

# How To Promote Employment

## Five Tips to Promote Employment for People Who Have a Disability

### 1. Understand Your Audience

Be sure you understand what the business needs to get out of the employment relationship and promote those features of your candidates and your services. The temptation is to tell businesses all about our programs, in detail, and the people we support. Save this for discussion as you build your relationship with the business.

In your first presentations, speak to those factors and qualities that matter to the business. Ask about their labour needs and challenges. Are they struggling with high turnover, finding quality entry-level employees, safety, etc.?

Once you've identified their needs you can speak directly to how your service and candidates can meet them. The other details will come out in good time.

### 2. Understand Their Business

Before you go to meet with a business owner or manager, do some research about his or her business. Be sure you know what that business does, how long they've been around, number of employees, new business developments and expansion plans, corporate values, recent news articles, etc. before you show up. Being knowledgeable and asking good questions about the business shows you have done your homework and builds credibility.

### 3. Build Champions

Successful business owners and managers listen to other successful business people. Look for opportunities to use a business-to-business approach. We all have success stories and businesses that support us.

Leverage these relationships, whether for case studies, testimonials, referrals to business colleagues and most importantly to speak publicly about their successes and the merits of including people who have a disability in the workplace.

Some of these business owners, with encouragement and support, will become champions. Nurture, educate and support them and look for ways to recognize them. Business champions can become your strongest advocates and allies and your most convincing sales people.

#### **4. Create New Networks**

We tend to network with our own kind. The problem is that other non-profit service agencies aren't the primary employers of the people we support.

Look to typical business networks with members who are in hiring and decision-making roles. Think about your Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Association, service clubs and professional organizations like the local chapter of the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPAO). This is where business people hang out and they are the ones you need to reach.

#### **5. Be Part of the Big Picture**

Understand the bigger role your organization plays in the community. Your organization not only contributes to the social well-being of the community, it also contributes to the economic fabric of the community.

We need to leverage this role in two key ways. First, support those who support you. If your major suppliers (including services like your bank) don't support you, don't support them.

Second, and more importantly, work with your community partners to solve community challenges. If your community has high unemployment, go in with the attitude of 'how can we help solve this problem'. If it's a shortage of doctors or skilled workers, take the same approach.

The obvious payoff is that if your community can reduce unemployment, your candidates will have a better chance. Solving the doctor problem means those you support will have better access to health care, more skilled workers means better staff for your agency, and so on and so on. The bigger payoff is that soon you will be seen as problem-solvers and contributors. The community will reciprocate.

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