



Employing people with disabilities makes sound business sense

People with disabilities are largely an untapped resource in the labour market despite the fact that they have immense potential to contribute meaningfully to society and to the business sector in particular.

That's the view of Dr Jerry Gule, Chairman of South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), who says this potential needs to be converted into positive action where people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to contribute and be rewarded for their inherent worth.

SAE4D is an employer organisation that is committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace.

Dr Gule points out that there is a sound local and international legislative framework for the employment of people with disabilities.

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for example, recognises the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others. This includes having access to a labour market and work environment that is open and inclusive.

In South Africa, the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) protects people with disabilities against unfair discrimination and entitles them to affirmative action measures. In addition, the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 and the Amendment Bill of 2011 make particular mention of people with disabilities.

“However, this legal framework cannot compel people in business to employ people with disabilities on a fair and equitable basis.

“Businesses must employ these individuals not because they have to, but because they want to. And that means recognising that the investment that has to be made to make a business accessible to people with disabilities is a worthwhile investment,” he adds.

According to Dr Gule, SAE4D – like the International Labour Organization (ILO) – maintains that there is a sound business case for employing people with disabilities.



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SAE4D members have found that generally, people with disabilities:

- are good, dependable employees who perform on par or better than their non-disabled peers;
- are loyal and less likely to job hop thus saving the business the costs of job turnover such as lost productivity and expenses related to recruitment and training;
- are an untapped resource of skills and talents. In addition to technical job skills, many people with disabilities – because of their own daily challenges – have a higher level of problem-solving skills than their non-disabled peers; and
- have insight into an overlooked and potentially lucrative market segment made up of people with disabilities and their families and friends.

“Finally, several studies around the world have shown that hiring people with disabilities actually increases workforce morale, possibly because it indicates to employees that they are working for a caring organisation. As a result, productivity and employee loyalty increases – and the benefits of this cannot be underestimated,” Dr Gule concludes.

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About SAE4D

South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D) is a body constituted by employers who are committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. The organisation was set up to share experience, develop best practices, confront and tackle prejudices that act as barriers to the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, and form a common understanding of the challenges and solutions required to fully develop the potential of people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to society and business.

SAE4D members are South African companies who are signatories to the Constitution of the SAE4D, its principles and values.



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Current SAE4D members supports include: ABB; Absa; Anglo American; Barloworld; Bowman Gilfillan; Edcon; Ernst & Young; Eskom; Glenrand; KPMG; Lorimar; Nedbank; PPC; SAB and Total.

Contact details:

Troika PR: 011 884 0775

Marilyn de Villiers or Silungile Mbatha

www.sae4d.co.za

info@sae4d.co.za