Employees with Disabilities the Forgotten Diversity Segment: Tracking Trends

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Since 1972, improving key business outcomes using partnership principles, stakeholder feedback, and systematic support.
A 30 year old non-profit that serves as a catalyst for change in disability employment

- **Mission**: Expand the participation and contribution of America’s 56 million men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life.

- **Focus**: Employment – increase opportunity and economic self-sufficiency for the 33 million working-aged Americans with disabilities.
Our programs provide innovative approaches to improving disability employment

**Wounded Warrior Careers:** Helping severely injured veterans transition into work

**Start on Success:** Career opportunities for high school students with disabilities

**Bridges to Business:** Demonstrating effective disability employment practices

**CEO Council:** A forum for corporate leaders seeking to diversify their workforce

**NOD Surveys, by Sirota; by Kessler/Harris Interactive:** Delivering data on disability issues/needs
Sirota and NOD Partnership

Survey research specialists with four decades of experience helping global organizations to improve their performance by better understanding their people. We find the people solutions to business problems.

NOD has three decades serving the disability community. Our primary focus is employment and our mission is to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities. We believe “it’s ability, not disability, that counts.”

In 2010, Sirota and NOD joined forces in an effort to better understand the voice of employees with disabilities. Our efforts have been underway since then to capture, assess and understand the workplace experiences of individuals with disabilities as they compare their experiences to non-disabled colleagues.

*This data has not previously been shared!*
Through this joint research venture our goals are to:

- Research the employment experience for those with disabilities in large, medium and small companies
- Understand differences/similarities in the data collected from employees with disabilities as it compares to employees without disabilities

**Sirota & NOD goals are to:**

1. **Raise awareness** of the employment experience for workers with disabilities
2. **Understand obstacles** to creating a positive and successful work environment for people with disabilities and their co-workers
3. **Provide information and resources** that will help companies rectify inequities that may exist
Why is this important?

1. Approximately 20% of the US population has a disability

2. PWD’s are the largest minority group in the country and the one with the greatest unemployment or underemployment

3. 29-33 million working age Americans with disabilities

4. Pending OFCCP regulations will dramatically raise awareness and “interest” in employees with disabilities

5. EWD are less satisfied than their non-disabled employees

6. Comprehensive workplace diversity programs must include employees with disabilities; EWDs typically have been forgotten
2010 Discovery
Are employees with disabilities (EWD) different than employees without disabilities?

2012 Replication
Are the results from 2010 an anomaly or is there a recognized trend?

Deeper Dive
What can we learn? How should we respond?
Goal – Investigate attitudinal differences between EWD and EWOD employees.

Analyzed engagement survey data from 6 different projects: N=267,769

Engagement surveys included questions like:
- Overall, I am satisfied with the company.
- My manager is doing a good job.
- I clearly understand how my own job contributes to achieving the goals of the company.
- Overall, I feel that my career goals can be met at XYZ

EWD voluntarily self-identified – Typically “Do you consider yourself a person with a disability?”

Disability Status

- Non-disabled employees: 259,617 (97%)
- EWD: 8,152 (3%)

2010 Discovery - Dataset
Employees with Disabilities (EWD) are less satisfied, less proud, are less likely to recommend their company and less motivated to go beyond what is expected.
The first question people ask is --- “Should an 8 point difference in Satisfaction be a concern?”

YES!
Typically, a 5 point difference is considered notable and a call to action for employers.

What differences do we see in the usual areas of investigation (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation)?

- Gender – Only a 1 point difference, males higher than females
- Race/Ethnicity – No notable differences
- Sexual Orientation – 1 point, heterosexual higher than homosexual

No notable differences!
Out of the 84 questions, there were no questions where EWD were more favorable than non-disabled.
Despite these differences, few companies are even capturing information on their employees with disabilities (the forgotten diversity segment)

Out of 150 Sirota projects, only 6 inquired about disability (4%)
2010 Discovery
Are employees with disabilities (EWD) different than employees without disabilities?

2012 Replication
Are the results from 2010 an anomaly or is there a recognized trend?

Deeper Dive
What can we learn? How should we respond?
**Goal** – Replicate 2010 results – are these results consistent?

- Analyzed engagement survey data from 7 projects (N=578,279)

- EWD voluntarily self-identified – Typically “**Do you consider yourself a person with a disability?**”

- **First confirmation** – Similar population size, about 3% self identified as having a disability.
Results are consistent with 2010 findings: Across all standard measures of employee engagement, EWD are much lower.
Not one project showed EWD’s had higher levels of engagement, 10 out of 13 projects showed notable differences of greater than 5 points difference.
2010 Discovery
Are employees with disabilities (EWD) different than employees without disabilities?

2012 Replication
Are the results from 2010 an anomaly or is there a recognized trend?

Deeper Dive
What can we learn? How should we respond?
• **Goal** – Investigate the major differences between EWD and EWOD

• Analyzed engagement survey data from 13 projects (N=846,048)

• Now with enough data, we can look for larger trends and get a deeper understanding

**Disability Status**

- 820,866 (97%): Non-disabled employees
- 25,182 (3%): EWD

[Diagram showing the percentage of non-disabled and EWD employees]
Many of the *largest differences* were around the relationship between the employee and the company.
Some of the *greatest differences*, however, were related to encouragement and opportunity to achieve in their position.
Most of the smallest differences were around local environment variables like compensation, team and manager.

- I am compensated fairly
- The better my performance, the more I will be rewarded
- My supervisor is doing a good job
- Teamwork and cooperation exist here

Among the smallest differences were:
- I am compensated fairly: -3%
- The better my performance, the more I will be rewarded: -4%
- My supervisor is doing a good job: -5%
- Teamwork and cooperation exist here: -5%

Percent Favorable:
- I am compensated fairly: 55% for non-disabled employees, 52% for EWD
- The better my performance, the more I will be rewarded: 46% for non-disabled employees, 42% for EWD
- My supervisor is doing a good job: 81% for non-disabled employees, 76% for EWD
- Teamwork and cooperation exist here: 73% for non-disabled employees, 68% for EWD
What are the key factors that distinguish engaged EWD from those not engaged?

- Feel communicated to from management
- Feel involved in decisions
- Have the opportunity to learn and get training
- Job makes good use of their skills and abilities
- Have satisfaction with work-life balance
- Feel that managers will act on survey results

These are the same key areas that drive ALL employee engagement!
Tracking & Measuring Matters: By measuring this difference and attending to it, we can make change.

Can We Make Change? One Company Results

- Non-disabled employees
- EWD

Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3
--- | --- | ---
Non-disabled employees | 77 | 86 | 86
EWD | 71 | 82 | 83

Percent Favorable
What we know from this company?

- In our sample company, we see that as they begin to track and measure the overall satisfaction of employees with disabilities and employees without disabilities we see an increase in overall satisfaction, bridging the gap between employees with disabilities and employees without disabilities.

- What did this company do differently?
  - Dedicated diversity manager with a new focus on disability issues.
  - Since tracking disability data the company has increased its focus on disability employment initiatives.

- Disability employment initiatives yielding the greatest results are:
  - Setting hiring goals & measuring progress.
  - Diversity commitment (internal & external).
  - Recruiting materials discussing disability as diversity.
  - Employee Resource Groups.
  - Trained managers, recruiters and staff on how to proactively discuss disability in the workplace.
1. **You can’t track (or even understand) what you don’t measure:** NOD has been encouraging employers to better understand all your employees including those with disabilities.

2. **Incremental change takes time – start now:** Change doesn’t happen overnight – we know that disability employment is a journey and understanding where you are in that journey is a key to success.

3. **Employers are changing the conversation on disability:** Disability conversations in the workplace are moving from taboo to mandatory for better success and increasing diversity (How are your conversations going?)

4. **Assess your current state:** Where are you? Have you reviewed your employment lifecycle? What diversity initiatives can you include EWD’s? Where do you need help? Know where to find that help?

5. **What is your plan?:** “You can’t plow a field by turning it over in your mind.” Know your next steps, how you are going to get there, and by when.

6. **Know who you are, and craft your message:** Every employer has a brand, ensure that your brand matches the messaging on disability employment initiatives.
As you continue on your journey to be more inclusive...

Think Differently
- It’s ability, not disability that counts
- Leave your perceptions behind – what you think you know about disability is likely wrong

Be Deliberate
- Establish a plan and drive forward
- Know what success looks like and don’t aim too low

Be Dedicated
- Disability employment happens in a movement not a moment
- Dedicate time, talent & resources similar to all other diversity programs
Questions?

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