**Job Accommodation Network**

**The Value Proposition for Engaging People with Disabilities**

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Hello everyone. I am Lou Orslene one of the Co-Directors of JAN. In this module, I plan to provide you with a number of practical tips for making your workplace more inclusive of individuals with disabilities, focusing on language and communication.

On the presentation cover slide, we see a montage of photos of JAN customers along with the title Disability Awareness to Increase Your Comfort, Confidence and Competence. Also, please note that my email is on the cover slide for any questions you may have after watching and listening to the module. My email is Orslene@jan.wvu.edu

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It is important to note from the outset that there is ability beyond disability. Disabilities, impairments, and chronic health conditions are a natural part of being human. We may be born with them or cycle in and out of disabilities through injury and recovery.

There are more than 56 million people in the US - or nearly 1 in of 5 – who self identify as people with disabilities. And most have disabilities such as diabetes, cancer, a learning disability, or mental health condition that are non apparent to the rest of us.

And many individuals who report a disability are of working age and in our workplaces and are consumers.

So the better prepared we are in understanding disability, reasonable accommodation, and inclusion, the more fair and equitable our workplaces will be. And, research suggests that having a diverse and inclusive workplace also insures a productive workforce and success in the marketplace.

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There are a number of other trends we should be aware of –

10,000 baby boomers reach the age of 65 every day.

Many of these boomers are deciding not to retire or are starting a new career. Thus, more than ever the workforce will be impacted by the chronic health conditions of aging workers. It is estimated that by the year 2020, half of the U.S. population will have at least one chronic condition and one-quarter will be living with multiple chronic conditions.” This information is from Center on an Aging Society, Georgetown University.

In 2010, 19% of people with disabilities have reportedly graduated from college, up from 14% in 2004.

The expectations of work for young people with disabilities are high as we now are seeing the first generation of young people who have benefited from the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. With graduation rates growing, more young people who have benefitted from school mainstreaming are entering the nation’s workforce. These qualified young people have been empowered by the ADA and expect to work and expect not to be hindered by the barriers of the past.

47,000 service members have been wounded in action. Hundreds of thousands more, nearly 25 percent of all who served, will be diagnosed upon returning home with other “invisible wounds.”

Increasingly, the private and public sector are filling their ranks with veterans, including our wounded warriors. Leading the way are companies such as Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman.

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And over the past decade, disability legislation has and continues to be strengthened to increase opportunity for workers with disabilities, insure the federal workplace is a model employer for individuals with disabilities, and create an employment system that includes people with disabilities. This includes Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended the (ADAAA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 including Section 503, 508, 501, Executive Order 13548 to increase the hiring of people with disabilities into the federal government, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which provides for and promises to create a more inclusive workforce preparation system.

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The Conference Board, established to help private industry understand and deal with the most critical issues of our time, believes disability in the workplace is one of these critical issues. The Conference Board notes that there are a number of trends driving inclusion including:

Employees aging in the workforce

Development of new, more universally accessible workplace technologies

Greater acceptance of remote work

Health care advances

Incentives provided by government

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So let’s talk about the value proposition of engaging with people with disabilities.

In an on-going survey conducted on behalf of JAN, employer customers report the direct and indirect benefits of accommodating people with disabilities:

90% of employers reported a higher retention of valued employee

72% report increased employee’s productivity

60% report eliminated costs associated with training a new employee

38% reported saved workers' compensation or other insurance costs

45% report increased workplace safety

28% report increased profitability

17% report increased customer base

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Disability has also become an emerging market for a growing number of enterprises. So more than ever there is a value proposition to hiring people with disabilities and involving these employees in the development and marketing of products and services.

Often, these days I hear of products designed for “ease of use”, or “designed for all”, or “universally designed.” This shift in thinking about consumers and particularly about consumers with disabilities is signaling a fundamental market change. Microsoft is a great exemplar here. Believing that “disability is an engine of innovation”, Microsoft and its “design for all” effort was featured in a recent Fast Company article.

According to an Association of National Advertisers blog, people with disabilities globally control $8 trillion dollars in disposal income, and together with their friends and family represent 53% of global consumers.

According to the author of this blog, people with Disabilities (PWD) are positioned to be the focus of brands within the next five years.

Marcus Robinson in his book, “The Business Case for Inclusion and Engagement”, writes that marketing programs aimed at people with disabilities can reach as many as four out of every 10 consumers. As the largest of all U.S.-based minority groups, this group is comprised of people of all ethnic backgrounds, cultures and ages.

And we know from 2006 study conducted by Siperstein and Romano that “…87% of survey participants specifically agreed that they would prefer to give their business to companies that hire individuals with disabilities.”

Thus, disability is becoming mainstream in the workplace and influencing many of the products and services we use.

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And finally, in making the business case for diversity and inclusion, E&Y’s CEO reported at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos Switzerland a few years ago

that in their latest survey on globalization “we found that the majority of respondents believe diversity of teams and experience improves both the financial performance and reputation of their organizations.”

Further he states, “Our experience found that the leaders of successful organizations capitalize on the richness of their global workforce by seeking out and implementing ideas from a variety of individuals with different backgrounds, skills and experiences. And they are not afraid to experiment.”

It is no wonder that E&Y consistently ranks first in Diversity Inc’s Top 10 Companies for People with Disabilities.

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I hope that information I shared about engaging people with disabilities motivates you to explore this largely untapped market. Understanding disability and developing a more inclusive workforce may be the key to your company’s future success.

If you would like to talk about this issue or others towards developing that more inclusive workplace, feel free to contact the Job Accommodation Network.

At (800) 526-7234 (V) - (877) 781-9403 (TTY) or visit us at our our comprehensive website at AskJAN.org.

Or email jan@askjan.org

Or text (304) 216-8189

Or Skype and put in the name janconsultants.

Or the many social networking tools as well.

I hope this has been valuable and thank you very much for listening.