

Unlocking Untapped Talent Through Disability Inclusion Drives Business Success And Innovation

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July marks Disability Pride Month, which celebrates the 1990 passage of the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), the landmark legislation that bans discrimination against disabled people on the job, at school, and in many public and private spaces.

While the ADA has been the letter of the law for 34 years, some workplaces are still slow to include that “A for Accessibility” in their DEIAB umbrella, which is a mistake.

First, because it is an untapped workforce, one in four Americans live with a disability, according to the Centers for Disease Control data released just [this month](#).

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When you make disability inclusion a priority at your company, how does it look?

You can do what [Columbia University Irving Medical Center](#) (CUIMC) in New York City is doing. They partnered with the [Consortium for Customized Employment](#), a group of 14 NYC-based agencies that serve adults with autism and developmental disabilities.

In the past four years, CUIMC has created 14 jobs for people with developmental disabilities across nine departments, with an impressive 92 percent retention rate.

These customized jobs for people with disabilities range from 2 hours a week to full-time. Some employees get on-site support from agency-provided job coaches every time they clock in; others work independently after initial support.

“CUIMC has greatly benefited from having access to an outstanding pool of talented, motivated, and highly productive jobseekers,” says Keith Diaz, founder of Columbia’s inclusive hiring initiative, [Project PossAbility](#).

“The brilliant thing about Customized Employment is that it makes good business sense in so many fields, and for businesses of all sizes,” says CCE’s Director, Karen Waltuck. “Hiring people with disabilities brings a wide range of skills and perspectives that enhance any organization.”

Disability:IN and Accenture released their annual [Disability Equality Index](#) report this month, which features top-scoring companies worldwide on disability metrics and also touts some ways to bolster disability inclusion, including “implement a confidential and voluntary process for employees to self-identify as individuals with disabilities,” and to “revise charters to include prospective directors with disabilities in the definition of board diversity as most already do with gender, race, and ethnicity.”

You are not alone when you tap into the hidden talent pool of jobseekers with disabilities; more and more employers are doing the same. According to [the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics report](#), 22% of disabled people were employed in 2023; the highest rate since 2008. And while the growth of that percentage of the pie is a success story, the result is that your organization misses out on a large pool of qualified candidates with disabilities.

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As we celebrated the anniversary of the ADA's passage last week - that's a legacy you can help continue.



Wendy Banner

Wendy Banner is the Associate Director of the Consortium for Customized Employment, a project of Job Path, Inc. with the dual mission of developing inclusive employment opportunities for neurodiverse jobseekers and cultivating a community of practice among 14 New York City nonprofit agencies, including AHRC NYC, Birch Family Services, NY Foundling, and Goodwill Industries. Wendy has been supporting learners of all abilities for 35 years. Her background as a developmentally trained literacy specialist and networking experience as a volunteer fundraiser combined with her commitment to equity made her an ideal candidate to join the Consortium team in 2015. She is also the proud parent of two young adults, one of whom has disabilities.

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