



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Integrated Workforce Development for People with Disabilities: Exploring the
Common Barriers and Offering Sustainable Solutions**

by

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Abstract

This project analyzes the current state of integrated employment for adults with disabilities in the United States. This project focused specifically on the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from gaining or maintaining employment. The project explored systematic challenges that job seekers face as well as challenges encountered by employers. The goal of this project was to identify gaps in services, identify best practices, and offer suggestions for improvement based on research. This project will add to the current research conducted on workforce development for adults with disabilities in the United States by looking at the common trends among nonprofits working toward integrated employment, while also offering innovative solutions to common problems.

Keywords: inclusion, disabilities, employment, workforce development, barriers to employment

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Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Section 2: Literature Review	3
History.....	3
Barriers to Employment.....	5
Section 3: Methods and Approaches.....	11
Methodology.....	11
Section 4. Data Analysis.....	17
Section 5: Implications and Recommendations	21
Implications.....	21
Recommendations.....	23
Section 6: Conclusions.....	25
Appendix A: Expert Interview Questions	32
Author’s Bio	33

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Factors Affecting the Health of People with Disabilities and without Disabilities.8

Table 1. Common Barriers to Employment for People with Disabilities.....

Table 2. Interview Results: Common Themes: Melwood

Table 3. Interview Results: Common Themes: Best Buddies.....

Table 4. Interview Results: Common Themes: Pride Industries.....

Table 5. Interview Results: Common Themes: Office of Disability Employment Policy...

Introduction

There are 56 million people with disabilities living in the United States, when we talk about inclusion and diversity, often times in the nonprofit sector this population is left out of the conversation. However, in the last two decades, this country has developed policies and practices that lend to a more inclusive nation. Specifically, when we look at the workforce development of our country, we understand the need to be more innovative and intentional about our view of people with disabilities.

The unemployment rate for people with a disability was 10.5 percent in 2016, which is about twice as much than the 4.6 percent of those employed without a disability (U.S. Department of Labor Statistic, 2016). Of those unemployed are many college educated people who are being left behind not due to lack of skill or ability, but due to fears and myths. There are many common barriers facing those with disabilities as they look for work. These barriers are noted by government agencies, nonprofit workers, and people with disabilities themselves. This paper will examine the common barrier to employment through a comprehensive literature review, insight from experts in the field, as well as looking at policies put in place to overcome such obstacles.

This report will look at the common barriers that people with disabilities face in the workplace, pulling from secondary research in the form of academic journals, news articles, and current government policies. This report will also look at feedback from experts in the field to find if there are any common themes or trends in workplace development for people with disabilities. Lastly, this report will offer recommendations

for the future to build a stronger and more inclusive workforce with people with disabilities in mind.

Office of Disability Employment Policy defines disability as:

“someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more “major life activities,” has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.” (ODEP, 2016)

World Health Organization defines barriers as:

“Factors in a person’s environment that is, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as: a physical environment that is not accessible, lack of relevant assistive technology (assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices); negative attitudes of people towards disabilities; services, systems and policies that are either nonexistent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life” (WHO, 2016)

Objectives

The initial objective of this study is to first Identify the common barriers facing people with disabilities whom are looking to enter into the workforce. The author will do so first by using secondary sources to research common trends in workforce development for people with disabilities. Second, the author will interview experts in the field to get first hand insights into the current landscape and trends people with disabilities are facing, through the perspective of service providers and government agencies. Lastly, the anticipated outcome is to provide a list of recommendations to improve integration of adults with disabilities into the workforce to provide an opportunity to intentionally connect the supply with the demand.

Section 2: Literature Review

History

In 1973 the United States passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act which has banned discrimination on the basis of disability by recipients of federal funds. This was the first time that it was recognized that problems faced by those with disabilities such as lack of education or employment was a problem for other reasons than simply a limitation due to their disability. This also shifted a view on people with disabilities as a minority deserving of basic civil rights protections (Mayerson, 1992). Since then, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 1990, in order to create a more equitable society for people with disabilities so that they would be provided with opportunities just the same as everyone else.

After the passage of the ADA, many amendments have been made in order to be more accommodating and inclusive: Title II (State and Local Governments); Title III (Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities); ADA Amendments Act Final Rule (in acted in 2016); and the Movie Captioning and Audio Description Final Rule (2017). However, although these policies are put in place and every growing, it is apparent that people with disabilities are still facing discrimination in their personal and professional lives. The ADA was put into place in order to protect people from discrimination in “state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunication” (Powell 2017). Although we have made great strides as a country, and the employment rate of people with disabilities is rising, it is still a far reach from those of able bodied peers, in fact failing behind at half the rate.

Inequality faced by people with disabilities in the workforce is not unique to the United States, it is important to consider other countries and the work they are doing to confront this issue through policy as well as innovation. Jackovljevic & Buckley (2011) look at the impact of technology-specific guidelines within the South African ‘Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities’ while looking at the barriers to employment in Johannesburg. In 1998, South Africa issued the Equity Act Number 55 to include people with disabilities, including reasonable accommodation which is the “modification or adjustment to a job or to a working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have access to or participate or advance in employment.” This study found the same barriers such as stereotyping or misconceptions, and as they have “reasonable accommodation” policies in place, there needs to be more work done in the workplace to actually implement these ‘accommodations.’”

Research Question: What are the common barriers that prevent people with disabilities from gaining fair employment and how can the nonprofit sector address this issue?

HYPOTHESIS 1: Workforce development programs increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Holistic support services lead to increased accessibility and job retention for employment for people with disabilities.

Barriers to Employment

Attitudinal. People with disabilities face stereotyping, stigma, prejudice, and discrimination before even getting into the workplace.

The biggest and most common barrier to employment for people with disabilities is attitudinal barriers mostly developed through misconception and fear. Some common misconceptions include believing that people with disabilities are “not as good as” able bodied person, that they may not be as good of a worker, not be able to be as productive, or have to work less. Other include the misconception that people with disabilities are a liability, running the fear that they might be more likely to get injured on the job, could be a health or safety hazard, or that their insurance might be costlier.

The problem with stigma is that it could and is having a detrimental impact not only on employment but on how people with disabilities are viewed in society. A study found that 50% of employers would never employ someone they knew to have a “psychiatric disorder” this is assuming they don’t know what the disorder is, how it’s being managed, or overcome. (Netto, J., Yeung, P., Cocks, E., McNamara, B., 2016). Unfortunately, this can also prevent people from being open about their disabilities out of fear of discrimination, which instead being able to share their disabilities might prove to get them more supportive accommodations in the workplace.

Even prior to having the change to work, people with disabilities are labelled and grouped into a category of people who fall under a series of stigma and isolating beliefs. Boutelle (2015) states, “workers with disabilities are often perceived as litigious and more entitled than their able-bodied counterparts, which is not the case. Another set of

concerns surround negative perceptions of work performance.” If even before stepping foot in the door, or getting a job interview, these are the beliefs that are being help by employers, we need to reframe the mindset if we want to see any change.

Communication. Often times people with hearing, speaking, reading, or writing impairments are at a great disadvantage and often have difficulties throughout the job application process as well as finding accommodations on the job.

People with impairments that affect their communication skills are at a far greater disadvantage than their able-bodied peers. If someone has a difficulty time reading, hearing, or writing, due to physical or cognitive impairments it can make the job application process nearly impossible. Some ways to address this is to, make things more accessible by providing large-print, braille, or screen reader version of information such as job applications, etc. Videos, such as orientation videos can include captioning. Orientations or trainings can be accompanied by an American Sign Language translator. Text or information can be simplified for people with cognitive impairments or written down simply for those that might need repetition. Other ways to overcome this barrier is to use accessible and assistive technologies, companies can make sure that they offer adaptive technology, provide on-site screen readers to help people fill out application forms, provide sign language interpreters or captioning systems during trainings, etc. There are many ways to work around communication barriers, we just need employers to becoming willing to work with people instead of ignore them due to their disability (ODEP, 2017).

Programmatic. Hindrances due to lack of flexibility in scheduling, lack of accessible equipment on the job, or education and support for employer/companies in working with people with disabilities.

Programmatic barriers to employment is wide-scale and often dependent on the individual and the workplace. Often times, there are immediate structural and programmatic barriers, these include creating physical like inconvenient scheduling that might not accommodate transportation needs, lack of accessible equipment, insufficient time set aside for training. Programmatic barriers can also look like lack of inclusive training in a company's strategic plan, lack of inclusive culture build by executive leadership within the workplace.

Policy. Current ADA policies need to be enforced by the government and regulated it there is to be true workforce inclusion.

Barriers in policy usually refer to the lack of awareness and enforcement of current laws and regulations. Some encountered barriers include: “denying qualified individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in or benefit from federally funded programs, services, or other benefits; denying individuals with disabilities access to programs, services, benefits, or opportunities to participate as a result of physical barriers; denying reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, so they can perform the essential functions of the job for which they have applied or have been hired to perform” (CDC, 2016). Although current legislation requires that “covered entities provide equal opportunity to qualified individuals with disabilities” meaning “an opportunity to obtain the same level of performance, or to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges that are available to similarly situated individuals without

disabilities,” it is not always enforced (Silverstein, R. & Brewer, J., 2011). The ADA as referenced above, is to guarantee equal opportunity for all people with disabilities. The Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protects people with disabilities from discrimination based on their disability, applying to employers and organization that receive any Federal financial assistance. However, with the threat of change in health care, specifically the current political threat to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), it is critical that we think about the political implications of policy and how that could affect people with disabilities. There is a legitimate fear of people with disabilities to gain employment because of the reality that it would jeopardize their medical benefits eligibility. Hall, J., Shartzler, A., Kurth, N, & Thomas, K. (2017) explore the effect of Medicaid expansion and its effect on workforce participation for people with disabilities. What they found was the people who are currently living in Medicaid expansion states are more likely to be employed than those that are living in non-expansion states (38% versus 31.9%).

Social. Socio-economic barriers or insurance coverage barriers are to be considered that might further prevent people with disabilities from gaining employment.

Social barriers are considered those that are related to the conditions in which people are born into, live and learn in, that can aid in decreased functioning socially or regarding their health. There are many limitations socially or historically that can prove to be hindrances for people with disabilities. For example, people with disabilities might have access in opportunity regarding education, previous work experience, or even having non-traditional work experience that would not reflect the same to their peers in a

resume. Historically, people with disabilities have faced prejudice in the workplace by employers or peers and not being given the chance to work alongside others or given the same responsibilities even if they are qualified. See tables below:

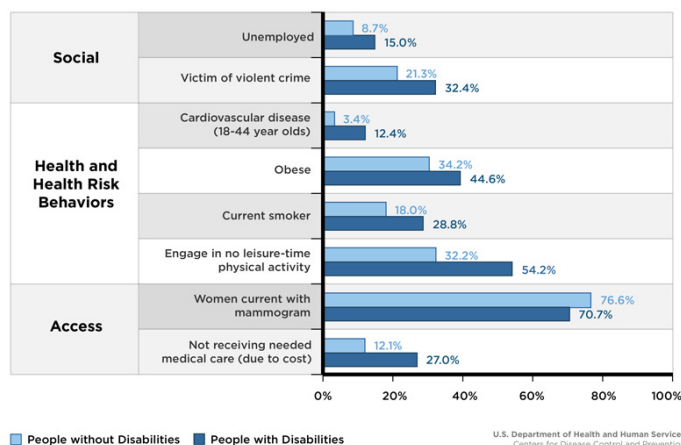


Figure 1.

Accessibility. There are physical barriers such as workplace environments not being accommodating ADA regulations not being enforced, or transportation barriers.

There are many physical barriers that can prevent people with disabilities from applying for or working at different workplaces. Some of the most common barriers to gaining employment or even applying include advertising, application accessibility, stated requirements, or even the structure of an interview process. Often job posts aren't accessible to people with vision impairments or other physical impairments that might prevent them from applying if the job is only listed online. Other examples include jobs posting that require lifting a certain amount or driving a specific vehicle that could potentially be adapted. One other barrier that is complex is fear, there is often fear on the employer's part that they might not know how to work with someone with a disability.

Specific barriers form people who have blind or low vision (use screen readers or Braille converters); mobility impairments (verbal commands but not all websites are not compatible); deaf or hard of hearing (amplified sound systems); cognitive impairments and neurological disabilities (can be difficult to navigate certain websites). Often times transportation can be a huge issue for people, for those living in rural areas who cannot drive, it might be impossible for them to even get into a place of work without assistive transportation. Physical, transportation barriers not only limit people with disabilities ability to work but also their “ability to be independent and to function in society” (CDC, 2016).

Other common barriers.

There are often fears of losing benefits when gaining full employment. Research by Thomas, K. & Ellis, A. (2013) explore the relationship between people with disabilities and patterns of healthcare use finding that people often fear losing their income support. This was also relayed in the expert interviews, that people with disabilities might not look for a job or for full-time work in fear that it might jeopardize their benefits if they start to make too much income.

Future barriers.

Currently, the administration is trying to pass to ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017. If this is passed, person with a disability “would be required to give a written notice to a business owner who has barriers to access” (Powell, 2017). The business owner would then have 60 days to even acknowledge that there is a problem-and then another

120 days to make substantial progress toward correcting the violation. In order words, people with disabilities would be forced to wait 180 days to enforce their civil rights. This would hinder people with disabilities from getting fair response to barriers beyond the workplace but could prevent them physical from having access to employment services, getting to an interview, etc.

Section 3: Methods and Approaches

Methodology

In order to approach this research question, the researcher conducted a thorough literature review of relevant resources. The literature review consisted of academic articles, nonprofit and rehabilitation journals, current Federal policy, government agency reports, statistics from the Department of Labor, as well as annual reports of relevant nonprofit organizations. The goal of the literature review was to review the current research on workforce development for people with disabilities to provide a better understanding of the landscape as it related to the nonprofit sector.

For this project the author conducted four expert interviews with experts in the field of disability workforce development. The experts were found in the early research phase, first by identifying types of organizations that the author was seeking to analyze from government organizations and small and large nonprofit organizations. The experts were contacted first via email, explaining the project and offering the proposal to learn more. At first ask, all experts agreed to participate in the project. Due to the various

locations and the timing of the project, each expert was interviewed via phone or video (skype/facetime). Each interview was structured for 30 minutes, however, due to the nature of interviews, each went a bit over the 30-minute limit with permission from the interviewees. The potential interview candidates were first contacted via email either directly by the researcher or connected by a third party via an email introduction. Each interviewee was given a brief background on the project and asked if they would be willing to conduct an interview. As the researcher and the interviewees were either in different states or countries, the interviews must have been conducted by telephone. As ethically proposed, each interviewee was asked to consent to having the interview audio recorded, all agreed.

The author constructed four semi-structured interviews based on the research in the literature review in order to maintain consistency throughout and relay common themes. Semi-structured interviews also allowed space to ask person specific questions and allow for any additional questions to arise. Each interviewee was asked ten of the same questions, each designed to be open ended to leave room for the interviewee to share as much as they wanted. After the initial questions, there was a series of follow up questions either designed specific for the person being interviewed or as a follow up to one of the initial questions. Each interviewee was made aware of the structure of the interview before conducting. Interviews were scheduled to be 30 minutes long, although some have gone over. After each interview, experts were thanked for their time and asked if they would be open to any follow questions by email, all responded with yes. All

experts were followed up with over email, however only three of the four responded to further questions.

Each expert interview started with thanking the volunteer for their time and interest in the project. The author explained the project in detail over the phone and let the interviewee know that they were being interviewed as part of a larger group. Each interview started with some background questions asking what their experience has been working with nonprofit organizations, learning the history of each person and what lead them to their current work. Next, each interviewee was asked about their history within the organization, and what their current role entailed, and how their job changed over their time with the specific organization. Next, each interviewee was asked a series of questions regarding the structure of the organization, first starting with roles of employees/employers/job coaches. However, as each organization and program is different, the questions became more specific to each interviewee. Other questions asked were regarding expectations job seekers, employees, employers, and community partners – outlining goals, successes and failures. The interviewees were all then asked about barriers faced for their employees as well as those barriers depicted by the employers and recognized by job seekers. After running through barriers, the researcher was able to pull common themes and trends. The research followed up with a series of questions regarding best practices, ways their organization was overcoming these barriers, successes in their specific programs as well as with the sector as a whole. Before each interview was over the research asked each expert to relay their “call to action” to

employers and how they suggest creating a more inclusive workforce. See Appendix A. for a more detailed set of interview questions, items in bold were asked of all interviewees.

Timeline

MAY: research and reach out to experts

JUNE: confirm expert interviews, conduct interviews

JULY: transcribe interviews and pull themes

Ethical Considerations

During a research study, particularly through expert interviews it is important to identify ethical considerations. Kara (2015) offers some guidelines to performing ethical research asking researchers to consider why they are doing the research, is it for your own or public benefit, as well as recalling the importance of keeping vulnerable populations at risk in mind. For this study the author considered conducting interviews with working adults with disabilities, however it seemed appropriate to still to expert perspectives as well as secondary resources for the purpose of this paper. As the perspective of employed people with disabilities is critical to this topic, with time allowance it would prove more impactful to spend more time and consideration with this population in a separate research analysis.

Participants

MELWOOD

Cari Desantis, CEO

<https://www.melwood.org/about>

Melwood is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization located in Washington D.C.

MISSION STATEMENT: Melwood's mission is to advocate for and empower individuals of differing abilities to transform their own lives through unique opportunities to work and play in the community.

BEST BUDDIES CALIFORNIA

Jenny Braunlin, Program Supervisor, Bay Area Jobs Program

<https://bestbuddies.org/find-programs/california/about/>

Best Buddies is an international 501(c)3 organization.

MISSION STATEMENT: Best Buddies International is dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Jobs Program Vision: The Job program secures jobs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), allowing them to earn an income, pay taxes, and continuously and independently support themselves.

PRIDE INDUSTRIES

Jenny Braunlin, Program Supervisor, Bay Area Jobs Program

<https://bestbuddies.org/find-programs/california/about/>

Best Buddies is an international 501(c)3 organization.

MISSION STATEMENT: Creating meaningful job for people with disabilities while operating our business profitably. Mission

For over 50 years, Pride Industries has been providing employment services in the United States. In 2016, Pride employed more than 5,500 people, over 3,200 with disabilities. Their programs include: vocational rehabilitation and training; individual and supported community employment; employment of choice; transition services; community access programs; independent living; pride ascend (technical skills and industry-based certificates; youth services; ticket to work (SSA supported career counseling, job training, and support to beneficiaries); transit services. Some of their most prominent successes is being the leading provider of employment services in California; employing 375 people in "supported groups" which includes 3 employees and a job coach; serving over 150 at-risk youth; and being the largest Ability One service provider meaning they created jobs for 1,300 people with significant disabilities. (Pride Industries Annual Report, 2016)

U.S. Department of Labor

Office of Disability Employment Policy

Carol A. Dunlap, M.Ed., AGS, Business Development Specialist

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/>

MISSION STATEMENT: Office of Disability Policy is to develop and influence policies and practices that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

VISION: To have a world in which people with disabilities have unlimited employment opportunities.

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) “is the only non-regulatory federal agency that promote policies and coordinates with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disability.” (ODEP, 2017)

Section 4. Data Analysis

Table 1: Common Barriers to Employment for People with Disabilities

Common Barriers to Employment for People with Disabilities

Attitudinal	Communication	Physical	Policy	Programmatic	Social	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Stereotyping b) Stigma c) Prejudice d) Discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Lack of accessible job applications b) Lack of readable materials for people with vision impairments c) Lack of captioning technologies for people with hearing impairments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Absent of useable ramps or entrances for people with mobility impairments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Lack of information around ADA practices b) Lack of enforcement of policies c) Denying of reasonable accommodations to qualified persons with disabilities d) Denying of access to programs and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Lack of assessable technologies or equipment b) Lack of scheduling flexibility c) Little communication to support people with disabilities d) Negative workplace culture e) Lack of executive leadership support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Education rates are lower for people with disabilities b) Poverty rates are higher for people with disabilities c) unemployment rate in 2012 for people with disabilities was more than 1 in 10 (13.9%) compared to less than 1 in 10 (6.0%) for those without disabilities (U.S. Department of Labor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Lack of adequate transportation services b) Emotional barriers as a result of attitudinal barriers could come into play

Source: Author’s creation. Elaborated from Christine Preziosi, 2017.

Table 2: Common Themes from Expert Interviews: MELWOOD

Interview Results: Common Themes

Organization	Programs	Barriers	Employer Barriers	Successes	Hindrances	Room for Growth
Melwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability One contractor • Also does referrals • Application/hiring process in house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone looks for FT because they don't want to lose insurance/SSD • Tangible (transportation; financial (cant buy work clothing, etc.); lack of vocational support) • Advocacy (fears by employers that people wouldn't be able to handle the job) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths (that they will be an drain on insurance • Stigma/Bias • Prejudice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education of employers to dismantle fears and myths • Getting one person in the workplace to change stigma • Getting employers to become the advocates • Job coaching • Job training • Job-specific training • Job-specific adaptability • Long standing relationships because of Ability One • Employer/Employee support if problems arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new administration, stigma • Budget cuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancement in technology • Looking at "Jobs of the future" • Working with tech companies to employ people with disabilities that might cater to their specific needs • Advocacy

Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from Christine Preziosi, 2017.

Table 3: Common Themes from Expert Interviews: BEST BUDDIES

Interview Results: Common Themes

Organization	Programs	Barriers	Employer Barriers	Successes	Hindrances	Room for Growth
Best Buddies Jobs Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two employment consultants in Bay Area Business advisory council Takes referrals Only works with people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties because their resumes might not be as strong as the general public (not recognizing internships as experience, even if that all someone could get) (Communication) Resume doesn't highlight their skills (Communication) Might not have a degree (Social) Bias/stigma (Attitudinal) Some people might not present well in an interview due to low social skills (shyness or no eye contact) (Attitudinal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking it would take too much time out of the day to work with someone with a disability (Attitudinal) Safety fears (Attitudinal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreaching events, job fairs Talking to employers to dispel fears Self advocacy Working with Human Resources departments Buddy Ambassador Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited capacity but always growing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job coaches can help dispel some of the fears presented by employers Best Buddies matches people at a 100% match for employee and employers, if its not a good fit they change it up 85% of people with disabilities are not employees and its not because they are not skilled Looking for a new employment consultants

Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from Christine Preziosi, 2017.

Table 4: Common Themes from Expert Interviews: PRIDE INDUSTRIES

Interview Results: Common Themes

Organization	Programs	Barriers	Employer Barriers	Successes	Hindrances	Room for Growth
Pride Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability One Contractor Largest contractor Job placement in the community National level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misguided perception (Attitudinal) People with disabilities have to prove themselves much more (Social) It often takes a lot of time to communicate with employers that their fears are not real (Attitudinal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear that people who have a disabilities 'cant do the same wok' as those without (Attitudinal) Resistances about hiring because they think their might be a lawsuit or insurance issue "in case anything happens" (Attitudinal) Some people have worries that they might have to give people with disabilities their mediation (Attitudinal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability one contracts allow for time to work with employers so that they can see success Federal contracting allows for trust to be built Increase government participation Work with huge companies that have room to hire more people Consultant Services 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrepreneurship Pride has a willingness to go after something different, there is a lot of room to grow in that Scalability can happen if there is more communication between government/nonprofit/business sectors Growth of coalitions

Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from Christine Preziosi, 2017.

Table 5: Common Themes from Expert Interviews: OFFICE OF DISABILITIES EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Interview Results: Common Themes

Organization	Programs	Barriers	Employer Barriers	Successes	Hindrances	Room for Growth
Office of Disability Employment Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce recruitment program Building a strategic plan for the Department of Labor to be more inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socially people are scared to hire people with disabilities (Attitudinal) People with disabilities aren't given a chance (Attitudinal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Companies don't want to always take the time to work with people with disabilities (Attitudinal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alliances built between government and employers Getting companies to commit to inclusion makes them look good so its desirable One hire can lead to multiple hires because it's the best way to dispel the fear 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The White House needs to annually recognize employers for exceptional disability employment practices

Source: Author's creation. Elaborated from Christine Preziosi, 2017.

Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

There are many implications of the current research which could be useful to the nonprofit sector. Often people might think that since the ADA passed that people with disabilities do not still suffer from discrimination in the workplace or they're myths and misconceptions about the low rate of employment for people with disabilities. However, as this research suggests, people with disabilities still face many barriers to employment and often face unequal treatment as they look for jobs or even once on the job. This research can offer insight into the current landscape of workforce development for people with disabilities for future research on the topic. The expert interviews provide some insight into the perspective of governmental agencies as well as nonprofit leaders who are using innovation to pave the way for a more inclusive workforce in the United States.

Implications

Formal Support Systems

Office of Disability Employment Policy defines supported employment (SE) as “processes and philosophies facilitating competitive work in integrated work settings for individuals with the most severe disabilities (i.e., psychiatric, mental retardation, learning disabilities, TBI) for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred. The SE model encourages work, social integration, and integration within individuals' community and is a means of increasing personal independence through competitive

employment” (Rosenthal, D., Hiatt, E., Anderson, C., Brooks, J., Hartman, E., Wilson, M., Fujikawa, M., 2012, pp. 74).

It is clear through the research that providing formal supports to people with disabilities can be critical to obtaining and maintaining employment. Formal support systems can come in many forms and are dependent on the person being employed as well as the work environment. These supports can come from mental health care providers, disability employment services, employment consultants specialized in mental health, formalize peer supports, etc. Other support services recommended by Inge, K., Graham, C., Erickson, D., Sima, A., West, M., Cimera, R. (2016) are employee disability management programs, transitional programs, supported employment job accommodations, and assistive technology.

Similar facilitators to obtaining employment have been found in other studies, specifically in regards to veterans with spinal cord injuries. Most prominent were the assistance of vocational rehabilitation specialists and the integration of specialist working with medical providers to help facilitate employment. (Cotner, B., Njoh, E., Trainor, J., O’Connor, D., Barnett, S., & Ottomanelli, L., 2015). This specific identification of collaborative practices is crucial to making employment for people with disabilities sustainable.

It’s Just Good Business

As companies become more aware and sensitive to working with people with disabilities we can see the culture of workplace development for this population shifting.

One common theme throughout the interviews was the importance of companies understanding that hiring people with disabilities is just good business (Wright, 2016). There are many reasons in which people with disabilities are advantageous in the workplace, for some people with disabilities may have specific skills and talents catered to specific jobs, for others it can be the added element of hiring someone with developmental disabilities that changes the atmosphere of somewhere creating a more welcoming and accepting environment.

Thankfully, companies like EY and Microsoft use targeted hiring to recruit people with disabilities, specifically autism, because they now see that people with autism “often have a very strong mathematical and technical abilities and can be very detail-oriented; very good at pattern recognition (Oesch 2016).” Other companies like Hewlett Packard understand that inclusion is so much more than just recruitment and hiring, that once they are once people with disabilities are hired, they need to offered more support if we want to provide equitable experiences. Hewlett Packard provides people who are hired with autism a buddy or consultant that can support them through on boarding and training. Big companies like this act as examples of how companies can be more inclusive.

Recommendations

- 1. Increase education in the workplace.** Social services, government agencies, and nonprofits need to educate employers on how to better support and encourage inclusion in the workplace

For Employers:

- Educate employers on assistive technology that is available to them.
- Encourage employers to talk with their candidates about their needs and learn how they work with their disability in the workplace.

For people with disabilities:

As analyzed in this research, there are many barriers to employment for people with disabilities. Once they are outlined and validated, it is important to understand that these are all lived experiences for people with disabilities. That being said, not only do people need to work with employers to diminish these barriers but people need to work on empowering those that have been facing these common issues.

- Rebuild confidence that might have been lost in the job search process
- Support people with disabilities that have been affected by stigma to regain power that might have been taken away from them
- Support people with disabilities in resume support to create a strong portfolio so they can feel proud going into an interview

- 2. Increase advocacy.** Use employers as advocates, rework into contracts the need to speak out on behalf of clients. Additionally, highlight their good work, invite them to talk to the other employers.
- 3. Increase collaboration.** The sector needs to create stronger coalitions for nonprofit service providers to act as the team rather than just competitors for funds.

4. **Use innovation.** Use innovative techniques such as social media platforms to limit misconceptions, share resources, increase job accessibility, and exchange best practices.
5. **Enforce policy.** Current ADA laws and policy need to be enforced.

Limitations

1. This study was limited due to the timing of the course, interviews were only able to be conducted by the researcher by skype and/or phone call although research shows that in-person interviews would be more impactful.
2. This research is limited to the perspective of experts in California and Washington D.C.

Section 6: Conclusions

As described in this research, it is clear that people with disabilities are do not have equal access to employment compared to those without disabilities. As its important for the workforce to be open minded an accommodating, Boutelle (2015) reminds us that disabilities run on a spectrum and are unique to each individual and require that we are not only clear in policy but also aware that employers need to just do more than hire fairly, but work further with employees once they are on the job. Overall, “employment encourages and enables friendships, personal contacts, and social networks; promotes inclusion and fair access; and helps to give meaning and purpose beyond financial and material reward.” (Netto, J., Yeung, P., Cocks, E., McNamara, B., 2016). Although there

are limitations in the work that can be done to formalize solutions to barriers, as the research shows, there are enough common themes to pull from. The most pressing recommendations are to increase advocacy around inclusion in order to reframe how employers view people with disabilities. Also, the Federal government needs to leave behind this idea of voluntary call to action for employers to be inclusive and instead put more practical policies in place to require inclusion.

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Appendix A: Expert Interview Questions

1. **How long have you been working in in the nonprofit sector?**
2. **What is your previous experience? (Use Linkedin and ask specifics)**
3. How long have you worked for this organization? In this line of work?
4. How have you seen the job change over time?
5. What factors were at play? Funding, ideologies, technologies?
6. What does workforce development look like at your organization?
7. **Can you walk me through an experience for a job seeker coming to your organization?**
8. What are your main goals?
9. **What are your expectations of job seekers?**
10. **What are your expectations of employees?**
11. What goals do you have that are unmet?
12. What would help you meet those goals?
13. How does funding play a role?
14. How does staffing play a role?
15. **What do you see as the common barriers faced by people with disabilities looking to gain employment?**
16. **What are the biggest barriers employers face? Job coaches?**
17. What remedies do you have? What resources would you need?
18. What is going well?
19. **What is unique to “organization”?**
20. **Where do you see workforce development for people with disabilities going?**
21. **Regarding the most common barriers faced for people with disabilities entering the workforce, what are some examples of how you as an organization overcome them?**
22. **Lastly: What is your call to action to employees?**

Author's Bio

Christine Preziosi is currently the Special Events and Parents Relations Manager at Katherine Delmar Burke School in San Francisco, CA. Christine is a graduate of the University of San Francisco (USF) School of Management with a Masters in Nonprofit Administration 2017 also receiving her B.A. in Psychology at USF in 2011. Christine is a longtime supporter on nonprofit organizations through her volunteer work and career path. Although she has many interests, Christine's focus is to create a more equitable society for all. Christine's background includes workforce development, youth development, organic farming as well as mental health and recovery. Christine has worked in multiple afterschool programs for youth in San Francisco as a tutor and enrichment coordinator. She has also worked in summer programs catered to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (A.N.C.H.O.R & Beacon Initiative). Although Christine's interest is mainly geared toward working with youth with disabilities, she has also with Progress Foundation as a relief counselor in Acute Diversion Unit dual diagnosis (substance and mental health) treatment facilities here in San Francisco. Most recently, Christine has worked with the ACLU of Northern California to support the influx of volunteer support after the 2016 election. In a different gear, she works with the Farm Committee at Big Wave Farms to develop volunteer programming and assist in farm growth and management. Christine strives to work in diverse and inclusive communities that are growth oriented.