

# Write an Inclusive Diversity Statement

Is your definition of diversity antiquated? If your business still defines diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender, consider updating it to include people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are 20 percent of America's population and its largest minority group, yet suffer from the highest rate of unemployment. This population has critical perspectives and abilities to add to the workplace. Plus, people with disabilities have equal or higher performance ratings, better retention rates, and less absenteeism. Savvy companies recognize the value of including workers with disabilities and specifically include this distinction in hiring policies.

With an aggregate spending power of \$1.7 trillion dollars and a turnover rate of 8 percent, companies are simply missing out on a wealth of talent. But not all companies. It's no surprise that some of the most successful companies have established recruiting and training practices that aggressively reaches out to people with disabilities. In fact, *DiversityInc* recently published an article listing the top 10 companies for people with disabilities in 2006. Topping this year's list are Merrill Lynch, Cingular Wireless, SSM Healthcare, Merck & Co. and Eastman Kodak.

Each of these companies not only has active recruitment programs for people with disabilities but most have some form of internal mentoring programs or council of key members committed to diversity. There is also a company-wide culture that embraces people with disabilities and the challenges that they face. In addition, many of these companies have established supplier-diversity programs for people with disabilities.

## Tips for Hiring People with Disabilities

- Establish a recruitment process that directly targets people with disabilities.
- Ensure that the application process & materials are accessible
- Make sure that your place of business is accessible and welcoming to applicants
- Embrace a top-down approach to diversity and inclusion
- Consider that there may be more than one way to do a job and be willing to evaluate adding accommodations so that a person with a disability can successfully fulfill the duties of the job
- If possible, establish a partnership with suppliers that employ or serve people with disabilities.