

CASE STUDY: WALGREEN'S DISTRIBUTION CENTRE



In 2002, Randy Lewis, former Senior Vice President of Logistics and Distribution, wanted to create a way to give new job opportunities to people with disabilities.

Based on the principles of universal design, Walgreens created a new foundation of systems, machines and processes when building their new distribution center in Anderson, South Carolina.

The facility was designed to be inclusive for people with cognitive or physical disabilities, and included:

- Flexible workstations
- Elevators for those who can't walk up the steps
- Touch-screen computers with large icons and easy-to-read type for the visually impaired
- New systems designed to help all team members work efficiently

When the center opened in 2007, Walgreens worked with local agencies to train and attract people with disabilities for employment at the facility. The centre offers equal pay and equal expectations of performance.

“As a pioneer of employing people with disabilities, Walgreens management decided to use education to dispel the myths.”

Walgreens

With so many stereotypes and portrayals about people with disabilities, Walgreens management decided to use education to as a tool to dispel the myths about hiring people with a disability. Through training and experiential opportunities for its management team, the company showed that people with



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disabilities can be successful in highly competitive environments. Disability awareness training was also provided to all workers.

Studies of Walgreens's experience at these distribution centers show that workers with a disability are more efficient and stay on the job longer. Absenteeism and turnover rates have decreased and safety statistics are up. The cost of accommodating workers with new technologies and education has proven to be minimal.

"We went into this project wanting to change the work environment, but soon discovered we were the ones who changed in wonderful ways."

Walgreens

The Supply Chain division has incorporated the lessons learned in Anderson at its newest Distribution Centre in Windsor, Connecticut. The Windsor DC is the company's safest and most productive warehouse in the country. This model is now the blueprint for all future Distribution Centres.

The numbers

Over 40% of the workforce in the South Carolina and Windsor Distribution Centers are comprised of people with a disability. The numbers speak for themselves:

- 40% lower safety incident rate
- 67% lower medical treatment costs
- 63% lower employee time away from work due to accidents
- 78% lower overall costs associated with accidents

Walgreens is working toward its new goal to fill more than 20 percent of its workforce with people with disabilities. Other organizations are following Walgreens lead - more than 100 executives of major companies have toured Walgreens distribution centers where at least a third of workers are physically or intellectually disabled.

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For more information

Walgreens Disability Inclusion -

http://www.walgreens.com/topic/sr/disability_inclusion_home.jsp

Americans with disabilities may be the best workers no one's hiring

http://www.salon.com/2013/08/07/americans_with_disabilities_may_be_the_best_workers_w_ho_cant_get_jobs_newscred/

Employees with disabilities can Boost Business Success

<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7599-hiring-people-with-disabilities.html>

Business & Disability: Walgreens - Randy Lewis on integration of people with disabilities

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeUQuul_p7w

Walgreen – A Warehouse of Wonders (2010)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT2j6pRm7bM>

Randy Lewis – Looking Past the Disability (17:06 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmwXNy-RpwE>

Why I Hired a Workforce no one else would (Randy Lew TedTalk)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyhgqkSvINU>