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The Right Talent, Right Now

Employers throughout the U.S. are wrapping up October by participating in National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a tradition that can be traced back to 1945. The purpose of NDEAM is to raise awareness about disability employment issues and celebrate the significant contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The theme of this year's outreach effort emphasizes the importance of the subject today: "*The Right Talent, Right Now*." "Every day, individuals with disabilities add significant value and talent to our workforce and economy," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta. "Individuals with disabilities offer employers diverse perspectives on how to tackle challenges and achieve success. Individuals with disabilities have the right talent, right now."

Hiring the right talent means enlarging the participation of Americans with disabilities and promoting a workplace that is welcoming and inclusive. By providing individuals with disabilities an opportunity to excel, employers strengthen workplaces, economies, communities, and families. Informed employers no longer view diversity efforts as separate from their other business practices. They recognize that a diverse workforce differentiates them from the competition, attracts new clients, and increases their market share. They appreciate that diverse perspectives encourage innovation and new ideas. Hiring, mentoring, and retaining employees with a wide array of experiences is also key for fostering a workplace that attracts top talent. Building a diverse place inside the office attracts a diverse following outside. Indeed, [Inclusion@Work](#) reports that the third-largest market segment in the U.S. is not a particular race, gender, or age cohort; it is people with disabilities.

What can employers do to recognize their commitment to NDEAM and an inclusive workplace?

- **Review your policies:** This is a great time to review company policies to ensure they are aligned with a commitment to inclusion. Consider [Inclusion@Work](#) ["Lead the Way: Inclusive Business Culture"].

Questions? Contact Stokes Wagner.

- **Establish an employee resource group:** Consider launching a disability Employee Resource Group to provide employees an opportunity to connect with others with similar interests and experiences.
- **Create a display:** Refresh break room bulletin boards with positive messages about your commitment to a disability-inclusive workforce [see NDEAM [poster](#) or the "[What Can YOU Do?!](#)" [poster series](#)].
- **Train managers and supervisors:** Train the individuals who are closest to employees to reinforce the culture you seek to create [see [Building an Inclusive Workforce](#) tabletop desk guide.]
- **Inform employees:** Highlight your commitment to employees by providing informal educational events such as lunchtime discussions to review the process for requesting reasonable accommodations [many accommodations are low cost yet yield considerable benefits through increased retention and productivity], or to recognizing the contributions of employees with disabilities.
- **Inform the Public:** Plan your NDEAM Press Release for next year, modeled after this [press release developed by the Department of Labor](#).

If your business is dedicated to including employees with disabilities, there is no time like the present. *The Right Talent, Right Now*. Resources on this subject are abundant. Employers may find these helpful:

- [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#): provides free, expert advice on workplace accommodations, including:
 - [A to Z of Accommodations and Disabilities](#)
 - [SOAR \(Searchable Online Accommodation Resource\)](#)
 - [Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact](#)
 - [Employers' Practical Guide to Reasonable Accommodation Under the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: Small Employers and Reasonable Accommodations](#)
- [Cornell University's BenchmarkABILITY®](#) is a self-assessment tool for businesses and provides information about leading practices to promote inclusive workplaces.