



DISCOVER THE ABILITY IN DISABILITY

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Hiring Someone with an Intellectual Disability: Know the Facts

At DVJS we pride ourselves on letting the Ability in Disability shine through. We endeavour to provide you with accurate information about disability and what it looks like in the workforce. However, we acknowledge that our clients are individual people, each with different experiences. We take the time to get to know who they are as a person and we ask that you do the same.

What is an Intellectual Disability?

An Intellectual Disability is the most common type of developmental disability. Individuals with an intellectual disability generally experience slower rates of learning and have trouble problem solving. An intellectual disability is diagnosed based on the individual having a lower IQ score.

Individuals with an intellectual disability can still learn new skills, they just do so at a slower rate. Many of them experience social isolation due to their condition, meaning that they highly value the opportunity to be a part of a team and will work hard to establish themselves in the workplace.

What are the Challenges Experienced by a Person with an Intellectual Disability?

Individuals living with an Intellectual Disability are often isolated and marginalised. As their disability is not visible, people struggle to understand their limitations and capabilities. As people find it difficult to understand, they are less willing to give them a chance.

They also experience difficulties in adaptive functioning, meaning that they can struggle with communication skills, understanding social norms and expectations, and problem solving. They like repetitive and routine tasks that don't require them to take in a large amount of information in one go.

What does an Intellectual Disability look like in the Workplace?

Employees with an Intellectual Disability are strong when performing repetitive and consistent work. They do not respond well to sudden changes or to new challenges or roles being given to them without warning. They most commonly learn best through repetition and visual cues. They struggle to follow complex or detailed instructions conveyed verbally.

Socially, individuals with an intellectual disability enjoy feeling welcomed and accepted. They may struggle to identify social norms or unspoken expectations of the work culture. However, if you explain these expectations clearly and through the use of visual cues and reminders, they can learn the expectations of the workplace.

What are the Advantages of Giving Someone with an Intellectual Disability a Chance?

Employees with an Intellectual disability generally enjoy performing repetitive tasks. They can perform monotonous tasks to a consistent standard, where other staff without and intellectual disability may become bored and disinterested. This means they are less likely to make mistakes or have a drop in productivity.

Additionally, staff with an intellectual disability generally have a higher level of work attendance on average. They can be very loyal and long-lasting employees. Therefore, individuals with an intellectual disability are the perfect candidate for a role which has a high turnover of staff.

What can you do as an Employer to Support an Employee with an Intellectual Disability?

Treat them with respect: Individuals living with an intellectual disability are often socially isolated. Being in a work environment where they are respected and treated as a part team will grow their feelings of pride, self-worth and their overall wellbeing. If they feel comfortable, workers with an intellectual disability are often very loyal and hardworking.

Ensure they have understood instructions: When communicating tasks and responsibilities be sure to avoid jargon terms and complicated language. If the employee does not respond, this may be a sign that they have not understood or are unsure what to do next. Check that the employee has understood by asking them to repeat instructions or explain them in their own words.

Use multiple forms of communication: Employees with an intellectual disability may struggle to follow complex verbal instructions. Varying forms of communication can be used, including visual cues, physically demonstrating the task for the employee and breaking the task down into small and achievable goals for the employee. If you take on a DVJS client, we can assist in setting up these communication forms.