

# Report finds it pays to hire disabled workers

March 5 2013, by Mary Catt

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Expanding the workplace talent pool through hiring employees with disabilities makes good business sense, according to a report produced by an ILR School partnership with The Conference Board.

According to the [report](#):

- Nearly 55 million people, more than one in 10 Americans, has at least one disability.
- People with disabilities and their families earn an estimated \$269 billion.
- Almost 90 percent of consumers prefer companies that employ people with disabilities.
- It costs little—and often nothing—for companies to meet federal standards to accommodate [workers](#) with disabilities.
- Managers of workers with disabilities are overwhelmingly likely to recommend hiring employees with disabilities.

Yet, only 33 percent of working-age individuals with disabilities are employed in the United States, compared with 76 percent of their non-disabled peers.

This means that many companies miss out on performance advantages, according to the report, "Leveling the Playing Field: Attracting, Engaging and Advancing People with Disabilities," published in February.

The report describes best business practices to help companies improve their organizational readiness to hire and retain people with disabilities and, ultimately, be more productive. When ingenuity developed by people with disabilities in their lives is applied to business problems, it can lead to better work team problem-solving and decision-making, according to the report.

The report looks at how employers are building competitive advantage through workplace practices that engage people with disabilities, including recent [military veterans](#) and [older workers](#). It also covers best practices to encourage workers to disclose disabilities so that resources can be directed to them. Mattel Inc., one of the 16 organizations to participate in the report research, has already adopted some of the report's best practices.

In addition to improving inclusion and [company performance](#), employing people with [disabilities](#) can increase workplace morale, productivity, safety, attendance and interactions with customers, said Susanne Bruyère, ILR associate dean of outreach and director of the Employment and Disability Institute.

**More information:** [Report Employment and Disability Initiative](#)

Provided by Cornell University

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