Respectability Webinar

**Successful Disability Employment Strategies-**

**Lessons from Staples, Pepsi and other leading Employers**

December 6, 2017 at 1:30pm ET

Rough Edit

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 >> Good afternoon and welcome to the RespectAbility webinar for 2017, December 6th. My name is Philip Pauli. I'm the policy and practices director. It is my delighted pleasure to bring you this webinar today with the folks from disability inclusion. Some of their work is really remarkable and offers a lot of lessons for all of us who care about promoting opportunities for the one in five Americans who live with disabilities. So I want to back up a little bit and give you kind of an introduction to the work they do and kind of why I felt that this would be a very valuable conversation to have today. So back two years ago, I had the pleasure of going out to Las Vegas for the national association of workforce development professionals conference, and as part of that, I had the opportunity to coordinate a site visit for some of the attendees to program the event, which is being supported by Disability Solutions in a distribution center, a retail shop, and a Pepsi and it was really amazing to see the approach to training, their approach to integration and inclusion, the efforts that they were making to really let job seekers with disabilities shine, and those successes are really remarkable. I know everybody who went to the site visits was amazed and really very intentionally thought about, well, how can I serve a job seeker with a disability through a new opportunity, you know, how can I learn from those lessons, and ultimately it comes down to the fundamental lesson that we all know if we find the right jobs for the right people, we can and will succeed, and it especially goes for people with disabilities, and some of the biggest brand names that are out there, brand names that are part and parcel of America, are hiring talent that people with disabilities bring. So I'm very excited to be joined today by Kevin and by Julie from Disability Solutions. They will be talking about best practices from leading employees that are really changing minds and driving inclusion in the workplace today. So, Kevin, Julie, please take it away.

 >> Thank you very much, Philip, and welcome to today's webinar, changing minds and changing lives through true disability inclusion. Philip, thank you to you and the RespectAbility team for the invitation to present. I'm very happy to be here.

 So today's webinar will discuss how Disability Solutions, a corporate disability consulting form, is changing lives through changing minds with Pepsi, Staples, and other employers across the country. Disability solutions clients have hired over 350 people with disabilities, including veterans, over the past five years through the implementation and planning of a strategic approach focused on driving business results. Julie and I will discuss today best practices for bridging gaps between partners and job seekers with disabilities who have produced real outcomes.

 So as you can see, Disability Solutions is at Ability Beyond. It is headquartered in Connecticut. As of 2017, we have obtained jobs for 1300 plus individuals with disabilities nationally. Disability solutions is a consulting arm of Ability Beyond created to help employers navigate the world of hiring job seekers, veterans with disabilities.

 Disability solutions, we are a team of consultants across the country with an array of business backgrounds. Our client list includes Pepsi, Staples, Synchrony Financial, Aramark and more. We are creating a playbook from A to Z on how to recruit and hire job seekers with disabilities for their companies. Our team has a focus on strategy development, partnership development, recruitment, training, compliance, human resources, and more to best prepare our clients, again, the employers, for success. This past October, we recently celebrated our fifth year anniversary.

 More on Disability Solutions. Again, you'll hear a couple of times throughout the presentation our motto is changing minds and changing lives. Through our clients, we are changing minds, and in return changing the lives of those individuals that are employed who basically have a disability.

 You can learn more about our services, success stories, and more at our website, disabilitytalent.org, and we also have a career center, which we'll talk about a little bit more, a great resource for both employers looking to hire individuals with disabilities and those job seekers with disabilities out there looking to work with employers or looking for a diverse workforce.

 So your presenters today, that's me on the left. I am Kevin McCloskey. I am the director of partnership development with Disability Solutions. I'm based out of Bethel, Connecticut, where we are headquartered. My focus is training and preparing local employer sites for such initiatives through disability 101 trainings and fear and stigma trainings. I also assist our clients by building the bridge to the community based organizations out there, both local and nationally, to provide the employers, our client, with a robust and best matched pipeline of job seekers with disabilities.

 On your right is Julie Sowash, senior consultant from the Indiana area.

 >> As Kevin said, my name is Julie Sowash, and I'm a senior consultant, and I oversee the implementation of the strategies that we help to develop for companies as they start or continue their disability and inclusion journey.

 >> Thank you, Julie. So we have got a good combo of presenters here. Julie does a lot of upfront work with the organizations at a headquarter level, goes through all of those wonderful systems, job descriptions, HR, all of that wonderful stuff, and then on my side, I always work with local employer sites to really find the talent. So you're going to learn a lot today.

 All right. So why are we here? So the hiring of job seekers with disabilities is typically viewed as charity, disability solutions and our clients, the employers, are changing that thinking through again, smart planning and outreach to set the example that hiring individuals with disabilities isn't just the right thing to do. It really does make business sense. So, again, our motto is to change the lives of people with disabilities. We are here to change the conversation from charity to talent value. We are talking about a sustainable business model, so it's when the company invests and puts time and money into the program, we make sure it works and gets business results with what they are looking for.

 We have strong case studies that we are going to talk a little bit about our case studies with Pepsi today and Synchrony Financial and some of the success that we have had and continue to have.

 And we also, a part of disability solutions mission is to create a good pipeline of revenue to provide services back to individuals with disabilities to the parent company, Ability Beyond, so Disability Solutions is out there nationally doing a lot of work, and we are funneling some money back into Ability Beyond, which again serves all individuals with disabilities.

 And again, to change the conversation from people with disabilities, what they can do Julie is going to talk a little bit about that. More people with disabilities can be engaged in employment with meaningful levels, from the board room to the mail room.

 Julie, I'm going to turn it over to you.

 >> Awesome, thank you, Kevin. So I think it's just easiest for me to start at the top and give you all a very strategic way that we try to talk to businesses about the importance of some of the things that we hear from them that are important to helping them build. Remember, a sustainable program that has a good business impact and also has a good community impact, in terms of people getting into work, and so I'm going to give you a really high level overview of that and a little bit about what we do up front in strategy development, turn it back over to Kevin to talk about the really cool stuff in partnership development and actually getting people to work.

 And so really, we see four basic building blocks of why companies want to start to engage in our community. And the first one, and we'll kind of get into this a little bit, just so everyone has a good understanding. It's a pretty complex piece of information, but it is affirmative action compliance, so that's section 503 and 4212, which we'll get into here in a few minutes, about why people or why companies who have contracts with the federal government are required to start hiring in our community.

 And the second piece is, you know, we are really at a full implement rate right now, and there's a lot of talent in the disability community that has been untapped and really bring a diverse perspective into in a workforce. And additionally, we know that a good portion of our population is actually aging into a disability. And, you know, the next thing is brand. Companies want to be seen as what's different about them, and part of that is their employer brand, how they engage their workforce, how they attract new and innovative job seekers and employers, and part of that is being inclusive of all types of diversity. We are a growing market. We have a consumer disposable income of over 650 billion, and when you think about not just us as a community, but then our family and friends, that's a lot of income that can be spent on brands that really want to impact our community in a positive way, nearly $4 trillion annually.

 And I love to call out some companies that are already doing some great work. Kevin is going to talk about my two favorites from an employment perspective, PepsiCo and Synchrony Financial, and we are so proud of the work that we have done with them, but really how they have owned this and created initiatives that live and breathe within their organizations. I love to call out Duracell and Guinness from a marketing perspective. Duracell has awesome commercials with Derek Coleman of the Seattle Seahawks.

 And then we kind of talked about some fun, cool stuff, right, everyone loves who is hiring, who is marketing, but it's really important, I think, to understand the very base and this is not when we talk to companies, we don't want companies to just be compliant, but we know that's important to them, so we say that basically compliance is the reporting of all of your diversity activities, and I'll step back here for just a second. So what I'm talking about compliance, I'm talking about federal contractors. So most companies in the United States, Fortune 1,000 companies, are known as federal contractors. That means that they have a contract with the federal government to provide a good or service, and/or they are a subcontractor, which means that company helps to provide a good or service to the primary contractor. And so there are about 250,000 federal contractor establishments in the country. An example is a Home Depot. Home Depot is a federal contractor. Each Home Depot location is a location or an establishment that has its own set of affirmative action requirements. And in 2012, we saw some updated regulations to section 503 of the rehabilitation act that really took away the nonmeasure of how people with disabilities are doing in federal contractors. So prior to 2011, the requirement was good faith outreach. Hey, I reached out it my vocational rehabilitation office and told them I would like to hire some people with disabilities, I posted my job here, and that's all I did, and the director of federal contractor compliance at the time said good faith outreach is not getting us results. The measure for people with disabilities has not changed significantly in the past 30 years. We need to do more. And so with that, they put together a group of goals that are now the updated regulations, and the goal for hiring people with disabilities, it's neither a floor nor a ceiling, so it's just a goal, is at 7% of your location by position or job grouping will be people with disabilities, and that's a pretty lofty goal, but in our opinion it's an achievable goal as well because we know that one in five people in the United States has a disability now, and that number is probably going to increase to one in four.

 The additional things that were put in place are to increase measures so that we know if the dial is moving, and what companies are moving the dial forward, and what companies need to be encouraged to do more. And so the other pieces of section 503 are around self ID. So if you have a person who is applying for a job and you are asked to self ID as a person with a disability or a veteran, that organization is a federal contractor. The next piece is to take a survey of employees to learn demographic information on a regular basis, to provide training and recordkeeping to your existing employee base, and then also to do an evaluation of the sources of your applicants. So, I think this is really important from a partner perspective or a community based organization perspective. If you are sending in job seekers to a company, that company is required to evaluate the quality and quantity of job seekers that are coming through our pipeline from each source, so that's a really great way to be a valuable addition to a local organization, a local company's recruiting activities.

 And then we have also in 2012 similar changes to section 4212, which are directly related to veterans, what we call protected veterans. I like to think about it more generally as veterans, but this includes veterans who have recently separated, who have had extended periods of employment, or have any disability rating. It's broader than that, but just to keep it simple. And for them, the benchmark is a little bit different, so for people with disabilities, it's 7% by location, by job grouping. For veterans, companies are required to hit a hiring benchmark, so all of their hires for the year should be 6.8% veterans, and that number changes just a little bit every year based on the number of veterans of a working age that we have in the population at a given time. They are also required to list their jobs with the state workforce agency, which we think is an amazing and underutilized resource. Same thing with the self ID, which we'll take a look at in a minute, and also to make sure that they have that recordkeeping in place.

 And then my favorite piece, and I think for us the most important piece for us to talk about from an application and how people with disabilities get to work, is the internet applicant rule. It's also a part of the same organization, the office of federal contractor compliance, that put 503 and 4212 also have created standards on how we measure who an applicant is, who a job seeker is that's really interested in the job, and from that regulation in 2008, I believe what we really saw happen was an extreme growth in application applicant tracking systems, so everyone moved to that online system, and there are hundreds, several hundred applicant tracking systems in the United States, and it makes how people apply much more complicated and creates additional challenges and opportunities for people with disabilities. I think we have all been to the place where we have gone and we have applied to the job and have gone into a black hole.

 And the internet applicant rule, very complicated, so I'm just going to be really quick. It just helps the company to define who an applicant is for affirmative action, and that means there are three requirements for being an applicant. The person expresses interest; that means they complete an application in the appropriate format, most likely online in the applicant tracking system. They meet the basic qualifications for employment, and they do not self select out, and that's really easy to do, to self select out, if you don't complete an application, if you don't answer some of the basic qualifying questions excuse me correctly, then you have self selected out of the process, and that means that your application may not be seen by a hiring manager. So those are important things for our community to think about, how to understand how important it is to apply for a job in a way that is going to get you the highest possibility of getting in front of those hiring managers.

 And really the last thing on compliance is this is the actual form that you'll see. It is a government form from the OMB, not very inviting, but you will see it as you apply, and then on the first day of employment as well, and you have the opportunity to select, if you are a person with a disability or a veteran, or if you choose not to disclose or you're not one of those individuals.

 And then switching over then really from compliance and understanding the market value, I'd like to talk about a little bit about what we do just so that when Kevin goes into the implementation, it gives you an idea of how we have gathered our information and how we have gotten to some of our outcomes, and we start with the discovery process, very kind of standard consulting procedures. We need to learn who a company is, what systems they use, what their processes are, and what their culture is like to really understand how best to source and identify candidates and then move them through those applicant tracking systems so we get to success.

 From there, we really focus on those learnings and putting together recommendations, plays, and impact areas, so that when a company is building a strategy, they see out of the gate a tangible and intangible impact on business drivers. Some of those impact areas might be brand. They might be around recruitment gaps, improving culture and engagement within their organization.

 And from there, we really help them to build a comprehensive strategy that they can lift and shift throughout their enterprise to make sure that they can hire people with disabilities in an effective and meaningful way, and that's really the candidate experience, the vendor process, and the internal processes and policies that both hinder or promote great growth for talent with disabilities once they are in the door.

 And then finally, from there, we design a strategy or design and build a program based off of what we learned in that strategy, and Kevin is really going to get into the meat of this, so I'm not going to take time from him, but there are lots of different ways to then put that strategy into place, and for us one of the most important pieces is to make sure that those results are measurable and that we can have a positive impact that champions within companies can go forward with and give a good business reason for growing programs like these.

 Kevin, I'll turn it over to you.

 >> All right. Thank you, Julie.

 So, deliver and go live. So Julie went through some of the upfront work that we do with these companies, being the employers, and what we do is we find out we do a lot of education upfront with these companies. All of the companies that we work with very interested in hiring individuals with disabilities and starting a program, but there's a lot of fears, there's a lot of stigma, there's a lot of unknowns, so our job is really again to help them navigate through those waters.

 And a lot of things we often hear are, you know, what jobs can people with disabilities do? And I am sure the majority on the phone call can say any job that they are qualified for or want to do. And we also hear we are only hiring with disabilities for these jobs, maybe your janitorial job or something like that. We here at Disability Solutions, we work with the employers to see what their needs are, and we help them find individuals who meet their business needs, and they so happen to have some type of disability, so we find individuals who are the best match for those positions, so we are looking for all jobs. And as you will see, anywhere from entry level to management is what we are looking to hire.

 We also, we started in Pepsi, so we often heard a lot of people with disabilities can't lift things or can't physically do any of these jobs. Again, a myth, a fear, so again they need a lot of education upfront to really prepare these employers for hiring people with disabilities and really finding the right talent for their business needs.

 So some of the education is really what is a disability. So it is important to understand the wide range of people this talent pool represents. So, as Philip said earlier, one in five people in the United States have some type of disability and also are facing challenges in getting hired. So we I would say the term disability includes but is not limited to people with hidden disabilities, such as depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders, ADD, ADHD, developmental disabilities, such as downs syndrome, physical disabilities that impact mobility, dexterity, vision or hearing, and disabilities due to medical conditions, injury, or aging such as Parkinson's, stroke, brain injury or cancer. So again we use the opportunity to educate the employers on all of the different types of disabilities that are out there and all of the talent that's out there. Many believe that since most disabilities are physical or visual impairment, the truth is that about 70% of all disabilities are hidden. So a large percentage of individuals with disabilities, including those aging into disability for the first person, as well as those veterans with disabilities returning home to civilian workforce. Also, everyone nowadays seems to like celebrities, so we also talk about celebrities with disabilities, Justin Timberlake, record breaker Michael Phelps, Steve Jobs, and also our own consultant. Again, many, many types of disabilities out there and also a huge talent pool.

 We go over education, disability 101, and person first language. As we continue to educate employers, we start with a simple to me, a little simple yet important piece of how to address a person with a disability. So as you will hear throughout this presentation, we use person first language, and I always tell my mom don't be worried if you still say some of these terms or you're getting used to saying something different. It does take time to break old habits. So when we address a person with a disability, we often hear "the disabled, the handicapped," the cringe worthy "R word," differently abled, challenged people, and these are used all the time and often have a little negative tone to them. When you hear about a car disabled on the highway, you think it doesn't function properly. Calling a person disabled, we think the same thing, so that's why we choose person first or to keep disability off all together. Disabled Keith versus Keith with a disability is different. It's a small piece of education to get our employers not only speaking differently but thinking differently as well.

 So, market value, Julie touched a little bit on this, I believe, so again, going in, educating employers that there is a market value out there. So as many of you might know, the individuals with disabilities are the largest minority in the United States. So, currently, again, you know, one in five Americans have disabilities, really approaching one in four, and that being the largest minority pool in America also has a huge spending power, worth $796 billion, so think about that as an employer or a company. In addition, 70 million families have at least one member with a disability. 70 million families. Studies also show that 87% of individuals prefer to spend money on businesses that hire people with disabilities. I often compare the disability community to the NASCAR community. You'll see when NASCAR fans go into a grocery store or something like that, and they look, they will always look at the product a little differently and see if there's a NASCAR logo on it. They do support the NASCAR brand, and much like that, you know, families and individuals with disabilities are very loyal to the companies that they know support companies who hire and support individuals with disabilities, also fostering inclusion, so they consciously select their products and services over competitors.

 I myself am definitely a victim to that. I don't know if "victim" is the right word, but I was a Coca Cola drinker my whole life. I definitely prefer a Coke over a Pepsi. I'm not going to lie, Julie, don't yell at me, but since I have been working with Pepsi for the past five years, I definitely choose their products over Coke now. Again, Coke versus Pepsi, I'm not going to go there, but I do support Pepsi. I drink Aquafina water because it's a Pepsi brand. Working through the employers throughout the last five years, I see a little bit differently what goes into making those products and the people that do the hard work, so I definitely spend my money on Pepsi and others as well.

 So, again, we prove to the employer and our clients that's not just the right thing to do. It does make business sense and helps the bottom line.

 Let's talk about some of the work we have done through some case studies. Again, two of our clients are Synchrony Financial and PepsiCo, so Pepsi, again, I think Pepsi was our first customer. It's not a bad first customer to have as a new business, and with them we created Pepsi ACT, which stands for achieving change together, and we came together with Pepsi and Disability Solutions to create Pepsi ACT to actively recruit, train, hire, and most importantly retain individuals with all types of disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, within all areas of Pepsi's operations. So a couple of big things there is retain. We don't want to just get numbers. We want to make sure that individuals we are bringing on to these companies are staying. They are qualified for these jobs, they can do these jobs, and they can be successful in these jobs, so Pepsi and us really want to make sure that we are retaining individuals.

 And another part of that sentence there is within all areas of Pepsi's operation, so again, we are not just looking for some janitorial work or something like that. We are again hiring anywhere from entry level all the way up to management, so working with Pepsi to do that.

 All right. So the rationale with Pepsi, one thing early on in those strategic meetings with Pepsi, again, it takes a lot of planning upfront to really maneuver these initiatives, and we want to make sure we are doing it properly through education and doing it the right way. So one thing that really hit me early on in those meetings is Pepsi realized they want to do this as a business model, because, again, it makes sense. They saw the value in it, and when you put dollars and time and manpower behind something that you're invested in, you look for those results and you get those results. Again, it's not charity. It's not something that can be cut easily through the bottom. It's something that really makes sense.

 One of the other things that really hit me is the top management said they wanted the workforce to reflect their community within each site. So, again, individuals with disabilities is a huge minority pool out there. They wanted the workforce to reflect their community. So that really hit me. I thought that was really great.

 And the rest now behind the Pepsi ACT was again strengthening the workforce. As we have seen with individuals with disabilities, there's lower absences, there's lower turnover, there's morale, it raises awareness, increases loyalty, and at the bottom is the old regulation stuff that Julie talked about, and then broadening the consumer base, again that market value, that huge spending power. You know, at least one in 20 million families have at least one member with a disability, and again reflect the values that they embody.

 So, Pepsi ACT again launched roughly four and a half years ago or so. And since then we have launched nine sites total. We are about to get two more in 2018. We piloted it in Houston and Burnsville Minnesota. We piloted it there, one is a union, one is a nonunion. Our third site was in Las Vegas. Actually, let me go back a little bit. Houston and Burnsville were warehouse, distribution sites. Our third site was Las Vegas where it was a certified center. A certified center is a very unique facility to Pepsi. Basically they take in their marketing equipment and refurbish them there. So we opened a brand new facility there and had a huge success. Our fourth site was Winston Salem, so they switched it up there and it was a call center, a unique job for people with disabilities. And then Phoenix, Nashville, Orlando, Indianapolis and Denver were the last five, and those were also MFW distribution sites. Over the last four years or so, we have hired 285 people plus individuals with disabilities, which is great throughout the country. Over ten distinct roles, entry level to management. Again, anywhere from a warehouse loader to sales reps to call center reps, call center sales reps, all the way up to a manager in Las Vegas managing about 15 to 20 different employees, so all across the board. We have a 14% hiring retention rate, higher than their national average, so the individuals we are finding for them are staying, which is again a part of that huge mission to begin with for Pepsi ACT. 20% of those individuals that we hired with the 285 are veterans with disabilities, and the Pepsi ACT has also received local and national recognition, and we have been talking through some conferences over the last couple of years as well. So great work there.

 Those four individuals pictured are actually again individuals that came through the Pepsi ACT program. They just did an internal marketing push to get some self IDs, so our individuals that we worked with are part of that video and again proud to be working with Pepsi. They put on that blue and yellow uniform in that case.

 Our other client is Synchrony Financial. So Synchrony Financial is a bank. One second, sorry. I'm sorry. We recently, our team collaborated with Synchrony Financial, and we piloted it in Dayton, Ohio, so we worked with their Synchrony call center. We were able to source talented individuals with disabilities for, again, a variety of different positions. You might remember again they are a large bank but they are a large provider of credit cards for people within the United States. For example, they are behind Walmart, Amazon, Sam's Club, so if you have some of those credit cards, Synchrony Financial handles those.

 We work across Dayton, Ohio, with customer service reps handing inbound and outbound calls. We have had tremendous success placing individuals with disabilities in a wide variety of positions.

 The Pepsi warehouse is really physical. Call center is a little bit different, and so you are able to tap into a different pool of talent of individuals with disabilities.

 We are up to 60 plus hires in Dayton, Ohio in just over a year. Multiple types of disabilities again. So as I mentioned before, they hire individuals with a wide variety of disabilities, employees who are blind, visual impairments using JAWS and other adaptive technologies. Like mentioned before, anxiety, depression, PTSD, so as you can see, we were able to beat the company average again for the retention with our pilot. Truly significant for those employers out there who are struggling with an elevated turnover.

 A project in Ohio was so successful that Synchrony has expanded into their Phoenix location. We have been there for about seven months of hiring, and we are up to I believe 18 hires today, actually, at this point, so the expansion site is also doing very well, and Synchrony is actually looking for a company wide expansion of the program into 2018, so very excited to work with them and again also receiving some local and national recognition with them.

 So, again, our job is really to find the best talent for our clients, the employers, working with community based organizations across the board. And sometimes we hear a lot of horror stories from these job seekers that we work with, and I am sure some of you have heard before. So this is Julie out in Dayton, Ohio, and, you know, some of these stories are really heartbreaking about interviews. A candidate in a wheelchair arriving for an interview should never know they are out of contention for the job before they even speak one word, but it happens a lot to individuals with different types of disabilities on a daily basis during this process. The great news is that does not happen with Synchrony Financial. The larger lesson is that inclusion works, basically. With our economy approaching full employment and employers continuing to fulfill important jobs, particularly in the call center environment, individuals with disabilities are one of the largest untapped pools in the United States, so they will be enriched with culture and diversity all the way to the bottom line.

 I'm going through more success stories. That's Mark Lang. He's one of the top sales performers here in detainee, Ohio, and that's Pete, an individual who has some hearing impairments. He worked as a forklift driver in Detroit, Michigan for 16 years, went out to Las Vegas, couldn't find a job because of his disability. He was struggling to get his foot in the door. He also struggled with the interview process, because he never really went through the interview process before. I worked with him a lot one on one over the phone, through emails, preparing for his interview with Pepsi, and he just recently celebrated his third year anniversary in September.

 So I'm looking at the clock. It is 2:12 right now in my time, so we have about 18 minutes left. I want to say we are going to leave about five minutes for questions. So at this point if you do have any questions, feel free to message us, and the moderator will take some of those questions for us, and we'll try to answer them at the end of the presentation.

 >> And you can type your questions directly into the chat box on the bottom left.

 >> Thank you. All right. I'm going to show a quick video right now of our work with Synchrony Financial.

 >> When I was two years old, I actually was infected with

 Oh, okay.

 >> Not a problem.

 >> Sorry about that. I'll tell you what, let's keep going with the slides, and then we'll post we'll send everybody, along with the PowerPoints, the direct video link. So sorry for the technical hiccup.

 >> Not a problem. All right, so the proof is in the pudding. Again, our clients have seen a lot of great goals, and that's what we are all about. Again, Julie and I work with a lot of upfront work, and then, you know, putting the initiative to work and getting those results. Disability Solutions is really happy about the results that we have, to continue to push these initiatives across the country. So our projects focus on disability hiring. Again, we are about 14 percent higher than our clients' average retention across the board. We have worked with our clients to hire individuals with disabilities from the mail room to the board room, like I said, entry level warehouse jobs, department managers, and for those employers worried about the OFCP audits, our clients have seen a 50% increase in disclosures. We also promote that there is diversity within disabilities. Disabilities don't discriminate. Much like the veteran population, disabilities include all different groups, African Americans, Caucasians, Hispanic populations including veterans too.

 We have talented individuals with disabilities that need jobs, so it's really a perfect match, as we like to say. So partnerships, we educate the employers on research and development, those partners, bridging the gap between the community based organizations out there and the employers, how to increase the pipeline and support and feedback.

 So educating them on different types of partners, what we saw early on when we started Disability Solutions, there are many different partners out there, and many, many employers are looking for a bigger talent pipeline coming through the door. So what we did as far as partnership development, we made sure we reached out to all of the community partners in the area, what their talent looked like, and what was a good match for the employers, and again, educating and building that bridge between the employers and the companies.

 We have got state and county partners, such as VR, workforce centers, nationally known Goodwill, Easter Seals, the VA and the Wounded Warrior Project.

 So we make sure that our employers and clients reach out, start doing some research on different partners in their area, so again, rather than focusing on one or two partners that might have the right talent for you, there's about 50 75 different community based organizations in one area serving people with disabilities.

 The outreach, again, just a little bit, but we like to make sure they are open to partnership, open to, hey, working with these partners. They have the talent. We need talent. How can we make it happen? So we like them to do a meet and greet at their facility. Really go over the jobs, meet their staff, see the facility, take a tour. We make sure they mean what you say mean what they say, as Julie said before, you know, some organizations just post their jobs on the job board and hope that everything works out. We are willing to take a 180 approach rather than community based organizations seeking out the employers. We want the employers to turn around and start seeking out the organizations that serve these job seekers, so we encourage them to listen to their partners. What do the partners do? Again, there's many different partners out there. They might not just serve job seekers. They might have some other benefits. There's tax credits and all of that good stuff that we'll talk about in a little bit.

 We also make sure to make these partners feel important, like they are part of the project.

 And then we talk about bridging the gap. How do we do that? So most of, I believe it's a lot of providers on the call today, and probably you're familiar with the beg, place, and pray model. So you beg a company, you have a really good worker, you beg the company to hire that individual, you place them, hire them, and you really pray that it all works out. Sometimes it does; most likely it doesn't. So we want to turn it around where there's a 180, the employer is working to make sure that it's the best match for that individual. We don't want to set up an individual, a job seeker in the wrong job, something that they are not qualified for, something that they are not interested in, so we really want to use that opportunity to educate and make sure that the employer and the community based organizations are working together to find the best match for that individual with a job.

 We encourage employers not to just give a job description, but to talk about a day in the life. This is on the bottom right, the day in the life of a warehouse worker at Pepsi. It shows that it is a physical job, not fit for everyone, long hours, a lot of heavy lifting. Again, it shows what the job is and exactly what it is. When you see it, it's a whole different world, so we encourage companies to really show the community based organizations what's the job all ability. What are the day to day activities. What do they really need to do.

 The applicant lifestyle, we look at the, you know, what's it like to go online. Is it an online application. What's an application look like? Is there videos? Is there an online assessment that you have to take? Are there questions I shouldn't ask or shouldn't answer a certain way? What are the knockout questions, all of that good stuff? All the way to hiring. What's the actual interview process look like? What's the job offer process look like? All of that stuff. So again, educating the community based organizations, therefore educating the job seeker and what that looks like.

 And then hiring needs. We struggle sometimes to get the employers really to figure out what their hiring needs are. When's a spike in the season. Is there no hiring during the Christmas holidays and stuff like that. So we really want to know what their needs are, how many they are going to need, when are these jobs posting, how should we apply, all of that good stuff.

 So increasing the pipeline. I always have to put a tom cruise reference in my slides. It's part of my contract with Julie. All of companies struggle to find the right talent for their group, for their company, so we encourage these companies to again really reach out to multiple partners in the area and continue to increase that pipeline, find the right talent in that pipeline. So these jobs open, you're interviewing, and you're finding the right talent.

 When we talk about increasing the pipeline, we want qualified individuals in there. In some cases with both Pepsi and Synchrony Financial, we worked with the community organizations in the areas to set up training and recruiting programs. So we went out with these employers, and we had open house events where job seekers who were interested in these types of jobs came, talked to the employers, talked to us, and learned a little bit about the job and at that point decided whether it's a good fit for you or it's not a good fit for you. It's important to realize that this is something that you don't want to do, just as important as seeking a job that you do want to do.

 We do interview prep to make sure that these individuals go into a job interview with Pepsi or Synchrony Financial and be prepared to answer questions. There is behavioral based questions, like tell me about a mistake that you have made. Those questions are hard. Most people say, oh, I never made a mistake in my life, which is not the answer which companies are looking for. They want to see an answer where you made a mistake in a real life situation and how you improved on that. So we worked with job seekers in the community based organizations so really prepare those job seekers for assessments and interviews. We also prepare for them for how to ask for a time out, how to deal with a difficult coworker, all of the things that happen in the workplace that causes an individual not to keep a job. We walk them through the interview process, the application process, and once they get the job, again, we want to make sure they retain the job, so we are helping through education to make sure those job seekers are prepared.

 On the left is an HR, Pepsi's HR, talking to a wonderful group in Phoenix. On your right is Pepsi Las Vegas. We had the opportunity to bring a group of about 25 individuals into the Pepsi's facility, and basically play around with their equipment, tinker with it a little bit to see if it was a good fit for them, and some people, again, within day one, an hour in, not a good fit for me. I want to work for Pepsi but the job is not a good fit for me. Others realized that they could do it and were very interested in the position, so very good to do the work upfront with community based organizations.

 Also attending career fairs and hiring events. We have all put on a career fair at one time and hardly anybody shows up, so it's kind of a bust. We really work with both community based organizations and employers to get the most of those hiring events. We set up a hiring event with Synchrony Financial on site so the job seekers who were interested come and learn about the job, and can even get job offers on the spot.

 Jill, I'm going to throw it over to you and talk a little bit about our career center.

 >> Great. So I actually I saw one question in the chat that I can answer on this slide, so thanks for that, Kev. So one way that we track outcomes is to use our career center, and we really want to have this be a great benefit to the companies that we work with so that they can see the talent with disabilities that are coming through their pipeline and how they are doing in that applicant pipeline, and so we started a career center just a little over a year ago where companies that we work with or are just really interested in hiring can post their jobs, and one thing that was really important to us is that people with disabilities feel comfortable setting up their profiles and applying to jobs through this source when they may not yet be comfortable self disclosing, so they can set up a resumé in the database that is anonymous, unless an employer reaches out to them and they choose to make that resumé and their name available. They can set up job alerts, if you really want to work for Pepsi, which is an amazing company, or Synchrony Financial, you can be notified when those jobs are open. And this is, again, just kind of two wins: Great for the job seeker who is interested in starting to engage companies that are really serious about hiring people with disabilities, but also gives another way to help track our outcomes in the company's tracking system through source codes and drop downs to make sure that the efforts that the companies are engaging in are showing fruits for that. Thanks, Kev.

 >> Thanks Julie. We have got about five minutes left, so I'm going to run through some of these quick slides and leave us with a couple of minutes for questions.

 We also work with employers in community basing organizations to learn about tax credits, W.O.T.C. We'll talk about the spending power again in working with community based organizations.

 Communication is probably the biggest key to these relationships. We always celebrate the wins, the first hire, second hire, always get the ball running. Learning from mistakes is huge. We always want to continue to see what is working, what is not working, and educate yourself on that. Once it's not working, how can we make it work. What are the solutions. Feedback and really honest, open communication from both sides is helping to getting that job seeker, those job seekers in the door.

 The trick of retention, again, we want to make sure that these individuals are staying on the job. This is from Pepsi Burnsville. We had an individual who was struggling early on and didn't seem like he was going to be successful, but they worked with him really as they would anyone else who was struggling early on, and that individual celebrated his second year anniversary. So once you put a little investment in the beginning to a struggling new employee, they are able to be successful and productive later on.

 We also talk a lot of companies get scared of accommodations. Instead of accommodations, we preach natural supports, so really how you treat any other employee, disability or not, mentorships, support, how are things going, do you need help with anything. That kind of support is really helpful in the inclusive environment to making that employee successful. We also talk about ruling them in rather than ruling out. Pepsi has a 30, 60, 90 goal that they work with, and we worked with Pepsi to say what if we stretch it out to 45 days. Sometimes they couldn't get there, but we want to make sure that we are ruling them in rather than ruling them out.

 Some employers get scared of accommodations, but they also forget about reasonable accommodations, and that's the word that should go before it. We also like to call this adjustment of differences. We have seen screen readers, screen readers, to the right a veteran of the gulf war he worked at Pepsi, and he had VA appointments that were very hard to come through. They were able to adjust his schedule. Braille, hearing aids, large desks, very easy accommodations.

 Retention is all about communication. Celebrate the wins, use a team approach. Don't have just one individual in charge of the whole program. We work all the way up to leadership to make sure that we have a team approach to figure out what is working, what is not working, and again celebrating those wins.

 I breezed through those last slides for some time, and we will now open it up to a couple of minutes for questions and answers. You have got the questions, we have got the answers.

 >> Great, thank you. So I have got a bunch of questions in the chat box, but before I read those out, operator could you just quickly tell anybody joining us by phone how to submit a question?

 >> Yeah, Philip. Hi, ladies and gentlemen. If you have dialed in and would like to ask a question, please press seven pound on your phone now, and you will be placed in the cue in the order received. Just listen for your name to be announced and ask the question when prompted.

 >> Wonderful. Thank you. First up, from Delbert, we have a great question that goes like this. Which have you found to be most successful points of entry to begin conversations about disability markets and disability talent.

 The obvious one that comes to mind is HR development, but what about brand engagement or marketing?

 >> Julie, do you want me to handle that one?

 >> Sure. Go for it.

 >> Sure. So, yeah, engagement is pretty tough. Definitely. It's all about sales upfront, right? So HR usually is the way to go. Again, with Disability Solutions, we usually start at a headquarter level and, you know, they let them dictate it from there and where we are going to go, where we are going to pilot a program. Piloting a program basically means that there's going to be a lot of things that aren't going to work. That's why it's a pilot. So our Houston and Burnsvilles, we learned a lot from those two sites into the next sites with a whole different approach we had. So HR definitely is a good start locally. If you can get someone who is in charge of that branch or someone in that corporation at the top, that definitely filters down to get that buy in. Like I say, with partnership development, I may work with a certain company or organization in Minnesota, but when I go to Las Vegas it's someone totally different, and just because it's the same organization doesn't mean it's going to be the same approach. So just finding the right person, basically. It could be anyone in HR. It could be anyone at the top. But you have really got to find someone that has bought in and is going to listen to you and understand the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.

 >> Wonderful. And then the next question comes from Chris Bailey who asks a twofold question. Where do you find job seekers, and how do you track hires.

 >> Good. So I think Julie touched on tracking hires a second ago, but we can talk a little bit more. As far as finding the job seekers, so I'll give you an example in Phoenix. So I work with both Synchrony and Pepsi in the Phoenix world, and what I do is when I first do that research, I go online and I work with companies to try to get the referrals. So I work with an ad business rep in Minnesota, I ask them for the Phoenix one, and then I start developing those relationships. Again, in larger cities and smaller cities, there's about 50 to 75 organizations that serve job seekers with disabilities, so we really reach out to all of them. I usually do a blast email. We do a survey monkey sometimes on what their company or organization is all about, and then we start hitting them through phone calls and really just promoting what we are doing, what the company is looking to do, to see if they are interested in doing it. Most of the time, obviously, we are looking to hire individuals that they serve, so they are definitely interested in it. So then I work with the community based organizations to educate them on what the employer is all about, what they are looking for, what the jobs so, what the application process looks like, so they are prepared to really go ahead and make those good referrals. So again, just developing those partnerships, it takes time. At that point you might not have someone who is going to be good for a warehouse role, and I know that. So six months down the line, as long as we have that working partnership, we are able to refer that individual and get some good talent in the door.

 >> Wonderful. And then we operator, do I have any phone questions?

 >> No questions from the phone lines.

 >> Well, we have got one last one from Allen, who is curious about whether there is a Canadian organization or any Canadian companies doing similar work.

 >> Julie, I was going to say something about that. I think the work that we are doing I don't want to say rare is the right word, but the work we are doing, we are proving with results that our programs are working, our clients are bought in, the employers are bought in. Community based organizations, job seekers are all bought in. It's been great work for Disability Solutions. We are based out of Connecticut but work across the country. Julie has actually started some work in India, so although we are headquartered in America, we definitely are interested in doing some work in Canada.

 But as far as I know, I don't know if there's any company doing what we do.

 >> Yeah. And the fact that there really isn't is precisely why I wanted to share your work and share your insights about changing minds and changing lives. Thank you so much, Kevin. Thank you so much, Julie. For all of the people participating in our webinar, we'll send you a PDF copy of the slides and some of those links to further resources so you can kind of learn more about what they are doing and kind of adapt it to your own work.

 And then next up, I also want to invite you to our next and our last webinar for 2017. This one is going to be a little different. So usually with our webinars, we are focused on employment. That's what our organization does. We work on Hollywood. We work on jobs. And, you know, when we look at our job work, we are always very focused on youth with disabilities. It's where the best alignment of resources, programs, and pathways really exist. However, next week's webinar is going to be different. We are going to specifically be talking about return to work and stay at work strategies with an expert who has been working on those issues for 30 years. I'm very pleased on Wednesday December 13th at 1:30 p.m. Eastern time, I'm going to be speaking directly with Jennifer Christian, M.D., who is really a very interesting thought leader when it comes to that specific segment of what happens when somebody engages into a disability, what requires a disability, that whole complex process of accessing insurance, supports, and getting back to education, getting back to work. It's going to be a little different, a little interesting, and I hope that all of you who are here today will join us for that. This webinar, recording, and slides will go up on our website pretty soon. So if you have a question come up and you want to go back and check on something that you learned today, you'll be able to do that. Thank you very much. I know that there were technical difficulties, but I appreciate your patience. I hope that you will sign in for the next one. Take care, good luck, and good bye.