

Myths vs. Facts: Hiring People with Disabilities

Hiring people with disabilities — including neurodivergent individuals — is often influenced by deeply rooted misperceptions and unconscious bias that can create unnecessary barriers to employment. These beliefs are frequently based on outdated assumptions about capability, productivity, cost, or workplace fit rather than evidence.

Research shows many of the most common concerns employers have about disability inclusion are inaccurate or overstated, yet they still shape hiring decisions, job design, and performance evaluations. This can result in qualified candidates being overlooked because traditional hiring systems rely heavily on proxies like interview style, communication speed, or social presentation rather than actual job-relevant skills.

At the core is often a “difference equals deficit” mindset — viewing disability or neurodivergence as lower ability instead of recognizing different strengths and ways of working. Below are some common myths — and the facts that challenge them.

Myth #1: Employees with disabilities are less productive

Fact:

Research consistently shows employees with disabilities perform as well as, and in some cases outperform, employees without disabilities. Studies have found that employees with disabilities often demonstrate strong reliability, engagement, problem-solving skills, and job commitment. For example, JPMorgan Chase, which has a well-established disability hiring program, found that on average, employees hired through the program were 90% to 140% more productive than employees who had been at the company for five or 10 years.¹

Myth #2: Accommodations are expensive

Fact:

Most workplace accommodations cost little or nothing. According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and the U.S. Department of Labor²:

- Nearly half of accommodations cost employers nothing
- Most other accommodations have a typical one-time cost of about \$300
- Many accommodations involve simple adjustments to communication, scheduling, or workspaces rather than expensive equipment

Myth #3: People with disabilities can only perform certain types of jobs

Fact:

People with disabilities work successfully across virtually every industry and profession. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a majority of adults who are neurodivergent report facing little to no difficulty completing their assigned roles and responsibilities.³ People with disabilities contribute in roles including:

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|-----------------|--------------------|
| • Technology | • Retail |
| • Finance | • Customer service |
| • Healthcare | • Marketing |
| • Manufacturing | • Research |

¹ See at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/03/07/why-its-important-to-embrace-neurodiversity-in-the-workplace-and-how-to-do-it-effectively/?sh=811ff444669a>

² See at: <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/odep/odep20230504?utm>

³ See at: <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/data-deep-dive-supporting-and-hiring-individuals-with-disabilities-and-neurodivergence>

Myth #4: Disability inclusion creates legal risk for employers

Fact:

Most disability-related workplace concerns are resolved through communication and accommodation processes — not litigation. The U.S. Department of Labor notes that most ADA-related employment disputes are resolved informally through negotiation or mediation rather than lawsuits.⁴ Proactively building accessible and inclusive systems can actually reduce organizational risk while improving employee engagement and retention.

Myth #5: Hiring people with disabilities increases absenteeism

Fact:

Research shows employees with disabilities generally have attendance records comparable to employees without disabilities. Many employers report that employees with disabilities demonstrate strong commitment, loyalty, and retention. Some studies have found lower turnover rates among employees with disabilities compared to other employee groups.

Myth #6: Managers need specialized expertise to supervise employees with disabilities

Fact:

Managers do not need to be medical experts. Successful disability inclusion is typically driven by strong management practices and open communication — not clinical expertise⁵. What managers need most is training on:

- Clear communication
- Inclusive leadership
- Workplace flexibility
- Accommodation processes
- Managing different work styles fairly and consistently

Myth #7: Hiring people with disabilities lowers workplace standards

Fact:

Disability inclusion is about removing barriers — not lowering expectations. Employees with disabilities are hired to meet the same performance expectations and essential job requirements as other employees. Inclusive hiring practices simply help ensure candidates are evaluated fairly based on their ability to perform the job, rather than being screened out by inaccessible processes or bias.

Myth #8: Disability inclusion only applies to large corporations

Fact:

Companies of all sizes can successfully hire and support employees with disabilities. Many accommodations are low-cost, and small businesses often benefit from increased flexibility and individualized management approaches. Community partners, nonprofits, and vocational rehabilitation organizations can also help smaller employers build effective inclusion practices.

Disability inclusion is not simply a compliance initiative — it is a workforce strategy. Companies that build accessible, flexible, and inclusive workplaces often gain access to broader talent pools, improve retention, strengthen workplace culture, and create better employee experiences overall. Many of the perceived barriers to hiring people with disabilities are based on outdated assumptions rather than evidence. Organizations that move beyond these myths are often better positioned to build stronger and more sustainable workforces.

⁴ See at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/ada/MythsandFacts?utm>

⁵ See at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10926-023-10118-2?utm>