Lewis County: Being an Inclusive Business, Tips and Tools

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Why is Inclusion Important to Me?

• Spouse to husband who experiences a toxic brain injury

• Mother:
  • 35 year old son with Autism and Intractable Seizure Disorder
  • 37 year old daughter, married with three beautiful children

• Grandmother to those three beautiful children

• Self-Employed Autism and Inclusion Specialist for 20 years

Disclosure: I am a wife and parent of those with disabilities, my passion can sometimes be misinterpreted!
Lewis County Disability Inclusion

- This training provides hands-on ideas for operating a business so it is inclusive to all people in the community, expanding customer audience and capacity for success.
Lewis County Disability Inclusion

• If you’re an employer or business who is new to the world of disability diversity and inclusion, you may be looking for general guidance and background on the what, why and how of making your organization more welcoming and accessible to customers, applicants and employees with disabilities.
Lewis County Disability Inclusion

- Inclusion should lead to increased participation in socially expected life roles and activities such as being:
  - Student
  - Worker
  - Friend
  - Community member
  - Patient
  - Spouse, Partner
  - Parent
James Emmett: The Benefits of Hiring Employees with Autism

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLuYIVg3YR0&list=PLWdqaEPxG1dFkGb54ptgg5ORPFKr9Yll&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLuYIVg3YR0&list=PLWdqaEPxG1dFkGb54ptgg5ORPFKr9Yll&index=2)
According to EARN: What does it mean to be disability-inclusive?

• There are numerous characteristics associated with disability-friendly companies, and what’s often surprising to employers is that most inclusion practices geared toward customers, employees and job seekers with disabilities have the added bonus of benefiting everyone.

• Some common characteristics of disability-inclusive companies include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. INCLUSIVE BUSINESS CULTURE
2. TALENT ACQUISITION & RETENTION PROCESSES
3. ACCOMMODATIONS
4. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF COMPANY POLICIES & PRACTICES
5. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
6. ACCOUNTABILITY & SELF-IDENTIFICATION
EARN #1: INCLUSIVE BUSINESS CULTURE

- Commitment at all levels of an organization is critical to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive work environment.
- Establishing an inclusive business culture begins with leadership at the highest levels, including top executives and boards of directors.
- Managers and supervisors, and particularly human resources staff and other personnel involved in hiring decisions, must also understand the role they play in facilitating an inclusive environment.
- Of course, communicating the goal of an inclusive workplace to all employees—and indicating what they can do to help—is also important.
Randy Lewis, SVP Walgreens Logistics (Retired)

- **Banish ‘them’ and ‘us’ thinking**
  - Lewis is very clear on one thing: “People with disabilities are us. Not everyone has to be an ‘autistic savant’ or a Jackie Robinson [the US’s first black baseball player].”
  - To further hammer this thinking home, there’s a sign painted on the wall of the first center: the word ‘them’ in a circle, with a cross through it.
  - “There is no them,” Lewis continues. “We made it straight from day one that this was going to be inclusive.
  - Once you see a person with a disability as you, not them, other things fade away. You might still see the differences but those are minor compared to how we are alike.”
EARN #2: TALENT ACQUISITION & RETENTION PROCESSES “Where can I find talent with disabilities?”

• Companies have expressed concern that one of the greatest barriers they face to advancing disability inclusion is the inability to find qualified candidates.

• The key is effective outreach and recruitment.

• Build a pipeline of applicants with disabilities, your company can develop relationships with a variety of recruitment sources.

• The investment will be well worth the effort.

• Not only will your company secure access to talent that otherwise may have overlooked, it will also benefit from other supports that can assist in effectively integrating people with disabilities into your workforce.
Randy Lewis: 'We haven't found a disability we can't employ'

- An autistic son motivated ex-Walgreens SVP Randy Lewis to see how he could make business more inclusive.
- He talks about how to become truly diverse, and reveals his frustration that more companies aren't trying.
- Lewis retired from Walgreens in 2013, after 16 years. He is now putting all his considerable energy into advocating for inclusive recruitment around disability, as well as promoting his book *No Greatness Without Goodness*.
- His story has a personal backdrop. The father of a severely autistic son, now in his twenties, he always had “a longing” to work out how business could make better use of people with disabilities. “It stems from me knowing what my son would be facing and all the parents like me who wish they could live one day longer than their child,” he says. “That worry: how are they going to take care of themselves?”
EARN #3: ACCOMMODATIONS

- Providing the ACCOMMODATIONS employees with disabilities may need to do their jobs effectively, whether that means:
  - Assistive technology,
  - Flexible schedule
  - Reasonable accommodations or productivity enhancements.
Walgreens – Randy Lewis

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vR3L3Akx6g
EARN #4: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF COMPANY POLICIES & PRACTICES

- Taking steps to ensure its business’s policy and practices focused on commitment to disability inclusion and providing training on disability-related workplace issues to staff.
“It made us believe it could happen!”

Randy Lewis

Similar buildings have opened around the US, but Lewis says although automation has helped, it isn’t the true reason why hiring people with disabilities has spread throughout the company.

“The automation is what gave us the courage to do something different,” he explains. “It didn’t make it happen, it made us believe it could happen. We could do this anywhere.”

https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details RANDY LEWIS WE HAVEN'T FOUND A DISABILITY WE CAN'T EMPLOY
EARN #5: ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- Ensuring a barrier-free workplace by maintaining accessible information and communication technology, as well as a workplace that is **physically** and **attitudinally** accessible.
Barrier-Free Workplace and Businesses

- Wheelchair access
- Doors that snap closed quickly make it difficult for users, particularly those with disabilities to get through safely.
- Public entrances serving different fixed routes within transit
- The emergency devices specifically designed to alert deaf and hard of hearing people to emergencies such as fire, carbon monoxide and sever weather. They use low frequency audible alarms, strobe lights and/or bed shaker attachments to ensure safety.
- ...and so many more!
Retail is a notoriously competitive environment, with razor thin margins.

When Lewis proposed his vision to the board, he knew saying he planned to invest significantly would not go down well with the shareholders.

“We never lost sight of the fact we are a business, not a charity: this had to make business sense,” stresses Lewis.

“We had to hold everyone to the same standards and have a completely inclusive environment. When I presented it to the board, I said this was going to be the most expensive building we had ever built, which they didn’t like, but I said it was also going to have the best ROI (Return on Investment), be the most efficient and be built in such a way that one-third of the workforce would be disabled.”
EARN #6: ACCOUNTABILITY & SELF-IDENTIFICATION

- PromotingACCOUNTABILITY & SELF-IDENTIFICATION, if appropriate, by adopting written policies, practices and procedures and measuring their effectiveness in order to identify areas for improvement.
‘What if it doesn’t work?’

• Lewis’s response? “If it doesn’t work, we’ll readjust. That’s what we do in business all the time: make mistakes, learn from them and move on.

• We didn’t say: ‘We’re going to have great performance or hire people with disabilities’; We said: ‘We’re going to have great performance, we’re going to have a positive impact on the community and change the workplace for everybody.’”
• Not only was performance the same (Lewis called in statisticians who studied 400,000 hours of work and proved performance is similar for those with and without disabilities)

• Warehouse, turnover was 20% to 50% lower and absenteeism was also down.

• Safety costs were also lower for people with disabilities.
  • “Fears about more accidents had come up, but we found deaf forklift drivers – who many companies won’t hire – are twice as safe as someone who can hear,” says Lewis. “If I could give everyone a piece of advice, it would be to put plugs in the ears of their forklift truck drivers.”
• Empowering Successful Business Strategies Through Disability Inclusion

• In the competitiveness of talent acquisition, hiring people with disabilities is a viable source for businesses to tap into one of the last available pool of qualified workers.

• Every year the number of corporations developing strategies to hire people with disabilities to meet their demand for workers has grown. Where such a strategy was once viewed as an act of charity, it is now a valued resource with a huge return on investment for those corporations.

• Those implementing disability hiring strategies are gaining competitive advantage over, not only their direct competition but also, the competition for qualified workers in general.

Packaging Goods on an Assembly Line the Answer? The value of Walgreens investment has been a model for other retailers to follow such as; Lowe’s Procter & Gamble Best Buy
• Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America (TIAA) and College Retirement Equities Fund (CREF);

• **TIAA is a diverse and dynamic organization. Our employees bring a wide range of perspectives, which allows us to deliver relevant insights. This allows us to better serve clients from all backgrounds.**

• Our commitment to diversity and inclusion doesn’t stop with TIAA employees.
Reaping the Benefits of Disability Inclusion in the Agriculture Industry: the Fruits of Employment Initiative

The seeds for the Fruits of Employment (FoE) initiative were first sown in 2009, when TIAA was seeking new and innovative strategies for providing its farmland investments with a skilled, safety-conscious and stable workforce.

The company has 10 employees with autism or other disabilities working full time at its:

- 1,000-acre Badger Mountain apple orchard in Kennewick, Washington.
- 4,300-acre vineyard in Santa Barbara County, California, staffed by 12 full-time employees who are autistic or have other disabilities.
4 Ways to Improve Your Company’s Disability-Inclusion Practices

• Hiring people with disabilities need not cost any more than hiring someone without a disability.

• Accommodations for the majority of people with disabilities cost nothing. And when there is a cost involved with providing technology or other tools, it’s usually less than $500 and there are tax incentives available to help.
4 Ways to Improve Your Company’s Disability-Inclusion Practices

1. Identify and change processes that support unconscious bias. Are your recruiting and hiring processes discouraging applicants with disabilities, or limiting their ability to demonstrate their strengths? i.e. Online applications

2. Help all employees understand the challenges that persons with disabilities face and contribute to solutions.

3. Strengthen the hiring pipeline by engaging with community groups.

4. Create a mutually supportive community.
Lean Production Principles

• The basic principles of the **Kaizen approach**. Underlying the Kaizen approach is a dedication to improving effectiveness, satisfaction, and waste. The core tenets of **continuous improvement** of Kaizen include: Standardizing a **process** so that it's repeatable and organized.
• **THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF LEAN SIX SIGMA**
  • Focus on the customer.
  • Identify and understand how the work gets done (the value stream).
  • Manage, improve and smooth the process flow.
  • Remove Non-Value-Added steps and waste.
  • Manage by fact and reduce variation.
  • Involve and equip the people in the process.
  • Undertake improvement activity in a systematic way.

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Lean Production Principles
Did you know?

The discretionary spending power of people with Disabilities is $225 Billion.

About 56.7 million people in the United States have a disability. That’s about 19% of our population. Each of these people is a potential customer for your small business.
James Emmett; Improving Customer Service for People with Disabilities

James Emmett & Co. helps businesses develop long-term strategies, systems, processes, tools and support that create a disability-inclusive workplace

• Community Partnership Development
• Build Better Businesses
• Customize Disability Solutions
• Grow Your Business

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViraivX2o2k&list=PLWdqaEPxG1dFkGbf54ptgg5ORPFKr9YIIl&index=2&t=0s

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Sixty million Americans live with some form of disability, including disability acquired by aging.

That’s 20% of the U.S. population, with virtually every American family is able to point to a child, sibling, neighbor, or friend with a disability.

“It’s the only minority group almost all of us are guaranteed of joining at some point in our lives.”
Inclusive Community Disability Advocate Jay Ruderman

There continues to be a huge sector of our population still discriminated against and marginalized in nearly every aspect of life, from school to employment, community life and housing.

“I believe that we’re coming out of the traditional mindset around segregation,” he notes, “but it’s slow and it’s a struggle, similar to the struggle of the civil rights movement for African Americans. In my discussion with members of congress, business leaders, and community leaders - people don’t yet get it. This is especially true for older Americans, who have grown up with institutionalization, segregation, and the belief that people with disabilities are better off separated.”
• The goal is to pull together all stakeholders in the disability and inclusion community for strategic advocacy and awareness, peer to peer learning, best practices, and networking.

“Everyone has a role in moving this agenda forward!”

• We have a long way to go before people with disabilities aren’t just perceived as charity cases but as individuals entitled to have their rights honored by society.
Disability Inclusion and the Health of People with Disabilities

• Disability inclusion allows for people with disabilities to take advantage of the benefits of the same health promotion and prevention activities experienced by people who do not have a disability. Examples of these activities include:
  • Education and counselling programs that promote physical activity, improve nutrition or reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs; and
  • Blood pressure and cholesterol assessment during annual health exams, and screening for illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.
  • Including people with disabilities in these activities begins with identifying and eliminating barriers to their participation.
Disability Inclusion and the Health of People with Disabilities

• People with disabilities experience significant disadvantages when it comes to health such as:
  • Adults with disabilities are three times more likely to have heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or cancer than adults without disabilities;\textsuperscript{4}
  • Adults with disabilities are more likely than adults without disabilities to be current smokers;\textsuperscript{5} and
  • Women with disabilities are less likely than women without disabilities to have received a breast cancer X-ray test (mammogram)
Disability Inclusion and Access to Education and School Community

• Just like the mariners of old, we know that we must chart our course for increasingly successful inclusive schools and societies.
  • What tools do we need?
  • What questions must we ask and answer?
  • Whether we are ambitiously charting our course for deep space, medical advance, new worlds, or inclusive schools, we recognize that we have work to do, experiences to enjoy, and friendships to build!
FOR EDUCATORS CHARTING THE COURSE

https://inclusiveschools.org/

- Are we truly inclusive in all aspects of our thinking, planning, and teaching?
- Do we share ownership for all students?
- Do we have high expectations for the success of every student?
- Are we collegial in our relationships with our peers?
- Welcoming of every student?
FOR STUDENTS
CHARTING THE COURSE

https://inclusiveschools.org/

Do we seek out a friendly, supportive relationship with all of our friends in school and in the community?

Do we protect each other from bullying or peer pressure?

Are we the friend we want others to be to us?
FOR PARENTS
CHARTING THE COURSE

https://inclusiveschools.org/

Do we create inclusive homes and neighborhoods?

Do we join with educators in finding ways to improve inclusive schools and in celebrating the successes – large and small?

Do we make certain that our children’s circle of friends includes the diversity reflected in our community and in our world?
Are inclusive practices a non-negotiable for our entire faculty?

Do we evaluate our current status in providing inclusive classrooms and schools and do we create plans for continuous improvement?

Do visitors to our school immediately feel the climate of acceptance and engagement?
FOR AGENCIES CHARTING THE COURSE

https://inclusiveschools.org/

- Do we offer services and supports to children, youth and families that are compatible with an inclusive philosophy?
- Is our message clear and well communicated?
- Do we model inclusive approaches and decisions?
FOR COMMUNITIES CHARTING THE COURSE

https://inclusiveschools.org/

Does our community provide inclusive settings and opportunities for students to learn about their place in society?

Do we model an inclusive living and learning environment?

Do the message and experience we provide to citizens reinforce inclusivity that students experience in school?
Disability Inclusion and Access to Faith Community

• Many problems of the past are being resolved for people with disabilities who want to participate in their faith communities.

• Physical barriers are being removed so that people with disabilities get past the parking lot, into the building, and in the pews.

• Now, there are new challenges to overcome so that people with disabilities might not be present only, but fully included and involved;

• The three barriers include;
  • Religious leaders’ lack of training or understanding;
  • Attitudes of the congregation;
  • Absence of planning that fosters participation.
Universal Design

"The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

• When designers apply universal design principles, their products and services meet the needs of potential users with a wide variety of characteristics. Universal design principles can be applied to many products and services, including instruction.
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Where are we now?

• On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was signed into law.

• Known as the ADA or the "Act," this is a wide-ranging law designed to ensure people with disabilities have greater access to American Society.
Lewis County, it belongs to us all!
Next!

• **CULTIVATING INCLUSION TEAM:**
  • The Team will meet from 11:45 am to 1:15 pm to further plan the year-long campaign.
  • Breakout discussions will take place regarding school, work and community.
  • Light food, coffee and water provided.