

Self-ID

Employees need to feel comfortable disclosing disabilities at work.

Objectives

- Understand the rationale, from both the employer perspective and the employee, to increase rates of self-ID
- Learn the main reasons why people don't want to disclose a disability at work
- Learn how to create a work environment where employees with disabilities feel comfortable self-identifying

Questions

- What can leaders do to increase self-identification?
- Why aren't more self-ID campaigns successful?
- How does an employer build the trust needed to make workers feel safe disclosing a disability?

The Case for “Coming Out” as a Person with Disabilities

Why should your employees care? Why should you?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau and data from NOD's Disability Employment Tracker, only 4% of employees, on average, disclose their disability to employers. This falls far short of the Department of Labor's 7% goal for federal contractors and the 20% of Americans that have a disability.

At the same time, research shows that employees who disclose their disabilities, or who have visible disabilities, have much greater satisfaction at work than those who do not. This includes the hiring process, accommodations at work and advancement opportunities.

We assume that the greater level of engagement among

workers with visible disabilities is due to these workers getting the accommodations they need to be most productive.

“Disclosing a disability at work frees up an enormous amount of emotional ‘real estate’ that can be channeled towards greater productivity on the work that matters”

–DEI Leader of a Fortune 500 Company

For employers, the benefits of a disability-inclusive workforce go way beyond compliance. They extend to greater **diversity of thinking**, higher rates of **productivity, retention and loyalty** among both disabled employees and their colleagues. This also reflects a company's

customer base in the makeup of its workforce. The global disability market comprises an estimated 1.27 billion consumers, almost matching the size of the market in China, with an estimated annual spending power of over \$8 trillion.

With the benefits of disclosure as great as they are, why are self-ID rates so low?

Self ID

76% of companies track self-ID, only 69% track new hires, and 48% track promotion.

Why such a focus on self-ID rates?

Self-ID rates are the holy grail and important for a variety of reasons. That's why companies measure Self ID rates more than any other measure (promotions, new hires, retention). The Tracker links the practices that statistically drive highest self-ID rates.

Practices that Correlate to Higher Self-ID Rates



Strategy: Tracks the ratio of applicants with disabilities to all job applicants and individuals with disabilities hired vs. all new hires



Talent Sourcing: Hires candidates with disabilities from community partners



Talent Sourcing: Has an application system that is compliant with both 508 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines



People Practices: Has lunch-and-learns focused on disability awareness



People Practices: Annually reviews the benefits package with a focus on disability



People Practices: Takes action to retain employees who age into disability

There are many reasons for why disclosure rates are so low, but **at NOD, we believe that the answer lies in how much those employees trust their employer**. One common concern is that the information will be used against them. That may explain why, as shown in NOD's Disability Employment Tracker, only 40% of employers who mounted self-ID campaigns, reported an increase in self-ID rates as a result of those campaigns.



“The critical metric for human capital management is the self-disclosure rate of your employees with disabilities. If it’s below 5% you have a critical problem — a severe lack of trust between your employees and you.”

—Luke Visconti, Founder and Chairman of DiversityInc

The Importance of Trust: Edelman Trust Barometer

Twenty years ago, the global communications firm Edelman created the Edelman Trust Barometer to help companies gauge trust by asking: “How much do you trust this institution to do what is right?”

According to Edelman’s research, now is a particularly important time to ask those questions. The global pandemic, economic crisis and mass demonstrations over centuries of systemic racism and injustice have pushed employers to the forefront of societal change. According to Edelman, it’s not enough to issue a statement or a policy, or make an emotional ad. More and more consumers and employees expect brands to act and advocate on the personal and societal issues that affect their lives.

Research from Edelman suggests that in response to racial injustice, brands in the U.S. must first get their own house in order by setting an example within their organization (64%), by reflecting the full diversity of the country in their communications (63%) and by making products accessible

and suitable to all communities (61%). Seventy percent of consumers surveyed by Edelman said that trusting a brand is more important today than in the past (a shared belief among age groups, gender and income).

In summary, Edelman’s data show that it’s not enough for a brand to simply take a stand or declare a commitment to an inclusion practice. Real action is needed. Otherwise a company will be seen as exploitative or opportunists. Does this perhaps explain why self-id campaigns aren’t successful? Clearly, companies have to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

As roughly 20% of the population, people with disabilities make up the largest “diversity” segment in the workforce, a segment any of us can join at any time. Yet few people self-identify as having a disability.

Some common reasons why employees may be unlikely to self-identify as a person with disabilities:

- Fear of discrimination or stigma
- A belief that it has no impact on their daily lives
- Unsure what they have to gain by “coming out”
- Many employees don’t know they have a disability
- If a worker lacks trust that their employer will do the right thing when an employee comes out as disabled, self-ID campaigns may well backfire

So, what are the characteristics of companies that do have high self-ID rates?

According to NOD's Disability Employment Tracker:



Strategy & Metrics

Senior leaders evaluate where they are and devise a plan of action for improving disability inclusion practices led by a disability champion.



Climate & Culture

Priority is given to creating employee/business resource or affinity groups that are specific to disability. Moreover — and this is critical — these groups have annual budgets that allow them to take visible and impactful action.



Workplace & Technology

As new facilities are built, universal design principles should be applied. This will ensure environments, processes, policies, technology and tools work for people of every ability.



People Practices

HR teams are trained to proactively ask new hires if they need an accommodation in the post-offer and pre-employment stages. These “moments of truth” can make or break how the employee feels about their new employer, which, ultimately, affects retention and turnover rates.



Recruiter Training

Recruiters, who are on the front line in the pursuit of employees with disabilities, are trained to find and use the company's accommodation process. This helps ensure candidates gain access to the supports needed to be successful and land the job. This process begins well before a job offer is made. It starts with how and where recruiters advertise, accessibility of the interview process, and how everything is communicated in job announcements.

What are some other leading practices to support employees with invisible diversity traits?

- Set the tone from the top down
- Cultivate trust to boost disability self-ID rates
- Disclosure can reveal supportive networks
- Tackle stigma head-on to succeed
- Take action to advance a culture of authenticity