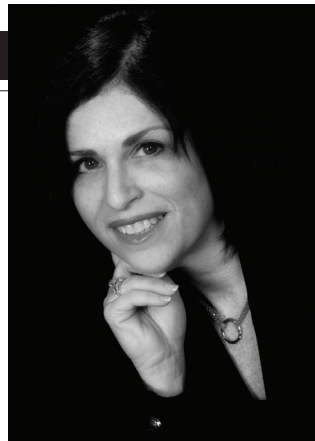


DISABILITY BEST PRACTICES: WHO'S DOING WHAT?

by Nadine Vogel

President, Springboard Consulting LLC 



WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU BRING TOGETHER BEST BUY, EMC, TOYS“R”US, AMC ENTERTAINMENT, CSX, PROCTER & GAMBLE, UPMC, ARMY AND AIR FORCE EXCHANGE SERVICE, CISCO SYSTEMS AND PRUDENTIAL FINANCIAL? An incredible mix of award-winning companies who have attempted to improve the U.S. workforce, workplace, or marketplace for individuals with disabilities. These companies realize this work is not about doing the “right thing”—it’s about doing the “smart thing,” meaning that while results may prove to be a strategic advantage for the company, it is necessary to also understand why it is a business imperative.

Workforce Initiatives

UPMC, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, works diligently to prepare individuals with disabilities for careers in healthcare through their development initiative based in Pittsburgh and Allegheny and surrounding counties. A comprehensive six-hour training program in addition to close community partnerships is enabling this program to succeed in terms of hires and retention.

AMC Theatres has formed a disability employment outreach program known as FOCUS (Furthering Opportunities, Cultivating Untapped Strengths), to encourage and facilitate hiring people with disabilities. This program, which is offered in more than 300 theatres across the U.S., strives to improve access to competitively paid, guest-facing, benefits-eligible positions.

Proctor & Gamble launched a program to create employment opportunities for people with physical or developmental disabilities by creating an integrated module to produce and assemble customized products complementing automated production at the Auburn, Maine FlexiCenter. As a result of this focused effort, 38% of this FlexiCenter’s workforce is someone with a disability.

In addition to utilizing a multi-year disability recruiting scorecard, CSX regularly looks to make facility improvements. They recently enhanced their website access and are taking part in a global disability community initiative.

Workplace Initiatives

Prudential supports its employees with their Business

Resource Group, ADAPT (Able and disabled Associates Partnering Together), with active groups in seven locations. ADAPT has a well-defined mission with specific annual deliverables in support of this mission; they focus on personal and professional development of members and on educating others on disability issues.

Cisco supports its employees around the globe with their ERG CDAN, Cisco Disabilities Awareness Network. Its effectiveness is attributed to its business relevance and alignment with the company’s culture of inclusion.

AAFES (Army Air Force Exchange Service), has introduced a number of initiatives to support its employees, such as providing supervisors with training on how to appropriately supervise individuals with disabilities and a Reasonable Accommodation Tracking System to help employees manage and track progress of accommodation requests.

Marketplace Initiatives

Best Buy works to serve consumers with disabilities by providing closed captioning on in-store televisions, providing in-person video relay devices to provide interpreters, and will soon offer an online shopping experience called TechAbility to enable someone to pinpoint accessible technology options.

EMC has taken their own successes and learning to other businesses via their B2B Abilities Connector, with the focus on initiating discussions and sharing knowledge and best practices about disability issues. They have also partnered with community-based organizations and the Massachusetts State Department of Rehabilitation to further workforce solutions.

Toys“R”Us is advancing their marketplace efforts via philanthropy, raising more than \$12 million dollars through in-store and online campaigns focused on Autism and their partnership with Autism Speaks. The company also created a special subset of the annual Toys“R”Us Guide for differently-abled kids, providing toy suggestions specifically for families and friends of children on the spectrum. **PDJ**

Nadine Vogel is President of Springboard Consulting LLC.