Sustainability and Disability: A Workplace Perspective

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Cornell University ILR School

UNM SUDI Conference, Albuquerque, NM
March 1, 2017
Presentation Overview

- Intersection of employment, disability, & sustainability
- Disability statistics, to put issues in perspective
- Why looking at the employers’ role is important
- Where people perceive employment discrimination
- Employer practices that improve employment outcomes in recruitment, hiring, retention, career advancement and inclusion, and the supervisor’s role
- Connection to sustainability and indigenous people
- Needed next steps and relevant stakeholders
- Resources for future reference

Intersection of Disability and Sustainability

- In many parts of the world, the sustainability economy is growing, and people with disabilities should have equitable employment opportunities.
- People with disabilities can be powerful allies in the sustainability movement worldwide.
- Many people with disabilities live in developing countries and rural areas, where sustainability issues are prevalent and critical.
- Many people with disabilities are also indigenous peoples, living in resource rich areas.
Disability in the U.S. & New Mexico

- Prevalence rates
- Employment participation rates
- Poverty rates
- Educational attainment rates
**Employment Rate**

Employment Rate, US and New Mexico
(Working age, 21-64, with disability)

- US (disability): 35.2
- New Mexico (disability): 30.5, 30.2, 31.1

- All Races
- Native American


**Poverty Rate**

Poverty Rate, US and New Mexico
(with and without disability)

- US:
  - With Disability: 27
  - Without Disability: 11.6

- New Mexico:
  - With Disability: 33.7
  - Without Disability: 16.4

Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment, by Disability Status
US and New Mexico

- High School or Equivalent
- Some College (associates)
- BA or higher

US (no Disability) US (disability) NM (no disability) NM (Disability)


Why a Focus on the Workplace?

- Greatest number of jobs available
- Current sector-specific incentives to hire
- Where disability discrimination can occur
- Where often people get stopped at entry point or in advancement, or sustainability
- A place where there is a nexus between employment, disability & sustainability
- Where Native American values can contribute and make a difference
Where/How is Disability Discrimination Occurring?

- Using the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Employment Discrimination Charge Data
- Interagency Personnel Act Agreement (IPA)
- Charges across all statutes from 1993 – 2014
- Identify trends in charges; issues and bases; comparison to other forms of discrimination

Most common issues cited on ADA Charges: 2005-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Percent of charges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discharge</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable accommodation</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms/Conditions</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a charge can cite one or more issues.

Sarah von Schrader, 2016, Cornell University, Yang-Tan Institute, using USEEOC Charge Data
Most common bases cited on ADA Charges (2005-2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Percent of charges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic/structural back impairment</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-paralytic orthopedic impairment</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other anxiety disorder</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart/Cardiovascular</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sarah von Schrader, 2016, Cornell University, Yang-Tan Institute, using USEEOC Charge Data

Increase in charges cited by those with non-obvious disabilities

Sarah von Schrader, 2015, Cornell University, Yang-Tan Institute, using USEEOC Charge Data
Employer Policies and Practices
Facilitating Disability Inclusion Across the Employment Process

• Recruitment and hiring
• Accessibility and accommodation
• Retention and career advancement
• Compensation and benefits
• Diversity and inclusion (the role of the manager)
• Metrics and analytics

Workplace Policies for Disability Inclusion

• Survey of U.S. human resource (HR) professionals
• Over 250,000 SHRM members; stratified sample across industries and org. sizes
• Online/phone based survey focused on:
  o Recruitment and Hiring
  o Accessibility and Accommodation
  o Retention and Advancement
  o Barriers, Metrics and Training
• Data collected fall of 2011
• Response rate: 23% (n=662)
### Barriers to Employment or Advancement

- **Attendance of people with disabilities**: 9%
- **Cost of training**: 9%
- **Additional cost of supervision**: 9%
- **Productivity and performance**: 13%
- **Attitudes/stereotypes**: 16%
- **Cost of accommodations**: 19%
- **Supervisor knowledge of accomm.**: 23%
- **Lack of requisite skills and training**: 30%
- **Lack of related experience**: 35%
- **Lack of qualified applicants**: 50%

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### Recruitment and Hiring

#### Percentage of organizations which implemented each practice or policy

- **PWD considered in management...**: 17%
- **Internships for PWDs**: 19%
- **Explicit PWD organizational goals**: 25%
- **Used tax incentives for hiring PWD**: 27%
- **Strong senior management commitment**: 38%
- **Actively recruiting PWD**: 45%
- **Relationships with community...**: 54%
- **PWD in diversity & inclusion plan**: 59%

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Do HR policies and practices matter?

Effects of Selected Practices on Hiring

Organizations with: Increased likelihood of hiring:
- Internships for PWDs: 5.7 times
- Strong senior management commitment: 4.8 times
- Explicit PWD organizational goals: 4.1 times
- Actively recruiting PWD: 3.2 times
- Including PWD in diversity & inclusion plan: 3.2 times
- Relationships with community orgs: 2.7 times

Erickson, W., von Schrader, S., Bruyère, S., VanLooy, S., & Matteson, D. Disability-inclusive employer practices and hiring of individuals with disabilities. Journal of Rehabilitation Research, Policy and Education.
Accessibility and Accommodation

Percentage of organizations which implemented each practice or policy

- Has a centralized accommodations fund (i.e., company-wide fund for accommodations): 19%
- Regularly reviews the accessibility of its on-line application system to people with visual, hearing, dexterity, and cognitive impairments: 27%
- Evaluates pre-employment occupational screenings to ensure they are unbiased: 38%
- Provides advance notice to job applicants that reasonable accommodations are provided during the job application process: 39%
- Has a formal (i.e., written, documented) decision-making process for the case-by-case provision of accommodations: 44%
- Has an established grievance procedure to address unreasonable accommodation issues: 66%
- Allows an employee to exceed the maximum duration of medical leave as an accommodation: 71%
- Has a designated office or person to address accommodation questions: 74%

http://rcb.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/11/14/0034355213509841.full.pdf

Accommodation Policies and Practices Most Often Rated as “Very Effective”

- Centralized accommodation fund
- Designated office/person to address accommodation questions
- Formal process for provision of accommodations

http://rcb.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/11/14/0034355213509841.full.pdf
Retention and Advancement

Percentage of organizations which implemented each practice or policy

- Includes progress toward retention or advancement goals for employees with... 9
- Has explicit organizational goals related to retention or advancement of employees with... 13
- Has a disability-focused employee network (e.g., employee resource group or affinity group) 13
- Offers special career planning and development tools for employees with disabilities 16
- Has a structured mentoring program to support employees with disabilities 17
- Invites employees to confidentially disclose whether they have a disability (e.g., staff surveys) 41
- Encourages flexible work arrangements for all employees (e.g., flextime, part-time,...) 57
- Has a return to work or disability management program for employees who are ill/injured or... 76

http://rcb.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/11/14/0034355213509841.full.pdf

Retention and Advancement Policies and Practices Most Often Rated as “Very Effective”

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- Having a return to work or disability management program
- Flexible work arrangements for all employees
- Mentoring program to support employees with disabilities

http://rcb.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/11/14/0034355213509841.full.pdf
% Organizations tracking disability metrics

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Organizations tracking disability metrics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>7</td>
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"Very important" factors, when deciding to disclose a disability to an employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons with a disability (N=598)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive supervisor relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability friendly workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active disability recruiting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing of other successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability in diversity statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in new opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### “Very important” factors when deciding to NOT disclose a disability to an employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Persons with a disability (N=598)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk of being fired/not hired</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer may focus on disability</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk of losing health care</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of limited opportunities</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor may not be supportive</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk being treated differently</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk being viewed differently</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No impact on job ability</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for privacy</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managers’ Role is Critical

• Managers are key to the quality of workplace experiences of people with disabilities

• Manager perceptions of organizational motivation for disability inclusion (true inclusion interests rather than legal compliance) positively impacts disability climate

• Disability disclosure most often occurs with the manager or co-workers, rather than with HR; education and training around disability disclosure is vital to foster inclusive workplace culture


Perceived Effectiveness of Disability Practices

- Awareness of practices is critical because managers will only use/implement the practices of which they are aware.

- Managers’ perceptions about the effectiveness of disability practices are positively associated with employees’ perceptions of the organization’s commitment to disability-related goals.

- Employees are less likely to report experiencing bias or discrimination based on their disability if the manager(s) they work for are aware of their organization’s disability policies and practices and believe that they are effective.
Experiences Are Better In Inclusive Units

Individuals with disabilities who work in inclusive climates report significantly --

- Greater success at having their accommodation requests granted
- Greater coworker support of their accommodations
- Better experiences of procedural and interactional justice during accommodations
- Lower levels of disability harassment/discrimination
- Higher organizational commitment and satisfaction
- Lower turnover intentions


Experiences Better for Employees with Disabilities Who Enjoy High Quality Relationships With Their Managers

Individuals with disabilities who are included in their manager’s “ingroup” report:

- Higher fit between skills and demands of job
- Higher empowerment
- Fairer treatment during the accommodation process
- Higher organizational commitment, satisfaction, and willingness to engage in citizenship behaviors
- Lower turnover intentions

Implications for Business Consultation

- Be knowledgeable about regulations that are influencing employers’ interests in disability hiring
- Be aware of specific workplace policies and practices that enhance recruitment, hiring, career advancement, retention, and inclusion outcomes
- Become equipped to talk about issues beyond hiring, such as top leadership diversity commitment, meaningful disability inclusion, and the importance of managers’ role in minimizing perceived discrimination, etc.
- Become knowledgeable about ways that companies can measure their disability inclusion progress

Employment, Disability Diversity and Sustainability

- Workplaces thrive when truly embracing diversity and differing abilities.
- Environmental sustainability is more important than ever and companies must embrace and participate.
- Inclusion of individuals who embrace sustainability for people and the environment is very much needed in business today.
Role for Business

• Top leadership commitment to diversity and sustainability
• In economic development initiatives, engage local indigenous communities in the dialogues about resource and land use
• In workforce development initiatives, target Native peoples and persons with disabilities for inclusion in training
• Creative inclusive internships/work experience

Role for Government and Grass Roots Advocacy Organizations

• Advocate to include people with disabilities in mainstream training opportunities in the sustainable economy.
• Work with employers to provide targeted support when mainstream opportunities are unavailable.
• Support community-based rehabilitation to develop skills.
• When informal economy is predominant, promote micro-enterprises and self-employment.
• Support development of networks of people with disabilities to promote self-empowerment.
• Engage other workers and unions in disability advocacy.
Role for Academia

- Conduct research to document the business benefits of sustainability and diversity.
- Embed diversity and sustainability in all disciplines and areas of instruction.
- Be present at the discourse in public policy formulation at local, national, global levels.
- Model the values that we preach – inclusive education & sustainability across campuses.

Related Resources

Related Publications


Related Publications (Continued)


Cornell Related Online Resources

- BenchmarkABILITY Online Tool for Companies [www.benchmarkABILITY.org](http://www.benchmarkABILITY.org)
- Disability Statistics Online Tool [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)
- Cornell Online Repository of Related Publications [http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/](http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/)