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Why You Should Hire Someone With A Disability



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Forbes Coaches Council ⓘ

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"To create that accommodation would cost our business a lot of money. I know we could and should do it, but it's not in our budget."

"People with disabilities have so many needs and medical issues, sometimes it's just hard to integrate them into our work and still stay on task."

"You don't know how hard it is to work in an environment where some people are blind."

These comments, uttered off the record by people with leadership authority in both small and large enterprises, dishearten me.

Nearly 13% of the American population has a disability, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's latest [findings](#). Speaking personally, I have a 20-year-old son with special needs who would be positively impacted by more acceptance and tolerance, and who I believe brings hidden talents and gifts to the table that should not be ignored.

Creating opportunities for people with disabilities and providing help may make business sense now more than ever. In an improving job market where millennials are positively impacting the workforce, companies are balancing purpose with profit, there's a general increase in business/social impact, and we have the Americans With Disabilities Act, it's time to come together to create more acceptance of all people in the workplace.

Here are three arguments for making this a priority in your business:

It Creates A Supportive Atmosphere

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I recently spoke to a friend and small business owner who employs a number of people with severe disabilities in various roles. He told me it was the best and smartest business move he ever made. Why? It created an atmosphere of goodwill

around the entire workplace. There is a sense of care and camaraderie that he couldn't have generated from even 1,000 leadership retreats.

When your business truly accommodates people with disabilities, you develop a compassionate workforce who must help each other with the small things. It can positively change your employees', your customers' and even your authentic perception of community and leave an impression on the customers and stakeholders you serve.

It Allows For Multiple Perspectives

To me, my son possesses superpowers.

Take Tony Stark or Daredevil. They both face potentially debilitating injuries, either from war or from an accident that blinds them, but they overcome those disabilities with great power.

Just like in the movies, my son faced his own genetic issues that limited his ability to read and function normally without seizures. It also hindered his ability to take care of himself as an adult. But even with this "disability," he has a real power (one that you couldn't find in comic books), and it has influenced hundreds of people, especially his family.

Colin has an incredible ability to read people, understand their emotions and demonstrate a level of pure, authentic love and concern for other people more than anyone I have ever known.

One of my friends who owns a retail store said to me, "If Colin has a few hours a week, I would like to have him just say hello to everyone who comes into our establishment. I don't care what he talks about, and we will make sure he's paid and has his helper if she is available. I just love him, and our clients will too."

[Reports](#) and research from organizations find that intellectually and developmentally disabled employees work exceptionally well with customers and do well at their jobs, especially with accessible and assistive technology.

It is a win-win. You can hire a superhero when you hire someone with a disability.

Other tangible business advantages include:

- Creating new insights and tactics for serving the population with disabilities
- Powerful, authentic stories of employees and customers served
- A wealth of creativity and innovation in all areas of the business

How To Get Started

If you accommodate people with disabilities the United States, the government and the IRS may help you with tax credits and deductions. The IRS has a slew of helpful information on how you can accommodate people with disabilities in your business. Check out [Publication 3966](#) or Form 8826 to claim a [Disabled Access Credit](#).

Do not discount those with disabilities because they "present a challenge" to your business. This is a challenge you need to overcome. It will create the greatest benefit of your professional life. I can tell you that you will surely find people with real, superhero-like qualities. The gauntlet is down. It is time for you and your business to step up.

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