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## The Benefits of Disability in the Workplace



**Judy Owen**, CONTRIBUTOR

I write about the joy and tribulations of starting a company [FULL BIO](#) ▾

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I am a little surprised that I still find myself spending a majority of my time educating people on the problem I set out to solve when I started my company, Opportunity Works. I guess I shouldn't be surprised, since I've only been at it for a number of months, not years (yet). It has occurred to me that shedding some organized, well-documented light on the problem here, might help. So here goes.



President George H. W. Bush signs the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 into law. Pictured (left to right): Evan Kemp, Rev Harold Wilke, Pres. Bush, Sandra Parrino, Justin Dart (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

Opportunity Works was founded in an attempt to improve employment of people with disabilities. We are a for-profit staffing service company, focusing our recruiting on organizations providing support to people with disabilities. We did this to solve the problem of high unemployment rates of people with disabilities, with marginal improvements since the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. So, why is it that there has been so little improvement?

It would be reasonable to presume that companies would be reluctant to hire employees that would cost them more than other options. This is reasonable as we have seen trends to move manufacturing and call center operations to other countries. Within the country, companies have gone radical and taken measures to do things such as setting policies not to hire smokers or overweight people. Right? So, surely this is part of the problem. The perception that people with disabilities cost more than your average Joe.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, "Leading Practices on Disability Inclusion", hiring people with disabilities is good for the bottom-line. The report has case studies from companies such as [3M](#), [PepsiCo](#), [Merck](#) and [AT & T](#). All companies in the report cite the benefits and importance of hiring people with disabilities. But, it does not clearly address the costs versus benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Job Accommodations Network annual report, "Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact" which concludes "workplace accommodations not only are low cost, but also positively impact the workplace in many ways." This report found that more than half of requested workplace accommodation cost absolutely nothing for the companies to implement. Some examples of these accommodations include scheduling flexibility, allowances in dress code rules or allowing somebody to sit (or stand) when other positioning is customary.

Employers reported that providing accommodations resulted in such benefits as retaining valuable employees, improving productivity and morale, reducing workers' compensation and training costs, and improving company diversity. The report also found that other accommodations had an average cost of \$500. How much is that cost compared to the cost of employee turnover? It is clearly much

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less expensive to provide the accommodation than to have an employee leave. But what about concerns about that applicant that is not yet an employee? BETA

I move on now to a report from [DePaul University](#), “Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities”. This study is fascinating and I would sure like to see something similar on a larger scale. This paper focuses on 5 issues: 1) Importance of Disability Employment Agencies & Disability Advocates 2) Persistence of Manager Bias 3) Lack of Promotion 4) Costs Associated with Workers with Disabilities and 5) Benefits Associated with Workers with Disabilities.

I have expressed my own opinions of the importance of disability employment agencies. What I have seen in my community though is that the agencies struggle in making placements. My interpretation of this struggle was that the employees within the agencies were stretched too thin. I also had concerns that there were communication challenges between social service agencies and businesses. I thought that forming Opportunity Works could bridge the gaps I observed. Am I on to something?

I think so. The study out of DePaul University found company representatives stated that people with disabilities did not apply with them off the street, but through disability service agencies. It also stated that company representatives “expressed concern with some agencies for not remaining in contact. They stressed that ongoing communication was key to successful partnerships between employers and disability employment agencies.”

What did this study find in looking at the cost/benefit analysis? The findings were, like the Job Accommodations Network report, that costs of accommodating employees were minimal. Despite these findings there were still perceptions that costs would be high. So, now the good stuff.

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## Five Best Practices For Strategic Charitable Giving

**Vanguard Charitable Voice**  
The Value in Giving [FULL BIO](#)

For centuries, across all cultures and lifestyles, philanthropy has been an integral part of society, creating and sustaining great educational and art institutions, human service organizations and much more. Today, many people who give to charity are doing so in new ways. While the end goal remains the same — positive impact on a need or cause — the road to getting there is increasingly seen as a commitment to intentional and well-planned giving.

To help individuals create a charitable strategy, donor-advised fund [Vanguard Charitable](#) has gathered [five best practices for philanthropists](#), drawing on years of experience working with donors and charities. These best practices are posed as questions below to help you consider the effectiveness of your philanthropy. The

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answers can serve as a guide for developing giving strategies and ensure that, over time, you can optimize your donations, expand your giving and fulfill your charitable plans. **BETA**



### 1. How do I define charitable success?

Create a charitable plan that not only focuses on the end result you want to achieve, but also on clear, measurable goals and the steps needed to achieve them. This includes a mission statement to help you define your purpose for giving and determining how to measure your progress against your goals.

### 2. How does charity fit into my overall financial plan?

In the broadest sense, many individuals end up giving discretionary assets — their wealth — to three main areas: people such as your heirs, the government (IRS) and charity. Understand how giving to each group connects to your estate and tax plans, including situations such as managing a financial windfall. Being strategic with regard to when and what to give enables you to appropriately diversify an existing portfolio, minimize tax repercussions and optimize giving.

### 3. Who should I involve in my philanthropy?

Reflect on who (spouse, heirs, advisor, lawyer, etc.) you want to include in your philanthropy and to what extent, as well as how they will affect your goals. Effective communication is paramount to successful philanthropy. Set expectations, maintain dialogue and listen with an open mind. Discuss what will happen to your charitable assets when you pass and how to ensure your charitable intentions are honored.

### 4. What giving tool is best?

Six key factors can help you choose the [giving option](#) that best supports your preferences and giving goals. Rank each factor by importance (high, medium, low), which will ultimately allow you to review the giving options that meet your needs.

- 1. Tax efficacy.** Review the timing and types of assets you want to give and what tools can maximize tax deductions.
- 2. Cost.** Understand the total cost of giving options and determine what you are willing to pay for philanthropic services, knowing that the more money is spent on fees, the less is available for charity.
- 3. Control.** Consider how much direct oversight and decision-making power is needed for each aspect of your philanthropy.

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4. **Legacy options.** Determine how you want to leave your charitable legacy (i.e., bestowing assets to charities or naming a charitable beneficiary in a will), and determine which options will meet your legacy needs. BETA
5. **Distribution to charity.** Ensure the giving tool allows you to support charitable causes in sync with your mission and, if desired, affords you the ability to give to charities on a consistent basis and/or grant one large sum in the future.
6. **Recognition v. anonymity.** Legally, not all giving tools can be sensitive to wishes for anonymity, while some may be able to cater to specific recognition requests. Determine which option is the right fit.

**5. How do I evaluate and monitor nonprofit organizations?**

This last step in being a strategic philanthropist can be overwhelming for some donors. Here are a few suggestions that can result in more impactful philanthropy:

- Review an organization’s IRS tax status, financials and governance standards. Understand how the charity spends money, its track record for success and who makes important decisions.
- Determine whether a donation should be used for a specific project or cause, or if it can be used at the discretion of the charity.
- Finally, engage with nonprofit representatives after giving money to continue conversations and monitor results.

*Additional resources to aid in your charitable planning are available at [vanguardcharitable.org/strategicgiving](http://vanguardcharitable.org/strategicgiving).*

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