THE BAKERS DOZEN AND THE PANDEMIC

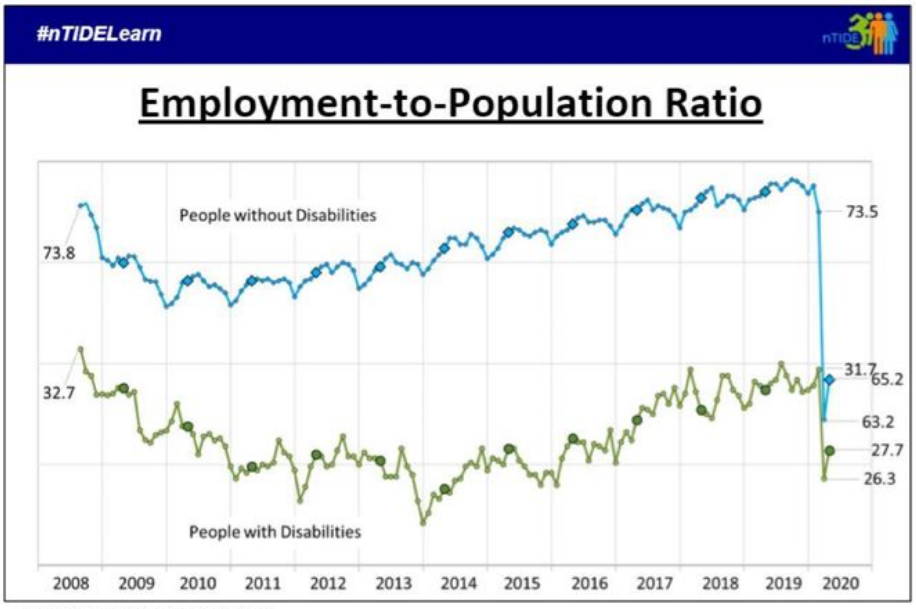
Ensuring inclusion during and after Coronavirus

Mark Wafer

2020

The year is 2020, and the demographic of disability in Canada is 22% of the country's population. Almost one in four Canadians have a disability and this number is growing to a percentage so large that it equals the entire population of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The demographic of disability is our largest minority group and is, of course, the only minority group any of us can join at any time as a result of an injury or illness. In fact, when immediate family members are included, over 65% of Canadians are directly impacted by disability, either they have one or a loved one at home has a disability.

It should not be a surprise to anyone that the employment numbers for the disabled are dismal. Prior to the current Covid19 pandemic, the employment figures published by StatsCan show that half of the disability community are not working. An unemployment rate of 50% may appear jarring, especially considering the worst unemployment rate in Canadian history was 24% during the Great Depression. Not surprisingly though, this figure is considered to be rather conservative. Our country has 550,000 recent graduates from the past five years with disabilities who have never worked. Of those, 270,000 have a post-secondary education. If one has never worked, never paid income tax and never contributed to CPP they are considered to have no labour market attachment and are therefore not captured in StatsCan's unemployment rate. Anecdotally, we can assume that the 50% unemployment statistic is more likely to be much higher; 70% perhaps, and even higher for certain types of disabilities. For example, it is widely understood that the unemployment rate for Autistic individuals is 88%.



United States Department of Labor

This graph from the US Department of Labour shows that jobs for the disabled are bouncing back at the same rate as non-disabled in the month of May, 2020. The graph also shows that countries struggle over the past ten years to maintain increased participation.

There are many service sector agencies, non-profits, Government agencies and more doing excellent work to bridge the massive divide between disabled and non-

disabled participation rates in the workforce. Although the demographic of disability continues to climb, participation rates have been shifting also. This shift has been sorely needed. The poor downward trajectory in unemployment numbers became quite clear when the 2016 unemployment rate of 70% was the same as the rate published in 1970 statistics. There are many factors at play in these percentages, and it is important to understand that many of those joining the disability community are doing so from the perspective of aging. Often already retired, these individuals may have lost their hearing or sight, and are now identifying as disabled. Some may simply no longer have an interest or requirement for meaningful employment. As such, it is important for us to turn our focus to these participation rates rather than the overall unemployment numbers.

There are a number of reasons why participation numbers are improving; however there are two in particular that have helped move the needle. The first is that employers today are far more comfortable including workers with disabilities in meaningful and competitively paid jobs. A decade ago, this was not the case. Employers, in fact, struggled to even discuss the topic of inclusion as it was too far outside their comfort zone. The second is that agencies and service sector non-profits who find work for the disabled have changed their approach to the private sector. Ten years ago, an agency would typically discuss the value of employment in regards to the individual, yet employers did not care. When the discussion shifted and was centered around business itself, employers began to listen and understand. There is a continental divide between the worlds of business and the service sector, as neither listen to each other and, as I have discovered over the years, the two are frightened of each other. The bottom line, however, is that business holds the cards and therefore the discussion of inclusion must be approached through highlighting the benefits to the employer.

As more agencies take a business first approach to inclusion, more doors are opening. In Ontario, we are seeing individuals with intellectual disabilities entering high paying union positions in manufacturing for the first time. In 2008, when I became serious about my activism, I would have never thought of this as a future possibility. Our country has also seen remarkable progress from those who self-advocate. The 270,000 graduates with post-secondary degrees and diplomas don't typically have an agency working with them, they instead self-advocate, apply for jobs, and in many cases use the business first approach to explain to employers why it is beneficial to hire them over a non-disabled individual.

Mark Wafer, activist

The business case is clear.
It is working.
It can't be argued against.
The data is fact.

Those who have used the economic case for inclusion in order to get themselves employed often have a clearer and easier route towards sustainable employment with adjustments or accommodations. Although only 35% of disabled hires require accommodations, employers are now keen to understand how adjustments may help all employees and not just those with disabilities.

Although we have a long way to go before we achieve parity between the disabled and non-disabled in employment and economic equality, the recent improvements and positive results are palpable. We must celebrate how far we have come, while still pushing hard on the gas pedal as we move forward. We still have much to do, but personally, I am pleased.

Then along came the Pandemic, COVID19.

There is an expression that has become a recent favourite of our leaders; "we are all in this together". While I understand what they mean, they could not be more wrong. Those in the disability community are not at all in the same place as a non-disabled Canadian. The hardship and the fear caused by this virus has been a massively increased burden. Those who rely on caregivers, those who have low vision and are unable to physically distance, deaf people who cannot get interpreter services without court action, wheelchair users who now find temporary barriers, Autistic people who rely on repetition; the list could go on. The world has been turned upside down for disabled people far more than it has for ableds. On top of this is the very real fear of catching the virus itself as many disabled people have less capable immune systems. We have already lost a number of disabled activists in the US and the UK as a result of Coronavirus, tragic indeed.

Canada's unemployment rate has slowly dropped from 8.3% in 2009, to 5.7% in 2019. Our rate has been so low in fact, that several jurisdictions, including Ontario, reintroduced the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) as it became a necessity to find workers who could fulfill empty employment vacancies. Certain sectors relied heavily on the TFWP, and those of us in the activist world lobbied the government often on the need to look at Canada's unemployed disabled citizens before using the TFWP. While we may have had some success across the country, reliance on foreign workers was more important to employers as well as being more aligned with their comfort zone versus employing the disabled.

Educational attainment[4]	Unemployment rate [3] Both sexes 25 years and over				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	Percentage				
Total, all education levels	5.8	6.0	5.5	5.0	4.8
0 to 8 years [5]	10.5	10.9	9.4	8.7	8.2
Some high school [6]	10.0	10.1	9.4	8.1	8.0
High school graduate [7]	6.7	6.8	6.1	5.7	5.8
Some postsecondary [8]	7.8	7.8	6.9	5.9	5.9
Postsecondary certificate or diploma [9]	5.4	5.6	5.3	4.8	4.5
University degree [10]	4.5	4.7	4.2	4.1	3.9
Bachelor's degree	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.1	3.9
Above bachelor's degree	4.9	4.9	4.1	4.1	3.9

Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0020-01 Unemployment rate, participation rate and employment rate by educational attainment, annual

Declining overall unemployment in Canada

Today's unemployment numbers are staggering, and while there is no real data available, we do know it has returned to a double-digit percentage. The reason we don't know the actual unemployment rate is because the Federal Government has provided relief in the form of wage subsidies and more, removing many workers from the statistics. As taxpayers, we will pay dearly for this in the future even as it is the right thing to do. Due to these various initiatives, it is therefore impossible to produce anything other than an arbitrary unemployment number, but it has skyrocketed. Our country, along with the rest of the world, is seeing massive unemployment within an imploding economy. While recovery is likely, it could take many years. No meaningful data is yet available, but it is reasonable to assume that if tens of thousands of Canadians were out of work, the same number by percentage of disabled workers would also be out of work.

During a time of crisis, a pandemic, a war, or an economic collapse such as a depression, the lives of the disabled often become expendable. Sometimes there are egregious examples, and sometimes there are examples that seem small. Yet all examples take shape in a society that still does not regard the disability community as its equal. They still do not have the same access and resources as typically abled Canadians.

The federal Government in its quest to secure the Canadian economy was careful to include most demographics. They even had a stipend for seniors of $300, but completely ignored the disabled until pressed to do so by activists. Even now, weeks later, there is little of substance for the disability community. Once again, during a time of crisis the disabled community has been ignored. The funding formulas for the disabled have always been poor. The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is a complete disaster, designed to keep disabled people in poverty with annual benefits of about $13,000. Even worse is the fact that the number of Ontarian's who leave ODSP to find employment is only 0.4 of 1%. I addressed this a few years ago, asking the Director of ODSP how most people leave the program, she replied, "to die". Unfortunately she was right. This is a disgrace.

ODSP must be scrapped and rebuilt with guaranteed minimum benefits that lift those with disabilities out of poverty.

Mark Wafer and Pierre Poilievre, MP

As well, ODSP, when first created included archaic income tax provisions. All provinces have this in some shape or form and it basically means that a person who finds work after being an ODSP recipient could find themselves paying more income tax for the same job, paying the same wages, as a worker who was not formerly on ODSP. The reasons behind this are complicated. Two years ago, I joined Federal Finance critic MP Pierre Poilievre to roll out Bill C-395, the Opportunities Act, to force provinces to change these draconian policies. Although the provinces set their own sector policies, the funding for much of the service sector is provided by Federal/Provincial transfer funds, therefore the Federal Government does in fact have a say in how the Provinces spend that money. The Bill failed in its second reading, which once again leads one to believe that being disabled in Canada is still burdensome. Employment, self-sustainability and being able to support oneself while contributing to society is therefore the only way in which disabled Canadians can get ahead.

This leads us to the question of where do we go from here. We are in an unknown world. We do not know what the economic future looks like. What does a second or third wave of COVID19 look like to both our community and the economy? The fact is, we will need to double our efforts going forward. Whether you are a job developer, coach, parent, teacher, activist, advocate or a disabled person looking for work, we will need to fight harder going forward. Until recently, employers were often weary of work from home initiatives. I have spoken to dozens of CEO's who say, "This job cannot be done at home". Yet COVID19 has proven them wrong. So many workers will remain working at home in the future that perhaps the worst possible business to own today would be an office rental company.

This means opportunity.

Opportunity for those with disabilities. Some with very significant disabilities who will now be able to use their education, knowledge and skills without having to enter a workplace in need of adjustments and accommodations or having to rely on

unreliable accessible transport. We have to take advantage of this opportunity now. Although most of these workers will be self-advocates, many will be clients of service sector agencies. The data is already trickling out that workers who work from home are more productive. Higher productivity makes an employer giddy with delight.

Sadly, the real damage from this pandemic will be felt in the developmentally disabled community. Frankly, there are very few, if any, stay at home jobs for people who have an intellectual disability. More often than not, these workers are employed in entry-level positions with 80% working in retail, about three quarters of those work in restaurants, mostly quick service restaurants. Those jobs are in the most danger of drying up. To be sure, we have made mistakes over the years relying too heavily on the retail sector to find work for those with Down Syndrome, those with cognitive disabilities, and those who are autistic. Some tried to rectify this problem over the past few years with some success, but agencies still have those "go to" McDonalds and Walmarts when trying to find work for those they represent. We will now be forced to look elsewhere in the future. Manufacturing jobs are likely to surge as we become more protectionist in the future, a normal reaction to crisis. Food manufacturing in particular will increase as our country strives to become somewhat more self-reliant in food production. The manufacturing sector is an excellent place for the intellectually challenged to find work as it is often repetitive work, exactly what these workers require. These jobs have a high turnover rate simply because of the mundane repetitiveness of these tasks, yet for an intellectually challenged worker, that level of mundane work is perfect. The added benefit is that these jobs often pay considerably higher wages than those found in retail where the normal pay would be minimum wage. An additional advantage is that manufacturing jobs often come with health benefits.

As we go forward, it is going to be critical that we specifically focus our efforts on the business case for full inclusion in meaningful and competitively paid jobs. To do this we must rely on data driven, evidence based methods created by empirical means and research. The business case for inclusion is the tool that will help us to recover the jobs we have lost and help us to gain a foothold in new sectors around the country. As well, as agencies, job developers and coaches we must adhere to the steps that we know are successful. This means it is time to review and update The Bakers Dozen, the thirteen most important evidence based facts that drive success to bridge the divide between business and the service sector.

A small group of dedicated activists developed and beta tested the "business case" with local Rotary Clubs in 2008. Rotary is a worldwide service organization with 1.2 million members. Most communities have at least one club where members engage in community support programs, global relief, and medical efforts such as the "end Polio" initiative. Most Rotary members are business owners or work for companies where they have influence over hiring practices. The business case was presented to club members and experienced such success that we continued the program, named "Rotary at Work", for five years. This resulted in the employment of at least 1,000 disabled workers. The program is still ongoing in British Columbia today. The results are real. The business case works and the data proves it. I have broken down the business case below in the "Bakers Dozen".

In order to successfully promote and communicate the business case to prospective employers, it is vitally important to follow the 13 tenets of the Bakers Dozen. I first published this as a result of witnessing behaviour from the service sector that was self-defeating. Today, more than ever, it is time to review and update the Bakers Dozen for a new world, where finding work for Disabled Canadians will be different and more difficult.

Those organizations in the non-profit world, who have undertaken innovative strategies to get through the pandemic, will be in the best position to move forward with well-developed vocational programs. Although the outlook for work is gloomy, there have been some exceptional examples of good outcomes. For example, Canadian Hearing Services (CHS) found real jobs for 29 deaf individuals in the first

six weeks of the pandemic. This bodes well for CHS and future vocational strategies. Others have had success too, not necessarily with job creation but by reimagining their vocational strategies to be ready when the crisis ends. From a Government point of view, Ontario is listening. Although the Ford Government handled the Autism file poorly, there are many cabinet ministers in our Provincial government who get it. Some, including the Premier are listening. Let's hope that leads to responsible change going forward.

As a former business owner, I had very specific expectations of the service sector. These expectations were written into our accessibility policy and unless an agency could demonstrate their ability and effectiveness to follow these 13 expectations, we simply didn't do business with them. This was no different as to how we treated any other vendor. Vendors had to provide value otherwise there was no point in remaining engaged with them. The Bakers Dozen, although a template for the service sector, is also a template for business, caregivers, advocates and the disabled themselves in order to understand the expectations of the service sector. Most business owners when approached by a service agency do not know what to expect. For the disabled the template provides guidance as to what they themselves should expect from an agency representing them. Therefore the Bakers Dozen is universal in its reach.

Mark with Senator Tom Harkin, creator of the Americans with Disabilities Act

THE BAKERS DOZEN.

1. CREATE BUSINESS CHAMPIONS.

This is perhaps the single most important piece of the Bakers Dozen. As I have mentioned, the private sector is highly suspicious of the motives of a service agency when they're approached in regards to vocational services. As a job developer, you may have a great understanding of the business case and may well be able to communicate this properly to a prospective employer. But still, the employer will be hesitant. A business champion helps you to bridge that gap of trepidation between the business and your sector by relaying the exact same message but from someone the business trusts. Business owners speak a certain language. When business speaks to business, peer to peer, there is understanding and acceptance, there is a feeling of comfort that each understands the others fears and challenges. Business clearly doesn't believe that the service sector understands that.

A business champion does the heavy lifting for you. In most cases, a business champion is someone who has already successfully hired from your agency. With that success and the ability to reach other business owners, the agency simply facilitates the discussion. This is scalable. In many cases, you may be asking a local Home Depot manager to speak to the owner of a local McDonalds. The Home Depot manager is your champion. He or she may have successfully hired a number of disabled workers and will be happy to contact the McDonalds owner. In fact, it is likely in a smaller community that they know each other already through the local chamber of commerce or Business improvement association. From the perspective of scale, I once sat across the table from the CEO of General Motors. We spoke the same language. It works.

Interestingly, over the past 25 years of promoting this strategy, I have never heard a business owner decline to be a champion once asked. You will have to coach them to ensure they stick to the benefits of inclusion rather than talk about how great the workers life has become, and you have to reward your champions. Very often, if this meeting takes place in person with you as the coach in attendance the two business owners will simply take over the conversation. This is how a champion seals the deal for you.

One of my favourite stories about business champions comes from the small town of Campbellford, Ontario where Steve Sharpe owns an independent Grocery store. This grocery store had a disabled employee working in the deli with great success. Steve was approached by Community Living Campbellford to act as a business champion in order to help with an approach to the local Canadian Tire. Steve accepted; a meeting was set up; and thanks to Steve's advocacy on behalf of CLC a job was filled at Canadian Tire by a worker with a disability. That is exactly how

this relationship works, and few days later however Steve showed up at the office of community Living Campbellford demanding to know "who we are hitting next".

Because of Steve acting as a local business champion, dozens of disabled people now have meaningful employment. Thanks Steve.

2. HAVE INCREASED EXPECTATIONS OF THE JOB SEEKER.

During the 25 years my wife and I operated 14 Tim Horton's locations, we employed more than 200 workers with disabilities. These workers had a wide range of disabilities; some were significant. There was not a single role in the company, from entry level to senior management, which was not at one time filled by a worker with a disability. We believe we hired people with every type of disability.

Sharon Mathias, Tim Horton's

It is normal human behaviour to judge, perhaps through unconscious bias. When it comes to the disabled, we judge often. I can tell you that I always mentally judged a new disabled employees capacity and capability despite all the experience we had, and despite the fact that I am disabled myself. Therefore it is only fair to assume job developers, families, and parents are also judging the ability of a disabled person's capabilities. HR departments in larger companies are guilty as charged.

In reality, I was wrong over 200 times. Workers with disabilities always outperformed the general expectations we mentally form for that individual. It is therefore vital that we keep an open mind of the potential, capacity and capabilities of each individual. We must NEVER make excuses for what a potential hire can or cannot do in the workplace. That can only be determined organically as time goes

on. As the employee becomes familiar with their work, makes friends, and increases their self-esteem and confidence, other aspects of their lives outside of work will change also.

Many years ago, we hired a young lady to bus tables. She is autistic and was at that time non-verbal. My initial feeling was that she would remain busing tables throughout her tenure with us, but I was sorely mistaken. After a few years of growth, she began to speak. Until that time, she had never spoken outside the home. She asked for a promotion to production and cake decorating. She was promoted and outperformed all others in the role as they were more concerned with their next smoke break and the gossip from the weekend. A few years later, she asked for a further promotion to serve customers and with some modifications, we successfully moved her into this role. Today, although we no longer own the restaurant, she is still a valued employee at that location where customers love to see her every day.

3. VIEW THE BUSINESS AS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT CLIENT.

The individual you represent in gaining meaningful employment will be well served if you position yourself as a problem solver for local business owners. Act as a conduit for talent. The company will appreciate and respect your agency.

A Dairy Queen franchise owner in Parry Sound, Ontario lists the local agencies as an extension of his Human Resource department. That's valuable.

4. ENCOURAGE FAMILIES AND STAKEHOLDER GROUPS TO SPEAK WITH CHILDREN EARLY IN LIFE ABOUT WORK.

Regardless of the severity of a disability, work must be the expectation for the future. Work cannot be a "wish" or a hoped for outcome, it must be the expectation every single time. Of course there are some children who will not be able to work when they grow up, and that's perfectly acceptable. By the time they grow up, these individuals will be well on their way to various programs to ensure they live a full life if employment isn't possible. However, with the very low number of Canadians with disabilities who fit into this group, we must emphasize early on that work is expected. Everyone is employable until proven otherwise.

Often times families, teachers and advocates wait until it is too late to discuss work. Talking to a 17 year old about joining the workforce at the very age where they should be working adds extra pressure to the employer, as they now have to work around poor social skills and very low self-esteem. By talking about work at the age of 10, we instill a certain level of optimism and therefore encourage confidence in a child. They may get the chance to work, just like mom and dad! A chance to normalize life! This opportunity is lost when we fail to expect that work is the desired outcome.

Having part-time work during teen years cannot successfully be expected if the topic of work is never broached in the household. It is typical for parents to encourage non-disabled children to dream big about what they want to be when they grow up but with a disabled child, they often lovingly tell them not to worry because they will be looked after. It's natural but is self-defeating.

Interestingly, having a summer job or part time job while in school is the number one way to improve soft skills as well it is the number one indicator of successfully landing a full time job later on.

5. THE APPROACH TO BUSINESS MUST BE AT ALL TIMES, THE "BUSINESS CASE"

The business case is clear and compelling. Those who try to refute it always fail. The data is proven and it is evidence based. Although we have published the business case often, I am including it here for quick reference.

The business case is based on the fact that a workplace, once capacity is driven, will reap economy gains from introducing workers with disabilities in meaningful and competitively paid positions, that a business will have a healthier bottom line and a clear competitive advantage.

There are many aspects of a business that make up the business case, with more being added as time goes on. The nature of the workplace may change but there are still a core set of proven points that make up the basics of the business case.

Capacity is the key. A business is unlikely to see explosive net gains by hiring one person who is disabled. In our business approximately 17% of our workforce at any given time was disabled. That's what I mean by capacity.

Clint Sparling, Tim Horton's

The main tenets of the business case are ….

- Lower absenteeism: Workers with disabilities often take years to land their first job. It becomes a precious commodity and is often the single most important thing in their life. For that reason, disabled employees are less likely to call in sick or take time off unless critical. They often worry about a manager thinking the disability is keeping them from work. This is grossly unfair but it is a fact. At any given time, we had about 45 disabled employees and 200 who were not disabled. Our absenteeism rate for the disabled employees was 85% lower than for the 200 non-disabled employees. This is also scalable. Dupont, a US based automotive paint company reported an 86% lower absenteeism rate for workers with disabilities in their plants.

- Greater safety records: Workers with disabilities are more likely to follow the rules and less likely to take chances in the work place. A worker with Cerebral Palsy using a wheelchair is highly unlikely to get out of the chair and climb boxes to reach something on a high shelf, whereas the rest of the workers typically will, and this is how accidents happen. In 25 years of business with thousands of employees, we never made an insurance claim for a worker with a disability. This led us to the highest possible safety rating in our sector.

- Greater innovation: Innovation in the workplace is created by hiring people who have different problem solving skills rather than from hiring super smart individuals. Consider the aforementioned worker with Cerebral Palsy. They have to get up in the morning, shower, get dressed, eat breakfast, go to the driveway and drive to work, perhaps with hand controls. Each and every one of these tasks have to be performed differently from the way most other people would do so. They innovate, then bring that attitude into the workplace.

- Higher morale: Employees without disabilities want to work in environments that are truly inclusive. With 63% of Canadians directly affected by disability (they have one or an immediate family member does) the matter of disability becomes front of mind. I regularly had 14,000 daily customers through the six locations we were still running in our later years. More than 7,000 had a disability or had a loved one at home who did. This drives employee morale, which is proven within the next point.

- Higher retention rates: As mentioned, workers with disabilities typically cherish their jobs more so than a non-disabled person. If a non-disabled person is no longer motivated, they will leave knowing there is a high degree of probability that there is another job around the corner. This is not true for disabled workers. Retention rates will differ, as some aspect of the business case is based on sector, but is most often the greatest savings to a retail business. Employee turnover is expensive. The more employees who remain on the job, the less costs the business has to spend as a result of training, onboarding and the lower productivity of an introductory versus experienced employee. The typical employee turnover rate in the quick service restaurant sector is about 100% per

year. For our group of restaurants it was 38% average over the last ten years, a very significant savings. However, the interesting piece of this is that the 200 non-disabled employees turnover rate was only 55%, half the norm. As mentioned people with disabilities, as well as those without, want to work in inclusive workplaces.

Clint Sparling, Tim Horton's

Although there is more to the business case, these are the most important talking points. Know your facts and use them often. Quote the data when speaking to employers and ensure your business champions also know this data. This is the language that business understands.

6. DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUSINESS BEFORE APPROACHING THEM TO HIRE YOUR JOB SEEKERS.

Nothing turns off a prospective employer quicker than having a job developer show up unannounced with news that they have the perfect employee for them. Agencies in town need to develop a relationship by being visible and letting employers in town know who they are. An agency should consider joining the chamber or a local service club as a way to let the business community know who you are.

When the time comes and you have a job seeker who you believe fits the ask of an employer, make an appointment to meet. Ask questions about the job and the business. Learn more about the business needs. Once you have developed an understanding of each other's needs talk to them about your job seeker. Visit the business often and take Timbits with you. That always pleases!

7. APPLY FOR JOBS WHERE JOBS EXIST

Agencies have a habit of applying for jobs that don't exist. I will cover some of that in the next point about wage subsidies. Nobody should ever waste their time in

looking for work where it doesn't exist. By all means, let an employer know that you have workers looking for particular jobs when they become available, but never apply at a company that doesn't have an explicit need. Job creation is pointless. It serves only to increase the labour of a business. The employer does not typically value the work of non-existent or made up positions, and once there is a downturn in the business the first person to be relieved is anyone not contributing productivity wise.

Almost all people with disabilities can and should fill positions that are being advertised. The sole exception to this is those with significant intellectual disabilities who may need a job created for them through job carving. Yes, this can slightly increase an employers labour costs, but has often had the opposite effect as tasks being completed by higher paid staff can be completed by a new hire, allowing the experienced worker to concentrate on different work.

8. AVOID WAGE SUBSIDIES

This is probably an odd comment to make, considering half of our country today is earning a wage subsidy from the Federal Government, but these are extraordinary times. I fully support our Government's decision to provide wage subsides, and I believe our country will emerge stronger than others based on the decisions made by both the Federal and Provincial Governments.

The wage subsidies that I am referring to involve splitting labour costs of a new hire with disabilities, with a government scheme for the disability community. In Canada, we have the Opportunities Fund with an annual budget of $40 million. Much of that money is spent on wage subsidies.

There are a number of serious issues with wage subsidies. The first is that it is rarely used to find work for a disabled person in a job that has been advertised. It is often a created job in a local business. Subsidies have expiration dates that vary depending on the scheme and the province it is being used in. When the subsidy expires the employer now has to pay full wages to the employee. In their mind it was ok when subsidized, but now they are unwilling to continue because a made up job simply increases labour costs with little or no increase in productivity to show for it. This creates an unfair situation for all. The employer thought they were doing something good, the employee most likely loves the job, and the parents or caregiver don't want the worker back home. In many cases the agencies then enter into a deal that the worker remain in the job unpaid and call it "work experience", almost always without a comprehensive training plan or one that is time constrained. This is illegal.

In 2017, I was asked to step in and help a corporation who had a franchise in South Western Ontario. This restaurant owner had an employee who operated the dishwasher. She worked 12 weeks with a wage subsidy, and for 19 years afterwards worked for free. The franchise owner was leaving the business and a

new owner questioned why the worker was unpaid. We were able to come to an agreement between the corporation and the worker, but the agency who allowed this to happen not only broke the law, they placed themselves in a position of potentially harming the reputation of the corporation. This can easily produce a costly lawsuit.

9. NEVER TAKE A JOB SEEKER ON A COLD CALL.

This is uncomfortable for the business and the job seeker. It also shows a lack of judgement and professionalism.

10. UNDERSTAND THE WANTS AND WISHES OF YOUR JOB SEEKER.

None of us apply for jobs where we have no interest. Don't assume that everyone with an intellectual disability wants to work in retail. Ensure that your intake procedures cover this area. A wrong fit is a guaranteed failure and all of us want jobs that we can enjoy.

11. IT IS CRITICAL THAT YOUR INTIAL APPROACH TO A BUSINESS BE WITH THE COMPANIES OWNER/CEO.

It is perfectly acceptable to have a day-to-day and ongoing relationship with company managers, but the CEO or owner sets the tone and intent of a company. He or she must be aware that new employees might have a disability. They must understand the economy value of inclusion. The CEO simply must be supportive of this otherwise failure is guaranteed. One might suggest, however, that approaching or contacting a CEO is an impossible task. I would therefore refer them back to #1, your business champion.

A good example of this was a champion who owned a retail store in the Niagara region. The agency discovered the owner was the sister of the founder of one of Canada's largest companies. With one phone call, the agency now had a footstep into that corporation.

12. CONSIDER YOURSELF AND YOUR AGENCY AS A MAJOR FORCE IN TOWN.

Do not downplay your significance in the community. Agencies often place business and business owners on a pedestal, which makes an approach to them more daunting. There is no business in town more important to the community than your agency.

13. DRESS FOR SUCCESS

The casual dress code that has been with us for a few years, along with other trends such as the open workplace, are dying out. Casual has its place but it is important to remember that when meeting an employer for the first time you are making an impression. It is vital that the impression you make is the right one. In my business, I would often have back-to-back meetings with vendors, food suppliers, and insurance companies, all trying to sell me the world's best lettuce. All of these individuals have one thing in common: they dressed to impress. Jeans and a grateful dead t-shirt are probably not going to leave a positive image of your agency. To be taken seriously, dress seriously.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark testing the new Radical SR3 RSX at Caldwell Park, United Kingdom

Mark Wafer is a disability rights activist. Until recently, he was the owner of six highly successful Tim Horton's locations in Toronto. During his 25 years in the business, Mark employed over 200 workers with disabilities in all areas of the operation including senior management. At any given time approximately 17% of his workforce identified as having a disability.

Mark is an internationally recognized expert on the economics of inclusion. He is an advisor to governments around the world and is responsible for Canada's national disability employment strategy.

Mark has received many awards and recognition for his work most notably from her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. He was inducted into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame in 2014

A prolific connector of people, Mark has raised over $40 million in the not for profit sector

Mark is also a Motorsports enthusiast, former race car driver and 2008 Canadian historic sports car champion

Megleen Inc. refers to a Canadian private company incorporated by guarantee.
Megleen's services span multiple industries, connecting across the world providing high-quality service to address the business case of hiring individuals with disabilities.
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