

7 TIPS for Building Connections with Employment Service Providers



People who have a disability are often an overlooked and under-utilized talent source. Creating strong relationships with employment service providers (ESPs) will help you reach this talent and experience the benefits of a disability-inclusive workforce. ESPs aren't "temp agencies." They are career professionals that support your business. Here are seven tips for building connections with ESPs.

1 Connect Through Intermediary Networks



There are hundreds of community-based ESPs across the country. So, where do you begin? Many community agencies are members of provincial and national intermediary organizations, such as the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN). Reach out to one of these organizations. They can facilitate connections with ESPs in your area.

2 Advertise in Disability Publications



Advertise in print and online publications focused on the disability sector and community, and on disability organization websites. It lets both ESPs and jobseekers who have a disability, know that you're interested in what they have to offer.

3 Connect Through Post-secondary Institutions

If you have an existing relationship with a college or university, use it to your advantage. Find out what connections that institution has with community-based employment agencies. The institution may be able to suggest ESPs to get in touch with or facilitate an initial meeting. The post-secondary institution may also be an ESP, through their Career Services or Accessibility Services department.



4 Attend Events Organized by/for the Disability Community



As the saying goes, "If you want to reach your audience, you need to go where they go." For example, attend disability-community events such as Mayfest, the annual Deaf Expo organized by the Ontario Association for the Deaf. Visit the Abilities Expo or attend job fairs hosted by disability employment service providers. You'll have the opportunity to meet employment service professionals; and to start conversations that could lead to partnerships with ESPs.

5

Network on LinkedIn

Use the power of online networking on LinkedIn, in conjunction with in-person networking like that in **Tip #4**. Send some direct messages to people in your network. Or spend a few minutes putting up a post explaining what you're looking for. It could lead to an immediate connection with an employment services professional.



6

Attend Business Education Events

Employment service providers often hold business-engagement breakfast or lunch events. Attending these can help you build your disability awareness plus make new connections. Sit with people you don't already know. It's an opportunity to strike up conversations that could lead to new relationships. At the end of the event, spend a few minutes talking with the service provider's representative who's there, and arrange a meeting to talk further about how they can help you with your hiring needs.



7

Nurture Vendor Relationships

Once you've connected with an ESP, maintain and nurture your relationship and connection to the team of professionals there. They are your collaborative community partners, not just transactional vendors. And remember, a strong relationship is mutually beneficial. You'll have each other "top of mind" when you have a hiring need or they have a great candidate.



Connect with us for more information or if you have questions.

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