

# Preliminary Findings: Employer Perceptions of Hiring and Initial Support of Employees with Disabilities

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## ■ A QUICK LOOK:

This study focuses on a very important but often overlooked aspect of employment for individuals with disabilities: what influences an employer's decision to hire a job seeker with a disability? Historically, more of a focus has been placed on figuring out how best to prepare job seekers with disabilities for employment. However, it is also necessary to understand the perspectives and experiences of employers, those responsible for making the hiring decision. This study was an important and innovative step into understanding what influences an employer's decision to hire as well as their experiences with the process of onboarding and then providing opportunities for the employee to learn and grow in their organization. This study reports on findings from interviews with 35 employers across various industries to better understand their experience.

## ■ KEY FINDINGS:

- The hiring process can be broken down into two major components:
  1. Hiring: initial interactions with job seeker and offer of employment
  2. Onboarding: integrating an employee into the workplace
- Support from the employment specialist (ES) was key across both phases
- A major factor in hiring and onboarding success was the ability of the ES to support the development of a relationship between the employer and the new employee
- Employers highlighted previous positive experiences with ESs and individuals with disabilities as key factors in their decision to hire again

## ■ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

Analysis of employer interviews provided valuable insight into not only their initial decision making process when electing to hire an individual with a disability but also what type of support made the onboarding process successful. The ES supporting dialogue and rapport building between the employee and their manager, development of supports to help the employee learn their job, suggesting reasonable accommodations, and identifying strong job and task matches for the employee with a disability were key strategies that shaped the employer's experience. It is important to instill these skills and share this information with service providers so they can make sure to incorporate these activities in their employer interactions and support.

## ■ NEXT STEPS:

This study identified key methods that can lead to successful hiring, onboarding, and eventually retention, and advancement for employees with disabilities. Now, researchers need to identify methods for sharing and training ESs in these techniques. This will also help prove that training in and use of these methods can improve employment rates for individuals with disabilities.

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