

**Small Businesses:
Creating Opportunities for
Workers with Disabilities**

Cathy Healy
and
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**Employment Opportunities in
Small Business**

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**Institute for a
Competitive Workforce**

Supports and provides resources to businesses, chambers of commerce, and industry associations to be the drivers of improvements in local education and workforce development efforts.

**3 Key Workforce
Challenges**

- Globalization
- Demographics
- Skills Gap

Of 24.7 million businesses in the US 99.7% were small business - 2004 SBA

- Small firms employ half of all private sector employees.
- Pay 45% of the total U.S. private payroll.
- Generated 60% to 80% of net new jobs annually over the last decade.

2005 Nat'l Study of Employers
Families and Work Institute

- Small companies lead the way in providing one of the most valued benefits: working flexibly.

2005 Nat'l Study of Employers
Families and Work Institute

- small employers significantly more likely to offer flexibility to all or most employees than employers of other sizes; and,
- in no instances are they significantly less likely to offer these options.

How do small employers recruit?

- 73 % report that they rely upon word of mouth or employee referral programs.
- 70 % place ads in newspapers or trade publications.

How do small employers recruit?

- Only 52% post job openings and search resumes on the Internet.

Job seekers with disabilities

- Have lower turnover related costs.
- Average and above performance ratings and attendance records.
- Willingness to complete a job.

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PRODUCTS INC.

Steve Korte
A & F Wood, Co Owner

Company Overview

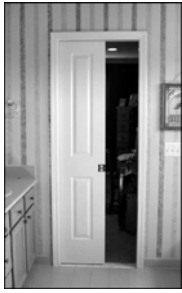
- 1966 A & F Opens
- 1983 Fire burns down plant
- 1986 Built a 12,000 sq ft building
- 1990 Jason, Pat, & Steve buy out Dad & Uncle
- 1992 Add on 12,000 sq ft
- 1997 Disabilities program started
- 1999 Build 36,000 sq ft building

Head Quarters
Howell, Michigan



Warehouse
Brighton, Michigan





Pocket Door
Frames



Commercial Flush
Doors

Our Customers

- Wholesale Distributors
 - Huttig Distribution
 - Masonite
- Lumber Yards
 - Stock Lumber
 - Carter Lumber
- Super Stores
 - The Home Depot
 - Lowes



Employees

- 30 employees
- 9 individuals with disabilities

Why Hire People with Disabilities

- Good source of employees
- Partnerships provide a good return on investment
- Tax benefits to my company

Why Hire People with Disabilities

- Positive impacts on the community
- Feels good
- Makes good business sense

How we got started

- Social worker answered ad
- After the interview we had concerns

Concerns

- Questions
 - “Will the government have to inspect our plant?”
 - “Can people with disabilities do our types of jobs?”
 - “Who is there who can help us?”
 - “How much will it cost?”



- Work Skills
 - Brighton Michigan
 - Private non profit
 - Employment and training services
 - Buffer to the employee
 - Buffer to the government



- What They Offered
 - Enhanced community image & public relations
 - Motivated workers/increased longevity
 - On-the-job training programs
 - Professional worker to job match service



- Advantages to their service
 - Money savings through hiring incentives
 - Efficiency increased by job / task analysis
 - Screened applicants / decreased risk
 - Follow – along services & employer assistance
 - Decreased personal time & cost

Answers

- Will the government have to inspect our plant?
 - No, not any more than in the past
- “Who is there who can help us?”
 - Work Skills

Answers

- “Can individuals with disabilities do our type of jobs?”
 - Let them try
- How much will it cost?
 - Time

Let's Do It!

- 1st applicant didn't work out
- 2nd applicant
- Slight modification
- Better modification



What we found out

- Motivated to work
- Eager to learn
- Looking for a place to go to every day
- Disability is a very broad term

Wheels started turning

- What can you do for us (Work Skills)
 - Job coach
 - Set up transportation
 - 2 week evaluation
 - More time if needed
 - Follow up
 - If it doesn't work out, then what

What can individuals with disabilities do at our plant?

What can't they do!



What can't they do!



What can't they do!



What can't they do!



My current process

- Try to make it a group interview
- Let each applicant try the jobs

My current process

- Meet with each applicant and their case worker if they wish
- If it works out, I set up for a 2 week evaluation

Challenges along the way

- We didn't automatically wake up in the Emerald City
- Struggled to help non disabled workers find their own comfort zone

Challenges along the way

- Shouldn't assume everyone has been exposed to people with disabilities

Take aways

- For service providers –
 - Treat the business as if we're your customer too

Take aways

- For service providers –
 - Good customer service to business means:
 - responsive to needs,
 - providing creative low cost solutions and alternatives to our challenges,
 - sometimes holding our hand along the way

Take aways

- To Business:
 - Look for partners
 - Don't give up after one try, it may take a few attempts

Take aways

- To Business:
 - Expect good customer service from your partners
 - Have high expectations from your workers

Review

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Review

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For more info

A & F Wood Products

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www.afwoodproducts.com