

Why are fewer people with disabilities being employed?

According to the 16th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2015-2016, published by The Department of Labour, the number of people with disabilities employed in 2015 has decreased since 2014, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, catering, transport and community. The retail and motor sectors have remained constant with a slight increase in the construction, wholesale trade and finance sectors.



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The question remains: Why? Employment of persons with disabilities remains high on the agenda for the National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDPSA). Persons with disabilities are often questioning whether the potential employer will understand their disability; what if the environment is not accessible or people around them are negative? Does management understand reasonable accommodation?

Challenges

On the other hand, employers are focused on return on investment and shareholder satisfaction. However, reaching a 2% Employment Equity (EE) target of employing persons with disabilities also forms part of the key focus areas for numerous organisations in South Africa. Employers are often faced with the challenge of finding candidates with disabilities who are adequately trained; a perception of possible extra cost in employing persons with disabilities; possible changes to the built environment; understanding reasonable accommodation and the culture of a diverse workforce.

As one of the leading NGOs in the disability sector, the NCPDPSA is often approached by large corporates to support them on a strategic level to reach their EE targets. However, before this can be done successfully, sensitisation training needs to be the first step to an organisation's readiness for a diverse workforce – creating an environment of understanding and respect – followed by universal access audits to create a locale that is accessible to persons with disabilities. Just employing a person with a disability to reach a target is no longer an option and is not sustainable. Being forward thinking and employing persons with disabilities with a long-term view will ultimately create a diverse society and promote transformation.

About the NCPDPSA

The NCPPDSA tackles many questions from both employees and employers to help drive the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa and have successfully assisted many corporates in achieving this goal. The NCPPDSA also runs a national campaign called [Casual Day](#), which raises much needed funds and awareness of the various challenges faced by persons with disabilities. We have also placed many persons with disabilities in learnerships, as well as in permanent and contract positions, allowing persons with disabilities to generate an income to become independent.

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