opportunities for further simplification and refinement. Understanding and compromise will be necessary in acclimating and adapting procedures to best fit the needs of operations. Clear and concise directions are needed and should be the focus of this simplification. If a partnership is formed, it is important to communicate changes to procedures so that employees follow the same steps regardless of where they were trained.

Coordinate and implement necessary accommodations

Collaboration, proper planning and utilizing resources are required to make it possible for a person with a disability to be hired. Once the accommodations are made, moving forward there should be no need for additional adjustments. Accommodations should prepare the individual for competitive employment where they will be expected to meet the same standards and requirements as their coworkers.¹⁷ Small adjustments to the current accommodations may be needed, but the overall implementation of the accommodations should be done with future hiring needs in mind.

Organizational Changes

- Have all of the changes been made that are necessary within the organization?
- Have all of the departments been notified and coordinated with?

There are no set lists of who needs to be contacted because no two business structures are the same. Some have many layers for implementation processes to go through and some have only a few. Any department or individual that will be affected by this change in hiring, which may be all departments, need to be brought into the loop and communicated with the necessary changes. Not all of them need to be involved in the decision-making process; however, they NEED to be notified of the changes and how to handle them moving forward.

Awareness Training

- Will this be developed internally or externally?
- Can this be done internally with the assistance of a partner, if needed?
- What topics will be covered to employees and what measures and metrics will be used to determine overall understanding of key points?

¹⁷ (Gibbs, 2013 - 2015)

- What will be used to measure success of training?
- Have the individuals been properly trained and what will be used to verify this?

Type of Employment

- What are the needs of the company?
- What are the needs of the desired position to be filled?

These are some of the questions that first need to be answered before hiring an individual and need to be addressed before execution can begin. There are a few different options that can be mutually beneficial for the company and the individual. Some positions can start off at a slower pace and be learned over time on a part-time basis. This would ease the new hire into the new environment and allow all the current employees time to adjust as well. Some positions require full time attention which will be identified in the new hire training and orientation. The company hiring will need to coordinate and allow full training to commence and permit the new hire time to understand and perform the tasks to required performance levels. There are a few organizations that can offer volunteer opportunities for some jobs which may turn into paid opportunities for the individual. These situations are rare but occasionally do happen.

Identifying the correct applicant

You should be hiring to your standard and make sure that the applicant can meet certain non-negotiable standards, like hours of work and job functions.

- The easiest way to deal with this is: ATP: Ask The Person.
 - How would you lift this box?
 - What hours can you work?

Giving the applicant the opportunity to respond to any reservations about their abilities will help to facilitate healthy discussion regarding issues that might arise later. Establishing this dialogue will be important when communicating expectations and guidelines for the role.

Two programs that are helpful in determining viable employment options for a disabled individual include; Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation and Targeted Employment Screening. These programs perform assessments and require the applicant to perform tasks or activities related to the position desired. If areas of struggle are identified, the evaluator can adjust to obtain optimum performance.

Partnership Agreements

This will not apply to all travelers on the journey, as some companies will prefer to handle these responsibilities internally. The goal of The HOPE Handbook is the changing of hiring practices to develop a larger pool of qualified candidates ready and willing to be hired and perform exceptionally within your workplace.

- Have any and all of the necessary agreements been finalized and signed?

- Do both parties understand what they require from one another and how the relationship will be mutually beneficial?
- What are the goals and objectives of both sides and do they align?

If outsourcing this to a partner is the correct fit for your journey needs, they will have their own metrics and processes they will use to identify the correct candidate. Providing them with a concise detailed job description will be essential for them to develop the correct coaching strategy and plan for your new hires.

Overall Understanding of Applicants

In the interview process, job requirements and performance expectations will need to be established and outlined for the new hire in detail. Other things that might be important to discuss include; transportation, scheduling, all necessary HR guidelines and forms, deadlines for decisions and paperwork to hand in. These individuals may not have had a job in their life and this may be their first employment. They will be eager and willing to impress and show you they belong within your company. However, in trying to impress they may encounter setbacks or errors along their own journey within your company. Patience with these individuals is a must and adherence to HR guidelines and federal regulations and statutes is the law. Earning a paycheck will give these new hires a sense of belonging and a sense of individuality within their life. They will be excited to go to work and excited to make friends and socialize with coworkers. Some may not speak or socialize well and they should not be punished or ridiculed for it as it is against the law.

Onboarding

Onboarding procedures for new hires will depend on the path you take towards job coaching and sourcing its function. Some companies might prefer training be done internally due to wanting to keep operations private. Still, other companies will be okay with outsourcing this function to a 3rd party vendor. Depending on what's preferred, the training can either be done on site or at the facility of the vendor. A smaller area separate from your operations may be built to facilitate instruction of responsibilities. The job coach could train the potential employee in your procedures and company culture for a transitory period until they are ready to start, approximately 60 – 90 days. This way, they are already familiar with the task requirements of the position and are ready to work on day one.

Performance and Success Metrics

- What will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the journey?
- Do you have a problem that you are trying to solve? Lower turnover, increase efficiency, etc.
- What current KPIs do you have to judge your performance?
- What current KPIs do you have for employee performance?

Job shadowing and evaluation may be required to ensure the new hire is performing the tasks as directed and trained. Frequent communication will be needed to ensure successful transition from training to employment. Like any new hire, they will feel pressure and anxiety to perform the job well and to the required expectation. Management needs to be aware of this as new environments may cause added anxiety for the new hire. This is where proper job coaching will be critical to have a smooth acquisition of the new hire to the organization. For optimum job satisfaction and low turnover, the conditions of maintaining the employment need to be made perfectly clear by the employer. This can be done through annual performance reviews and upholding the expectations in the job description.¹⁸

E (Execution)

Execution is the final phase of The HOPE Handbook, but it should not be the last step of the journey. As noted throughout the playbook, there need to be continuing improvements within all aspects of your organization. There needs to be continual checking and adjusting of your performance throughout the process. The addition of a different workforce also means that some changes will have to be occasionally re-coached and there will be a need for constant adaptations of current SOPs. The making of a strong organization is built on a sturdy and solid foundation. The planning process is similar to mixing the ingredients to make concrete. The final phase, Execution, will be focused on making a useable, workable, and sustainable work environment for years to come. This is where The HOPE Handbook can help plan your business towards a direction that will be improved and sustainable.

Clear, Concise Communication of Objectives

Introducing a strategy that could affect the culture of your company is something that should not be taken lightly. Your employees deserve clear and concise communication about any incoming changes and why they are necessary. An explanation of why and the benefits of the decision and reason you are on the journey will help ease any anxiousness. Open and real feedback will go a long way with your employees. Starting a program like this behind closed doors will ultimately lead to distrust and resistance. All departments need to be on board to drive consistency and improve processes. This openness will also make it easier on any new employees and teamwork that will be needed going forward. Having clear expectations on the direction of the plan and the need for a team environment will help to dissuade any fears and help to make the program a success.

Employee Engagement

Improvement is driven from the bottom up in small steps by people doing a majority of the daily work. Your front line employees are the most knowledgeable in the daily operations and will be imperative to help acclimate new hires to the environment. This will be necessary to help make sure everyone feels like they are part of the team.¹⁹ They are the ones who are in the best position

¹⁸ (International, Jul 1, 2015)

¹⁹ <https://www.sixdisciplines.com/thesixdisciplinesblog/five-steps-to-successful-execution-of-a-strategy>

to know what is happening on a day to day basis, so they should be involved in creating solutions and implementation of strategies involving their areas of expertise.

Polling employees for their understanding of day to day operations and what they find difficult about their everyday work also will help in simplification of SOP's. If your current processes are difficult to follow or are complicated, by their standards, so will a new hire. Finding effective solutions and creating detailed processes will be a necessity. Taking surveys on how your employees feel about current processes and how to improve them, will lead to new solutions that make new and current employee working conditions more productive and effective.

Motivate and Encourage

One of the most difficult strategies that a company can take would be to force a change without justification or rationale. Hiring new employees with disabilities will make the company more productive and profitable and it will improve the lives of the employees and work environment. Having engaged employees will help to make change easier to implement. A change like this can bring a company closer together and force a whole new level of openness and communication that improve overall operations. Promoting a safe happy environment to grow and thrive in will have many unintended benefits.

Evaluation

Constant review and adjustments will need to be made. The goals and objectives set forth before execution should be measured and evaluated. There should be KPIs that need to be measured or evaluated before, during and after implementation. Implementation of this strategy will transform your company and need to be measured. Some aspects of the cultural changes, like employee attitudes, might be harder to measure. Having open dialogue about changes with your company will highlight areas that need to be focused on and help guide any changes that might need to be addressed. Given the right environment and pre-established corporate culture, your employees will be able to provide you with honest and critical feedback necessary for continued success or necessary change.

Adjust Course if Needed

There is no cruise control for this journey. It requires an active driver and at some point change of course may be needed. This is not to say it will happen, but just a precautionary that it may. In the execution phase, adjusting the rollout or the plan altogether may be required but should not be feared. Some adjustments may be minor and will be able to correct course. The only failure is to abandon the journey altogether.

Conclusion

The HOPE handbook contains many high-level concepts that need to be explored and developed fully before implementation. All sections are intertwined and there has to be constant evaluation of successes and desired outcomes. One of the most important concepts in the handbook is having a project champion. This project champion will help remove barriers, keep the project on track, and make sure that the team has what they need to be successful.

Once you decide to take the path toward hiring people with disabilities, you will find out that it's a very rewarding direction. Heading down this path will enrich your organization in a multitude of different and exciting ways. You not only have the potential to reduce costs through turnover, productivity, and employee engagement, but you have the opportunity to improve the lives of many productive future employees. Thinking outside your organization, you have the opportunity to get the local community involved in your business that will support your culture and cheer you successes.

This all starts with you, the choices you can make and the path you take. Hopefully, this handbook can start you on the path to a rewarding future.

Appendix A

Turnover Calculator and Costs:

Turnover Calculation					
	Number of Employees Separated During	Average Number Employees During	Turnover Rate (Monthly)		
	Month	Month			
January	0	100	0.00%		
February	0	100	0.00%		
March	0	100	0.00%		
1st Quarter	0	100	0.00%		
April	0	100	0.00%		
May	0	100	0.00%		
June	0	100	0.00%		
2nd Quarter	0	100	0.00%		
July	0	100	0.00%		
August	0	100	0.00%		
September	0	100	0.00%		
3rd Quarter	0	100	0.00%		
October	0	100	0.00%		
November	0	100	0.00%		
December	0	100	0.00%		
4th Quarter	0	100	0.00%		
Annual			0.00%		



Appendix B

Information below is based on findings from Randy Lewis, Meg O’Connell, James Emmet, and Deb Russell.

Created by the Elmhurst Learning and Success Team – ELSA

The preparation portion for a company in hiring individuals with disabilities starts with the meaning behind the organization. The meaning in an organization is communicated through the “Why” and “What” that employees are working towards on a day-to-day basis. This is where the preparation part is key in communication with employees.

The Why – needs to be communicated to employees

- ☒ Participants with disabilities from the retail and hospitality sectors stayed on the job longer than participants without disabilities.
- ☒ Across all sectors, participants with disabilities had fewer scheduled absences than those without disabilities.
- ☒ Retail participants with disabilities had fewer days of unscheduled absences than those without disabilities.
- ☒ Regardless of sector, participants with and without disabilities had nearly identical job performance ratings.
- ☒ The number of worker’s compensation claims of retail participants with and without disabilities were equivalent.

The What – How do we prepare our staff for an inclusive workplace?

- ☒ The Buy In – Everyone is on board and wants to be a part of an inclusive workplace
- ☒ Management understands they might have to adjust their setup in the workplace for accommodations and modifications to certain jobs.
- ☒ Rules in the workplace might have to be altered. Everyone learns differently. The business structure does not have to be black and white. As a manager/director, be prepared to alter certain rules in the workplace to create an inclusive work environment.
- ☒ Create Natural Support in the work environment – Have an environment that is inclusive for all employees to help support and train one another without disrupting the workload and flow of business.
- ☒ Illustrate the breakdown of certain tasks within the job to see where the individual needs support so that they can be independently successful.
- ☒ Understand where support is needed for individuals if they struggle in certain areas emotionally or cognitively. Analyze the different job functions and support with accommodations.
 - Any support needed with reading and writing?
 - Any support needed with following instructions/directions?
 - Any support working with a team?
 - Any support using the technology in the workplace?

- ☒ One-third of the staff can be employed with a disability – 2:1 ratio of natural support in the workplace.
- ☒ ELIMINATE THE FEAR
- ☒ Start with internship opportunities that lead to employment opportunities
- ☒ ATP – “Ask the Person” Many people feel uncomfortable or that you should not ask a person with a disability if there is a problem; but no, if there is a situation confront it.

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<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/dat-accessibility-skills.shtml>

Appendix C

Local Resources

ILLINOIS RESOURCES

Disabilityworks, funded by the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, is a cooperative between the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, businesses, state and local governments and community service providers to support employers looking to hire individuals with disabilities.

Our comprehensive "virtual one-stop" Illinois workNet, seamlessly connects employers and qualified job seekers. With the new Disability Resources Pathway, businesses, individuals and workforce professionals are easily connected to useful statewide and local information.

RESOURCES:

Aspire Chicago - Founded in 1960 and is recognized throughout Illinois as a leader in providing bold, pioneering and uncompromising services to children and adults with developmental disabilities, their families and the Chicagoland community.

Hours: Monday - Friday 8 AM - 5 PM

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity - DCEO is Illinois' Workforce Development agency providing economic development, training and follow-up retention services
» illinoisworknet.com

Contact:

Hours: Monday - Friday 8 AM - 5 PM

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services - DRS provides vocational rehabilitation, home services, special programs for people who are blind or deaf, and early intervention services » www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29736

Contact: 800-843-6154

Hours: Monday - Friday 8 AM - 5 PM

Disabilityworks - This innovative partnership of employers, Chambers of Commerce and the DCEO utilizes technology to expand access to workforce development resources aimed at individuals, businesses, and workforce professionals. » disabilityworks.org

Contact:

Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30 AM - 5 PM

Appendix D

For a list of sources and partnership possibilities, inquiries can be directed to the website below: <http://thinkbeyondthelabel.com/states>

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