



PERSPECTIVES **NATIONAL DISABILITY
EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH**

by Nadine Vogel

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OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH, a celebration started by President Harry Truman in 1945; the month is still dedicated to promoting the employment and advancement of disabled workers.

The official theme of this October 2011, as announced by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, is "Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities."

This year's theme honors the contributions of workers with disabilities and serves to inform the public that they

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represent a highly skilled, educated, talented pool that are ready to work and can help employers compete in today's global economy.

This is critical, because study-confirmed facts illustrate that:

- People with disabilities are more likely to stay with an employer than their non-disabled counterparts.
- People with disabilities consistently meet or exceed job performance and productivity expectations.
- People with disabilities have a well-deserved reputation for innovation. Accustomed to adapting to a variety of situations, they are often quick to troubleshoot, formulate new ideas, and adopt cutting-edge solutions.
- Absentee and turnover rates are lower for people with disabilities and for older workers compared with "typical" employees.

Keep in mind, the disability community represents the largest and fastest-growing minority segment in the

world. In the U.S., it is surpassing the Hispanic population by 5%. People are often unaware that there are so many people with disabilities, unaware of the many challenges they face and equally unaware of the abilities they possess. This is especially true in the workforce and workplace.

Its one thing for a company to be considered compliant from a regulatory standpoint, it's quite another for a company to possess best practices and be considered an Employer of Choice. Many organizations go beyond the basics of compliance; one way they do this is by observing this month with some of the following activities:

- Offer Disability Etiquette & Awareness Training sessions to managers and all levels of employees.
- Hold forums with disability experts and/or professionals with disabilities.
- Hold events that showcase the skills, abilities, contributions and achievements of people with disabilities both internally and in the larger community.
- Offer day-long mentoring and/or job shadowing (at all levels) for individuals with disabilities, perhaps those about to graduate post-secondary education if your company is geographically close to a school that offers programs for students with disabilities.
- Host resource fairs disseminating information from a variety of non-profit organizations and agencies representing local, regional or national presence. **PDJ**

Nadine Vogel is President of Springboard Consulting LLC. Springboard is considered a global expert; working with corporations, governments and organizations on issues pertaining to supporting the disability community in the workforce, workplace and marketplace. She is also the author of Dive in: Springboard into the Profitability, Productivity and Potential of the Special Needs Workforce.