



JobAccess and You

Having a disability and looking for work can be a very stressful thing. People with a disability often worry about how they can convince employers to give them a job.

They worry that the boss might think that they can't do the job. If you are deaf you may worry that the boss will think you can't do a job because you cannot speak on the phone. If you are blind you might think it will be too hard to convince the boss that you are able to read information that is required as part of your job. If you have a learning disability you might think the boss will not think you capable of doing the job at all. These are all real worries and can affect the confidence of the person with a disability who is looking for a job.

Many people with a disability know how they will do a job. They have had their disability since birth or for many years. They will have developed a lot of skills to do many different things. Whether it's a different way to talk on the phone, a different way to read, a different way to get around a building or a different way to communicate they have developed skills to meet many different situations. Yet despite having the skills when they look for a job they worry that they will not be able to convince the boss that they have these skills.

One thing that can help a person with a disability who is looking for a job is to know beforehand the things that they need to do a job.

Often they require different technology. They might require software that goes on their computer to help them read. They might require a particular service like the National Relay Service to be able to access the phone. They might require certain changes to the workplace to access a building like a ramp. It is important to know what is needed.

It is important because often for an employer, when they meet a person with a disability, it is their first official experience of dealing with a person who has a disability. What this means is that they don't know what is required or what people with a disability need to do a job.



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They rely on the PERSON who has the disability to educate them about how they will do that job. This means it is important that the person with a disability knows beforehand because their boss is unlikely to have the answers.

Unfortunately there are many people with a disability who leave school who do not know what they need to do a job and this can put them at a disadvantage when it comes to looking for a job. It is, therefore, very important when the person with a disability is training or deciding what job they want to do that they explore the different tasks that a job may have and know what they need to do the different parts of a job. What technology does a person need? What changes need to be made to do a job? What services can be utilised? It is also very useful to know what government funding is available to help as well.

At school, when planning a work experience program, it is a good idea to look at the tasks that are involved in a job. Teachers and students might need to consider how they are going to read information, how they will communicate with workmates, whether there are any obstacles that will make it difficult to get around or if there are any devices or technology that are needed. Learning these things early is essential for a smooth transition from school to work and study for many people with a disability.

It is also important to know what assistance can be received to buy technology or make workplace modifications. The Australian Government funds a program known as JobAccess www.jobaccess.gov.au. JobAccess provides funding to help make workplace adjustments or to purchase technology. For example the author of this piece is deaf and JobAccess purchased a special Smartphone for him to be able to communicate when he is on the road.

JobAccess might be able to fund the building of ramps for people in a wheelchair, the purchase of screen readers for people with reading difficulties and it will fund Auslan interpreters through the Auslan for Employment Scheme. There are many ways that JobAccess can help. It is a valuable program so if you have a disability or assist people with a disability who will be looking for work, find out what it can do.

Why?

Because when an employer asks questions about how things can be paid for like technology or how you will be able to do a job it's important that you have the answers at your finger tips.

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This eZine was written by Gary Kerridge, NDCO, South-Western Victoria.

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Your regional NDCO (Newcastle-Hunter) is Kay Dean

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Phone: 4921 8844 | Mobile: 0438 218848 | Email: kay.dean@newcastle.edu.au | Web: www.newcastle.edu.au/ndco