



The International Day of Persons with Disabilities

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SINCE 1992, the United Nations' (UN) International Day of Persons with Disabilities is annually held on December 3. This global observance (it's not a public holiday) aims to increase the understanding of the issues around disabilities and attention to the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

It also aims to increase the awareness of the gains for everyone if people with disabilities are integrated into all aspects of political, social, business, economic and cultural life.

Approximately 10% of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with disabilities. People are often unaware that there are so many people with disabilities, unaware of the many challenges they face, and

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equally unaware of the abilities they possess. This is especially true in the workplace.

It's one thing for a company to be considered compliant from a regulatory standpoint relative to disability in the workforce, workplace and marketplace. It is quite another for a company to possess best practices and be considered an Employer or Supplier of Choice. Many organizations do want to go beyond the basics of compliance, and one way of doing this is by observing this day. The following are just some ways in which global organizations are celebrating.

- Raise awareness within your company by offering Disability Etiquette & Awareness Training sessions to managers and all levels of employees.
- Hold forums with disability experts and/or professionals with disabilities.

- Hold public discussions on a variety of related topics such as accessible transportation or travel.
- Create public information campaigns that focus on relevant disability issues and trends.
- Promote a positive image of people with disabilities by creating marketing campaigns for your company's products and services that include this segment of the population.
- Hold events that showcase the skills, abilities, contributions and achievements of people with disabilities, both internal to your company 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.
- Organize events that showcase performers who have disabilities.
- Have exhibitions of art created by people with disabilities, perhaps by your employees or by employees dependents who have disabilities.
- Offer a presentation of the progress and obstacles related to implementation of disability policies (governmental, corporate, etc.).

This year's theme is *“Keeping the promise: Mainstreaming disability in the Millennium Development Goals towards 2015 and beyond.”* If your company or organization is global, I hope you will consider celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with me and the rest of the world on December 3, 2010. For your organization, it will mean good business. For the disability community, it will mean the world! **PDJ**

Nadine Vogel is President of Springboard Consulting LLC. Springboard (www.consultspringboard.com) 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.