

Lesson Four: Putting Research into Practice in the Workplace

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

The challenge for business is to decipher fact from fiction about the issues that may be of concern to employers. Questions about costs of accommodations, productivity and other workplace issues are the focus of much research. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) assists businesses by funding research on a wide spectrum of issues related to the employment of people with disabilities.

NIDRR's research

- ✓ measures attitudes in the business community to identify employer needs;
- ✓ refines workplace technologies designed to increase the productivity of people with disabilities; and
- ✓ evaluates reasonable accommodations and personal supports needed to successfully assist people with disabilities in the workplace.

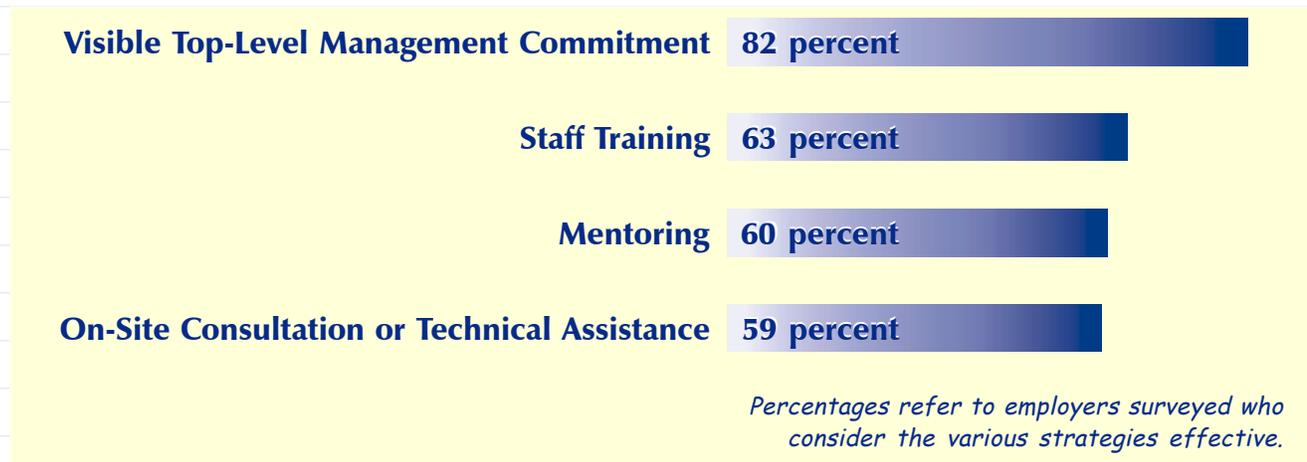
NIDRR's research also tracks current employment statistics about people with disabilities, helping you keep up with trends and issues affecting recruitment and retention.

Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers

NIDRR funds Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs), the purpose of which is to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and thereby improve the rehabilitation services outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

For example, Cornell University's RRTC for Economic Research on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities has developed a Web site that offers an interactive repository of employment statistics about people with disabilities (www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/il/independence/research.htm). In making important business decisions regarding employment, you might ask, "What are the most effective approaches for reducing barriers to employment for people with disabilities in the workplace?"

Human resource professionals can look up Cornell's surveys of employers at www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/surveyresults.html and find strategies employers believe are effective approaches in reducing barriers to employment for people with disabilities, including:



Through the work of NIDRR-funded research programs, many partnerships among the business, industry and rehabilitation communities have been established. One model for establishing collaborative partnerships is provided by Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) RRTC on Workplace Supports.

This RRTC identifies factors that enhance or inhibit your business from hiring people with disabilities. It collects data and resources related to employment supports, a particularly useful employment strategy for individuals with disabilities.

A Web site created by VCU's RRTC (www.worksupport.com) contains valuable information on return-to-work strategies, effective disability management programs and financial tax credits to offset accommodation costs and encourage hiring, retention and advancement. VCU also created the VCU Business Roundtable as a forum to identify and address factors that deter or inhibit industries from employing workers with disabilities.

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers

To help business and industry find, hire and retain people with disabilities, NIDRR established 10 regional Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs) to provide information, training and technical assistance to employers about the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

The centers serve as a comprehensive resource for ADA issues on employment, public services, public accommodations and communications. Each center works closely with your business — and disability, government and rehabilitation networks — placing special emphasis on helping small businesses understand and comply with the ADA.

Programs vary in each region, but all DBTACs provide the following programs:

- ✓ technical assistance on ADA questions;
- ✓ education and training;
- ✓ materials dissemination;
- ✓ information and referral;
- ✓ public awareness; and
- ✓ local capacity building.

Lesson Four: Strategies

Strategy 1:

Look at the facts. Hiring people with disabilities makes good business sense for your company. Visit Cornell University's RRTC for Economic Research on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities at www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/il/independence/research.htm. You can also look up Cornell's surveys of employers at www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/surveyresults.html.

Strategy 2:

Learn about successful employment strategies used by other businesses and form your own business roundtable to support disability recruitment, hiring practices, retention methods and placement efforts in your business and community.

For more information about a model for business-led efforts to increase the employment of people with disabilities, visit the Worksupport.com Web site at www.worksupport.com.

Strategy 3:

Locate your local Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) and explore its resources by visiting www.adata.org/dbtac.html or calling 800-949-4232 (voice/TTY).