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STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE:
THREE PERSPECTIVES ON BEST PRACTICES FOR HIRING PEOPLE WITH
INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

by

Elyse Whittlemore

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Straight from the Source: Three Perspectives on Best Practices for Hiring People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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The purpose of this research is to identify best practices for the successful employment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by exploring their employment from several perspectives. Despite the prominence of DEI initiatives in today's organizations and federal legislation prohibiting discrimination, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities still struggle to find employment. This is unfortunate as employment is vital for people's physical, mental, and financial well-being, and because employers may be overlooking valuable potential employees. Through a qualitative analysis of first-hand accounts of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family members, and employers who proactively hire people with disabilities, my goal is to better understand the benefits and challenges of seeking employment with an intellectual and developmental disability and hiring employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities. My analysis uncovers several common themes in these accounts, including each group's motives for seeking employment or helping those with disabilities find employment. Drawing from the information gleaned in my study, I have identified actions organizations take to meaningfully hire people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to positively impact both the employee and business.

KEYWORDS: Disability, Employment, Best Practices, Intellectual, Developmental

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is an extremely prevalent topic as workplaces attempt to make their environments more inclusive. In recent years, especially with the increase in awareness of certain human rights issues, significant efforts have been made by organizations to address DEI (Ferdman, 2020). DEI are values that aim to create a more inclusive workplace for all people by being fair and accessible. Many companies implement DEI practices through statements or policies to “support individuals of different ethnicities, religions, abilities, races, sexual orientations, gender, political perspectives, and backgrounds” (International Management for Institute Development, 2024). These statements join a series of commitments companies are making to better their culture and business.

Although ability is incorporated in DEI, organizations often fail to include disability in their DEI statements or initiatives (Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) team, 2022). In the United States, approximately 54 million people or 16% of the population live with a disability (Understanding Disability Statistics, 2023). Of that population, seven million people are living with an intellectual disability (*Population Specific Fact Sheet – Intellectual Disability*, n.d.). Intellectual disability (ID), one focus of this research, is a disability causing limitations to people’s ability to function in their daily life and learn at an expected level (*Facts About Intellectual Disability*, 2019). These limitations originate before the age of twenty-two, impacting a person’s intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior (*What is Intellectual Disability?*, n.d). In 2013, a study conducted by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston showed 44% of people aged twenty-one to sixty-four with ID are in the labor force, whereas 83% of people without disabilities are in the labor force (Siperstein et al., 2013). Developmental disabilities (DD), the second focus of this

research, are a group of conditions from impairments in physical, learning, behavior or language areas (*Developmental Disabilities* | CDC, 2022). Researchers often refer to intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) together. The study conducted in this paper will include ID and DD together as IDD.

The largest minority group in the world is people with disabilities. Unlike other minority groups, people can acquire a disability at any time in their life. Despite the impact and relevancy of this minority group, people with disabilities are often overlooked in inclusive hiring practices and workplace culture (Marcantonio & Curry, 2022). In the literature about DEI, the focus on improving culture remains primarily on race and gender. Numerous organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, do not mention disability in their policies, missions, or on their website at all. As revealed, race and gender are often the two main points discussed in DEI, with other categories such as disability or age referenced second or not at all. Although these groups are important, a major minority group (disabilities) is continuously being forgotten (Casey, 2022). People with IDD are within this minority group and are also being excluded.

Kroger, a Fortune 500 company, advertises their commitment to DEI on their website through the publication of their “Framework for Action: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion”. Kroger utilizes this document to place emphasis on reflecting the communities they serve (*Standing Together – The Kroger Co.*, n.d.). People with disabilities shop at Kroger, nevertheless, this is not reflected in their framework for action. The framework mentions racial awareness, generational diversity, micro diversity, inclusion training, and a program to provide people with a second chance to enter the workforce. Along with the framework, a “Year in Review” is included that also makes no mention of disability. The review discusses donations and partnerships with racial equality organizations and programs, as well as diversifying talent

through Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (*Standing Together – The Kroger Co.*, n.d.). The exclusion of ability reflects the place hiring people with disabilities has in Kroger’s culture and hiring practices. If Kroger fails to include this marginalized group of people in their DEI initiatives, there is less of a chance they will make a conscious effort to hire people with disabilities. Kroger is just one example of large companies who exclude disability.

A second example of the many Fortune 500 companies that fail to put disability at the forefront of their DEI initiatives is Salesforce. Salesforce surpasses Kroger in their efforts, but they are still one of the many companies whose DEI initiatives place less emphasis on people with disabilities. On their website, Salesforce boldly states their commitment to building a more inclusive workplace and their goal of equality. The first four statements under their equality tab do not mention disability but rather mention gender, race and ethnicity. The next section on the page, “Our Latest Equality Data” also includes only gender and race (*Salesforce Believes in Equality for All. Join Us in Building a Workplace That Reflects Society.*, n.d.). It is not until reaching the third section on the page that employees with disabilities are finally mentioned. In addition to being shared significantly later on the page, Salesforce takes a reactive approach to disability especially compared to the proactive approach it takes for race and gender. Essentially, actionable statements are showcased regarding the work that has been done and aims to be done to better include people of different races and gender. Conversely, the statement about disability recites data as a positive statistic from Salesforce but makes no call to action to improve the issue.

Kroger and Salesforce are just two of the companies that neglect disability in their DEI initiatives. There are many other companies that are not Fortune 500 companies, such as Smithfield

Foods, that also fail to do so. While most companies are failing in disability hiring, there are champions for people with IDD who are succeeding. These pioneers, coupled with passionate advocates who have disabilities themselves, are working towards more inclusive employment for people with IDD and other disabilities.

Take Christopher Paul, a twenty-seven-year-old man with a degree in computer science from California Polytechnic State University as an example (CBS Sunday Morning, 2018). Paul has submitted over six hundred job applications, and it still has taken him more than two years to finally receive a job offer. Paul has autism causing him to struggle with social and communication skills. Paul's strengths, however, clearly outweigh his weaknesses. His strengths include strong attention to detail and the ability to recognize patterns. Although his skill set contains very marketable skills, his struggle with social skills makes the hiring and interview processes difficult. Paul knew he was capable of the jobs he was applying for and was also aware of his struggle with social skills, but worried about disclosing this fear due to potentially looking desperate (CBS Sunday Morning, 2018).

For companies who hire people with disabilities, the business imperative is clear (CBS Sunday Morning, 2018). At the same time Paul was struggling to find a job, tech-giant Microsoft realized there was a strong business case for hiring people with IDD and they were missing out on a large talent pool of people with disabilities. As more companies become aware of the benefits of hiring people with IDD, the experiences of those with disabilities are starting to change. In 2015, through Chief Accessibility Officer Jenny Lay-Flurrie, Microsoft created a hiring program to better identify job candidates on the autism spectrum. Microsoft hired Paul as a Software Engineer and was immediately impressed by his ability to think out of the box and

bring new insights (CBS Sunday Morning, 2018). Both the experience of Paul and Microsoft are proving to be a strong business model for companies to move towards.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Researching current employment attitudes, opportunities, and outcomes for people with IDD is important to ensure opportunities are provided for people within this minority group. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), people with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities. And, when they are employed, they are more likely to earn lower wages (World Health Organization, 2011). Studies show people with IDD want to work because they are motivated by the desire to earn a living, appear competent to their peers, and socialize (Petner-Arrey et al., 2015). Just as employment is an important part of every person's life, employment is important, and arguably even more important for people with IDD. Employment fills an important social role in society (DuBois et al., 2024) and contributes to an individual's self-worth, financial stability, and independence (Barkoff & Read, 2017), thus enhancing their quality of life (DuBois et al., 2024). The following literature review will explore employment legislation, attitudes, opportunities and outcomes for people with IDD.

For this research and based on common practice, I focus on intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) which researchers often call IDD. I draw on the definition of intellectual disabilities from the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). The AAIDD defines intellectual disability as “significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills originating before age eighteen” (Qian et. al, 2018). Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions from impairments in physical, learning, behavior or language areas (*Developmental Disabilities* | CDC, 2022). In many cases, both intellectual and developmental disabilities are present in people with disabilities (*About Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs)*, 2021).

The literature on employing people with IDD is growing, however, as a new field, there are still some significant limitations in our understanding. IDD is discussed much less than physical disabilities and is only beginning to be explored in the United States. Many of the articles about this topic are from studies conducted in other countries. The literature focuses heavily on the outcomes and changes that can be made on the side of people with IDD rather than changes to organizations and their cultures. There are few multi-perspective approaches and recommendations made towards employers to promote and encourage the successful employment of people with IDD. This literature review will use the little information available to draw together the impact of disability policy on employment practices today and the current outcomes of employing people with IDD. Through a synthesis of the existing literature, this review will provide the foundation for future research on the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of hiring individuals with IDD.

Regulations & Policies to Combat Disability Discrimination

The current policies, regulations, and employment outcomes would not be possible without the work of influential figures throughout the disability rights movement. Judy Heumann, an early figure in the disability rights movement contracted polio, becoming a paraplegic. Growing up, Heumann had to fight for every service she needed in school. She graduated from college with a teaching degree but was denied the right to teach because she could not pass a medical exam. As result, Heumann's early activism for employment rights helped to form Disabled in Action, a disability rights activist group (Berger & Wilbers, 2021). Around this time, disability activism like Heumann's focused heavily on physical disabilities. Today, it has evolved to include many disabilities including physical, intellectual, developmental, and psychological disabilities.

In response to this activism, the U.S. Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Berger & Wilbers, 2021). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 has two provisions, Section 501 and Section 503, that address employee discrimination based on disability. As the first federal law to prohibit discrimination due to disability, the Rehabilitation Act was the first step to provide people with disabilities equal access to employment in federal agencies and programs that receive funding from the federal government (Gonzales, 2023). This act was a step in the right direction, but it only prevented discrimination in employment at the federal level. In 2023, the EEOC and U.S. The Department of Labor published a resource guide to help companies be more aware of the recruitment, hiring and employment of people with disabilities (Gonzales, 2023). The resource guide focuses specifically on leveraging and interpreting the Rehabilitation Act. Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act specifically requires federal agencies to recruit and educate people with disabilities in position opportunities. As with a job hiring process, the goal is to attract, identify, and hire the candidates with the best skills and characteristics for the job, which can include people with disabilities. The guide helps employers to ensure people with disabilities are sought out and aware of job opportunities while encouraging employers to see the benefits of widening their talents and select the best possible candidate.

In 1990, arguably the most crucial piece of legislation for people with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, prohibiting the discrimination of people with disabilities in the workforce (Barkoff & Read, 2017). The passage of this act deemed disability a civil rights issue, impacting disability policy and making the United States considered a leader in disability policy (Heyers, 2015). According to the ADA, a person with a disability must be able to complete the job that they were hired to do, with or without reasonable accommodation (A guide for people with disabilities seeking employment, 2023).

While the ADA can be deemed the most important disability employment policy, there are multiple drawbacks and loopholes to the ADA causing difficulties for people with IDD to find employment. One drawback of the ADA is that it only applies to companies with fifteen or more employees (The ADA National Network Disability Law Handbook, 2013). Even with the passage of the ADA, the gap in employment between those without disabilities remains large. Studies show that smaller companies are more likely to discriminate against people with disabilities because they are not subjected to the ADA guidelines (Ameri et al., 2015). A second drawback of the ADA is that not all people or businesses are covered under Title I of the act. To be covered a person must meet the definition of disability as defined in the ADA. Outside of the United States, some countries require hiring quotas regarding how many people with disabilities must be employed at a company. There have been mixed results from the implementation of this policy (Riddell & Weedon, 2011). In addition to the ADA, Section 14(c) of the Labor Standards Act of 1938 allows for employers to pay people with disabilities subminimum wage (DuBois et al., 2024).

It is also important to note that disability policy has been difficult to discuss because of stigmas surrounding the ability of people with disabilities. Public policy has made people feel they have a sense of public responsibility to serve people with disabilities, instead of believing people with disabilities can do the same things as people without disabilities (Heyers, 2015). The above drawbacks combined with the ambiguity of reasonable accommodations leave room for people with disabilities to still face employment discrimination. The inequality for people with disabilities despite DEI programs and laws against discrimination is important to address because it impacts people with IDD's ability to find employment leading to poverty and social isolation (Nagtegaal et. al, 2023). Although the employment of people with IDD is not widely discussed in

literature, the rest of this literature review will primarily focus on literature specifically related to IDD.

Employment Opportunities for People with IDD

Current literature and research around employing people with IDD reveal people with IDD gain significant benefit from employment. These benefits include more social contacts, a better quality of life, greater economic security, higher autonomy and improved physical and mental health (DuBois, 2024). Although these benefits are apparent and despite the ADA (Ameri et al., 2015), the employment outcomes for people with IDD have remained relatively unchanged over the past twenty years (Butterworth et al., 2015). People with disabilities are discriminated against both during the hiring process and while on the job (Ameri et al., 2015). Studies show students with a permanent disability are more likely to be unemployed than students without a disability (Riddell & Weedon, 2011). When people with disabilities are hired, it is often at a lower wage (Ameri et al., 2015) and with fewer opportunities to interact with employees who do not have IDD (Dubois et al. 2024).

Researchers have begun to identify the obstacles and concerns related to the employment of people with IDD due to this discrimination. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), barriers to employment for people with disabilities are lack of access, misconceptions about disability, discrimination, and overprotection in labor laws (World Health Organization, 2011). There is a stereotype that people with disabilities do not want to work and are not capable of holding a job, although this is not true (Barkoff & Read, 2017). The literature suggests that people with disabilities are not hired because of perceptions that they have higher employer related costs and lower education and skill levels. For example, employers, especially within smaller companies, are concerned about the accommodation costs that come along with hiring

people with disabilities (Ameri et al., 2015). Researchers have also found that for parents of people with IDD, finding employment opportunities is also an issue (Bianco et al., 2009). Research shows parents are concerned, policies are in place, and people with disabilities want to work; however, there are still a shocking number unemployed (Barkoff & Read, 2017).

As mentioned above, there is a stereotype related to disability resulting in employment discrimination. A study conducted by researchers at Rutgers University sent out 6,016 job applications to open accounting positions. One third of the applications disclosed the applicant had a spinal cord injury, one third disclosed the applicant had Asperger's, and one third disclosed the applicant did not have any disability (Ameri et al., 2015). Asperger's is considered a developmental disability categorizing it under IDD (Asperger's Syndrome and Social Security Disability, n.d.). Both disabilities disclosed have no impact on people's ability to complete job duties related to an accounting position. After sending in the application, researchers kept track of the employer's responses. The employer's responses were divided up by companies who wanted an interview, companies demonstrating another form of interest, or companies displaying no interest at all. The study found that applicants with disabilities were 26% less likely than those without a disability to receive an expression of employer interest (Ameri et al., 2015).

The literature provides solutions to improve the employment outcomes of people with IDD, but research is more focused on changing the behavior of people with IDD or writing national policies rather than making holistic changes in organizations. More work is needed to understand how people with IDD and organizations can work together to ensure the successful employability of this group. For example, state developmental disability agencies have adopted "Employment First" policies to focus on employment in integrated settings (Butterworth et al., 2015). In a study conducted by the Human Service Research Institute, results show people with

IDD are interested in participating in competitive, integrated employment (CIE) as a solution (Dubois et al., 2024). CIE is defined as full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher with the following three conditions: 1) wages must be similar the rate employees without IDD are paid for the same job, 2) the employment location is a place where people with and without IDD are interacting and 3) the opportunities for advancement are the same as those without IDD (Mostafa & Wang, 2023). The WHO also provides potential solutions to these outcomes, citing laws and regulations, tailored interventions, vocational rehabilitation and training, self-employment and microfinance, social protection and working to change attitudes (World Health Organization, 2011).

Conclusion

There are many holes in our understanding of the employment opportunities for people with IDD. The goal of the ADA is providing people with disabilities the opportunity to be economically independent; however, through the above research it is clear this has not currently been achieved. There is a significant need for research in this field because of the lack of focus on IDD specifically, the lack of the literature reviewing these topics, and the lack of research studies conducted within the United States in this area. There is very little literature about the attitudes of hiring people with IDD especially from the employer's perspective and there is little literature on the changes employers can make to successfully employ people with IDD.

People with IDD are an underemployed population and research needs to be done to help combat this problem. Current literature has some generalized ideas about the challenges faced by people with disabilities, but in this paper, I am going to specifically explore the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities. The following qualitative analysis seeks to build upon this literature by identifying the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of hiring individuals with IDD

from multiple perspectives. Through this research, I aim to increase our understanding of the most effective ways to increase the employment of people with IDD.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Objectives and Questions

My main research objective is to investigate hiring people with IDD from multiple perspectives to identify best practices for their successful employment. The perspectives my research analyzes are people with IDD, their family members, and employers who proactively hire people with IDD. The three perspectives were chosen to gain a holistic view of the employment experiences of people with IDD. The first perspective is employers of people with IDD. They were chosen because they are at the forefront of the movement to create an inclusive workplace. This group of people have the power to enact change in their company and advocate on the behalf of hiring people with IDD. Secondly, family members of people with IDD were chosen because of their personal connections, ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of hiring people with IDD, and the impact employment opportunities have on the family. Lastly, and most importantly, people with IDD were included because it is important to hear and understand their perspectives. For people with IDD, there should be *nothing about them, without them*. In the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools youth movement, the previous statement is significant to ensure decisions about people with IDD are not made without learning their opinion on the topic. In their 2011 World Disability Report, the WHO calls out the need to consult with people with disabilities when creating laws, policies and programs (World Health Organization, 2011). Therefore, my research uses a multi-perspective approach to determining the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employing people with IDD. Although it would be helpful to include the perspectives of organizations that do not hire people with IDD, it is not practical due to legal implications and negative publicity from sharing this information.

The multi-perspective analysis enables a well-rounded approach to IDD employment practices enabling not only employers, but the voices of people with IDD and their family

members to be heard. The hiring of people with IDD will be investigated through the exploration of the motivations, benefits, and obstacles of hiring people with IDD from the three perspectives. My research uses a qualitative analysis of first-hand accounts to uncover themes among each perspective and the commonalities and differences between them. I analyzed seventy-three videos from YouTube of varying lengths, experiences, and perspectives to investigate this topic.

My primary research questions are:

- From an employer's perspective, what are the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employing people with IDD?
- From people with IDD's perspective, what are the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employing people with IDD?
- From family members of people with IDD's perspective, what are the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employing people with IDD?

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative approach, I conducted an analysis of seventy-three videos from YouTube of personal accounts of people with IDD, their families, and employers who have hired people with IDD. The videos included stories from large and small organizations, including both privately held and publicly traded companies. Videos included interviews from news channels or segments, accounts directly from companies who hire people with intellectual disabilities, business owners and hiring agencies. My goal was to collect data from as close to primary sources as possible, therefore I used videos of people sharing their personal accounts. I refrained from including information from webinars or interviews that were from researchers or sharing secondary information.

The videos were found through searching YouTube using the keywords “hiring people with disabilities,” “hiring people with intellectual disabilities,” “hiring people who are neurodiverse,” “hiring people with developmental disabilities,” “employing people with disabilities,” “employing people with intellectual disabilities,” “employing people with developmental disabilities,” “people with disabilities working,” “neurodiversity hiring program,” “businesses that employ people with disabilities,” “neurodiversity programs,” “autism hiring program,” “corporations hiring neurodiverse,” “corporate companies hiring people with intellectual disabilities,” “stories of people with disabilities working,” “story of hiring people with disabilities,” “hiring people with disabilities organizational citizenship behavior,” “business case hiring people with disabilities,” “hiring people with disabilities business case,” “obstacles for hiring people with disabilities,” and “jobs for people with disabilities.” The word “disability” was used as a search word because many videos talk about people with intellectual disabilities; however, they categorize it under disability causing disability to be the word used in the titles

and descriptions. As the focus of this paper, “intellectual disabilities” and “developmental disabilities” were used to gather videos where IDD was specifically used in the title or description. Lastly, “neurodiverse” was used because many people who are neurodiverse and many of the disabilities people who are neurodiverse have IDD.

After searching YouTube using the keywords described above, I reviewed the titles and descriptions of the videos to determine if they met the criteria of discussing intellectual and developmental disabilities. The titles and descriptions were reviewed on the search page until the page ended or videos were repeated. The video titles needed to include the keywords “disability” and “employment” or “hiring.” After determining the title met the above criteria, I watched the video to ensure it related to the topic of employing people with IDD and was from one of the following three perspectives: 1) person with IDD, 2) family member of person with IDD, and 3) employer of people with IDD. Thirty-eight videos included accounts from people with IDD, seventeen videos included accounts from their family members, and forty videos included accounts from employers.

To begin the data collection, I watched each video in its entirety and took detailed notes, using a spreadsheet designed to ensure consistent data collection throughout the process. In addition to collecting data to answer my research question, I also collected demographic information about the people in the video and other descriptive information including the title, date, length, location, summary, keywords and URL link. The spreadsheet, located in Appendix One, included columns for the demographic information, obstacles, motivations, benefits, and quotations. The videos were of people living in Canada and the United States. The videos ranged from 1 minute and 16 seconds to 47 minutes and 9 seconds long, with an average length of 7 minutes and 6 seconds long. The videos were posted on YouTube between 2012 and February

15th, 2024. Sixty-four videos were posted in the last ten years with the highest number of videos from 2022 and 2023, each with ten videos posted.

The heart of the analysis was conducted in the benefits, motivations, and obstacles sections. Prior to analyzing the videos based on these three themes, I defined each of the three themes based on questions I would ask to understand what qualified for each theme. The table below outlines the questions to determine notes inclusion.

Table 1: Data Collection

Obstacles	Motivations	Benefits
Why are employers reluctant to employ people with IDD?	Why are employers motivated to employ people with IDD?	How do employers and organizations benefit from hiring people with IDD?
What obstacles are people with IDD faced with when seeking employment?	What motivates people with IDD to seek employment?	How do people with IDD benefit from being employed?
What do family members believe are the biggest obstacles to employment for people with IDD?	What motivates family members to employ or help people with IDD seek employment?	How do family members benefit from the employment of people with IDD?

I utilized a semi-structured format to determine which information belonged in each category. Many videos stated words such as motivation, obstacle or benefit in their video, while other videos did not. Based on context clues and the semi-structured definitions for each section, I categorized the accounts from videos that did not specifically mention one of the three categories. After watching each video and taking notes, I analyzed the notes to determine common themes among each category for reach of the perspective. The number of times a statement was placed into each category was counted and the most common themes were determined based on the frequency number. The themes were then compared among the three

perspectives, and similarities and differences were determined. Notable quotations were also captured from the videos and utilized to support these common themes.

CHAPTER FIVE

Outcome and Findings

This study uncovered similarities and differences among each of the three perspectives analyzed. The frequency of these perspectives for each category is summarized in Table 2. Findings from all three perspectives consistently showed that the traditional hiring process and fear of the unknown are obstacles for employing people with IDD. Amidst all three perspectives, the benefits that result from employing people with IDD are a common motivator for hiring people with IDD or helping them find employment. Family members and employers are motivated by the opportunity to provide people with IDD meaningful employment and to gain the competitive advantage this group brings to an organization. Benefits were the most discussed category across the three perspectives with the themes gathered from each account being repeated more than the themes in any other category. For employers, the common benefit of employing people with IDD is improved organizational health among employees. Family members who have started a business for their child also noted their business benefited from improved organizational health. Moreover, employers' benefit from diverse perspectives, increased productivity, and higher retention rates. People with IDD benefit from employment through increased social interaction and independence.

Table 2: Frequency of Each Category by Perspective

Obstacles	Motivations	Benefits
People with IDD: 10 videos	People with IDD: 37 videos	People with IDD: 38 videos
Family: 28 videos	Family: 16 videos	Family: 15 videos
Employers: 10 videos	Employers: 39 videos	Employers: 40 videos

In addition to the findings mentioned across the three perspectives, each perspective had their own themes that were commonly discussed in their accounts. These unique themes are notably apparent when analyzing the benefits as there are two types of benefits discussed throughout the videos: 1) the benefits hiring people with IDD provides to an organization, and 2) the benefits people with IDD receive from employment. Both benefits are equally important in justifying the need for this underemployed population to have employment. The motivations for family members of people with IDD to employ people with IDD are also unique and significant. People with IDD are motivated by the opportunity to provide their child or sibling with employment. The themes described in the above paragraphs are summarized in Table 3. Table 3 identifies the major themes uncovered in each category and the applicable perspectives. The table displays the findings discovered from all three perspectives, as well as findings that are unique to one or two perspectives.

Table 3: Common Themes

Category	Themes	People with IDD	Family of People with IDD	Employers of People with IDD
Obstacles	Traditional Hiring Process	Lack of early talent recognition in resumes and interviews Struggle with social skills and communication	Traditional interview process	Candidates with IDD are overly honest and unable to convey skill set with traditional job interview
	Reasonable Accommodations	Employers assume accommodations cost the company money		Assume accommodations cost the company money
	Lack of Knowledge			Outdated understanding of IDD, little experience working with people with IDD, and concerns about language when talking to people with IDD
	Stigma and Fear of the Unknown	Stigma about people with IDD's abilities to work and invisibility of neurological differences	Employers are intimidated about hiring people with IDD because it is uncommon	Stigma about people with IDD's abilities to work and employers are intimidated because employing people with IDD is uncommon Fear difficulties of people with IDD integrating into the organization, not being able to be critical of an employee with IDD's performance and employees with IDD will not add value to organization
	Preconceived Notions and Perceptions of Capabilities	Not capable of being employed	Unaware of their family member with IDD's capabilities Employers believe people with IDD are not capable of completing tasks, have difficulty keeping up, do not add value to an organization, and	Employers believe they cannot be critical of people with IDD's performance and that people with IDD have difficulty keeping up and do not add value to an organization

Category	Themes	People with IDD	Family of People with IDD	Employers of People with IDD
			employers cannot be critical of their performance	Employers subconsciously perceive people's abilities or inabilities
Motivations	Benefits of Employment	Socialize with coworkers and make new friends	Employment provides their child or sibling with benefits, such as social engagement	Business imperative for organizations financial and cultural success
		Seek independence through purpose and financial stability	Competitive advantage for organizations and strong business case rather than altruism	
		Loyal and innovative employees		
	Meaningful Employment	Long for work that goes beyond minimum wage jobs or fulfilling a diversity quota	Start their own business to provide meaningful employment opportunities built around the capabilities of people with IDD	Desire to change the employment opportunities based on seeing the lack of employment or previously working with people with IDD by providing meaningful employment
Internal Motivation	People with IDD's disabilities are not an excuse to not succeed		Family members with IDD age out of public school programs with limited support and opportunities for next step	Feels good to employ people with IDD and is rewarding to work with people with IDD
		Employing people with IDD is the humane thing to do		
Opportunity to Learn	Eager to learn through employment			Provide people with IDD the opportunity to learn life-skills and job related tasks Employers learn from people with IDD
	Hiring Agencies			Streamline hiring process, easing potential obstacles by simplifying the

Category	Themes	People with IDD	Family of People with IDD	Employers of People with IDD
				process, sharing tools and resources, and supporting organizations
Benefits	Independence	Financial independence from earning a paycheck and contributing to society	Ability for people with IDD to contribute to their family and society	
	Organizational Health		Creates a powerful and stronger community among employees	People with IDD contribute joy, humor, purpose, engagement, excitement and passion
	Productivity			People with IDD are more productive because they work safer, have less absenteeism and encourage universal design
	Social Interaction	Leads to improved communication skills and new friendships	Improve family member with IDD's social skills, changing their child's behavior and mood	
	Diverse Perspectives			Fosters innovation and ensure people with IDD are represented in products or services allowing organization to accomplish more
	Community Support		Support of the community and engaged customers because many customers believe hiring people with IDD is great practice	
				Bridges the gap between people with and without IDD
	Retention Rates	Loyalty		Little turnover among people with IDD, especially in jobs with high turnover rates

Obstacles

One of the three categories I used to analyze the video accounts is obstacles. Obstacles included the traditional hiring process, reasonable accommodations, lack of awareness, stigma and fear of the unknown, and preconceived notions and perceptions of capabilities. Fifty-five of the 73 videos in my sample referenced obstacles related to employing people with IDD.

Traditional Hiring Processes

Fifteen videos across all three perspectives reported the traditional hiring process proves to be difficult for people with IDD to gain employment. In this case, the traditional hiring process does not allow people with IDD to show their strengths (video 62). The traditional hiring process includes reviewing resumes and the interview process. Of these 15 videos, twelve 12 discussed problems related to a traditional job interview. According to the videos, people with IDD struggle with socializing, communicating, and maintaining relationships. Kayln Morris, an Engineering Associate with autism at Wells Fargo Technology states “interviews are a struggle that [she] shares with many others on the spectrum.” For example, when answering a question, Morris tends to be too honest or answer the question completely off base. Interviews are often geared towards social and communications skills instead of the actual skill set needed to hold the job. The Head of Technology at Wells Fargo states, “That doesn’t mean they don’t have the skills to do the job. It just means that when you are interviewed, if you don’t do those things that normally a hiring manager is expecting from a candidate, you are not getting selected” (video 13). Interviews focus heavily on soft skills rather than technical skills and people with IDD often do not excel in this area (video 15). These difficulties coupled with the invisibility of their neurological differences make the interview process difficult (video 7). The videos show that the

traditional hiring process is not an accurate assessment of the capabilities of people with IDD to be successful in a job. Oftentimes, employers look at what they see on the surface rather than peeling back a few layers to understand the strengths that are below the surface of people with IDD (video 63). There was also mention of the lack of early recognition that people with IDD have a disability, instead an employer will see a mistake in their application documents, such as a resume, and immediately reject their application (video 2).

Reasonable Accommodations

Nine videos mentioned the need to make an accommodation as an obstacle for people with IDD to be employed. The videos indicate employers make multiple assumptions about what accommodations entail, leading them to avoid hiring people with IDD. Employers believe every person with IDD will need an accommodation and that this accommodation will cost an organization extra time and money. Employer experience shows that most people with IDD do not need an accommodation. If they do, it either does not cost any money or is under \$500 (video 48). The accommodation needed is not as difficult as many employers think it is going to be. Oftentimes it is as simple as needing something repeated one more time or bringing a job coach in for a few days (video 26). If an accommodation is made, it is typically to the benefit of all employees in the organization. Organizations hear the word “accommodation” and immediately think it is going to require extra work on their end causing organizations to shy away from hiring people with IDD.

Lack of Knowledge

Along with the misunderstanding of reasonable accommodations, the lack of knowledge people without IDD have about people with IDD leads to employment obstacles. This lack of

knowledge was admitted from both employer and family members and there are two ways it hinders hiring. On one side, people with IDD are perceived to lack knowledge and on the other side, people lack knowledge about hiring people with IDD. Although people with IDD did not personally state that lack of knowledge is a problem, it is evident in many of the obstacles they specifically face, such as trouble understanding the employer, lack of confidence to ask the employer questions, and being told they cannot succeed in a job.

Nine videos discuss a lack of knowledge from the family and employer perspective. Lack of knowledge includes the inability to understand the needs of people with IDD (video 2), being unsure how to communicate with people with IDD (video 6) and having an outdated and limited understanding of what IDD looks like (video 30). As a part of this lack of knowledge, the lack of experience working with and understanding people with IDD was the most common aspect of this obstacle cited. People are not aware of what disability looks like, rather they see what the media portrays (video 30). Chez Genese, a business owner who employs people with IDD, states “There is a level of integration and exposure that we get from the content we consume and a lot of that information either doesn’t exist, it’s very small, or it’s very outdated and the language that’s being used or the models or the worldview that’s being used is not current” (video 30). These types of portrayals discourage employers from disability employment practices because they are being led to believe ideas that are not always true or are outdated. This lack of knowledge causes employers to fear speaking to people with IDD because they are unsure about what they can and cannot say to people with IDD. Most employers have not been involved with a company who has hired people with IDD, contributing to this lack of understanding (video 33).

Stigma and Fear of the Unknown

Four videos from the perspectives of employers and people with IDD mention stigma as an obstacle to employment. There is a stigma about employing people with IDD as people tend to think negatively assuming the worst and setting low expectations for people with IDD. Dave, Director of Strategic Programs for Potentia Workforce, and an individual with IDD argues, “For many our biggest barrier isn’t anything with our brain, it’s within the minds of others. It’s the stigma around people who think differently” (video 69). The ability for people with IDD to hold employment does not fall on their capabilities to hold a job, instead it falls on the inability of people who are employing them to look past stereotypes and see the abilities of people with IDD. Another employer mentions that prior to learning about the benefits of employing people with IDD, he and other employers might not interview people if they knew they had a disability (video 2). People with disabilities have long been the subject of certain stereotypes, leading to myths about their interests and ability to work.

Six videos, all from the perspective of employers and family members, mention fear of the unknown as an obstacle associated with employing people with IDD. Employing people with IDD is so uncommon, employers are not sure of the process and if it is different than hiring people without IDD. For many, it can be intimidating to not have experience with the disability community (video 30). As an employer, business manager or owner, the fear of the unknown can be difficult to overcome because the success of the business lies in the decisions they make. While less common than the other obstacles, it is important to note that stigma and fear are still issues this group faces today.

Preconceived Notions and Perception of Capabilities

The preconceived notions and assumptions about the capabilities of people with IDD are a large obstacle hindering the employment of people with IDD. The themes in this category did not have significant overlap across the three perspectives as each perspective has their own way of thinking.

People with IDD suffer from the preconceived notions of people without IDD. People with IDD are told they are not capable of being employed because that's what people without IDD believe. For example, Cody Takayoshi, a Software Engineer at Microsoft who has autism, was told at a young age by a psychologist that he would not be capable of entering the workforce when he was older (video 62). Although they were completely unaware of his capabilities at the time, this powerful statement was made by a well-respected person. These notions impact the confidence, self-doubt and nervous energy of people with IDD.

Families of people with IDD identified preconceived notions, assumptions, and perceptions of the capabilities of their child or sibling that they have personally believed or seen other people believe. Family members said people believe that because their child has a disability, they are not capable of working or completing tasks. Sherri Mercantonio, CEO and founder of Bridge Builders of Diversity, has a son with Down syndrome who is nonverbal and constantly fighting preconceived notions even though he is bilingual in English and American Sign Language (video 18). She argued people look at the disability before they look at the abilities. Although Mercantonio's son understands two languages, people's preconceived notions lead them to believe that because he is unable to speak, he is unable to understand what a person is saying and unintelligent. Other family members discussing the capabilities of their child or sibling, admitted they themselves underestimate the capabilities of their child or sibling with IDD.

Both families and employers of people with IDD reported the perception of people with IDD having difficulty keeping up with work, not adding value to an organization and having the inability to be critical of their performance as obstacles to hiring people with IDD. Employers have proved these preconceived notions to not be true, however, they still run through many employers and family members' minds. There are other issues that are a part of employers' perception that they can't hire people with an IDD because they have a business to run, and their employment will negatively impact it. Employers also mentioned it can be easy to subconsciously perceive people's abilities or inabilities.

Motivations

Another category I used to analyze the accounts is motivation. Motivations include the benefits of employment, meaningful employment, internal motivations, the opportunity to learn and hiring agencies. Sixty-six of the 73 videos discussed these motivations.

Benefits of Employment

The most widely discussed motivation across the three perspectives are the benefits individuals with IDD receive from employment or the benefit an organization receives from employing people with IDD. Twenty-five videos discuss the benefits of employment and the business imperative. Of those 25 videos, 20 state the benefits as motivations and five state the business imperative as motivations.

Each of the three perspectives are motivated by the benefits. Employers hire people with IDD because of the increased productivity they bring to an organization (video 4). People with IDD can fill jobs that might not be filled or are difficult to fill (video 8). Since the benefits of

people who think differently are so large, there is a need for diversity within businesses. A diverse group of employees creates opportunities for an organization to relate to all customers. The business also benefits from stronger retention rates, less absenteeism, and improved organizational health (video 10). On the other hand, families and people with IDD are motivated by the benefits employment provides the person with IDD. Family members discussed social engagement and the ability to make friends as a motivating benefit. People with IDD also agreed the opportunity to socialize and make new friends with coworkers are motivating benefits, as well gaining independence and financial stability. Persons with IDD mentioned employers are motivated to hire them because of their increased loyalty and ability to innovate. Organizations like Walgreens and Ernst & Young hire people with IDD because they see the business imperative (video 3). Families also argued that employing persons with IDD creates value and a competitive advantage for organizations.

Although a couple of videos argue employers hired people with IDD because it feels good, there is a clear point in the five videos about the business imperative, as well as the videos that mention the benefits, to point out employers and family members are not being altruistic when hiring people with IDD. People with IDD can do the job and are being hired to complete, providing organizations with financial and cultural success. There is also a business imperative to be made by people with IDD. People with IDD do not want to be hired to have diversity in the workplace or to meet a quota, but because they can do the job (video 47).

Meaningful Employment

Twenty-three of the videos discussed meaningful employment as a benefit from the three perspectives. People with IDD are motivated to find meaningful employment, while families and

employers are motivated to provide people with IDD the opportunity for meaningful employment.

Sixteen of the 23 videos discussing meaningful employment are from family members. Each of the 16 videos discussed family members starting their own business to give their child or sibling a place to experience meaningful employment. For family members, the motivator to provide a child or sibling with meaningful employment is strong. Family members begin worrying about what their child or sibling will do as an adult as soon as they find out they have an IDD (video 67). Typically, at the age of 22, an adult with IDD ages out of the public school system, ending their child's vocational training (video 18). During this time of their loved one with IDD's life, family members strive to provide them with an opportunity to experience meaningful employment built around their capabilities. For example, in Skokie, IL, founder and mother of a child with IDD, Joan Hallagen opened Will's Place to create meaningful employment and training opportunities for adults with IDD. Hallegen's son Will has autism, loves to cook, and was struggling to find opportunities after he aged out of high school, so she opened the cafe. The small, local cafe has 17 young adults with IDD who want meaningful employment working for them and have recently aged out (video 34). This finding is significant and important to take note of.

Five of the 23 videos mention the perspective of employers who want to provide people with IDD the opportunity to experience meaningful employment. These employers have seen the lack of employment opportunities for people with IDD first-hand and are motivated to do something about it. Multiple employers saw adults with IDD aging out of their high school transition programs and being left with no job opportunities or vocational training. This issue resonates with them, these employers want to embrace what they can do rather than what they

could not and provide people with IDD with meaningful employment opportunities (video 14, video 38, video 60). Similarly, other motivations to provide people with IDD meaningful employment stem from having the opportunity to previously work with people with IDD (video 60). One important aspect to note is that for many of these employers, meaningful employment goes beyond simply providing a job. Meaningful employment includes training and ensuring a person's skills are aligned with the role.

It is no secret that people with IDD want to work (video 8, 23). People with IDD want to be treated like human beings, can work (video 39) and have purpose in their lives (video 3). In addition, people with IDD want to have a sense of normalcy in their lives and strive to be like their neurotypical peers (video 70). These desires are strong motivators for people with IDD to seek meaningful employment. For some people with IDD, especially those on the autism spectrum, they can take this desire a step further. For them meaningful employment means they are destined to work more than a minimum wage job (video 62). People with IDD understand their capabilities, education, and skill sets go farther than what employers believe they can do.

Internal Motivation

In addition to the desire to provide or experience meaningful employment, ten videos discussed other internal motivators as a reason for employing people with IDD or seeking out employment. Of the ten videos, two videos discussed employing people with IDD because it feels good to be able to help someone, and it is rewarding to have the opportunity to work and be friends with people with IDD (video 6, 15). Three of the videos discussed employing people with IDD because it is the right thing to do (video 26, 39, 43). Two of these accounts came from the perspective of people with IDD who argued it is the human thing to do and everyone wants to be

treated like a human being (video 39, 43). A third account from an employer argued employing people with IDD is the right thing to do from the heart (video 26). Additionally, people with IDD are motivated by their disability and are not going to use their disability as an excuse not to succeed (video 9). Others with IDD long to feel a sense of purpose, build self-esteem (video 11), and know through their employment they can help others (video 28).

Opportunity to Learn

Eight videos discuss the opportunity to learn as a motivation. People with IDD are eager to learn through employment and organizations are willing to employ people with IDD to learn about IDD. Five of the eight videos talk about the motivation an individual with IDD has to become more knowledgeable. Two of the videos cite from an employer's perspective, they're motivated to employ people with IDD because it provides people with IDD with numerous opportunities to learn more (video 35). Life skills, such as independence and managing money (video 35), and job development skills like following directions and receiving constructive criticism are learned through employment (video 12). Employment also provides the opportunity to learn specific job-related tasks (video 45). On the other hand, three of the seven videos discussed an employer's motivation to employ people with IDD to learn more about IDD. Employers argued they can learn just as much from people with IDD as they can teach them (video 28, 40). This aspect of motivation is helping to combat the fear of the unknown described in the obstacles section.

Hiring Agencies

Employers were motivated to hire people with IDD if they had the opportunity to use a hiring agency to employ people with IDD. Hiring agencies are used in two ways: 1) hiring

agencies seek out employers to find opportunities for people with IDD who come to their agency looking for a job and 2) employers contacted hiring agencies to start the process. One business owner cites The deMoya Foundation, a nonprofit hiring agency, made the process of employing people with IDD easy for him. The de Moya Foundation created a job description based on the organization's needs, before finding people with IDD capable of completing the duties in the job description to fill the role. The foundation also conducted a disability and sensitivity awareness training with employees at the organization. The opportunity to be able to use a hiring agency to employ people with IDD ensures they are given the right support. Many hiring agencies being free of charge is an added motivator (video 54). Hiring agencies work to make certain people with IDD are matched with a job that fits their abilities and skill set to fulfill job requirements (video 33). Hiring agencies may also utilize a job coach to help people with IDD become acclimated and understand their job duties (video 33).

Benefits

Seventy-one of the 73 videos discuss the benefits employing people with IDD provides the organization or the person with IDD. The benefits employers receive by hiring people with IDD were discussed overwhelmingly more than the obstacles and motivations. From the employers who shared their experiences, the benefits outweigh any challenges hiring people with IDD pose or issues the employer thinks it will cause. The overarching theme of the benefits of employing people with IDD is that it is a business imperative providing a competitive advantage. The videos consistently mentioned employing people with IDD is not a charitable act. There are consistent benefits that have exceeded the expectations of people who have begun employing people with IDD.

Independence

Among the social interactions employment provides people with IDD, it also fosters independence and a sense of purpose, a benefit for those with IDD and their families. Twenty-two of the videos discussed increased independence and purpose in life as a benefit. People with IDD can do things on their own and want to be treated like they can do things on their own. Employers of people with IDD say they strive to empower their employees to earn their own independence and be a stand-alone person (video 13). The benefit of independence comes in part from the ability to earn a paycheck. The independence derived from employment and earning a paycheck thus creates a sense of purpose for people with IDD (video 59). For an individual with IDD, they feel like they can contribute to society and are appreciated for what they are doing. Family members argue the benefits of this independence also impact their family and society as all people are contributing to the best of their ability (video 45).

Organizational Health

Seventeen videos include the impact employing people with IDD has on an organization's health and culture. Employers and family members of individuals with IDD commented on the benefits employing people with IDD provides to an organization's health. Employees with IDD have many characteristics at work that improve the environment of a workplace. When employed, people with IDD bring joy, humor and purpose to the organization (video 18), alongside engagement, excitement and passion that is not often seen in employees without IDD (video 27). Matthew Castro, a young man with Down syndrome, says "I leave my ego at the door, and I come with a positive attitude" (video 41). Attitudes like Castro and these characteristics of people with IDD portray have a ripple effect on other employees in the

organization improving the team dynamic. Teams within an organization are happier, communicate better, and work together when people with IDD are on them (video 31). Employers and family argued the employment of people with IDD creates a family amongst the people who work in their organization (video 16) and creates stronger employee engagement all around (video 44).

Productivity

The increase in productivity in an organization that employs people with IDD was overwhelmingly discussed as a benefit. Seventeen videos discussed the increase in productivity employers have seen and how employees with IDD are more productive than employees without IDD. Many people with IDD have strong attention spans and the ability to focus on tedious tasks for long periods of time leading to this productivity. For example, Dakota Kiriachuk, an employee with autism at Critical Control, showed productivity levels of the four to sixth month range at only month three. Her accuracy was in the 99th percentile (video 70). Not only was she working at a faster pace than the average employee, but she was also doing so at a highly accurate rate. Other companies have shared that sustained focus has increased their productivity by 30% (video 4). This increase in productivity also comes from the benefits of working safer, less absenteeism, and universal design that people with IDD provides. Employees with IDD are conscious when completing a job and follow directions closely leading to safer environments and fewer mistakes. They are also punctual and rarely call out of work. Multiple employers report having to tell their employees with IDD they need to leave work because the day is over, but they want to continue working. Walgreens redesigned their facility according to universal design and this also increased productivity rates. This productivity benefit has been termed return on disability (video 10).

Social Interaction

For people with IDD, employment provides them with the social interaction they might not otherwise get after graduating high school. Each perspective recognizes the social benefits of employment as they are discussed in 12 videos. People with IDD understand the gain they receive from socializing with their coworkers or customers. Kristopher McLamb, a York Coffee Roastery employee with IDD states, “Before I came here, I couldn’t talk like and actually keep a straight face because I would be so nervous and jittery there. It would be a constant anxiety and panic attack” (video 73). The potential to see and talk to people every day has been helpful for McLamb to improve his social skills (video 73). The benefits extend beyond improving social interactions to include building and maintaining relationships. Julie, an employee at Walgreens met her husband through her employment. Parents and employers have also seen the gain, citing changes in their child’s behaviors and moods. A businessman and brother of an adult with autism shares, if it was not for the job, he was providing his employees with, most of them would be home playing video games and without friends (video 1).

Diverse Perspectives

Ten videos mention the diverse perspective people with IDD bring to an organization as a benefit. Employing people with IDD allows the 15% of the world's population with a disability to be represented in the product or service an organization offers (video 62). By thinking of creative ways to solve problems, the employees ensure companies are designing with universal design in mind. These perspectives lead to different ways of thinking, innovating (video 5), and providing unique solutions to different projects (video 29). For example, Kristine from Meijer states, “When you have different people from different cultures, backgrounds, and abilities, you

create a stronger team, and you have the ability to do so much more” (video 35). Diverse perspectives create a stronger group of people with the ability to accomplish more than a group without those perspectives (video 35).

Community Support

The employment of people with IDD benefits people with IDD, their families and organizations, but it has also been shown to benefit the community. Six videos discuss the support and impact employing individuals with IDD has had on the people outside of the organization. Ben Wright, co-founder of Bitty and Beau’s, says “It creates a bridge from where people with disabilities are to where people without disabilities are. Brings them together, let's them experience each other and see humanity in one another” (video 37). Wright and his wife argue a place like Bitty & Beau’s transforms the community because it creates an atmosphere, where people are coming together and living life. Customers can connect with employees and be part of a warm and welcoming environment (video 37). The benefit towards the community thus provides a benefit to organizations themselves. When a sense of community is fostered around an organization, customers are likely to come back and interact with the organization and employees, improving their brand recognition and profits.

Retention Rates

People with intellectual disabilities are loyal employees, as organizations and individuals with IDD have reported strong retention rates from hiring people with IDD. Fourteen videos discuss the benefit of the retention rate of individuals with IDD. Mark Cronin, the owner of John’s Crazy Socks has benefit from the retention of employees with IDD. Cronin runs warehouses and warehouses are one of the top four businesses with the highest turnover rates in

the country. Cronin says, “We have almost no turnover, people come and stay” (video 8). People with IDD are loyal when they are employed somewhere.

An additional finding outside of the obstacles, motivations and benefits is the two-pronged path of unskilled versus skilled employment opportunities people with IDD are given with very few opportunities in between. Unskilled employment includes minimum wages jobs, such as working at a coffee shop, grocery store, or on a custodial staff. Most of the businesses started by family members for their child with IDD were businesses that employ people in these unskilled positions. On the other end, large corporations, such as Microsoft, Dell, Wells Fargo, SAP, and Ernst & Young have implemented neurodiversity hiring programs for highly skilled positions. The goal of these programs is to hire skilled workers with autism who can successfully fill roles within the company through their unique ways of thinking. There are not many opportunities available for people with IDD in between the entry level positions and ones offered through hiring programs. People with IDD are limited in their representation in education and office positions within medium sized companies.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion and Conclusion

Exploring the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employing people with IDD from multiple perspectives is important because it exposes the best practices of companies who are successfully employing people with IDD. These best practices have been successful for both the employer and the employee with IDD and have been formulated into actions business can take to successfully accommodate and employ people with IDD. These best practices were derived from analyzing the obstacles and motivations to figure out what works best for both employees and people with IDD to lead to successful employment and the benefits discussed.

The findings suggest obstacles to employment for people with IDD are traditional hiring processes, reasonable accommodations, lack of knowledge, preconceived notions and perceptions of capabilities, stigma and fear of the unknown. The obstacles were commonly discussed across all perspectives. Traditional hiring processes and reasonable accommodations were the most common obstacles. It is important to point out, the reasonable accommodation itself is not an issue. The issue lies in the belief these accommodations require extra work and cost the company money.

There are similarities and differences in the motivations for employers, family members and people with IDD. They are motivated to be employed because they desire to be a part of the many positives other people receive. At the same time each perspective is seeking meaningful employment, as people with IDD want to experience it and employers and family members want to provide it. Internal motivators and the opportunity to learn are also discussed among all three perspectives from the point of view of their respectful perspective. A high number of family members were motivated to provide their child or sibling with a job. On top of the inability for

their child or sibling to find a job, any services they receive, both educational and vocational, are lost when they turn 22 and age out of the public school system. Parents refer to this as the cliff because their child has nowhere to go after this. Uniquely, the use of hiring agencies and the motivation it provides from ease is supported from the employer's perspective.

The overarching finding of my research suggests employing people with IDD has a strong business case and can impact people with IDD. Employers reported improved organizational health, diverse perspectives leading to innovation, increased productivity, and higher retention rates as benefits. Reasons for improved organizational health include the passion and excitement people with IDD have from the opportunity to work. People with IDD reported benefiting from the increased social interaction and independence, while family members are benefiting from the community support, social interaction, productivity, and organization health. The employment of people with IDD is not because they are a charity case, it is because they are strong employees who can be held to the same standards as other employees. My findings show that employing people with IDD can provide an organization with a competitive advantage.

Best Practices

My findings suggest a series of best practices for employers who are interested in employing people with IDD to follow. These best practices have been used by other organizations to successfully employ people with IDD.

Capitalize on Strengths and Weaknesses

Regardless of ability, employees have strengths and weaknesses that employers need to identify within their employees. The identification of these strengths and weaknesses makes

people aware of their capabilities while also allowing for stronger matching of tasks in an organization. Although employers should be seeking out the strengths and weaknesses of all employees, for people with IDD, it is especially important to find their strengths and weaknesses. When people with IDD are put in a role that capitalizes on their strengths they succeed and outperform. Throughout the process of hiring people with IDD, it is important to make sure their strengths fit the job description.

Accommodations

Every employee needs accommodations regardless of their ability. An accommodation can be as simple as coming in late because of a doctor's appointment. Pedro Figuero, Home Depot Store Manager in Worcester, Massachusetts, argues that making accommodations is a part of doing business and that every person needs an accommodation. Rather than fearing hiring people with IDD because they need an accommodation, it needs to be embraced.

Non-Traditional Hiring Processes

As expanded on in the obstacle's results section, the traditional hiring process of interviews and resume reviews is difficult for people with IDD. To successfully employ people with IDD it is important to change these processes to highlight the abilities of people with IDD rather than the disabilities. Wells Fargo is a prime example of a non-traditional hiring process people with IDD benefit from. Wells Fargo's neurodiversity program uses a skills-based hiring model. The program creates communication, collaboration, and teamwork among job applicants using a workshop-based approach. An approach like Wells Fargo lowers the anxiety an interview causes people with IDD and promotes trust between the employer and applicant. The interviews need to be geared towards the skill sets of people with IDD so they can showcase their talents

(video 15). Microsoft uses a similar interview process and has seen success. Microsoft uses a hiring process that involves team building exercises which allows Microsoft's hiring managers to watch potential employees' complete tasks in an environment they are comfortable in rather than asking them about it (video 17). Traditional hiring processes focus on a candidate's soft skills. Both Wells Fargo and Microsoft are moving their hiring process away from this method.

Hiring Agencies

Hiring agencies are great tools to simplify the process of hiring people with IDD and ensure their skill set lines up with the job description. Hiring agencies make the process of employing people with IDD easy. Hiring agencies work to match people with IDD to employers that are looking to hire. They facilitate the onboarding process to make it seamless. Other agencies will come into a business to conduct job carving, meaning they create a position that is customized based on the organization's needs and the person with IDD's needs. Oftentimes, they will also provide some of the other best practices outlined, such as a job coach and employee training, free of charge.

Job Coach

The use of a job coach for people with IDD is helpful for people with IDD to know and learn how to accurately complete the job they were hired to do. Job coaches save an employer time because they are there to explain to people with IDD how to do something. They are also able to explain to an employer how people with IDD like to work or how they need instructions explained to them.

Employee Training for People without IDD

Other employees often have concerns about employing people with IDD. To ease these types of concerns, employee training about people with IDD is vital to ensure employees know how to talk, interact, and treat employees with IDD. Employee training includes sensitivity education, bias education, and disability education. Mandatory training is already included in the onboarding process for many organizations. The addition of training for people without IDD on disabilities to this onboarding process can create a stronger work environment for people with IDD and ease any potential concerns from employees without IDD.

Universal Design

Building an organization with universal design not only creates a successful employment environment for people with IDD, but it also creates a successful environment for everyone. Designing with universal design in mind benefits all people. By designing an organization with universal design, the building layout, employee training, and standard operating procedures are accessible for people with IDD. This allows for people with IDD to be successfully employed without costing the business more money.

Belonging

Hiring people with IDD is not the final step to creating successful employment for people with IDD. Creating successful employment opportunities includes creating a sense of belonging for people with IDD. People with IDD want to feel meaningfully included. They want to be included in social events, meetings, and feel a part of the organization. They do not want to feel like the organization is employing them to check off a box. To foster this environment of belonging, inclusion must be a part of an organization's core values. Some organizations have moved towards adding belonging as part of their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to instill it in their core values. The companies beginning this initiative have termed the idea

“diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging” (DEIB), placing emphasis on fostering a strong culture of belonging in an (Miller, 2023). Moving forward, it is important for companies to ensure this belonging portion of DEIB is applied to people with IDD.

Ask the Person

As revealed in the obstacles section, employers let their preconceived notions and beliefs about the abilities of people with IDD impact their hiring decisions. Instead of letting these beliefs impact their decisions they need to ask the person with a disability how they would do things. By asking the person, this allows the person with IDD to explain their methods rather than creating their own ideas about the person's methods.

Limitations

As with any research, there are limitations in this study. It is important to consider the risk of bias across the videos in the analysis. First, videos were hand selected from YouTube and not chosen from a random sample. The use of this site means the YouTube algorithm may have impacted the videos selected. The search history was not cleared throughout the study. Although I used search terms that were intended to identify all relevant videos, it is possible that I missed videos that may have presented different views on the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employment for people with IDD. Additionally, finding videos that discussed the disadvantages of employing people with IDD was difficult. Not surprisingly, employers did not discuss these downsides, possibly for fear of legal ramifications or damage to their public image. Videos about employing people with disabilities from the perspective of people with IDD and their family members were focused on improving employment outcomes, not giving reasons that people with

disabilities should not be hired. Thus, my results may be biased in favor of hiring people with IDD.

It is also important to note that demographic characteristics of the people whose accounts are analyzed in this study may limit the generalizability of my results to all people with IDD. The majority of the accounts are from white business owners or family members. The accounts from people with IDD are more racially and ethnically diverse but are still predominately white. Although there are people with IDD among all races, not all races are accurately represented in these videos. It is possible that people of color with IDD might face additional barriers to employment that are not identified in this study. Furthermore, some of the experiences described in these videos demonstrate high levels of investment in time and resources from family members. This level of advocacy may not be available to people with IDD from lower socio-economic status.

Directions for Future Research

Generally, there is a strong need for more research on the obstacles, motivations, and benefits of employing people with IDD. Future research should focus on several areas. First, this study used videos, but future studies should directly interview people with IDD, their family, and employers of people with IDD. Second, more effort should be made to measure the benefits of employing people with IDD through surveys and other quantitative research. A larger understanding of how people with IDD influence profits is needed. Third, research regarding the differences in employing people with IDD in skilled and unskilled jobs needs to be conducted. There is a considerable gap between people with IDD being employed at entry level (minimum wage jobs) and people with IDD being employed at large corporate companies with hiring

programs, such as Dell, Microsoft, or Wells Fargo. Fourth, the ability to spread awareness about the benefits of employing people with IDD and encouraging organizations to hire people with IDD should be studied. Finally, future studies should also look at other demographic factors, such as race, geographic location, and organization revenue to understand who is currently employing people with IDD. Along with that, there should be more research to understand employing people of different races and ethnicities, pulling together the Special Olympics Unified Champion City Schools initiatives and the employment of people with IDD in inner-city areas.

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Appendix One

Video Coding Sheet

Perspective	Title	Date	Length	Location	Obstacles	Motivations	Benefits	Quotations	URL
1. People with IDD 2. Family of People with IDD 3. Employers of People with IDD					<p>Why are employers reluctant to employ people with IDD?</p> <p>What obstacles are people with IDD faced with when seeking employment?</p> <p>What do family members believe are the biggest obstacles to employment for people with IDD?</p>	<p>Why are employers motivated to employ people with IDD?</p> <p>What motivates people with IDD to seek employment?</p> <p>What motivates family members to employ or help people with IDD seek employment?</p>	<p>How do employers and organizations benefit from hiring people with IDD?</p> <p>How do people with IDD benefit from being employed?</p> <p>How do family members benefit from the employment of people with IDD?</p>		

Appendix Two

1. Hiring people with autism: how one car wash turned it into a winning formula

URL: <https://youtu.be/QixutorIyb8?si=uT7gofvf-oEBC9n4>

2. The power of neurodiversity in the workplace

URL: <https://youtu.be/pjgQqxAtvKk?si=RDdRVivvbr9KHDg>

3. Companies seeking out potential employees with autism

URL: https://youtu.be/YnAUy4BM0w8?si=-Bp_1D8bzAH8cS4w

4. Autism: Neurodiversity at Work Works Best

URL: <https://youtu.be/ikioIpTcBbI?si=TdoFsaxa3QwT3x7->

5. Autism and Neurodiversity: Different Does Not Mean Broken

URL: <https://youtu.be/J8X-SZfCWPw?si=QBYQHTNfh3VrgdK8>

6. Empowering Companies to Hire Autistic Adults

URL: <https://youtu.be/dqAPcTxibYg?si=EXQltRHb0slyTN10>

7. Neurodiversity, work and me

URL: https://youtu.be/Nae_pWStWzw?si=9vorU2AT-DktJFB6

8. Hiring Those with Differing Abilities Is Good Business

URL: https://youtu.be/uXtrhHSFkuY?si=c_4T_cVKoUINFs11

9. Disability & Work: Let's Stop Wasting Talent

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twaKuhvYpss>

10. Business Owner Makes Money by Hiring Disabled Workers

URL: <https://youtu.be/CRHnlyJI0dg?si=1a7xbocfDtgcU014>

11. Creating Employment for People with Disabilities

URL: https://youtu.be/HCYmoUHLxqo?si=Xqg7P7VF-0hdVs_L

12. Esteemed Coffee: Why Hiring People with Disabilities Matters

URL: <https://youtu.be/Z8a29ZFjQPM?si=LfkWm5tleVZrtXoR>

13. Well's Fargo Neurodiversity Program

URL: <https://youtu.be/yCL6QUMIFe0?si=MY-pH4SS9dLIDjxz>

14. Nonprofit Reimagines Workforce By Employing People with Disabilities

URL: <https://youtu.be/6lypUYZB0VU?si=ohBdaZfR-lajaArL>

15. Hiring Autistic Workers

URL: <https://youtu.be/3b5OGx-v6Ao?si=1dsy-O4KM8XyKfX4>

16. People with Developmental Disabilities WORK

URL: <https://youtu.be/LCa02lgV0I0?si=cf-qoK7lg7FXcYIJ>

17. Employers Rarely Hire People with Disabilities. Here's Why They Should

URL: https://youtu.be/L7KTODIJGwg?si=VK3NHrFKaMeU_Lpo

18. People with Disabilities: Ready for Hire!

URL: <https://youtu.be/ihSpOBmAOKk?si=S6I8J9v7VOC0aAHJ>

19. Hiring People with Intellectual Disabilities are Helping Businesses Too

URL: <https://youtu.be/L0LQ4E-aVI4?si=fZkLytnAy5YFUsd9>

20. Program Gives Jobs to People With Disabilities

URL: https://youtu.be/c8XGNe_x_3c?si=IPL22W482KEeeDzK

21. New Phoenix Center Helps Employ People with Developmental Disabilities

URL: <https://youtu.be/Y-JAwh2pOPI?si=3tIeR4c9mGD7ul22>

22. Employing People with Disabilities

URL: <https://youtu.be/25hv3MJfe7w?si=EqxEqv7b-MKaOKj>

23. How 1 Thrift Store Is Helping Young Adults with Disabilities

URL: https://youtu.be/Ae_Ru1KbokY?si=rU52Yo8pvk_OfigO

24. Why Companies Should Hire People with Disabilities
URL: https://youtu.be/GosoTn_D8nY?si=PbPcHESXcF61owge
25. Employer Recommends Hiring People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/6CvaZZ5p0pc?si=OkdvRrIVr99jpJMt>
26. Home Depot's Pedro Figueroa - Hiring People with Disabilities is Great for Business
URL: <https://youtu.be/3EdaAQWMJlo?si=umMtBgWW3nFc5poO>
27. Works for Me: Employers' Solution for Hiring People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/Ug53UiaV2-c?si=0risYzjSLYD4yokf>
28. Getting Down to Business: Hiring People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/LvyVpeZ-NxI?si=ULvFbU-aZQfZmeMv>
29. "Investing in Ability" - Reducing Employment Barriers for People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/x7fnDv11rbl?si=T5IIEkchwDqlkfyH>
30. What REALLY Holds Employers Back from Hiring People With Disabilities
URL: https://youtu.be/1OW6vEO9uB4?si=v3vW_ajAWo5t1JcT
31. Why You Should Hire People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/rcNOWcMOXBk?si=OXchU5Wkucb0jYKp>
32. How She Works with People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/H5b-c5qnsLU?si=ERd3RzLj4sz7cVB0>
33. How Hiring People with Disabilities Benefits Cornerstone General Contractors
URL: <https://youtu.be/zakEjjjMZgo?si=PZ533YqT8LFVa8et>
34. Will's Place Giving Meaningful Employment to Adults with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/836W0mq7dNk?si=ZBh8BTHSZ5h0bdka>
35. Meijer Talks About Hiring People with Disabilities

- URL: https://youtu.be/gSEbyQzkc5c?si=vbBAQzCVnk11M_z3
36. Bitty & Beau's Coffee Prioritizes Hiring People with Disabilities
- URL: <https://youtu.be/OIeslwNYfkE?si=sVEDRBmwwC87mPdi>
37. Bitty & Beau's Coffee Empowering People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- URL: <https://youtu.be/RC2GnliPLKI?si=qh9GxuYUxGNisyXx>
38. Employing Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Hugs Café & Greenhouse
- URL: <https://youtu.be/wBxcqb4joFU?si=hfvaSlbEPazsugcy>
39. Why is Job Opportunity Still Lagging for People with Disabilities
- URL: <https://youtu.be/--4NRuDr2g4?si=NCtJJ2xVkmiaop-o>
40. Empowering Employees with Disabilities
- URL: https://youtu.be/NNJpLI6QrIM?si=3lvo-3ro4dQS7b_M
41. Man with Down Syndrome Seeks Job, New Restaurant Hires Him on the Spot
- URL: https://youtu.be/scd3Evw_sxY?si=-sfrM7_hBB6anBb5
42. Busted! Josh Rimer on Myths about Hiring People with Disabilities
- URL: https://youtu.be/djiQsoiYO_g?si=SBFtCJ1fQb-nRluE
43. The Business Case for Hiring and Retaining Workers with Disabilities
- URL: <https://youtu.be/aY9J-vak4Sw?si=ucjKhl4gBPzVphLI>
44. The Real Barrier to Inclusive Employment
- URL: <https://youtu.be/i58Yw3p8ysw?si=C-1TJzpnMNmqJ-15>
45. Project Search: New Pathways for Young Adults with Disabilities
- URL: https://youtu.be/UQ-8p5DN26c?si=lqCzxd_zGQVrT9RH

46. Rudner Law Video Update: Hiring People with Disabilities
URL: https://youtu.be/VFJ1bh_nJo0?si=1xPWxqZJasRsWIDC
47. Episode 1 Employing People with Intellectual Disability
URL: <https://youtu.be/vFtUIZeX9Tg?si=z631tS3hNNrgUKV0>
48. The Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/JRtbOA5iyOI?si=4q9xt6HbCBFksyEL>
49. Hiring Employees with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/k3ArDGaUo3A?si=RhNi49CIDediZ80e>
50. The Business Case for Disability Inclusion: An Interview with Terry Peterson of Rush
URL: <https://youtu.be/hLBCLaqJu4M?si=cKz0C6uWmgiesNgZ>
51. The Small Town Known for Hiring Dozens of People with Disabilities
URL: https://youtu.be/-8vJgJz9_sw?si=yD3MefjgYls3IKdJ
52. The Advantages to Hiring Individuals with Disabilities
URL: <https://youtu.be/4t94aHJ5H7g?si=uw8fa7p1Mpns6npA>
53. Hiring People with Disabilities - Codesign Nirvana
URL: https://youtu.be/SE_SUZs68S0?si=jjwcDGROylEfT1Bb
54. Hiring People with Disabilities from an Employer Perspective & Organizational
Citizenship Behavior
URL: <https://youtu.be/YBUmk51F4BY?si=wFG30URDHoyngCSw>
55. Why Employers Should Consider Hiring Job Seekers with Disabilities
URL: https://youtu.be/3Q6ojK8APEU?si=gLxG44kLiH_ApYIL
56. Successful Employment: Ethan's Story
URL: <https://youtu.be/NAmHROV47rs?si=kZg6v2UsUzaeXHun>

57. Disability in the Workplace - Reflections of People with Disabilities Working in Accessibility

URL: https://youtu.be/GSvUp2rIsvQ?si=ePsZ_L2VbsIZFBqR

58. People with Disabilities are the Most Unemployed in U.S. an LA Nonprofit is Working to Change That

URL: <https://youtu.be/NTIa49686tw?si=vfIUtV1yJZszighK>

59. Movie House Provides Meaningful Jobs to People with Disabilities

URL: <https://youtu.be/Ww9IP2V841M?si=OH7yKa613ogOB6UC>

60. South Fork Bakery Offers Full-time Jobs for People with Disabilities

URL: https://youtu.be/sv3mcOi3h_E?si=ArsilyuSsvvur8lh

61. US: Major Corporations Begin Hiring Autistic Workers

URL: https://youtu.be/24E_jl_i8v8?si=xp_z9xHuV74t-mFc

62. Microsoft Autism Hiring Program

URL: https://youtu.be/XUAsU_zQVMo?si=yuUcbECGx0i2C8AW

63. Electrical Engineer with Autism gets Interview, but no job

URL: <https://youtu.be/eQY0KnCfyb8?si=AL5wRqgCybD8AlZJ>

64. Autism News: Google Launches Program to Hire More People with Autism

URL: <https://youtu.be/BEKHNZo8Cyg?si=Po2irbLIpfHY5z-1>

65. Dell Technologies Neurodiversity Hiring Program

URL: <https://youtu.be/Voy1m4uazrI?si=VvrYml29C1iCgcYm>

66. Neurodiversity @ IBM - Nothing About Us, Without Us

URL: <https://youtu.be/2noTl6ThDRg?si=2J4-hv4MuTPGvvaf>

67. Why I Hired a Workforce No One Else Would

URL: <https://youtu.be/SyhgqkSvINU?si=UScFaH0YXuaky8Rn>

68. Job Opportunities for those on the Autism Spectrum

URL: <https://youtu.be/uVrpDJfsjUg?si=OgYQvNJQCAiIKVhj>

69. Rebranding the Brain: Neurodiversity at Work

URL: <https://youtu.be/vp7QfomN2Bs?si=wJ-T6SOsthsptd7u>

70. Woman with Autism Finds World of Possibilities in New Job

URL: https://youtu.be/UIBu-EI9Kpc?si=JnYy_9tgVhdIITBQ

71. Student to Hire People with Disabilities for New Business

URL: <https://youtu.be/Ek-Kqct2SSc?si=lAzvrF9keVVcHHMK>

72. Meaningful Jobs for Disabled Adults

URL: https://youtu.be/-wk24UZ8uc4?si=IuwoxSrg_IARuMUZ

73. New Coffee Roastery Opens in New York to Help Adults with Disabilities Learn Jobs Skills

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8a29ZFjQPM>