

Resources to support blind employment

Overview

According to several sources, roughly **70% of people who are blind or visually impaired are unemployed.** These people make up an underutilized part of the workforce, and increasing blind employment has many benefits for the community. Below are a collection of facts, statistics, and practical tips to aid those who are looking to join the initiative to improve blind employment.

Facts about blind employment

The high unemployment rate for people who are blind or visually impaired causes several issues for them and for society as a whole:

- They aren't a part of a dynamic, fulfilling workplace
- They don't recognize—or can't showcase—the abilities they do have
- They can't grow in a career path that can give them purpose
- They aren't given the opportunity to develop professional relationships with others

People who are blind or visually impaired have proven that they're loyal, hardworking and resourceful. With the right tools, training, and technology, they can succeed in a variety of roles.

Statistics about disability employment

2.4 OPEN POSITIONS

for every one job seeker in Wisconsin, according to a recent [study](#).

2 MILLION PEOPLE

haven't returned to the post-COVID workforce, according to [estimates](#).

600,000 OPEN POSITIONS

in manufacturing and hospitality in WI alone, [increasing 5% each year](#). A significant majority of these jobs only require a high school education.

**22.5% OF ALL PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES ARE EMPLOYED,**

according to a [2023 study](#).

**31.4% OF DISABLED PEOPLE
AGES 16-64 ARE EMPLOYED**

compared to 72.5 percent for people without a disability in the same age group, according to the same [2023 study](#).

Statistics about disability employment (continued)

Businesses also have a lot to gain from employing people who are blind or visually impaired. First and foremost, it can create a more resourceful, dynamic and welcoming environment, where people see each other's strengths beyond their obstacles. According to the [International Labor Organization](#), the following benefits underscore the importance of disability employment:



Access to talent

By focusing on skills rather than stereotypes, you access an untapped pool of talent.



Increased engagement and retention

Employees who feel included have higher levels of loyalty and enthusiasm.



Increased innovation

Employees with diverse experiences have different approaches to problem solving.



Better reputation

Customers value companies that show a real commitment to inclusion.

Businesses can see increases in revenue and profitability by investing in employing people with disabilities:

- According to a [study by Accenture](#) in 2018, data shows that employers who consistently hire people with disabilities have on average **28 percent higher revenue**, double the net income, and **30 percent higher economic profit margins** than their peers.
- A [scientific paper](#) published in the Humanities and Social Sciences Communications journal in 2021 outlines several economic benefits of hiring people with disabilities, including **increased business performance, market share and shareholder value; lower absenteeism rates; increased productivity; lower employee turnover; and higher levels of innovation.**

Practical tips

With all these facts and statistics, all that's left is putting it into practice. Below are several ways that businesses and individuals can improve their workplace accessibility and even their mindset when it comes to blind employment.

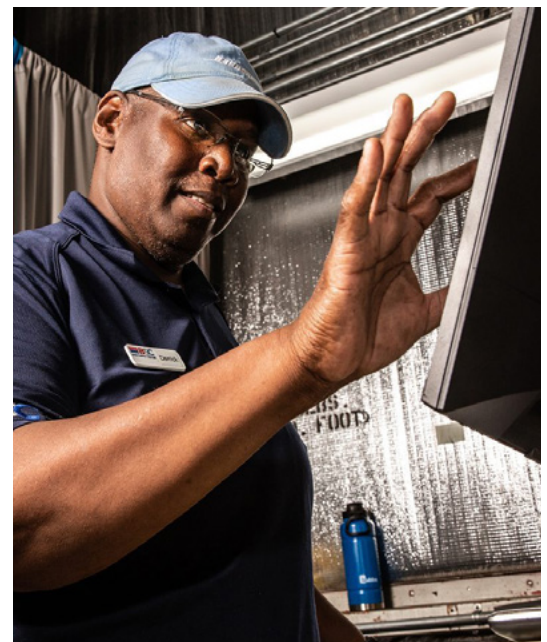
Workplace accessibility

Textured floors

Use textured or contrasting flooring to help identify transitional areas and points of reference within your workspace.

Doors with windows

Install doors that have windows. This helps ensure that sighted workers pay attention to those on the other side of doors.



Assistive technology

There are now devices that can read screens and enlarge pictures and text in real-time, so people who are blind or visually impaired have many more options for jobs. These devices include:

- OrCam My Eye - A device that attaches to your glasses that can read text out loud, verify typed information, and assist with various speech-to-text tasks.
- OrCam Read - Similar to the above device, it looks like a pen or laser pointer, and it can read text on any paper or screen.

- Acrobat HD by Enhanced Vision - A camera that you place underneath what you'd like to view, and it enlarges the print.
- JAWS (Job Access With Speech) by Freedom Scientific - This helpful computer screen reader program allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen either with a text-to-speech output or by a refreshable Braille display.

To learn more about the many different kinds of technology available—many of which are affordable and easy to use—check out [our blog on assistive technology options](#).



Public transportation

Most people take it for granted, but all blind and visually impaired workers have to coordinate transportation every day. Many of them either take rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, take public transit, or have someone drive them to work every day. To make getting to work more accessible for your employees, you can:

- Help your employee coordinate daily transportation
- Provide details on local public transportation options
- Adjust their work schedule to coincide with transportation schedules
- Provide a safe, comfortable space outside the building to wait for transportation

Public advocacy

IBVI and other organizations in Wisconsin and around the world are consistently advocating for public policy that supports the blind and visually impaired community. In fact, recently, IBVI helped show support for a bill in Wisconsin that will provide a transportation credit for people who are blind. Contact your local (or national) representatives and ask them what they're doing to support the blind or visually impaired community.

ADA compliance

From your workplace to your website, you should make every effort to make your company ADA compliant, so people with disabilities can engage with you easily.

For more information on IBVI, visit our website at [IBVI.org](https://www.ibvi.org)

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