

Job Access

Driving disability employment

Employers in professional service industries can benefit from untapped talent pool

More than half of Australian businesses in the professional and financial service industries can benefit from an untapped pool of talent by considering candidates with disability during the hiring process.

New research released by the Australian Government titled [Building Employer Demand Research Report](#) shows that the majority (79 per cent) of Australian employers across these industries are open to hiring people with disability. While these numbers are encouraging, there is room for improvement as only 58 per cent are currently employing someone with disability.

Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services, Sarah Henderson said most employers recognised the value that people with disability bring to the workforce, however many were unsure about what was involved in the disability employment process at a practical level.

“78 per cent of businesses in the professional and financial service industries believe it is important for their workplace to reflect the diversity in the community by including people with disability,” Ms Henderson said.

“When considering the things that mattered to them, 76 per cent said equal work opportunities for people with disability was an issue that was personally important to them.

“But the research tells us these businesses want more help to transition from ‘willing’ to ‘hiring.’”

Just 44 per cent of employers in the professional and financial service industries thought their business was equipped to employ someone with a disability, and 36 per cent saw employing a person with disability as ‘a step into the unknown.’

Ms Henderson said a range of supports are available to open employers via [the JobAccess website](#) to support them through the process.

“Through JobAccess, employers can access practical advice and resources on all aspects of disability employment – from recruitment assistance, staff training and financial support, to workplace modifications, and tips for creating flexible work environments,” Ms Henderson said.

“Leading disability employers are already utilising these services and reaping the benefits, but we’re urging more employers to get on board.”

PwC Australia is one professional services employer echoing that sentiment, signing on to support the Australian Government’s *Employ their Ability* campaign.

With a workforce of more than 7,000 staff, PwC Australia is committed to workplace diversity, and has been named [Australia’s most desirable employer for two years running](#).

Nicole Vongdara, Senior Manager, Diversity and Inclusion at PwC Australia said considering a person with a disability often leads them to the best person for the job.

“I’ve seen first-hand that employees with disability bring valuable new perspectives, skills and diversity to our team,” Ms Vongdara said.

PwC has utilised JobAccess to obtain partial funding for equipment such as iPads, and captioning services through the [Employment Assistance Fund](#) that can help cover the costs of making workplace changes. The EAF can cover more than just physical changes to the workplace. Other items often covered under the EAF include communications technology, Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreting, disability awareness training for staff, and specialist support for people with mental health conditions or learning disorders.

“For an organisation of our size, and with such varied capabilities, we’d be restricting our view or ability to attract talent if we weren’t employing people with disability,” Ms Vongdara said.

She said building a workforce which genuinely reflects and represents their customers and communities had multiple benefits and made good business sense.

“It’s win-win. That diversity strengthens our workforce, and at the same time, we’re helping to ensure more Australians with disability are given the opportunity to enjoy the personal, social and financial benefits that come with being employed and part of a team,” Ms Vongdara said.

“Right now, there are around 1 million Australians with disability looking for that opportunity, and we want to be part of a movement that helps turn those numbers around.”

For resources and assistance to hire people with disability go to www.JobAccess.gov.au.

Other key research findings:

- Across Australian employers in all industries, large (90%) and medium employers (83%) were more open to employing people with disability compared to small (77%) and micro businesses (76%).
- Among this cohort, there was widespread agreement that employees with disability have a good attitude to work (76% of ‘open’ medium businesses, 69% of ‘open’ large businesses) and are loyal to the business (69% of ‘open’ medium employers, 63% of ‘open’ large employers).
- Research identified professional and financial services; retail, accommodation and food services; and social, health care and education services as the major industry groups most supportive and open to hiring people with disability.
- Employers in the services industries (business and professional services) held the most supportive attitudes to hiring people with disability (83% said they were open to the idea).
- Across all businesses, HR personnel were most open to hiring people with disability (93%) followed by admin staff (83%), middle managers (79%), people in leadership roles (76%) and business owners (73%).

