REALTIME FILE

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>> All right, good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to the Job Accommodation Network monthly webcast series. Quarterly during this series we feature initiatives that are making a difference in the field of disability. Today we are highlighting the success of the U.S. Business Leadership Network's Going for Gold program. Leading the companies and SMEs around disability inclusion through leading practices and tools.

The program has supported more than 10,000 hires at participating companies, which I think is absolutely extraordinary, and which is why we wanted to highlight it today.

So Leslie Wilson and Deb Dagit from the Going for Gold program will be talking this afternoon about the initiatives.

But before I do introductions, let's start off with a few housekeeping items. If you experience technical difficulties, please call us and hit button five. Or TTY calls.

Towards the end of the webcast, we'll spend some time answering questions. You can send in your questions at any time during the webcast to our e‑mail account at question@askJAN.org, or you can use our question and answer pod in the bottom right‑hand corner of the screen. Type your question and then click on the arrow to submit to the question queue.

On the left‑hand side of your screen, you'll notice a file share pod. If you have difficulties viewing the slides or if you would like to download them, click on the button that says "save to my computer." You can also find a handout for today's presentation in the file share pod. And finally I want to remind you that at the end of the webcast, an evaluation form will automatically pop up on your screen in another window. We really appreciate your feedback, so please stay logged onto fill out the evaluation form.

Now let me do introductions to our speakers today. First, Leslie Wilson, as leader of the USBLN's Going for Gold program, Leslie and a team of six subject matter experts are working in a community of practice with 20 major corporations on spreading disability inclusion across their enterprises and increasing their hire of individuals with disabilities.

As of March 2018, the Going for Gold companies have hired over 10,000 new individuals with disabilities. Leslie has worked with hundreds of businesses, business people on the return on investments of disability inclusion, and the benefits of recruitment and retention of individuals with disabilities.

At the same time she's trained thousands of employment service providers in multiple states on working with and communicating with employers to create demand for talented career seekers with disabilities.

Ms. Wilson is an expert on Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and Association for Training and Development, ATD, a certified trainer, and formerly certified mental health first aid instructor. In 2014, she was awarded the George Thomas Award by Strausberg University in Pennsylvania.

Thank you very much, Leslie, for being here today.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Thank you.

>> And let me also introduce Deb Dagit. So Deb Dagit who is the principle of the Deb Dagit Diversity is a much sought after consultant and speaker on topics of inclusion. She started Deb Dagit Diversity in 2013 to deliver the practical just‑in‑time products and services that she wished were available when she was the chief diversity officer at Merck at Merck Pharmaceuticals. She was responsible for global equal opportunity, employee relations, recruiting and staffing, and diversity and inclusion.

Under her leadership, the company was recognized for its exemplary work in diversity and inclusion by a wide range of publications, government agencies, and organizations. A sampling includes a 100% score on the HRC corporate equality induction for eight consecutive years, disability U.S. new freedom award winner, military freedom award, and out and equalizer trailblazer award, black enterprise top 100, working mothers top 100, just to name a view. Welcome Leslie and Deb. So let's listen in and engage with Leslie and Deb as they detail the evolution of the Going for Gold program and how the initiative continues to evolve. Leslie, did you want to take it first?

>> LESLIE WILSON: Thank you. Yes. First of all I want to thank JAN for the partnership with the USBLN. The Going for Gold companies take full advantage of everything JAN has to offer on a regular basis.

Deb?

>> DEB DAGIT: Yes, hello everyone. We look forward to not only sharing information with you, but we hope for lots of good questions. So take it away, Leslie.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Thank you, Deb. First of all I want to say that we decided early on if at any time you have a question, please raise your hand. I'm not sure how it's working on the call box today. But please let someone know that you do have a question so that we can respond as we go. It just makes the dialogue more interesting.

I'll go to slide two, if we can, to talk about the U.S. Business Leadership Network. If we were in a room together, I would ask how many of you have ever heard of the U.S. Business Leadership network. Truly we are a best kept secret, a national nonprofit which drives performance by inclusion of disability in the marketplace. I recommend that you go to our website and scroll across the top navigation of what will we do and a drop down menu will come down and you can take a look at all the various programs of the U.S. Business Leadership Network. We are the collective voice of local and state business leadership network affiliates across the U.S., representing 5,000 businesses. I've done a lot of work with local BLNs, and they are very, very important to the U.S. BLN. We also certify third party disability‑owned businesses, including businesses owned by disabled veterans. Disability Supplier Diversity Program. Then we have the U.S. BLN conference. The next conference is in Las Vegas. I've given you the link to that. It's not too late to register. We anticipate 1300 to 1400 people will attend the conference. The vast majority of those are business people. The agenda is spectacular. So click that link. You'll see the link to the agenda up on the right‑hand side and you can take a look at everything that's going to be presented at the conference. We would love it if you would attend. Next slide.

So we're here today to talk about another USBLN program, the Going for the Gold program. It's funded by the Smith Charitable Trust, the Poses Family Foundation, and Going for the Gold Corporate Match. We started the program with several companies. They took a fly with us before anyone really knew how successful this program would be. And they greatly contributed to our success.

>> Leslie, could I interrupt for just a second. Could you speak a little bit louder?

>> LESLIE WILSON: I feel like I'm yelling! If you start to think I'm too loud, let me know.

>> Will do.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Using a cell phone, this is always dangerous.

This is our amazing team. We have deep experience and knowledge in disability inclusion. Jill brings many, many years of experience to disability inclusion and is a very active part of our team. Deb and I are speaking today, but we have Emily Malsch who is a sourcing and community outreach consultant. Beth Butler used to be with Lowe's. She is an attorney. And very knowledgeable in accommodation policies and practices. And Becky Curran is a Disability Equality Index Program Manager. We are very fortunate to have Becky on our team. They get very special attention. And a result of having Becky on our team.

Next slide please. I'm going to click along here pretty quickly because we only have an hour and Deb and I have agreed that we very much want to have a lot of time for questions. As I mentioned, we went from six companies in 2014 to 20 companies in 2018. And you can see this list, I mean all these wonderful logos of these spectacular Fortune 500 companies. Really wonderful to work with. I always say there is not one person at any of the companies, and believe me we work with multiple companies in each one of the companies. And I would say the other interesting thing is we started in 2014 and six companies ended their full consultation in three years. It is a three‑year program. They were done in 2017 of June. And they continued for another year and they just all signed up for another year.

I think are not only our outcomes are outstanding, but the fact that we have not lost a company since the beginning of the program is really and truly remarkable. So we're very proud of our accomplishments with them and really they get so much of the credit because of their commitment to disability inclusion.

Next slide. Deb?

>> DEB DAGIT: So thank you, Leslie. We're on slide number six. And in terms of what is involved in doing for the gold, well it's the first of its kind program in the nation. As I mentioned, the companies commit to three years.

And what they get access to in addition to our team of subject matter experts is the other USBLN resources such as the supplier diversity program, the Rising Leadership Academy, for students getting their first job out of college. And also our Affiliates, which are located around the country. If you go to our USBLN website, under affiliates, you can see where all of these locations are in many states in the United States. So our companies can engage both locally where they have operations as well as in the broader national effort.

And a lot of our companies are global. And so over the last couple of years, we began to work with many of them in the different countries where they operate.

And we have two meetings a year that are in person. One on the west coast in January. And it's an all‑day meeting.

And then we also have an all‑day meeting associated with the conference, which will occur on July 9th.

During meetings, we do talk about best practices and how to sustain success. We meet each company where it's at. And during the assessment phase, one of the things we try to really get to know is their culture, their language norms, their business case, whether or not they have a disability‑focused employee resource group, and how involved they are, where they are with their self‑identification campaign. And then we customize a strategic plan that is really focused on each organization and not only the what they want to focus on and when, but how they are used to receiving that information so that both the business leaders and the H.R. team feel like we're an extended member of their diversity and inclusion staff. And we do look at disability as a dimension of diversity and inclusion and work at those intersections.

Once the plan is approved, over a two‑three year period, often the companies will make sure that it's appropriately resourced and then we begin their work with Emily. And identifying the sourcing partners at the locations that they've identified to find candidates for the types of jobs that they want to focus on. And this is from the early career professional level all the way up to senior leaders. All of our companies do provide a quarterly report on their hiring. That is one of the obligations and they do have an aspirational goal over the life of the project. And quite honestly, most of our companies have exceeded that aspirational goal at the midpoint in the project, after about 18 months.

If you go to the next slide, slide number seven, you'll see the return on investment. We talked about some of the aspects that we provide. Certainly the expert consulting. The DEI our companies have found it's an excellent benchmarking tool and a great place to start. If you haven't take an look at the DEI, it's always available online on the USBLN website. We focus a lot on increased self‑identification. At the candidate level, for new hires, and then for existing employees, and creative campaigns that use a variety of modalities to get the word out in a way that is well received and yields the kind of outcomes that they're looking for.

We build strong and mutually beneficial sourcing relationships. And we're good at helping our companies to find people that do an excellent job of matching candidates, and this again includes the Disability Resource and Career Placement Centers in the universities. And these are the same universities most of the time that our companies already go to. It's just that we help them to find the students with disabilities on those campuses.

We also work with our social media. We're very proud of our first virtual career invitational, which took place a little over a month ago.

And our companies really enjoyed. That involved a lot of social media outreach to candidates with disabilities, and then the opportunity to get to know candidates online.

And then hopefully move some of those candidates through the regular hiring process after that introduction.

And then sustained gold standard achievement. And as Leslie said, we're very happy that our original six companies have all decided they want to keep being involved in going for gold, even though they in all cases have exceeded the original goals that they set at the beginning of the project.

On slide number eight ‑‑

>> Deb and Leslie, we have our first question. Let me throw it your way as we're moving along here. Please define how you're using "sourcing relationships." What does that mean?

>> DEB DAGIT: Go ahead Leslie.

>> LESLIE WILSON: So what we do is when we're working with a company, we find out where they would like to source candidates with disabilities, at what location. And they'll tell us, okay, for example, we want to go to Philadelphia. We'll go into Philadelphia, and Emily will work with them to identify organizations that help individuals with disabilities become employed. And we'll also contact colleges and universities' disability resource centers who also help identify students and recent graduates, as well. It depends on what they're looking for, who we connect them to. But we do a lot of research in those local areas to find really good sourcing organizations that are a great match.

>> Thanks very much.

>> LESLIE WILSON: And Deb, I think I'm number eight.

>> DEB DAGIT: Yeah, go ahead.

>> LESLIE WILSON: The success dashboard, which is slide number eight, as you can see this is our report card. And it's getting out of date. We're too busy to have our graphics specialist develop a new one for me. So I figured it out on the airplane today how to resolve my own. The companies had 7,941 new hires, and that was only 11 companies reporting. And at the end of March, we're at over 10,000 new hires. Let me give you an example. We had one company start in the first year with 7 hires.

And they said right away we are not going to make our emphasis on hiring. We're going to put the emphasis on getting our culture in shape so that we can bring people with disabilities in and also retain them AND do a better job of retaining the employees we have, who have disabilities.

They started with 7 hires. In three years, they had over 1,000 hires of individuals with disabilities. So I think this emphasis on culture, which we'll talk about a little bit really does play a role.

And there are other things that really kind of play into it.

Do you want to go to the next slide on slide nine? We're going to talk right now. The lessons learned. What have we learned from the companies about hiring individuals and retaining individuals with disabilities? Slide ten.

Basically the Peter Drucker quote, which is one of my favorites. Culture eats strategy for breakfast, and it's true.

You can have the most wonderful strategy, but if your culture isn't inclusive, you are not going to have the kind of success that our GFG companies have had. And I always like to say the culture of each company is as unique as each one of our personalities. And I would say Deb and I would say we have not worked with one of the companies that they are anywhere close to being alike. You have to get inside the company and figure it out and then you have to do whatever it is to make it part of their culture.

I think that is a really important piece of this. And if you want to go to slide 11, this is a quote from Lori Golden of EY. There are more companies driving inclusion throughout all aspects of the organization rather than simply going out and recruiting. I think that's a really excellent quote.

And by the way, I love the EY Abilities page. If you type into your browser EY Abilities, it will come up. And Lori is very open with people. Just go there and steal whatever you need. You can get some really great ideas about a company that has become really disability inclusive.

One of the things I appreciate is their emphasis on mental health in their workplace. They have a phenomenal program called "Are you okay?" It's about coworkers working with other coworkers who are having mental health issues. They are now looking at alcohol and substance abuse, not just for their employees, but their employees' dependents. They do some really great things. A lot of our GFG companies are doing more around this area, as well. Deb, slide 12.

>> DEB DAGIT: Yeah. A really important aspect of success is the executive leadership sponsorship of this effort. And so we look for that early in our relationship with our companies. And that can take various forms consistent with the culture. Sometimes it might be the head of HR or the Chief Diversity Officer or the head of the legal department. In other cases, it may be a line leader or someone in facilities. So it just depends on who has had a reason to get highly engaged around this topic. And it may be that they themselves have managed a disability in their lives. At one of our companies, an individual said throughout his career he has had individuals with a broad range of disabilities who have worked for him and has come to understand the kind of work environment that they need in order to be successful. But that he says that his career has been successful because he made it a priority to include people with disabilities.

So that is really key. On slide number 13, you'll see a quote from Peter Cappelli from the Harvard Business Review in 2015. It's really true of any aspect of diversity and inclusion. In order to get managers on board, you really need the top executive team to be visibly and authentically leading the way. H.R. is an important element in terms of integrating disability inclusion work into policies and practices. But they can't enforce or measure, you know, this if it's not something that is driven from the top down as a business priority.

In slide number 14, the next slide, what we've noticed with culture change is it's helpful to look at what's already working. So when we start to get to know our companies, we'll ask them questions about how they've been successful at recruiting more women, people of color, LGBTQ employees. And then what they've done in order to build the pipeline. How far back do they go? As far back as K‑12? What has been the key to success with their sourcing partners and universities? And, you know, how did they go about doing that? And it's also important to understand how do they deal with the accommodations process. It's really important that whatever process is in place that it be streamlined and really, really easy to find. One of the things we provide to some of our companies is a list of keywords that need to be entered into the artificial intelligence of their search engine so that people who are not familiar with the language that those of us who are in the disability inclusion space are familiar with like reasonable accommodation can still find where you go to request an adjustment or some form of assistance.

And then once an accommodation is requested, that the response is very prompt. An example of culture and accommodation that was very creative and that worked well in one of our corporate cultures is an automotive company. And they wanted to make accommodations work more smoothly. So the facilities leader said well, we have a radio button where when you go to our facilities website to make a change in the work environment, if you click the button that is the safety issue, it automatically goes to the top of the queue and it's addressed very quickly. What we're going to do is we're going to add another radio button that if it's an accommodation, it is equally as important and goes to the top of the queue. So that's an example of where culture and accommodation go together.

It's also to communicate the accommodations process verbally and in writing to candidates, to new hire employees during orientation, and then to all employees at all levels throughout the employee life cycle. We know that employees are more likely to ask a colleague if they know how to request an accommodation than they are H.R. or a manager.

So if we go to the next chart, some of the examples of cross‑functional teams. So the other thing we start out with, with a new company is helping them to identify who will be on their Going for Gold team internally. So we talked about executive sponsors. We have an empowered project manager. That this is a real job. Not something that they've been hiding. It's on their performance management objective. We typically have someone from ENI and someone from affirmative action or EEO compliance, someone representing the accommodations team, from I.T. to deal with internal and external digital accessibility, talent acquisition or recruiting, an HR business partner, someone from communications, learning and development. If they have unions, labor relations. Their disability employee or business resource group leader and other passionate employees who want to be involved.

And then slide number 16 talks about the Disability Equality Index. As I mentioned, it is a benchmarking tool. There are five areas that it focuses on. Culture and leadership, enterprise‑wide access, employment practices, community engagement, support services, and supplier diversity. And this is now available for the 2019 survey on the USBLN website now where we've added some new questions that are now weighted around supplier diversity. That's the new area that we're now measuring.

And we will be celebrating in Las Vegas the recipients of a score of 80 or higher on the DEI with a special awards program.

Turn it back over to you Leslie.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Thank you, Deb. I want to mention that our companies did very well on the DEI this year. That's not always been the case. And when they don't do well, we work very hard with them. That has resulted in a tremendous increase in the scores of our GFG companies We're looking forward to the awards and the announcement as Deb mentioned at the USBLN conference.

Just like all goals, the hiring of individuals with disabilities should be measured. And in addition to measuring the hiring, we should also be measuring retention. And we do have those data available to us from a quarterly hiring report that the companies also provide.

Interestingly, one of the companies that's been with us about a year and a half, actually two years now, I was looking at their data the other day. They've had some nice numbers of hires, but no one has left. They've had 100% retention. And one of our other big companies that's had over 1,000, they've had very few departures. So I think the whole idea about culture is really having an impact. Of however, I will tell you we did have one company that had major layoffs and downsizing at the company. And people with disabilities were not immune and some of them also lost their jobs. But the important thing is that what is measured gets done. And if you're a federal contractor, almost all of our companies are, you also have to track the data for the federal government in case you get audited. It's good to do it not just for compliance reasons, but to see where you are in recruiting and hiring.

The next slide, slide 18, employee business resource groups. I really prefer the term business resource groups. Because I believe the BRGs should focus on business growth and business objectives. And when they do they're stronger.

PNG has three basic objectives for their disability ERG. Recruitment, retention, and customers. They do market research for the company by testing packaging and product labels, how to open something. The BRG has become a really important component of the business. And that makes it very strong.

Slide 19. Self‑identification campaigns. I know it sounds odd, but I think, well I know from our experience that when companies invest in self‑identification campaigns that really push the envelope on making individuals in their company aware of disability inclusion, things change. Not only do their self‑ID numbers go up, but we see other self‑improvements, as well. I think having a great self‑ID campaign is a great way to launch your disability inclusion initiative. I will say this. We were on the phone with one of the companies this week talking about their campaign. They had an increase, but they weren't happy with it. What we found is repetition is key. You can't just do a campaign once. You have to run it, see what happens, measure it, look at the problems that you've had, look at the successes you have, and then run it again.

And some of the companies are running them every single year.

And as they do so, more people are self‑identifying, but they're also seeing more awareness and openness about the issue of disability in their culture.

Slide 20.

>> Leslie, we do have a couple of questions. If I could give them to you. The first question is the Going for Gold program available to companies who already score on the DEI?

>> LESLIE WILSON: Oh, yes.

>> A high‑scoring company may wish to formulate strategies and goals to address opportunities identified by the DEI.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Absolutely. And even a company who scores 100 will find there are many things they still need to do. In fact because Becky Curran is a program manager and she's on the team, she puts together a PowerPoint of the companies even those who scored 100 showing where their successes are and even where they can improve. Because as a DEI, the bar continuously gets raised. We had companies that scored 100, but they had things they wanted to work on and other things within their company to focus on.

>> SPEAKER: Maybe before I ask the second question, a follow‑up to this question. How does a company become involved in the going for gold program?

>> LESLIE WILSON: Very simple, you send Leslie@USBLN.org an e‑mail. (Chuckling) and basically we're very happy to meet with you and others in your company to talk about how the program works, what it costs, and so forth. And we usually prefer to do that in a private conference call with your company to talk about your needs and so on.

>> SPEAKER: Okay. And the second question is, and this sort of goes back to the sourcing question. Are you finding that in terms of the supply side of individuals with disabilities that there is a digital divide that still exists. Are companies still having problems identifying good qualified candidates, particularly in terms of their digital skills?

>> LESLIE WILSON: One of the things that we did this year, and Deb mentioned this, is our companies said we need experienced hires and we need them in the STEM arena and we can't find them. A lot of us who work in this field know that 80% of people with disabilities aren't served by anyone. It becomes really hard to find them. So this year we did a social media campaign with 13 of our GPG companies to promote them as disability friendly and to advertise our virtual career invitational that we ran April 20th. We had over 600 resumes come in from experienced hires. We matched that against our criteria, which was STEM, finance, or business. And we ended up with over 300.

So the platform was built for us, and our companies were actually able to do interviews in 13 minute to 30‑minute intervals. It wasn't just one of these job fair where is people just come in and out of your chat room. They were literally able to schedule through the platform 13‑minute interviews. Our companies just like the rest have really struggled with it especially when entry level is one to two years experience. Understand that is a problem. I hope I answered your question.

>> SPEAKER: I'm just curious, do you think finding the qualified applicants is more challenging than just finding people with disabilities with the right skills? Which is the primary? What seems to be the biggest challenge? Finding them?

>> LESLIE WILSON: Yeah, I think finding candidates that are well matched to a company's requirements and needs is extremely difficult.

>> SPEAKER: Okay.

>> LESLIE WILSON: And we are getting better all the time at it. I think the other thing is a company like Northrop Grommon. They met the goals. And basically what they said is we did massive outreach and recruitment. We knocked on every door and we went into every place where people with disabilities might be. And they were able to meet that goal. They found qualified people. And I think one of the other pieces of this is when a company announces itself as disability friendly or an employer of choice, more people with disabilities will apply at that company. And I think they've done a great job at that. Our companies have done a spectacular job at that and we are working with that to do that more.

So getting that reputation will help you. People will come in the door.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you very much for that, Leslie.

>> DEB DAGIT: If I could just add that according to the Center for Talent Innovation's 2013 study 30% of college educated office‑based employees identify as having a disability. So one of the things that's really helpful is once you're able to have the culture be disability inclusive, that base of employees will send employee referrals through. And for a broad variety of reasons, just like with other demographic groups, people with disabilities often know people with disabilities outside the company who may be qualified. And for STEM talent, which is the most highly sought after, they fall into that college‑educated, office‑based workforce by and large. That is a really helpful aspect. Word of mouth, getting out through social media informally, on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. That's how the LGBTQ community was able to bring more people into the workforce. Is to get the word out through social media and through their friendships, you know, that this really is a great place to work.

If we go to slide 21, you'll see an image of 18 celebrities that identify as having a disability. And we use this and other highly interactive and fun tools to make the disability training memorable and actionable with our recruiters. Typically our Going for Gold companies will identify 2‑5 areas where they would like to focus their recruiting efforts within their footprint. And then we will go into that location, take a look at the jobs that are at that site, the facilities, other things that are important to know about that location. We'll do training with the recruiters, with the hiring managers, and then we will introduce local sourcing partners to the recruiting team.

This is an extra site we start out with, asking them which individuals have a disability, and if so what kind of disability it is. And from this, we're able to demonstrate important things like, you know, not trying to match someone to a job based on the nature of the disability. So one quick example would be James Earl Jones. His disability is he really struggles with stuttering. For most of his life. Yet, he has a career where he uses his voice.

So we like to debunk myths using examples like that where people move away from saying "Well, we're looking for people to fill this kind of job. What kind of disability do you think would work with this job?" Which we don't want them, you know, thinking along those lines.

If we go to slide number 22, companies who have a really good accommodations process do a really nice job of getting the word out in multiple modalities as I said before. Both verbally and in writing. And some of our best practice companies actually have a link and a phone number on every requisition where you can contact someone if you need some kind of an accommodation. We do recommend, and it's in the Disability Equality Index centralized funding. That doesn't mean centralized all at corporate. But it can be. More often, though, we find that it may be at the divisional level. As long as it's not going to fall on a small department to absorb the costs of an accommodation.

We also like to see that H.R. and other key people in the organization are trained on the interactive process. If you're not familiar with the JAN reasonable accommodation toolkit and the associated videos that demonstrate how to utilize the interactive process with a broad range of disabilities, that's something that we've worked on together using real scenarios. And we use those videos in order to train not only H.R., but in companies that have shared services and others who answered the phone. We can even work with a third‑party provider.

We look for things to be very timely and efficient. And best practice companies actually do some form of a survey with both the employee and the employee's manager as to their satisfaction with the accommodation that was provided not only right after it's been solved or, you know, provided. But as regular intervals of three months, six months, and a year, asking whether or not there's any change in the need.

There are cost savings that are often documented in terms of safety, return to work more quickly, just benefits, costs, shorter leave. So it really makes all kinds of business sense. And we highly recommend that it be to the degree possible an employee‑driven process versus medically driven. While a corporation may require that there be some form of documentation, we like to keep that to a minimum and really only when necessary because it slows things down. And often the medical provider is not sufficiently well informed as to the essential duties of the job. We are developing some customized training for I.T. professionals so that they're more comfortable responding to some of the more complex I.T. recommendations so that will be something we're adding to our tool kit in the very near future.

If we go to the next chart, ‑‑

>> SPEAKER: Deb, we have a question.

>> DEB DAGIT: Sure, go ahead.

>> SPEAKER: So the question is we have a company that wants to start down the path of inclusion. And they're not sure where to start. And they've heard that they should do an audit.

And they don't know whether to audit their accommodations program or their I.T. that they use in doing and conducting business or even their physical site audit. So what would be the advice or what's the suggestions coming out of GFG? How are the companies doing this sort of thing? How are they getting started?

>> DEB DAGIT: We recommend that they use the DEI, which is always available and free, the Disability Equality Index, and then really hone in on the accommodations process as a part of that. And if they don't have an employee resource group, that they have informally some employees who are either allies or employees with disabilities who can provide candid feedback on how easy it is or not to use the accommodations program, that's a really good starting place. As far as I.T. accessibility, generally we recommend starting with the careers portal and the part of their external website that is candidate facing and making sure that's accessible and it is very clear how to request an accommodation during the selection and assessment and interview process.

As you all know, JAN is a place where you can get that kind of an assessment conducted. And then there are disability‑owned businesses that can help with deeper dives to assist your I.T. team with digital accessibility both internally and externally for more complex things that are needed.

From a facilities standpoint, unless their buildings are really old, generally most facilities are meeting the ADA guidelines if they've either been recently built or recently renovated.

Generally, we recommend that you make sure the lobby is fully accessible for your guests, including automatic doors and the restrooms used by visitors have automatic doors and there's good parking.

But then we suggest from a facilities standpoint having a phased approach and going by what your employees are telling you where the priorities need to be. Does that answer the question?

>> SPEAKER: Yes, yes it does.

Thank you very much.

>> DEB DAGIT: Okay. So slide 23. Diversity talent advisers. The best practice of many of our companies is to identify people who work with the talent acquisition and talent management function to help them integrate disability inclusion into their practices. And so we've had a lot of success with companies who work with the sourcing partners, not only for people with disabilities, but other sources of talent. So that's really a best practice. Slide number 24, flexibility and creativity. One of the interesting examples we had is a company who actually when they recruited someone who had a pretty stellar academic career as a biomedical engineer at a top university, they didn't have an opening right away for this person in engineering. So they got creative and they recruited them to be a sourcer of talent, STEM talent in the recruiting department, even though they didn't have a recruiting background. And after they were in that role for a little while, they moved them into an engineering role. But it was a good way to get their foot in the door and get to know this person.

And it also gave them a whole different point of view on how to find especially Millennial talent with disabilities.

Okay. I'll turn it over to Leslie on slide number 25.

>> SPEAKER: Okay. And actually we have a couple of more questions.

>> DEB DAGIT: Oh, good. Thanks!

>> SPEAKER: What do you find is the competitive advantage for a company to participate in the GFG program? And also in diversity and inclusion? Over a company that does not participate. Is there data to support this. I think they're asking for the business case Is there a business case for inclusion?

>> LESLIE WILSON: It is kind of hard for us to say. We have not run those kind of data. We have a white paper that outlines that. I think one of the real benefits is for a customer‑facing company to be disability friendly, people with disabilities and their families are very loyal customers. And companies have realized one out of five Americans having a disability, that being a disability‑friendly employer can also bring in new business.

So not all of our companies are customer facing, but most are. So that is one thing. If you look at General Motors and making sure they have cars that are accessible and they're working on autonomous vehicles. And they've been tested by one of their employees who is an engineer who also is blind. So all of these things are telling companies this is a group of people we need to tap as customers. And by being disability friendly also when you're hiring people with disabilities, you're learning more about that group of individuals and how you can best accommodate and the kinds of products and services you can offer.

>> DEB DAGIT: A couple quick things. The founder of Diversity, Inc, in the top 50. He has often said that companies that are really good at disability inclusion get all of the diversity and inclusion categories nailed. Because it is the one that requires the most one‑size‑fits‑one approach from management with employees. Versus a cookie cutter. Treating people respectfully, creating a safe and trusting environment on an individual level, which all human beings want. So it's a really good way to get good at all aspects of D&I.

The other thing is Going for Gold, our companies love their time together both virtually and person.

And they exchange ideas on a broad range of topics. It's pretty rare to see people in roles similar to yours in twenty other companies that you can learn from both with or without the subject matter experts facilitating. I think that's another key aspect of that.

>> SPEAKER: Thanks, Deb. Another major shift in questions. Somebody is asking do you have experience working with Ability One companies? Do you use them as some of your sourcing relationships?

>> LESLIE WILSON: Any organization who is using people with disabilities who are search for employment. We cast a very wide net.

>> SPEAKER: Okay, great. Thanks.

>> LESLIE WILSON: Very quickly since we have 7 minutes left and I want to make sure we get through everything very quickly, slide 25. So this is the outreach and recruitment piece where we don't just push out, we help our companies not just push out job descriptions, but to pull in sourcing organizations and candidates. And a couple of things that I love. One of our companies has champions. So in each one of their major markets, they have recruiters who have become disability champions. They're specially trained and their colleagues ask them questions. It's like embedding experts in your team. Another company has done fireside chats where they bring in employees where disabilities, their ERG members, and others, to talk about working with the company and what that's like. I went to one in New York. It was fantastic. We do a lot of training. We do a lot of work with colleges connecting to disability services and the virtual career invitation. We'll be doing more of that virtual recruiting as time goes by.

And slide 26 is our cohort model. That's the 20 companies that come together twice a year in person. But we connect them and facilitate those connections between them all yearlong. It really has developed comradery and they get recognition for being a GFG company. There is healthy competition. Everybody wants to see what's going on. We do not say companies are reported anonymously, but they see their own progress every quarter and stacked up against the other companies, as well. And they just have really, the ones that have been around longer have gotten really tight.

And this year, at this meeting because we've gotten so big we are going to be assigning mentors. So companies that have been around for a while will be seated with newer companies so they can help them through the meaning and the process.

On slide 27 there is a summary of the baker's dozen. You can look at that yourself.

Slide 28, where we talk about the future. If you're interested, send me an e‑mail.

>> DEB DAGIT: We're ready for questions!

>> SPEAKER: Sounds good. Well there is another one coming in. Are any of the airlines working with the GFG?

>> LESLIE WILSON: No, we don't have any airlines right now. But if you're an airline and you're interested, we would love to have you.

>> SPEAKER: That puts the gauntlet out there. We know of all of the good work of a number of airlines. Hopefully one of them will give you an e‑mail. A question, I'm not sure if we'll be able to answer this. But what's the percentage of people with disabilities who are actively looking for employment? Have you guys run into that statistic when you're talking to companies? GFG companies? Have you collected any of that info?

>> LESLIE WILSON: Well, we know that approximately two‑thirds of people with disabilities are not in the workforce. But I don't know, Deb. Do you know the actual statistic of job seekers with disabilities?

>> DEB DAGIT: I don't. And, you know, part of the problem is it's very difficult to find out who's given up and, you know, there isn't a mechanism that the government has for reporting that. I think, though, the statistic you can go by that is of concern is how many, and I don't have the data. But I know a lot of people when they can't get employed apply for SSDI, Social Security Disability. And some people are able to get it and some people aren't. And one of the things that changed is the definition of why you get SSDI. You have to assert that you aren't able to work and never will be able to. In today's knowledge economy, there are many jobs that people with disabilities can do. But if they struggle to obtain employment, it's too bad that right now we're asking them to make that choice. And I think from a public policy perspective hopefully that will change in the near future.

>> SPEAKER: Okay. And just two statistics that I think of that we use often, which is just the unemployment rate, which is running about twice the amount of people who do not have been disabilities. And then the job participation rate, as well, which is I think about a 40% difference in between. And one can find those numbers on the front page. They sent us figures. The Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor publishes those statistics monthly and has them on their front page. A place to find that if you need them.

Also, are there companies actively looking to recruit employees with developmental disabilities? In terms of that group of folks who are looking for work?

>> DEB DAGIT: Absolutely. Five of the companies are searching for candidates with autism. They're starting autism at work pilot sites. And we'll be connecting them to the 7 autism of work round table companies. So we do see that. And some of our companies do also recruit individuals with intellectual disabilities and have done a really great job. We are going to have someone from Microsoft speaking at our GFG meeting on July 9th about Microsoft's developmental recruiting program. They've hired over 200 people on their campus. So we are really promoting that among our companies, because individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the highest unemployment rates of any group.

>> SPEAKER: Absolutely.

And sort of building on this, a person is also asking in your experience with GFG companies and the recruitment, if you're also experiencing a severe shortage of job coaches that are adequately trained to work with people for instance with intellectual disabilities?

>> SPEAKER: That has been a problem since time in motorium. We don't pay them very well and there is a high rate of turnover. That continues to be a problem.

>> SPEAKER: And one final question. Does GFG program work with smaller or local businesses or other companies with less resources than the companies you've given as examples? Is there a size limit?

>> LESLIE WILSON: There is not. But there is a match that the companies do pay. That sometimes I think is a stumbling block to participation. But like I said, you have my e‑mail address. And I'm happy to talk to anyone. We do not limit by size. And if you would like to explore it with us, send me an e‑mail and I would be happy to talk to you.

>> SPEAKER: Great, great. Thanks very much. So that's all the time we really have today. Thanks everybody who participated in this webcast. Thanks also to Leslie and Deb for sharing the GFG initiative with us. It's just an excellent program in just creating such wonderful results out there. We all need to be paying attention to it.

Thank you also to Alternative Communication Services for providing the net captioning. And finally, I want to remind you that at the end of the webcast an evaluation form will pop up on your screen in another window. We really appreciate your feedback. So please stay logged on and fill out the evaluation form. So this really concludes today's webcast. Thanks very much everyone.

>> SPEAKER: Thanks for having us and for those great questions.

>> SPEAKER: Thanks Deb, thanks Leslie.

(Ended at 3:01 p.m. Eastern Time)