

Employing People with Disabilities: An Employer's Perspective

Spring 2009 Survey Results

Overview

In the Spring of 2009, as part of the Work for All initiative, a survey was conducted to evaluate the perspectives, attitudes and practices of employers regarding recruiting, hiring, training and retaining individuals with disabilities, apparent or non-apparent, as part of their workforce.

Work for All is an initiative launched in early 2009 to increase employer awareness of the human resource talents and opportunities available by employing people with disabilities. The survey was conducted to establish baseline information, as well as better identify concerns or obstacles so efforts could be most appropriately targeted.

Executive Summary

The survey identified specific opportunities for educating businesses about resources related to employment of individuals with disabilities, as well as employers' receptiveness to hiring people with disabilities. Attitudes in the survey group reflected, for the most part, comfort employing people with disabilities. Only seven of total respondents expressed "discomfort or unfamiliarity hiring people with disabilities" with over 72% considering it "Not a Challenge." Supporting that atmosphere were questions regarding attitudes of co-workers and supervisors with "Not a Challenge" selected by around 80% of respondents. Thirty-six percent of respondent organizations currently employ a person with a disability, and 43% had done so in the past.

Ranking highest for increasing a respondent's consideration of hiring a person with a disability was having information on: 1) available assistance in recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining; 2) job performance, attendance, and retention; 3) specific disabilities and how they impact the workplace, and 4) benefits to a company's productivity, bottom-line.

Top challenges identified in hiring people with disabilities, were: 1) uncertainty about cost/time of accommodation, 2) actual cost of accommodation, and 3) lack of ability to find qualified people with disabilities to meet needed productivity levels. Seen as either "somewhat of a challenge" or a "major challenge," these three issues were concerns for 41-45% of respondents who answered this series of questions. Lack of knowledge or information about people with disabilities was either "somewhat of a challenge" or a "major challenge" for 33% of the respondents to the question. Also of note, about 33% had concerns about the cost of providing health care coverage.

Distribution Area and Method

There were seven distribution sources for an 11 question, electronic survey, administered via Survey Monkey. (The survey questions are attached as Appendix A.) The distribution method was an email request to a representative within a company from a known organization (such as a Chamber of which they were a member). The following organizations distributed the survey on behalf of Work for All:

- Thurston County Chamber
- Centralia Chehalis Chamber
- Grays Harbor Chamber
- Northwest Manufacturer's Alliance
- Centralia Community College Center for Excellence
- Olympia Master Builders
- North Mason County Chamber

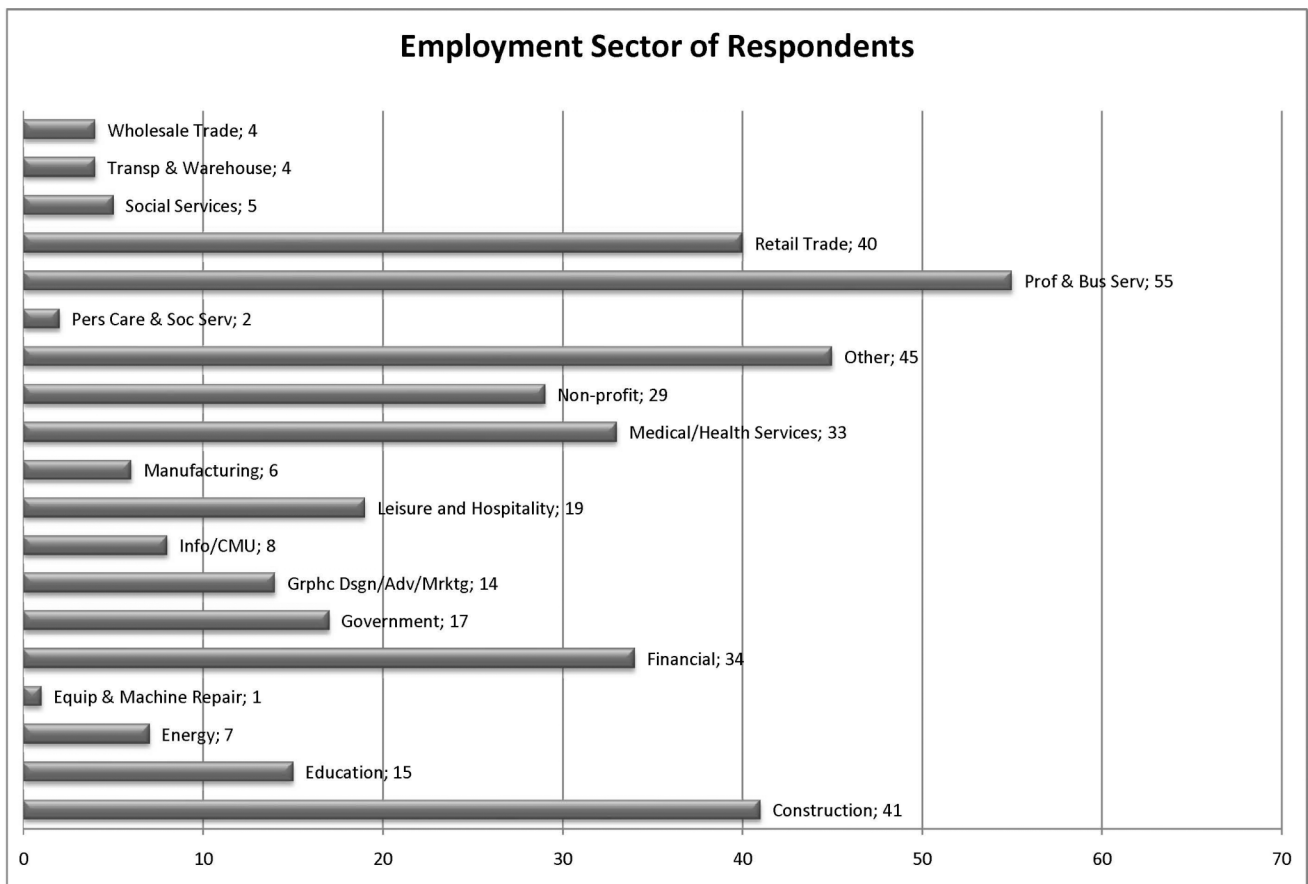
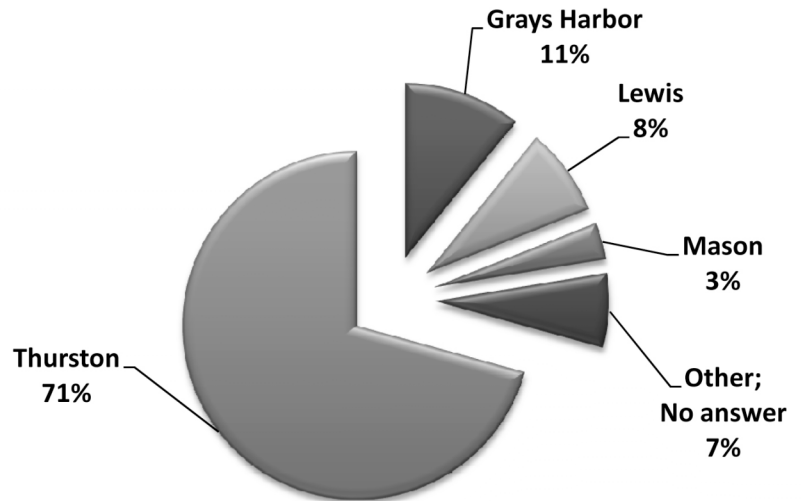
There were a total of 379 respondents from those seven sources, covering employers in Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Lewis and Grays Harbor counties. Some respondents employed people in various counties and, additionally, sometimes outside of the five-county area.

Respondent Demographics

Seventy-two percent of the respondents were from Thurston County, the most employer and population dense county of the five included in the survey area. Eleven percent of the respondents were from Grays Harbor County and 8% were from Lewis County.

Fifty-five percent of those responding fell into one of five industry categories: Professional & Business Services (15%), Construction (11%), Retail Trade (11%), Medical & Health Services (9%) and Financial (9%).

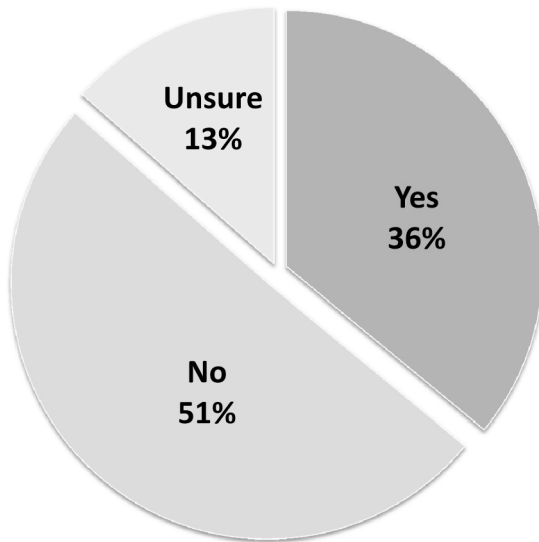
Respondent Locations by County
379 Total



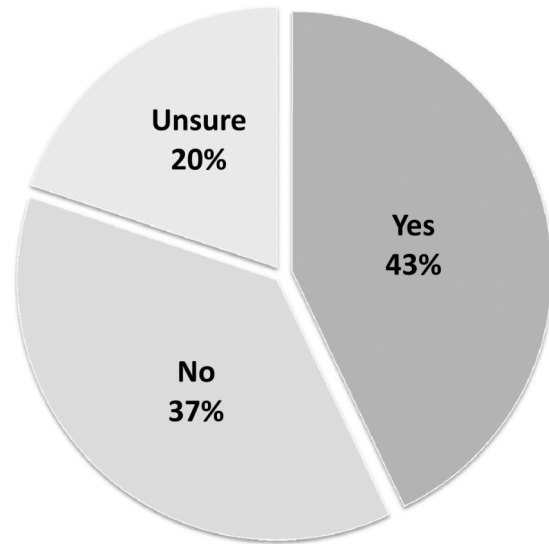
Employment Practices

Of those responding to the question, 36% said they currently employ an individual with a disability and 13% were unsure if they did. The percentages increased to 43% “Yes” and 20% “Unsure” when the question was expanded to include the past, asking if the respondent’s company *had ever* employed anyone with a disability.

Currently Employ a Person with a Disability?



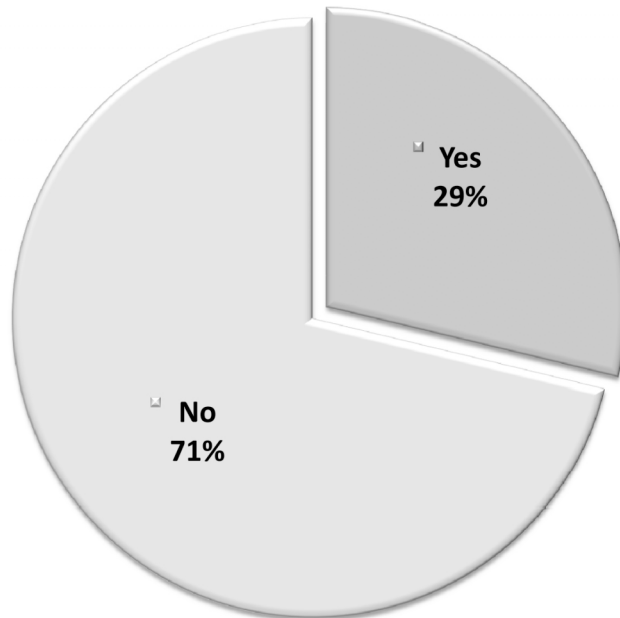
Employed a Person with a Disability in the Past?



Qualified Employees Not Always Easy to Find

Of those responding, 29% said they had had difficulty finding qualified applicants in the past 12 months. Since the various distributing organizations sent out the surveys at different times, this response covers the second through fourth quarters of 2008, as well as the first and second quarter of 2009.

Difficulty Finding a Qualified Applicants in the Past 12 Months?



What information would make employing a person with a disability more likely?

	Yes	No	I already have this	Unsure	Totals
Costs, tax credits, incentives	29% (74)	27% (69)	27% (69)	18% (46)	258
Benefits to a company's productivity, bottom line	36% (90)	20% (50)	29% (74)	15% (38)	252
Job performance, attendance, and retention	43% (111)	16% (41)	27% (69)	14% (36)	257
Specific disabilities and how they impact the workplace	37% (93)	21% (53)	24% (59)	18% (44)	249
Testimonials of senior executives	24% (59)	36% (88)	19% (46)	21% (50)	243
Testimonials of human resources managers	25% (61)	35% (86)	21% (52)	19% (47)	246
Testimonial of line managers	28% (68)	34% (83)	20% (49)	19% (47)	247
Available assistance in recruiting/hiring/training/retaining	38% (95)	26% (64)	18% (44)	18% (46)	249

How much of a challenge are the following factors to your company in hiring people with disabilities?

	Major challenge	Somewhat of a challenge	Not a challenge	Unsure/ Don't know	Totals
Discomfort or unfamiliarity hiring people with disabilities	3% (7)	19% (45)	72% (175)	7% (16)	243
Lack of knowledge or information about people with disabilities	2% (6)	24% (59)	68% (164)	5% (12)	241
Attitudes of co-workers	1% (2)	16% (39)	78% (189)	5% (12)	242
Attitudes of supervisors	1% (2)	12% (29)	81% (193)	6% (15)	239
Attitudes of customers	3% (8)	19% (46)	65% (155)	12% (30)	239
Uncertainty about cost/time of accommodation	8% (19)	36% (87)	45% (111)	10% (24)	241
Actual cost of accommodating	12% (28)	33% (79)	40% (96)	15% (37)	240
Concern about the cost of health care coverage	14% (33)	19% (44)	56% (135)	12% (30)	242
Fear of litigation	6% (15)	16% (38)	62% (147)	16% (38)	238
Cannot find qualified people with disabilities to meet needed productivity level	19% (45)	22% (52)	37% (88)	23% (55)	240

More on Work for All

Work for All, a program launched by the Thurston County Chamber, is designed to help businesses realize the human resource opportunities and benefits of employing individuals with both apparent and non-apparent disabilities. The initiative is designed to do this by:

- Communicating the human resource advantage of employing individuals with disabilities
- Connecting employers to resources related to recruiting/hiring/retaining workers with disabilities
- Celebrating and sharing the success stories of businesses employing people with disabilities

Funding Organizations

Work for All efforts were largely funded by a one-time grant from the Pacific Mountain Regional Alliance WIRED (covering Thurston, Lewis, Grays Harbor, Mason and Pacific counties) with a focus to expand the employment talent pool to include traditionally underserved populations, including individuals with disabilities. The Chamber, as well as Morningside, were also significant contributors to the efforts which included development of program scope, branding, website, surveys, and outreach to employers via various methods from individual phone calls to mass media.

Continuing Work

People with disabilities are contributing to the economy in ever growing ways, and the Work for All initiative provides the foundation for increasing employer awareness of this valuable talent pool.

Further Information

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www.WorkforAll.biz