

AN EMPLOYERS GUIDE TO HIRING DISABLED TALENT

LIEBS
& CO.

YOUR GUIDE TO
CREATING AN
ACCESSIBLE AND
EMPATHIC WORK
ENVIRONMENT

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The information in this document provides a brief overview of tips for employers in becoming more diverse, with a focus on disability. This covers hiring strategies, disclosure tips for an employer, workplace accommodations and strategies, and guidance regarding inclusive language.

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HIRING STRATEGIES

Below are some tips and strategies to help you create an inclusive application and hiring processes.

Writing Job Postings

- Use inclusive language
 - (see inclusive language section for more information).
- Ask for skills instead of certain experience for a certain number of years and provide alternate experiences that can be applied.
- Keep the posting concise and with a focus on essential job duties and qualifications.
 - This should not be an extensive wish list of what an employer thinks an ideal employee is.
- Always include a diversity, inclusion, and equity statement, as well as an accommodation statement, which includes contact info of person to contact to request accommodations.
- Applications and postings should be in accessible formats and job portals.
 - Eg accessible PDFs, different submissions like audio, using disability job platforms such as Disabilities Jobs Canada to connect with potential candidates and ect.

HIRING STRATEGIES

Preparing for the Interview

- **Virtual Interviews**

- Have live close captions available
- When orally asking questions provide the questions written in the chat bar as well for the interviewee to read
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Have a clean background with minimal distractions
- Ensure all questions are focused on the job and essential to the position
- Provide interview details ahead of time
 - eg: platform being used, time of interview, length of interview, ect

- **Accommodations**

- Asking all candidates if they need accommodations
- Provide interview questions in advance
- Ensure organization is accessible to all
 - eg: virtual interviews, or a space that has accessible washroom/parking/clear pathways throughout
- Discuss with front office staff how to accommodate all people and ensure they are up to date on disability training and professionalism surrounding people with disabilities
- Ask questions about HOW the applicant will complete the tasks assigned to them as this focuses on skills.

HIRING STRATEGIES

- Review up to date policies to remember what exactly what you can and what you cannot ask
 - You will never know when you will be interviewing a person with a disability
- **Following Up**
 - Use inclusive language
 - Eg. Avoid using terms such as inspirational/brave/courageous, anything in regards to limiting someone based on their disability and reinforcing the idea that they are not capable
 - Be to the point and transparent
 - If rejecting, provide feedback on what they did well and what they can work on for next time
- **Pre-onboarding**
 - Assign someone to help the employee through their training (a coach)
 - Provide a tour
 - Set up introductions with team members

HIRING STRATEGIES

- Go over important policies and procedures
- Give an introduction to basic job duties on first day and continue as the week progresses
- Give the new team members time to get assimilated and comfortable in the environment
- If there are any new software/applications involved in training, teach them how to use it
- **Probationary Period**
 - Provide regular assistance when required
 - Arrange regular check-ins to aid in areas the new hire may be struggling
 - Provide positive feedback and appreciation for work being well done to increase morale
 - Also provide constructive feedback when necessary

DISCLOSURE STRATEGIES

When someone discloses they have a disability, they may be afraid of judgement and lack of understanding by hiring managers or companies. The following are suggestions and guidance on how to accommodate when they are discussing their disability.

Keep in mind that you cannot force someone to disclose their disability, as it is their personal decision to disclose. By using these strategies mentioned above it will create a more welcoming environment that people may feel more open to disclose their disability and related challenges.

It is also important to never assume or compare one person's disability to others as it is uniquely experienced by each individual who lives with their disability. Finally and most importantly, when someone does disclose their disability at any point, be sure to thank them as they are being vulnerable and expecting you to help them with their needs.

On the next page we discuss a breakdown of where you can expect to see disclosure and tips on how you should handle it.

DISCLOSURE STRATEGIES

Disclosure at Varying Points

A person may disclose at different points (depending on their comfort level) in the application and hiring process, so it is important to be understanding. You may see disclosures in the following areas:

- **Application: In The Applicant's Resume or Cover Letter**
 - Tip: By having an accessibility and inclusion statement in place as well as your job posting being offered in accessible formats (and having a statement about who to contact if you require accommodations), applicants seeing these components may feel comfortable enough to disclose during this step of the hiring process. This will allow you to prepare to make any accommodations necessary to ensure spaces are accessible and any other modifications can be put in place, in advance.

DISCLOSURE STRATEGIES

- **When Interview is Scheduled or After the Interview is Scheduled**
 - Tip#1: If disclosure occurs during this point in the hiring process, be sure to be understanding and potentially find an accessible space for said person's interview
 - eg utilize Google Meets as it offers live closed captions
 - Tip#2: At this point, the employer should be open minded about the type of person they will be interviewing, so keep in mind that diversity is a good thing and will be beneficial to the company.
- **During the Interview/When Meeting**
 - Tip: If a candidate discloses their disability during the interview, be very careful about the wording you use when acknowledging their disability and asking about what accommodations will be needed. This is important because you could unconsciously be making a rude comment or assumption, depending on the wording of your response which can result in the candidate feeling uncomfortable.
 - For example, after a candidate discloses, a possible question could be what strategies the candidate has in place to cope with their disability. It is important to ask questions that begin with what or how.

DISCLOSURE STRATEGIES

- For example, "What can the business do to accommodate you?", "How have you coped with your disability in other work environments?", and "What strategies do you have in place?".
 - You should not use words like "do".
 - For example, "Do you have a plan in place to deal with your disability?". By asking this, you are implying the candidate does not have a strategy or plan. This is something the candidate has been living with and they know what aids them so it can be insulting to ask if they know how to help themselves.
- **After Receiving & Accepting a Job Offer**
 - Tip#1: Thank them for sharing personal information and it is a positive sign that the person feels comfortable in the environment/company culture they are in.
 - After learning about the person's disability, it is important to find out how you can help and what accommodations are needed.
 - Tip #2: After disclosure it is important to remember that you have a duty to accommodate the person's needs. You both have to work together to make a plan that works for the individual needs and if necessary include the person's medical professional.

WORK STRATEGIES & KINDS OF ACCOMMODATIONS

The organizer on the next page showcases the accommodations that can be used assist someone with various disabilities.

Please keep in mind that some of these are intersectable with other disabilities and ultimately each person is different and may require varying accommodations.

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Physical & Mobility Disability

- Modified shifts
- Flexible work schedule
- Work from home/a permanent location
- Frequent breaks/extended breaks
- Elimination or reassignment of non-essential tasks
 - For example hiring a secretary that has to be able to lift 20 lbs. This isn't an essential task. The position's main job is to do administration work and provide excellent customer service.
- Individualized training
 - Training based on preferred learning style is one example
- Modify job duties
- Modify work environment/ physical surroundings
- Clear paths for travel through workspace
- Assistive devices/modified equipment
- Install carpets or non-slip strips to help with movement
- Adjust height of shared items such as photocopiers/printers

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Physical & Mobility Disability

- Provide access to ramps and automatic door openers
- Accessible washroom that are gender neutral
- Modify keyboards
- Hands-free telephones or voice to text/text to voice translation
 - Example: Software such as Dragon.
- Document holders to assist with typing
- Speech recognition software
 - Example: Microsoft Word has speech to text options
- Modify lighting
- Relocate workstation to be closer with other required equipment/rooms
- Calming music via headphones
- Modify hallways/entrances to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices
- Accessible parking
- Accessible presentations

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Physical & Mobility Disability

- Example 1): Ensure font size and colour contrast of presentation is at WAG standards
- Example 2) Widescreen monitors

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KIND OF DISABILITY

Neurodiversity, Learning Disability & ADHD

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

- Modified shifts and/or job duties
- Flexible work schedule
- Work from home/flexible work locations
- Job sharing
- Job coach
- Peer mentoring
- Elimination or reassignment of non-essential tasks
- Individualize training based on preferred learning style
- Minimize distractions
- Additional training
- Written job instructions
 - Example: This can be done by utilizing platforms such as Asana or Monday can help with this as it allows you to set due dates, breakdown tasks into subtasks, and allows you to keep track of progress, helping other prioritize and schedule out their day
- Modify work environment/ physical surroundings

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KIND OF DISABILITY

Neurodiversity, Learning Disability & ADHD

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

- Modify lighting
- Reduce background noise
- Earplugs to reduce noise distractions
- Eliminate/minimize scents
- Accessible presentation materials
 - Example 1) : Give PDF or excel slides out in advance
 - Example 2) : Provide written transcriptions afterwards of what is said in the presentation
- Recording devices for instructions or meetings
 - Examples: Software/applications like Otter.Ai. transcribes and records all of your meetings or utilizing audio recorders on your phone
- Hands-free telephones or voice to text/text to voice translation
 - Example: Software such as Dragon or WordQ
- Speech recognition software
 - Example: Microsoft Word has speech to text options

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Blind & Low Vision

- Modify keyboards
- Job coach
- Peer mentoring
- Elimination or reassignment of non-essential tasks
- Modified shifts
- Flexible work schedule
- Work from home
- Job sharing
- Split shifts
- Scheduling work at only one location
- Frequent breaks
- Individualize training
- Maximize employee's strengths
- Additional training
- Modify job duties
- Modify work environments/ physical surroundings
- Modify lighting

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Blind & Low Vision

- Clear paths for travel through workspace
 - Example: Contrasting colors for flooring, like light strips to mark where stairs or carpet begins and ends.
- Magnify written material using magnifiers
- Recording devices for instructions or meeting minutes
- Screen readers or magnifiers for large print or low vision
- Accessible parking spaces
- Accessible presentation materials
 - Example 1): Give PDF or excel slides out in advance
 - Example 2): Have closed captions and audio description on any material utilized
 - Example 3): Provide Alt text for photos as well as photo descriptions below the photo

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Blind & Low Vision

- Example 4): Provide written transcriptions afterwards of what is said in the presentation in braille or large print
- Wide screen & large monitors
 - Example: For those who use magnifiers
- Low glaring light, natural lighting, or brighter lighting

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Deaf & Hard of Hearing (HOH)

- Sign language interpreters
- Accessible presentation materials
 - Example 1): Give PDF or excel slides out in advance
 - Example 2): Have closed captions on any video material utilized
 - Example 3): Provide written transcriptions afterwards of what is said in the presentation
- Job coach
- Peer mentoring
- Elimination or reassignment of non-essential tasks
- Individualized training
 - Example: training based on preferred learning style
- Reduce background noise
- Wear transparent face shields or masks for lip readers (covid related)

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KIND OF DISABILITY

RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Deaf & Hard of Hearing (HOH)

- Recording devices for instructions or meetings
 - Example: Software/applications like Otter.Ai. transcribes and records all of your meetings.
- Video remote interpreting
- Voice carry-over telephone
- Modified shifts
- Reduced hours
- Flexible work schedule
- Work from home/permanent location
- Job sharing

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Below are some tips to help you communicate properly and inclusively to people who live with a disability.

Tips

- When referring to a person with a disability, do not focus on their disability (when it is not necessary) or limit them to their disability
- Always speak directly to the person with a disability rather than a companion
- Offer assistance but do not provide it without consent
- Be considerate of extra time the person may need. It may take longer for them to process what you are saying
- Do not use language that can be interpreted as condescending, pitiful or a sense of inferiority, this includes but is not limited to "suffers from", "unfortunate", "burden", "sick", ect.
 - Note: This is important because you do not want to limit people to their disability. They are not unfortunate, they are not sick. Please keep in mind this is someone's identity and people take pride in their disability. By using language like "you are so brave" you are making it seem like they are doing something amazing by being themselves which reinforces the limiting belief that people with disabilities are not as capable as others. Therefore, remember that people with disabilities are inherently worthwhile, just like everyone else.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- Avoid labeling, for example " person with wheelchair". Ask the individual how they would like to be described and be mindful
- Emphasize ability
 - Example: Ben is partially sighted or has low vision VS Ben is partially blind
- Educate yourself about disability rights and stigmas/stereotypes that you might unconsciously have towards people with disabilities and work towards unlearning this by educating yourselves

REFERENCES & RESOURCES



For a deeper understanding of the information provided, feel free to check out the resources provided in references below. Additionally Liebs&Co would be more than happy to provide any assistance regarding disability strategies. Contact us at info@liebsandco.com to learn more and/or for any questions/concerns.

Resources Provided by:

"CASE"-Canadian Association for Supported Employment."CASE,
<https://supportedemployment.ca>

● DISCLOSING YOUR DISABILITY: A LEGAL GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN BC/DABC.
[HTTPS://DISABILITYALLIANCEBC.ORG/DISCLOSUREGUIDE/](https://disabilityalliancebc.org/disclosureguide/).

Other Resources

● THOMSON,GREG."DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE." ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA).[HTTPS://WWW.AODA.CA/DISCLOSURE-OF-DISABILITY-IN-THE-WORKPLACE/](https://www.aoda.ca/disclosure-of-disability-in-the-workplace/).

REFERENCES & RESOURCES



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