

Untapped Labor Source

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, over the next ten years the baby boomers' exit from the workforce will lead to a slowdown in the growth of the labor force. Companies will be forced to look for applicants in less traditional markets. One of the untapped markets is individuals with disabilities. The unemployment rate of people with disabilities (aged 21 to 64 years old) averages an astonishing 70 percent!

There are several reasons for companies to tap into this market. Individuals with disabilities have the ability to adapt to different situations because they have had to in their everyday lives. It has been well documented that individuals with disabilities are very dependable employees. Studies show that employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities and they tend to remain on the job longer. Additionally, most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than employers expect. According to JAN (Job Accommodation Network), over 50% of accommodations cost nothing, 42% of accommodations have a one time median cost of \$600 and only 7.5% cost \$601 or more. An example of an accommodation that costs nothing may be an extra 15 minute break for an individual that has mental health difficulties. Employers may also be able to access Federal Tax incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities. These include the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, the Barrier Removal tax credit and the Disabled Access credit. By accessing this pool of individuals, employers are finding that this is a source of qualified and skilled employees.

Tammy Casey
Disability Program Navigator
Missouri Career Center