IS YOUR COMPANY EMPLOYING THESE 5 PRACTICES CRITICAL
TO INCREASE DISABILITY SELF-IDENTIFICATION RATES?

**The 2017 NOD Disability Employment Tracker™ results reveal what the
top companies are doing to achieve a disability workforce
representation of 4% or more.**

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*The 2018 Disability Employment Tracker™ is now open for enrollment. Complete the free and confidential survey to receive a complimentary benchmarking Scorecard.*

More and more American businesses share a goal to increase the number of employees with disabilities within their workforce, driven by motivators like competition for top talent, achieving a competitive advantage through diversity, compliance with federal regulations, or all three. As a result, increasing disability self-identification rates among new and existing employees with disabilities has become a priority to many human resources and diversity & inclusion teams.

Yet, at the National Organization on Disability (NOD), we’ve seen that despite making strides in implementing disability inclusion policies and practices—many companies still struggle to see their percentage of employees who identify as having disabilities rise.

So, as we analyzed the data gained from our 2017 [Disability Employment Tracker™](http://www.nod.org/services/tracker/), the National Organization on Disability’s confidential, annual survey of corporate disability inclusion policies and practices, we aimed to find out what differentiates companies that have been successful at building disability-strong workforces from those that have not.

As we pored over the 2017 Disability Employment Tracker™ [results](https://www.nod.org/resources/benchmarks/), which measure practices and outcomes of more than 175 companies that together employ more than 10 million workers, across a range of industries, we sought to discover what companies with an above average percentage of employees had in common.

We uncovered five practices shared by high achieving companies that reported a disability workforce representation of 4% or more:

1. Strategy & Metrics. Senior leaders discuss and publicly promote overall diversity. Further, they have a plan of action for improving disability inclusion practices that is driven by a disability champion who is accountable to advance this strategy.
2. Climate & Culture. Priority is given to creating employee/business resource or affinity groups that are specific to disability. Moreover—and this is critical—these groups have annual budgets that allow them to take visible and impactful action.
3. Recruiter Training. Recruiters, who are on the front line in the pursuit of employees with disabilities, are trained in, and know how to find and use the company’s accommodation process. This helps ensure candidates gain access to the supports needed to be successful and land the job.
4. People Practices. HR teams are trained to proactively ask new hires if they need an accommodation in the post-offer and pre-employment stages. This ensures that there are no gaps in providing support to employees with disabilities from day one, and goes a long way to protect the employee experience. These “moments of truth” can make or break how the employee feels about their new employer, which, ultimately, affect retention and turnover rates.
5. Workplace & Technology. As new facilities are built, universal design principles, a set of guidelines that ensure environments, processes, policies, technologies and tools work for people of every ability, are routinely applied.

Companies with a higher than average representation of people with disabilities (> 4%)
share these practices.

Companies struggling to attract and keep talent with disabilities should reexamine their efforts against these key practices, which the Tracker results found are correlated to successful workforce outcomes, to identify opportunities for improvement. Without this foundation, companies may struggle to see disability self-identification rates rise.

While the research does show a lot of effort and hard work on the part of employers to advance disability inclusion practices, ultimately, we are not seeing significant increases in disability inclusion in the American workforce. On average, we found the workforce representation of people with disabilities was 3.2%—well below the target of 7% set by the Department of Labor for those companies that do business with the federal government. When you consider that one in five Americans has a disability, the gap is striking.

Admittedly, finding the right workers in any labor pool—especially one not yet fully familiar to many employers—may demand some skills and types of effort that are out of the ordinary. Recruiters and hiring managers need to know where to source this talent, and how to address the needs of candidates with disabilities in the pre-offer stage. A cross-departmental effort, including representatives from IT, Facilities, Legal and HR, is needed to provide comprehensive accommodations in a reasonable amount of time, so employees with disabilities can be successful on the job. Most importantly, leaders must create a culture of trust and open communication to engender a spirit of ‘disability pride’ where employees with disabilities feel welcomed and supported in order to perform, produce and progress. Doing so, will create an employee cohort that will surely be among the most engaged, committed and productive.

The National Organization on Disability, the national leader in helping business tap the disability labor pool, offers companies a [complete set of solutions](https://goo.gl/okSYnr), including benchmarking, program design and planning, and customized local hiring engagements. Our employment experts make the journey with companies, from initial exploration through stage after stage of improvement, all the way to success. We’ve partnered with over a dozen Fortune 500 companies, like EY, Kaiser Permanente, Prudential Financial, PwC, Sodexo, and Toyota to help them advance their disability inclusions efforts to the next level.

For American businesses that prioritize disability inclusion the benefits are many. Employees with disabilities are a rich supply of talent, ready to be tapped, at a time when talent is at a premium, and the employers who hire from this pool consistently rank employees with disabilities among their best, most dedicated workers, with some of the lowest rates of turnover. Furthermore, research has shown that the vast majority of consumers prefer to buy from companies who hire people with disabilities, and Americans with disabilities and their friends and families constitute a huge and growing consumer segment with over $3.9 trillion in disposable income.

*To start the free and confidential Disability Employment Tracker™ today, visit www.NOD.org/tracker.*

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