

PRACTICE NOTES

Centre for Disability Employment Research & Practice

Up-skilling

Management and staff need to prioritise the upskilling of people with disabilities. Scheduling time for training needs to be planned. If it's not scheduled it won't happen!

Complex Jobs

Employees with disability need to be offered complex jobs and tasks (more than one or two step tasks). This in turn requires staff to be competent in and utilise a variety of training strategies to teach more complex tasks.

Strengths Based

Staff need a strengths based attitude. Staff need to acknowledge people with disabilities can learn and not allow their thinking to put a 'glass ceiling' on what people with disabilities have the opportunity to try.

Expertise

Staff need to acknowledge their own lack of expertise and up-skill to a commanding knowledge of the strategies that assist those with disabilities in workplace learning. Systematic Instruction is one example.



An Invisible Barrier to Success

The Glass Ceiling

It is generally accepted that the 'glass ceiling' phenomena does exist. It is an invisible upper limit; the hard-to-see informal barriers that prevent people from opportunities in the workplace ... but does this also apply to those with a disability?

Seen & Unseen Barriers

Most of us recognise the barriers that many people with disabilities face when gaining and maintaining employment. For example, difficulty in accessing education, lack of accessible transportation, health issues, difficulty in negotiating reasonable workplace adjustments, and potential loss of Disability Support Pension etc. However, those that are charged with assisting to overcome these barriers (disability employment support staff) can also inadvertently be a barrier.

Is It Them or Us?

Research since the 1950's has demonstrated that IQ has little



Attitude is Everything!

Often we see government policy, lack of funding, the employer, or even the person with a disability as the barrier to meaningful employment. While these can certainly be contributors, negative attitudes can be equally damaging.

Unfortunately, changes in attitude can't be legislated! However, there is hope. Just as changing negative community attitudes towards people with disabilities is best achieved by direct contact with people with disabilities. Positive attitudes towards employees with disability potential skill set is achieved by the provision of training. When employees with disability are provided with quality training they not only meet but also often exceed expectations.

Step 1 Management must be committed to prioritising training.

Step 2 A training schedule that is matched to employee's workplace goals needs to be developed.

Step 3 Have the right attitude. Expect that if you provide quality training new skills will be learnt.

Step 4 Just do it ...train, train, train!

to do with what an employee with an intellectual disability can achieve in the workplace. Numerous studies (and let's face it our own experiences) have repeatedly shown us that those with disability can achieve so much when given the right supports. Those supports include workplace training by skilled staff. We should never say 'they cannot learn' instead, our cry should be 'are we competent enough to teach?'

A Bitter Pill

This shift in acknowledgement that perhaps we as staff lack competence as opposed to those with disabilities can be a bitter pill to swallow. One that takes insight, absence of ego, recognition and then action!

Time for Staff Training

So what are the skills staff need to ensure those with disability can break through the workplace glass ceiling? There is a wide variety of strategies, these include: Systematic Instruction which comprises of task analysis, prompts and fading, Video Self modelling, Self-Instruction and Positive Behaviour Support. Don't be fooled while staff may be familiar with these terms, they need to be competent in delivering them. For an employee with a disability, staff competence is often the difference between workplace success or failure!

