

Preparing workplaces to welcome people with disabilities.

NID Training Disability Diary

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Introduction

In the modern move towards inclusivity where everyone should feel welcome at work, it is imperative that employees with disabilities should be accommodated. Employing people with disabilities is an important component of

creating a healthy, diverse workforce (Neddersen, 2023). Hiring people with disabilities is good for businesses and the economy.

Discussion

When a business first decides to include people with disabilities in their workforce, employers might be concerned that it will have a negative impact on existing teams. Even though they might be qualified and hardworking, people with disabilities should not be regarded as being the same as other employees, because many need technical, physical and social adjustments (accommodations) to be successful (Pulrang, 2019).

Special allowances and accommodations might have a negative effect on the morale of existing staff, mainly because they might lack knowledge and experience. The answer to this is to prepare not only the physical workplace and but also colleagues before the prospective employees arrive. When colleagues are equipped with information on the disabilities and necessary accommodations they will encounter, it is easier for them to welcome their new colleagues.

While there are informal ways employers can help to prepare colleagues and workplaces to welcome people with disabilities, it is best to have specialised people present sensitisation sessions before employees or interns with disabilities join the staff. In these sessions efforts are made to help staff understand the types and degrees of disability their future colleagues might have and explain how they should communicate and work with them in a sensitive and practical way (NIDT, 2023). A sensitisation

programme should focus on making a workplace truly welcoming for all employees on a day-to-day level. Aspects that could be covered include introspection of personal biases and experiences of people with disabilities, a review of different types of disabilities that will be encountered by staff, reasons for accommodations that will need to be made, expected behaviour and communication styles of people with various disabilities.

Conclusion

The best way to learn about something unfamiliar is to listen with an open mind. Taking proactive actions, like those mentioned above, will contribute to creating an inclusive, safe work environment and increase awareness of all employees.

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References

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