



DISABILITY CAN BENEFIT YOUR COMPANY

MANY COMPANIES MISTAKENLY BELIEVE THAT HIRING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IS INCONVENIENT, BUT THERE ARE BENEFITS. FROM QUALIFYING FOR TAX ALLOWANCES TO DUCKING HEFTY PENALTIES, HERE ARE SOME OF THE PERKS

Disability employment is sometimes regarded as cumbersome for an employer. However, it is no different than the complicated processes that the South African legislative framework has for all employees.

The essence lies in the Employment Equity Act (EEA). Reasonable accommodation for an employee with disabilities is, for example, the responsibility of the employer. To the employer, this requirement may appear onerous. However, many employers fail to realise that "reasonable accommodation" applies to all employees and not specifically to persons with disabilities.

The EEA assists employers with job creation for people with disabilities through the Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities, the Technical Assistance Guide and the Code of Good Practice on Employment Equity; all of which are guides to employing people with disabilities.

These outline the disability targets that employers should work towards, which is represented in their Employment Equity Plans. This plan should cover a five-year period, demonstrating how employers will achieve their annual equity targets. The Code refers to Stats South Africa as a guide for employers. The latest census states 7,5 percent as the target for disability employment.

If an employer is unable to achieve their equity targets, they may be liable for penalties. These penalties can be

anywhere between R1,5 million and up to 10 percent of an employer's annual turnover, depending on the nature and frequency of the non-compliance.

A major challenge for employers is the sourcing of people with disabilities. This is demonstrated by the statistic provided by the latest Commission on Employment Equity Report of 2016/17. It states that only 1,1 percent of people with disabilities are accounted for in the working population. This is way off the target of 7,5 percent.

To address this major gap in disability employment equity, skills development provides a solution where employers can source skills-development grant funding from their respective SETAs.

Employers would enjoy the benefits of earning tax allowances on placing their staff or unemployed persons with disabilities in learnerships. For example, a R120 000 tax allowance can be claimed by the employer for a learner with a disability.

In addition, the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act provides a scorecard, where the employment of persons with disabilities can favourably contribute to an employer's points score. The impact could well propel an employer to a higher level.

An employer should develop a strategy governing disability employment. There are numerous service providers that can assist the employer to achieve legislative compliance or tap into the numerous benefits available in the employment of persons with disabilities. ^[7]



Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert extraordinaire, who assists businesses to "let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility" through BBBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. He ensures that businesses are able to maximise their points on the BBBEE scorecard and become compliant with legislative requirements as stipulated in the Employment Equity and Skills Development Acts. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability.