

# Making the Business Case

## DEIA as a Business Engagement Strategy

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Northeast ADA Center



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...providing training, technical assistance, consultation, and materials on a broad range of topics related to disability in the United States.

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# Small Business at Work Toolkit

*Helping small businesses leverage  
the talents of people with disabilities*



Tool Menu: - jump to Tool -



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# From Charity to Inclusivity



***I am not your inspiration,  
thank you very much!***

***“We are a society that  
treats people with  
disabilities with  
condescension and pity,  
not dignity and respect.”***

— *Stella Young* (1982-2014)  
Comedian, journalist, activist





# Assumptions, Expectations & Attitudes...

## The Charity Mindset

- People with disabilities deserve our pity
- People with disabilities are “victims” who “suffer” and are “afflicted”
- Creates a culture of caretaking and “custodialism”





# How does the “Charity Model” impact employment of people with disabilities?

- Hiring a person with a disability is a “nice” thing to do
- They will be grateful for any type of job
- Employers who hire people with disabilities are reducing the “burden” on society
- The four F’s



# Tool 1: The Business Case

**How disability inclusion benefits a business**





# The ADA on *“Qualified”*

- Requisite **skills and experience necessary** to perform the job
- Able to perform the **essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation**

# ***Making the Business Case to Business***

- ✓ The biggest barrier is not the disability
- ✓ **It's about talent, *not* charity!**
- ✓ Sending a message about what you stand for
- ✓ Business should be representative of their communities
- ✓ Your employees are your brand



# The *most* important message to send to employers regarding hiring a job seeker with a disability is:

A. Job applicants with disabilities can help to meet diversity goals

B. Hiring people with disabilities can help meet business needs.

C. Hiring someone with a disability can qualify the business for tax incentives.

D. People with disabilities are pleasant to work with.

## Situation Room: *Josie's Restaurant*

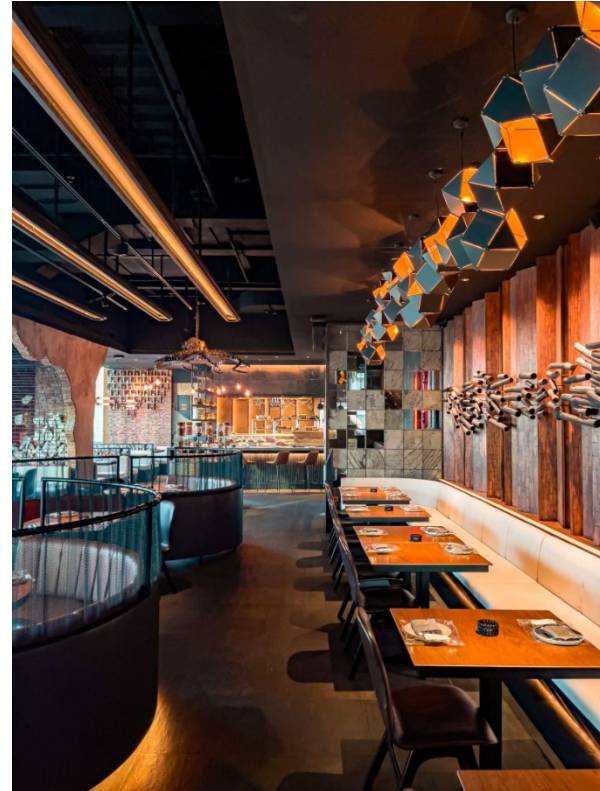
- Josie's Restaurant has been a favorite for locals and tourists alike for the past 30 years. Josie's owner was recently stunned by some bad online reviews from customers. One negative review described a situation where a family had come for dinner 3 times and was always seated at a table way in the back of the dining room, next to the restrooms and kitchen entrance. The family attributed this to the fact that one of their children had cerebral palsy and used special utensils and supports when eating.
- Another negative review came from a person with a visual disability who had come to Josie's with a well-behaved service animal. The host refused to seat this individual indoors, stating that other customers might be allergic to his service dog. Instead, he offered the customer a table outside on a back terrace.

**Think about it. What needs to happen? How might you support Josie's restaurant in this situation?**



# The Takeaway

- ✓ Twenty percent of the customers dining at Josie's Restaurant were doing so with a disability.
- ✓ Having employees with disabilities on staff can vastly improve the business's ability to reach out to this large segment of their customers.



# Tool 3: Productivity

## Getting the work done



# The Impact of Assumptions



# Supervisor & Coworker Attitudes

Attitudes reflect several influences:

- Stereotypes about people with disabilities
- Discomfort around people with disabilities
- Communication challenges
- Prior contact with people with disabilities

-Schur, Kruse & Blanck, 2005

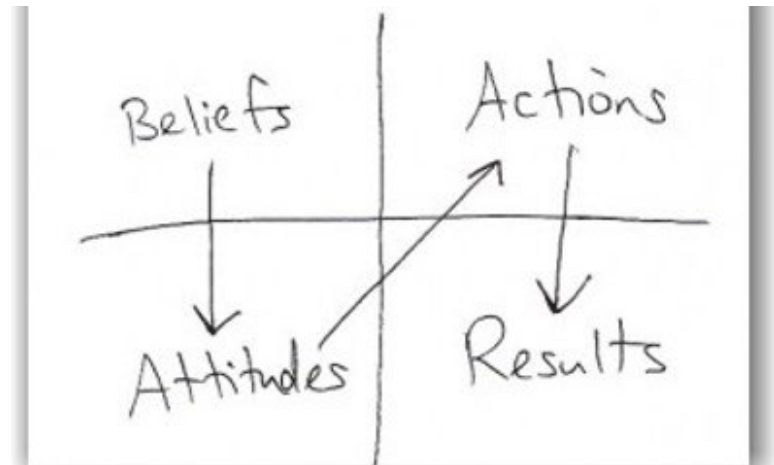


# Impact!

## Attitudes in turn affect...

- performance expectations;
- performance evaluations;
- desire to work with a person with a disability; and
- hiring into jobs with substantial responsibility.

-Schur, Kruse & Blanck, 2005



# The research says...



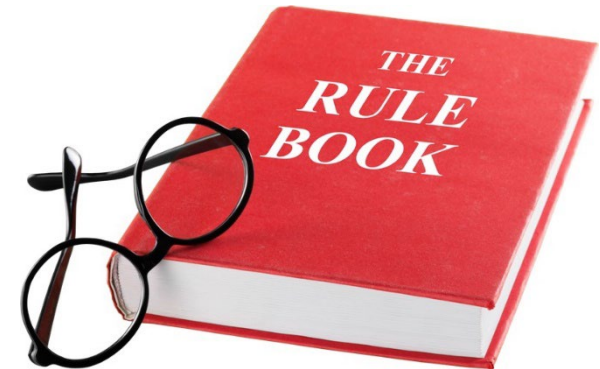
- ✓ Supervisors rated 72% of the performance of their accommodated employees with disabilities as being average, above average, or excellent.
- ✓ Workers across 18 distribution centers found no significant differences in the job performance of workers with and without disabilities.
- ✓ Supervisors from 13 companies reported nearly identical job performance levels for workers with or without disabilities.
- ✓ Workers with disabilities had lower rates of turnover and the same rate of absenteeism as workers without disabilities.

(DePaul University (2007); Kaletta et al. (2012); Lee & Newman (1995))



# Setting Expectations with Employers: Productivity Standards

- Businesses can/should have **productivity standards**
- Making clear the *rules of engagement*
- Lowering productivity is **not** a reasonable accommodation under the ADA!
- The importance of accommodation



# “Coffee Pot” Learning

“I just couldn’t get things right. I forgot all the details about what people ordered and it was taking me way too long to get orders out. But another waiter took me aside and told me her system for keeping all the orders straight and satisfying my customers. After that, it clicked, and I was able to pick up the rest on my own. I just needed a few tips.”

- Joe, new employee



# Coaching and Mentoring: Encouraging Natural Supports

- Leads to improved job performance
- **Yet**, workers with disabilities are **less likely to be coached** and mentored than others.

*Make sure that all employees  
have the same access to  
performance feedback!*



# Situation Room: *The Struggling Designer*

➤ **Ellen** has a hearing disability and has been working for one year as a kitchen designer in Upscale Designs, a design and contracting firm with 95 employees located in a large city. She is a solid performer, and her customers are generally satisfied with her results. But she has had some difficulty with her customer load and is currently handling about 25% fewer customers than her colleagues in the kitchen design department.



# Situation Room: *The Struggling Designer*

➤ **Ellen** uses high-tech hearing aids which bring her hearing to about 90% of what fully hearing people hear. Her speech is slightly impaired, but this does not seem to pose any problems during customer interactions. Though her colleagues are pleasant to her, they do not seek her out for conversation. Her boss originally thought she just needed a little more time to learn the ropes, but things aren't improving. He is now wondering if her hearing problem is standing in the way of bringing her up to speed.



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**Think about it. What needs to happen? How might you support Upscale Designs—and Ellen--in this situation?**



# The Takeaway

- ✓ Ellen's hearing disability isn't the main problem. Being marginalized in workplace interactions is.
- ✓ Ellen just needs a good coach or mentor.



# Tools 6-7: Hiring & Accommodations

**Recruiting and hiring  
people with disabilities**



# What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

Any **change** in the **work environment** or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to **enjoy equal employment opportunities...**

...and the opportunity to attain the same level of performance or to enjoy **equal benefits and privileges of employment.**

-29 C.F.R. § 1630.2(o)(1)(i-iii)  
(1997)

-29 C.F.R. pt. 1630 app. §  
1630.2(o) (1997)

# Categories of Accommodations

**Application  
Process**

**Enjoyment of  
equal benefits  
and privileges of  
employment**



**Performing the  
essential functions  
of the position**

# Is the employer's hiring process *accessible?*

- ✓ **Do they inform applicants** about their right to an accommodation and how to request one?
- ✓ Are **in-person recruiting** and hiring functions (such as career fairs, interviews, and applicant information sessions) held in **accessible locations**?
- ✓ Encourage employers to designate an accommodation process for job applicants.

# Do This?

**Is this  
OK?  
No!**

Hello all:

Stacy got an accommodation so that she can come in late to work. That means I'm going to have to assign extra morning shifts to everyone else in the department. I just wanted to give you a heads up.

Best,

*Your Manager*

# Bridging the Knowing-Doing Gap

## Do This

- Seek new recruitment and hiring partnerships for staffing needs.
- Provide accommodations so applicants can fully participate in your hiring process.
- Make sure staff who interview applicants understand ADA limitations on questions about disability.

## Not This

- Use partnerships that can't access broader pools of talent or address turnover issues.
- Fail to inform applicants and hiring managers that accommodations can be provided during the application process.
- Let managers and supervisors hire "on the fly" without procedures and guidance



# Situation Room: *The Frazzled Managers*

- CyberX is a rapidly growing computer equipment company. Their 15 team leaders are scrambling to keep up with demand. **Recruiting and hiring is an ongoing challenge.**
- CyberX has two HR managers who do recruiting and intake of job applications. After a quick background check, these applications are forwarded to team leaders who choose applicants for interviews. If the manager likes the candidate, **they are given a job offer on the spot.**



# Situation Room: *The Frazzled Managers*

- Lately, **turnover has increased**. The owner decided to read their online reviews. Comments were terrible! They described a frenetic work environment, where anyone who didn't fit the mold was in the "out" group.
- He asked each team leader how they made hiring decisions. The response: They hired "**from their gut**" and "**just knew right away**" who would fit. The owner looked around and realized this meant they were hiring people who were most like themselves. He wondered whether this had anything to do with their turnover problem.



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**Think about it. What needs to happen?  
What advice would you give to CyberX?**

# The Takeaway

- ✓ Applicants with disabilities are excluded when companies lack a clear and purposeful strategy around inclusion.
- ✓ Busy managers cannot be expected to make thoughtful hiring decisions without expectations and guidance.



# Tool 4: About Inclusion

## Why workplace inclusion matters



# The Heart of the Matter



- *“I couldn’t go to the office holiday party because it was held in an inaccessible location.”*
- *“They seem to just feel sorry for me and not treat me as an equal.”*
- *“I was denied a slight change in schedule as an accommodation for my disability. But they allowed another guy to have a major change in his schedule so he could train for a marathon.”*
- *“I never got feedback or coaching from my boss. Everybody else got tips and ideas to help them in their jobs. But I was just out of the loop.”*

# Understanding “The Why” of Inclusion

- In study after study, businesses who have a work culture based on including all people and focus on building trust are more likely than others to be successful.
- Strive to create a workplace where **all** workers feel:
  - ✓ their contribution matters,
  - ✓ their voice can be heard,
  - ✓ they can learn from co-workers,
  - ✓ and they can trust others at work.

*“Team performance improves by 50% when everyone feels included.”*

-Accenture, 2020

**WHY?**



# Making the business case to employers: The benefits of an inclusive workplace

1. 70% is learned informally—talking to co-workers, making mistakes, getting feedback, and coaching. ***This learning is most likely to happen in a climate of trust and connection.***
2. **Teams function better** when built on trust, fewer conflicts.
3. **Less stress** in a climate of support
4. **Less likely to leave** their jobs
5. For many businesses, getting and keeping good workers **makes or breaks success.**



(AAPD, 2018; Axios, 2018; Anthony-McMann, 2016; Segers, 2017)

# Taking Action: *Setting the Tone*



# Situation Room: Coffee Shop Project Plans

- Benjamin is a web designer with a noticeable **speech impairment, but his speech is understandable**. He is the **most experienced of the 5 workers** on the company's web team. **He was upset** when he overheard these co-workers talking about new plans for the website—**plans he didn't know about**. These plans involved major changes to the website. When he asked a co-worker how these plans got started, she told him that the four of them had “just been bouncing around” ideas **at the coffee shop over lunch** and had also talked with others in the company to explore its viability.



# Situation Room: Coffee Shop Project Plans

- Because Ben was never invited to join these co-workers, he was **left completely out of the loop**. Until that time, he had felt very engaged with his job because he felt his work was valued and he believed in the mission of the organization. But now he has started to look for other jobs.



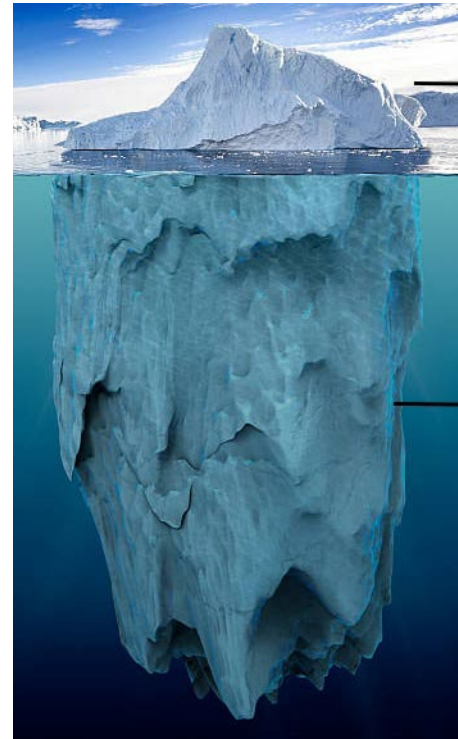
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**Think about it. What needs to happen?  
How would you support Ben and his employer?**

# The Takeaway

- ✓ Workers with disabilities can be marginalized through unconscious bias that plays out in the informal culture of the workplace.
- ✓ Organizational leaders set the tone for whether this marginalization is acceptable.



## Cultural Artifacts

Art, food, clothing, money, customs, gestures, etc

## Cultural Values & Assumptions

Unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, perceptions, and feelings

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# Now, Later, Never

Name one thing you  
can do **NOW** to  
Make a Difference!



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