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Top 10 Ways Hiring Disabled Workers Can Motivate All

By Roy Saunderson

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Inspiring and motivating your team involves more than one-on-one giving and rewarding tangible forms of recognition. It is also about making a difference and giving back in ways that have meaning for your workforce and customers. You can reinvent your corporate culture by living the beliefs and values that are common to the community in which your company is present.

The harsh reality is one out of five Americans lives with a disability, and 70 percent of Americans with disabilities are unemployed.

Consider the following 10 points, sparked from my conversation with Robert Stack, chief executive of Community Options, Inc., www.comop.org, on how we can be more inclusive of disabled Americans in the workplace.

- 1. Americans with disabilities represent an untapped resource.** They want to be working no matter their disabilities—whether it's blindness, hearing impairment, a muscular ailment, autism, etc. Consider a physically or mentally challenged person as your next hire because he or she may provide a unique talent and ability that makes a difference in your organization.
- 2. Reap hidden ROI.** Tapping individuals with special needs for employment will become a visible marker and spill over into attracting clients that similarly care about and respect all individuals.
- 3. Hiring challenged individuals motivates and impacts all employees.** Many people have family members or friends with some form of disability, or knows someone who has a loved one with a disability. Being a disabled-worker-friendly company will thus increase loyalty and morale across the entire company.
- 4. Raises brand awareness.** While you should never do it for publicity reasons, hiring people with special needs, and offering training and development to cultivate their growth, is a positive and inclusive way to enhance your corporate brand similar to other corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- 5. Improve customer awareness.** Having individuals with disabilities aboard your company increases awareness of the typical physical challenges they experience and might help you innovate new solutions for products and services.
- 6. Break stereotypes.** Companies that make the step in hiring people with disabilities help team members understand workplace and personal differences, appreciate their blessings, and let go of incorrect and negative perceptions.
- 7. Find the perfect employee for the job.** Many disabled workers are gifted with talents that will actually lend themselves to existing positions in your company. Asperger syndrome is an autism disorder that gives some people incredible ability to process details, which is an excellent trait for computer programmers, social media posting and monitoring, and researchers, etc.
- 8. Find the perfect job for the employee.** Robert Stack shared a poignant story of an autistic person

who was unable to read but was eager to work. He was the perfect candidate for shredding confidential papers when a company was challenged in finding someone who met the strict requirements for the job.

9. Elevate workplace principles. By allowing such individuals to be a part of your workplace, you are going to learn and demonstrate caring, kindness, greater courtesy, and respect, and make your company a friendlier and more service-oriented organization with which to do business.

10. Begin your outreach. Finding talented and skilled people with disabilities for your organization is a process. Robert Stack invites companies to get more information at its Web site, www.comop.org.

Incentive columnist Roy Saunderson is author of [Giving the Recognition Way](#) and president of the Recognition Management Institute, www.realrecognition.com, which consults companies on improving employee motivation that leads to increased productivity and profit. He can be reached at roysaunderson@realrecognition.com. Also, tune in every Tuesday to his radio show, [Real Recognition Radio](#).

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