

Employment Guide – Disabilities

Bureau of National Affairs

To find the best employees to serve our worldwide IT client base, ACS has recruited and hired nearly 160 employees with disabilities in a pilot project designed to attract top talent to the company.

A Xerox company, ACS is a Dallas-based Fortune 500 business with 65,000 employees in more than 100 countries. We provide business process outsourcing and IT solutions to commercial and government clients.



Since 2008, we've worked with upwards of 300 different agencies in 28 targeted areas – including vocational rehabilitation centers and the Business Leadership Network, an employer-led program focused on employing people with disabilities – to hire people with disabilities.

The reason is simple, according to Lora Villarreal, chief people officer for ACS: "It's the war for talent that every employer is facing," she says. "You have to come out of the box."

Ability

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An employer's bottom-line advantage of hiring employees with disabilities is that these individuals tend to stay longer, work harder and have better morale than many other employees, Villarreal says. Not only that, being recognized as an inclusive employer enhances a company's overall reputation, she adds.

"It's not disability, but ability that matters," Villarreal says. "I'm Hispanic, and I don't want people to hire me because my skin is brown; I want them to hire me because I can do the job."

Some employers worry that accommodating employees with disabilities may be expensive. But Villarreal said the cost is more than offset by lower turnover and higher productivity. She notes that her department has partnered with the company's legal team to train both recruiters and line managers in the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act. Training covers how to set up accommodations and how to integrate employees with disabilities into existing teams.

One new hire is Kyle Woodruff, 28, who is blind. He works 40 hours per week as a customer care representative in the company's Utah facility. When handling calls, Woodruff uses a text recognition system that reads aloud words on his computer monitor. The system also translates text into Braille displayed on a special monitor. Woodruff has shown such professionalism and skill that his responsibilities have been expanded to include training new employees.

"It's great to work at a company where they look beyond my disability," Woodruff said. "To this company, I am a person with skills, not a person with a disability. I have just as much opportunity here as anybody else."

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Dedicated Recruiting Team

The company has a team in the United States dedicated to recruiting, hiring and promoting people with disabilities. In just six months' time, this team of diversity recruiters has established partnerships with state and local vocational rehabilitation agencies, community and local government groups, college disability services, advocacy groups, independent-living organizations, veterans' organizations and others that provide services to people with disabilities.

"ACS's program to recruit, hire and accommodate people with disabilities is a tremendous success," said Sharrieffa Blair, employment specialist with Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, which refers individuals with disabilities to companies for potential hiring. "Goodwill Industries now has a solid partner in our efforts to employ people with disabilities."

ACS was recently honored for its hiring practices with the 2008 Golden Key Employer of the Year award from the Office of the Governor of Utah. The Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities presents the award to recognize companies for outstanding contributions and practices that improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

ACS tracks the progress of its recruiting efforts and continually seeks innovative ways to continue to knock down barriers to employment, according to Villarreal. "We provide ongoing training to employees and managers regarding hiring, managing and promoting people with disabilities," she said. "We are committed to becoming an employer of choice for people with disabilities, and we hope that other employers will learn best practices from us one day."

About ACS

ACS is part of Xerox's \$22 billion global enterprise with 140,000 employees serving our clients in 160 countries.

You can learn more about us at www.acs-inc.com.



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