



## Company Website Disability Inclusion Messaging: **Observations of Job Seekers with Disabilities**

Website features and approaches to online recruitment play an important role in attracting qualified individuals with disabilities and broadening talent pools. For job seekers, the online recruitment process helps to form a perception of whether they feel the organization would be a good fit. The applicant's reaction can determine if they respond to an online application, and how they use selection tools.<sup>i</sup>

EARN staff conducted a series of focus groups with current or recent job seekers with disabilities. The purpose was to gather information on the job search strategies they used and the types of content and messaging that participants considered most impactful to gauging a company's disability inclusiveness.<sup>ii</sup> The focus groups revealed some effective strategies for engaging job seekers with disabilities in the online recruiting and selection process:



### **Accessibility of career portal and availability of disability-related content:**

- ✓ Meet or exceed web accessibility standards to improve applicant access and to signal that the organization considers access for applicants with disabilities important.
- ✓ Make information about requesting accommodations obvious and easy to access.
- ✓ Include visual representation of disability in online content to convey disability inclusiveness.
- ✓ Use diversity and inclusion statements that go beyond the boilerplate equal opportunity language to express genuinely inclusive sentiments.
- ✓ Provide options for multiple modes of communicating with recruiters (e.g., instant chat, email, etc.).



## Appeal to job seekers with disabilities:

- ✓ Spotlight messaging to veterans and people with disabilities on career pages.
- ✓ Highlight organization characteristics, like corporate social responsibility initiatives.
- ✓ Include explicit statements about the value of inclusion and diversity.
- ✓ Promote options for flexible work (e.g., remote/virtual work, flexible hours).
- ✓ Provide closed captioning for all recruiting videos and media content.



## Avoid unintentionally screening out qualified candidates with disabilities:

- ✓ Review [job descriptions](#) to evaluate whether inflexible standards can be removed. For example, any unnecessary physical requirements that can be removed, or overly narrow degree preferences.
- ✓ Offer job trials or probationary periods to assess fit between the candidate, the job and the employer.
- ✓ Consider individuals with employment gaps in their resume.
- ✓ Ensure modes of communication meet the needs of applicants with disabilities (e.g., video relay services for calls or interpreters for interviews as needed and electronic communication that is accessible to screen readers).

**In summary**, EARN's focus group revealed that there are a few key areas where reviewing and customizing online recruitment tools and website interfaces can improve the experiences of job seekers with disabilities. Early-stage reactions to disability messaging by a company can also influence employee decisions to disclose their disability to the employer. An applicant's comfort level disclosing a disability can serve as an informal indicator of an employer's success in conveying a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.<sup>iii</sup>

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- i Chen, C-C, Lin, M-M, & Chen, C-M. (2012). Exploring the mechanisms of the relationship between website characteristics and organizational attraction. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(4), 867-885. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.579916>
- ii Malzer, V., Saleh, M. (March 15, 2021). Observations of job seekers with disabilities of company website disability inclusion messaging: EARN RCR focus group report. Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability Cornell University.
- iii von Schrader, S., Malzer, V. & Bruyère, S. M. (2014). Perspectives on disability disclosure: The importance of employer practices and workplace climate. *Employer Rights and Responsibilities Journal*, 26, 237-255. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10672-013-9227-9>

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