

Chapter 3: Preferred Solutions: How Job Brokers for People with Disabilities Meet Employer Needs

Profiled in this chapter:

- GoodTemps — New York and Northern New Jersey
- Manpower Inc.'s TechReach Program in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Over the past 20 years, employer use of staffing services has grown and the positions created by this practice are a major source of work for many individuals, especially new entrants to the labor force. While most staffing services are run by private, for-profit companies, a number of community-based organizations and national nonprofit organizations also operate staffing services. A national network, the Alternative Staffing Alliance, was formed to help alternative staffing programs access technical assistance, address policy issues, and obtain advice on how to expand. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which has been active in supporting alternative staffing services, recently conducted an alternative staffing demonstration in order to assess the value of the alternate staffing organization model. Two companion research reports describe the findings from this demonstration project.²⁷

This chapter profiles two staffing services successfully coordinating partnerships to meet employer needs through the recruitment and training of people with disabilities. These profiles examine the work of a nonprofit staffing service (GoodTemps) and a private, for-profit staffing service (Manpower Inc.), both devoted to providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the public and private competitive labor market.

GoodTemps is an alternative staffing agency operated by Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey. A report by the National Academic and Law Center to the Mott Foundation in 2005,²⁸ defined alternative staffing agencies as not-for-profit, fee-for-service agencies that charge companies a competitive mark-up rate for their workers while also helping hard-to-employ individuals secure permanent jobs with self-sufficiency wages and benefits. Alternative staffing agencies differ from for-profit agencies in a number of ways. First, they make extra efforts to place “hard-to-employ” workers. Second, they typically attempt to pay workers a higher rate than these workers would receive from other staffing agencies. Third, they make pointed efforts to eliminate the problematic workplace issues often associated with private staffing services. Fourth, many of these agencies attempt to couple job placements with day care, housing assistance, educational assistance, and other supportive services that can help workers maintain employment. Fifth, they often undertake political advocacy in order to directly challenge the adverse working conditions many in their service population face.

In this profile, it is evident that GoodTemps maintains relations with a lengthy list of local provider agencies from whom it recruits job seekers with disabilities. It trains them and provides qualified employees with disabilities to mostly public agencies and ensures that employees have appropriate supports. GoodTemps makes it possible for these employers to benefit from the employment of workers with disabilities through its service of providing quality employees and through its trusted relationships with these employers.

Manpower Inc. is a world leader in the employment services industry, with 4,100 offices in 82 countries and \$22 billion in worldwide revenues.²⁹ The Manpower profile involves an effort in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and shows how relationships can be transformed into lasting partnerships when employer job needs are identified and met. Manpower worked with Central New Mexico Community College, state workforce agencies, and other providers to establish a Manufacturing Academy and develop a curriculum, with input from the employers and partners, to train workers with disabilities for electronic assembly work.

The GoodTemps and Manpower profiles demonstrate successful market-based approaches to serving individuals with disabilities while ensuring that businesses and public-sector agencies have the best workers possible. It is the ability of these organizations to compete “toe-to-toe” with standard commercial enterprises that frames these models as particularly promising. Both organizations demonstrate a sophisticated, flexible mindset in working with employers.

The GoodTemps Advantage: Reliable and Ready

Introduction

GoodTemps operates as a full-service staffing agency with a specialty in placing people with disabilities and other underrepresented populations. GoodTemps is the largest of the 25 staffing services operated by a Goodwill Industries member agency across the United States and Canada.³⁰ Over the past several years, GoodTemps has placed an average of 2,000 people per year in short- and long-term temporary assignments in the public and private sectors. More than half of the temporary staff placed are people with documented disabilities.³¹ GoodTemps is a mission-based business, with substantial net revenue that has supported the establishment of Goodwill-funded community services.

GoodTemps seeks to help people who have traditionally faced challenges to securing employment, and to expand the types of jobs they are able to obtain. GoodTemps focuses on people with disabilities, and a significant portion of its current business is generated through its participation in state preferred-source programs for people with disabilities. It also generates a fair amount of other types of business, and has won private-sector as well as public-sector contracts through competitively bid (not preferred-source) procurements.

GoodTemps' approach to pre-qualifying applicants includes developing a pool of pre-screened applicants for placement, giving skill assessments, and providing useful data on all potential candidates, therefore competing with other major placement agencies. GoodTemps' practices in building this pre-qualified pool and acting as a labor intermediary bear close examination by workforce and disability service agencies.

"GoodTemps, a division of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, has been providing temporary staff to our offices...since October 2003. We have three different shifts, which consist of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., and 12:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. Duplicating USA has a stringent testing procedure and screening process that GoodTemps has not only executed but has consistently provided qualified copy operators at different skill levels.

We have been happy with the attention to detail and service that has been provided by this agency. As a result, we have hired on to our staff permanently, approximately 12 of GoodTemps' employees.

We recommend GoodTemps highly and are continuously growing our business. GoodTemps has been a resource that has proven to be extremely effective. We look forward to a long-lasting relationship."

Robert Snow, General Manager, Duplicating USA

GoodTemps meets the needs of large and small private- and public-sector organizations through a temporary workforce of qualified individuals, most with disabilities, who work at market rates and compete against private-sector staffing firms. David Schoch, Senior Vice President of GoodTemps, maintains, and many experts agree, that GoodTemps workers compete successfully against commercial agency temps. If GoodTemps placements do not perform well, Mr. Schoch states, its public-sector customers would “protest their way out of their mandate” to use GoodTemps, and find a way of justifying competitive procurement of temporary staffing services. It is this record of competition in a tough staffing marketplace that demonstrates the agency’s focus on customers, and confirms the value of its screening, qualifying, and training protocols in preparing people with disabilities and others to meet business client needs consistently. GoodTemps places 2,000 workers per year, and about 900 are working at any one time.³²

The GoodTemps Protocols

GoodTemps began on April 8, 1996. Its goal is to be the best temporary staffing service available in the area. While GoodTemps markets its services to both the public and private sectors, its status as a preferred-source vendor in New York and New Jersey has led to contracts with a number of public agencies and quasi-governmental organizations. Preferred-source programs provide mechanisms to increase employment for people with disabilities. In New York, the preferred-source program is administered through the New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID). Government agencies and public benefit corporations may contract with GoodTemps for NYSID-covered services without competition; in fact, they are expected to try to negotiate such a contract before they engage in competitive procurement. Its preferred vendor status has helped GoodTemps to become the largest provider of temporary office staff to New York City.

“When I became involved with GoodTemps, I was looking for training that would qualify me to do temporary work while I assessed the next step in my life professionally. I was treated with impeccable professionalism, respect, and compassion. I received the training that I needed in a very supportive environment, and was placed in my first temporary assignment very promptly. I am so very grateful for the door that GoodTemps opened to me into a new working world.”

Marilyn Barney, Brooklyn, NY

“GoodTemps is a very cooperative company with a well-rounded group of employees who treated me with respect and care. You should be proud to be a member of GoodTemps as it was a very rewarding experience for me. I appreciate the fact that you acknowledged my skills and capabilities, and hope to learn more through your agency. I look forward to being on the team of GoodTemps agency.”

Janie Battles, Brooklyn, NY

In New Jersey, the Association for Choices in Community Supports and Employment Services (ACCSES NJ) serves as the central nonprofit agency to administer the State Use Law for Rehabilitation Facilities. In 2005, then New Jersey Governor Richard Codey issued Executive Order #67, directing every department, agency, authority, and instrumentality of New Jersey to make a “good faith effort to purchase three percent of such goods and services from the Central Nonprofit Agency, which has been established to fulfill the aims of the Rehabilitation Facility Set Aside Act.”³³ ACCSES NJ and GoodTemps engaged in a four-year process to have temporary office work listed on a contract line under this law, and to have GoodTemps be a designated provider of such services in northern New Jersey. Under this law, individuals with disabilities that are engaged in temporary office work must be paid market wages and work in an integrated employment setting.

In addition to the preferred-source programs, GoodTemps has made concerted efforts to generate business in the private sector. GoodTemps has found it challenging to compete with international staffing agencies such as Adecco, Kelly Services, and Manpower, which leverage many more of their resources to promote their brand names, and have the advantage of being able to contract with international employers, many of whom prefer to have a single staffing service vendor in multiple locations. As part of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, GoodTemps is restricted to a defined New York/northern New Jersey area. Another common business practice in the staffing industry is for larger companies to employ a Managed Service Provider (MSP), which contracts with multiple staffing agencies in a local, regional, national, or international area. Such agencies then compete on an order-by-order basis to provide a candidate ultimately chosen by the company. GoodTemps began soliciting these MSPs and was able to successfully serve private-sector customers such as General Electric, Sony, and JPMorgan Chase.

GoodTemps continues such arrangements with sanofi-aventis and Con Edison, but began to focus on a new strategy to attract small and mid-sized businesses. After conducting a marketing campaign that emphasized advertising on Google, Yahoo, and MSN, with some good results, the strategy now involves social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter as a means of promoting GoodTemps’ service to smaller private-sector employers and to job seekers. GoodTemps has provided temporary staffing services to approximately 1,400 small and mid-sized companies.³⁴

In order to grow, GoodTemps has begun to focus on markets outside New York City. In addition to northern New Jersey, it is concentrating on suburban Long Island and Westchester County in New York. GoodTemps currently has contracts with the State University of New York at Stony Brook and with Westchester County. GoodTemps has also considered joining with other Goodwill staffing services in national marketing. Goodwill International is exploring how to leverage its staffing service network to facilitate contracting.

GoodTemps stakes its existence on its belief that people with all different types of disabilities are skilled and can be placed into jobs.

The market for temporary workers, in general, declined by 30% during the 2007-2009 recession,³⁵ and GoodTemps' roster of working temporary employees decreased by 20% due to general business conditions.³⁶ In addition to general business conditions, David Schoch notes that "customer churn" is part of the staffing service business. According to Mr. Schoch, the staffing service industry across the board has suffered a major decline due to business conditions, but the GoodTemps decline has been less than the industry average. The staffing industry has begun to grow again as the economy begins to recover. Companies that are not ready to commit to hiring will initially grow through temporary staffing. Mr. Schoch believes that GoodTemps, having weathered the recession better than the staffing industry in general, is positioned to fulfill this need.

GoodTemps recruits candidates from a wide variety of organizations, with particular emphasis on those that serve people with disabilities. Most of its placements are in office administrative and professional jobs and require a high level of functioning. Many of GoodTemps' temporary placements are relatively long-term assignments, and generally last from six weeks to six months. While most assignments are full time, some are part time, although part-time assignments may also last for many months.

GoodTemps places people with all different types of disabilities into jobs. Some of the disabilities are visible, while others are not. Many of the candidates placed into jobs have disabilities such as hypertension, hearing loss, heart problems, eyesight loss, mental illness, depression, bipolar disorder, learning disabilities, and many others.

GoodTemps' first job is to build a pool of qualified people, including people with disabilities, and this effort continues on an ongoing basis. This is seen as the key to the agency's success. Business customers expect orders to be filled immediately. Because GoodTemps always has pre-qualified candidates, it has earned a reputation as a reliable and responsive staffing service.

The key word is "qualified," and GoodTemps' pre-qualification process can be done in one visit that may take up to three hours. Candidates visit a GoodTemps office, either in Manhattan, Elmsford, New York, or Harrison, New Jersey. They complete an application, and, depending on the type of job they are interested in, they may be asked to take a skills assessment. GoodTemps uses Kenexa Prove-It, which includes more than 1,000 validated assessments. Prove-It is often used by employers to assess skills typically used by office personnel, such as Microsoft Office applications and other basic office skills. If a candidate's skills do not measure up to the standards needed for the position, GoodTemps will help them improve their skills. Goodwill offers free training to anyone registered with the agency, both on site at computer labs and via the Internet.

In addition to the skills assessment, GoodTemps interviews each candidate and evaluates other attributes, such as work-appropriate attire, motivation, professionalism, communication skills, and experience in the field in which they are seeking work. Based on both the skills assessment and the interview, GoodTemps makes a determination about whether it is likely to be able to refer the individual to a position. This is the benchmark decision. If GoodTemps thinks it will be able to refer the individual to an assignment, the individual is registered in

GoodTemps' database. In New York, GoodTemps estimates that 75% of all applicants are placed in its database, which is searched every time there is a placement opportunity.³⁷ In New Jersey, less than half of all applicants are ready to be placed in the GoodTemps database for referral.³⁸ GoodTemps gives candidates constructive feedback that will help them realistically assess their skills and opportunities in the labor market. GoodTemps staff stressed that the organization is there to help candidates who sincerely want to improve their skills.

Relationships with Customers

Because 75% of the individuals placed under NYSID contracts must be documented as having a disability, GoodTemps has developed a process for obtaining and keeping this documentation. Any candidate referred by the New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), New York State's vocational rehabilitation agency, brings documentation that automatically qualifies them under NYSID contracts. For other referrals, Goodwill's vocational rehabilitation division signs off on the documentation of a disability.

In order to handle both candidate and business customer relations, GoodTemps employs a staff of approximately 30 people, including two in Harrison, New Jersey and one in Westchester County (a suburban area just north of New York City). GoodTemps has its own Web site (<http://www.goodtemps.org>), through which it recruits both employer customers and applicants. For David Schoch, GoodTemps needs to and is driven by commitment to create value for the candidates, their referring organizations, and clients. It is this market solution to the needs of three disparate groups that deserves further study and potential replication.

Recruiting Partnerships

GoodTemps recruits candidates from Goodwill's own programs and a wide variety of agencies and carefully nurtures these relationships. In New York, GoodTemps has established a good working relationship with VESID. The relationship with VESID covers all five boroughs of New York City as well as suburban Westchester County. GoodTemps sends representatives to VESID's monthly consortium meetings, which include both VESID offices and community providers of vocational rehabilitation services, and has a staff person who serves as a liaison with community organizations. GoodTemps maintains a community outreach database of more than 200 organizations. Recruitment sources in New York include a large and diverse array of organizations, including nonprofit organizations, vocational rehabilitation, and One-Stop Career Centers.

Referral agencies work with GoodTemps because the agency has access to jobs, because working on a temporary basis has advantages for people with disabilities, and because GoodTemps pre-qualifies and pre-tests applicants. A representative from VESID said that this

information is extremely valuable. GoodTemps representatives are very clear on what they can and cannot offer, and on what job seekers can expect. Referral agencies appreciate the directness and clarity of the communication, which makes it easier to work with GoodTemps.

GoodTemps is “user friendly” for the staff of referral agencies. GoodTemps is inviting, wants to hear their concerns, and is responsive to this feedback. A VESID representative said that GoodTemps has improved its service based on feedback. The relationships with GoodTemps offer another avenue for many organizations that are required to place people with disabilities into jobs. An advantage to GoodTemps is that if an issue arises on the job, GoodTemps can engage that agency to intervene.

Good Temps Sources of Recruitment in New York City

- VESID, the largest source, has referred more than 600 people to GoodTemps. Approximately 30% have been placed into assignments. One advantage of working with VESID is that it certifies eligibility of disability status that satisfies the requirements of the preferred source requirements of NYSID.
- Federation Employment and Guidance Service (F·E·G·S), a large New York City-based nonprofit organization and provider of services to individuals with disabilities. GoodTemps works especially with F·E·G·S’ “We Care” and “Back-to-Work” programs.
- Goodwill’s own programs
- Lighthouse International
- Workforce 1 (One-Stop) Centers in New York City
- Abilities!
- Career and Educational Consultants
- Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
- North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System
- National Jewish Council for Disabilities
- International Center for the Disabled
- Goddard Riverside Community Center
- Fountain House
- AARP

In New Jersey, the major referral sources are the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the One-Stop Career Centers, and community providers. The regular e-mail blasts from GoodTemps go to more than 125 people in New Jersey, including many community providers. In addition to its regular referral sources, GoodTemps attends job fairs, particularly those that focus on people with disabilities, is listed on various Internet search engines, and lists its jobs with such Web sites as Craigslist, SimplyHired, Indeed, and HotJobs.

Conclusion

The majority of GoodTemps placements are temporary, although many are long-term temporary assignments. In some cases, individuals are hired on a permanent basis where they have been assigned, but this is the exception rather than the rule. David Schoch says that some individuals prefer long-term temporary work, with breaks in between. For others, the experience of working for GoodTemps provides work experience that serves as a stepping stone to finding other work. Approximately 85% of the individuals placed under NYSID contracts were people with disabilities.

Most of the jobs (70%) are administrative in nature; another 25% are professional, and the remainder are a mixture of other types of jobs, such as warehouse positions. The average wage of GoodTemps placements in 2008 was \$13.13 per hour.⁴⁰ GoodTemps offers statutory fringe benefits but does not provide paid benefits such as health care coverage.⁴¹

This profile has the following implications related to the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

GoodTemps' business customers use temporary workers for business reasons. Temporary workers fill in for absent employees or temporary vacancies in order to provide extra support during busy seasons or times, to staff special short-term projects, or as a source of permanent employees in temporary-to-permanent arrangements. GoodTemps believes that people with all kinds of disabilities have skills, want to work, and can be placed into jobs. The businesses or agencies at which people are placed want someone who can do the job, and GoodTemps provides them with people with disabilities who can do the job. Feedback from employers indicates that GoodTemps placements are as good as or better than candidates from other staffing services with which they have worked.

GoodTemps registers 500 to 800 new candidates for employment per month. As of 2009, there were 35,000 individuals in GoodTemps' pool. GoodTemps places 2,000 people per year into temporary assignments, with approximately 900 working at any one time. Of this 900, approximately 550, or more than 60%, are individuals with disabilities.⁴²

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

As a staffing service, GoodTemps illustrates the vital importance of a single point of contact for the business customer. GoodTemps focuses on the needs of the business customer, recruits from multiple service providers, and makes the match. This makes it easier for business customers to hire people with disabilities. GoodTemps assesses and screens candidates on an ongoing basis and screens to employer skill specifications. Through a temp-to-hire staffing model, employers can be sure of the candidates they hire before committing them to their payroll.

Public and community agencies refer candidates to GoodTemps for placement in temporary jobs. GoodTemps has access to jobs and serves as a central point of contact for provider agencies that want access to these jobs for their clients and customers.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

GoodTemps gives people with disabilities an opportunity to work that they may not have had otherwise. This is a critical advantage that it achieves through its partnership with providers. By removing direct employer screening, GoodTemps eliminates the inadvertent discrimination that sometimes takes place in the marketplace. Also, GoodTemps can often place people who have no experience as long as they have the necessary skills.

Through GoodTemps, individuals with disabilities are gaining experience and learning skills that make them more marketable. This is true for people with little or no experience in the workforce as well as for people interested in changing careers. It is a good way of transitioning those with skills but little experience into the competitive workforce. GoodTemps is able to give many people jobs quickly, which some people need. Workers can then continue to search for other work while working in a temporary position. This builds up the supply of workers GoodTemps can offer customers.

GoodTemps also offers free training in its computer labs and via the Internet to individuals who are registered with the organization.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

GoodTemps has grown due to its customer focus and successful relationships with public agencies, community providers, and employers. GoodTemps has also played a leadership role within Goodwill Industries International in promoting the use of temporary staffing services to benefit underrepresented populations served by Goodwill as part of its mission.

Manpower Inc.: The Albuquerque, New Mexico TechReach Program

Introduction

Manpower Inc. is one of the largest staffing companies in the world. According to the company Web site, “Founded in 1948, the \$22 billion company offers a range of services for the entire employment and business cycle including permanent, temporary, and contract recruitment; employee assessment and selection; training; outplacement; outsourcing; and consulting.”⁴³ The company has 4,200 offices worldwide and meets the staffing needs of 400,000 clients. In 2008, Manpower had four million associates placed in permanent, temporary, or contract positions around the world.⁴⁴

From its inception, Manpower Inc. has had a strategy of tapping disenfranchised employees, including people with disabilities. Martha Artiles, Global Chief Diversity Officer, said that the company has been “very passionate” in its efforts to recruit employees with disabilities because it improves Manpower’s competitive position with competitors. She said, “It’s about business; it’s about talent; but it helps communities.”

The TechReach program in Albuquerque, New Mexico, offers a rich example of how Manpower recruited people with disabilities to meet employer demand for skilled employees.

Development of the Partnership

The TechReach partnership was initiated in response to a business need for skilled employees for electronic assembly. A regional manager for an electronics company said the company did not have sufficient skilled workers to meet customer demand. A contracts administrator for an aerospace company said that their company was experiencing a shortage of skilled workers as well. As a result, these companies approached Manpower for help.⁴⁵

Jeff Parker, Regional Director for Manpower-Albuquerque, proposed the TechReach program, which would recruit a new diverse group of workers, including at-risk youth, veterans, dislocated workers from ethnic minority groups, and people with disabilities. The proposed program combined “candidate selection, training, certification, placement, and continuous skill-upgrade components to deliver comprehensive solutions for employers.”⁴⁶ A key element of the proposed program was the establishment of a partnership between the employers, Manpower, and community organizations such as the Employers’ Disability Resource (New Mexico’s Business Leadership Network), the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (the local One-Stop system), and Central New Mexico Community College. Each of these entities brought expertise and resources needed for program implementation.

Partnering with employers, government, community agencies, and the local community college, the TechReach program recruited and trained people with disabilities for high-demand jobs in the technology sector. TechReach is an example of a partnership where a staffing company assumes the role of intermediary between entities serving people with disabilities and employers.

Lawrence Rael, Executive Director of the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments, which serves as the administrative entity for Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico, recalls when Mr. Parker presented the idea for TechReach to his board. He said that a core issue was that the community college did not have a curriculum for certification for the needed jobs. In collaboration with employers and Manpower, Workforce Connection and the Council were able to “entice” the college to develop a curriculum and establish training for these jobs. Employers’ Disability Resource agreed to screen applicants for TechReach and provide needed supports. It was further agreed that each participant would be registered with Workforce Connection to facilitate funding for the training. Mr. Rael said that the TechReach program is consistent with his agency’s commitment to “adapt to meet the needs of customers including people with disabilities.”

Training and Curriculum are Key

The initial challenge for the TechReach partnership was the development of a curriculum for training prospective candidates. Central New Mexico Community College established a Manufacturing Academy and developed a curriculum with input from the employers and partners. This curriculum not only provides classroom laboratories for skill training in electronic assembly but also training for soft skills such as interviewing, résumé writing, and customer service. Denise Gardner, Business Development Manager at the college, noted that the curriculum was developed for all demographics, including people with disabilities. Jeff Parker added that the curriculum meets the highest international standards for assembly training in areas such as military, avionics, and medical devices. Upon completion of the training, students receive a certificate qualifying them for employment in electronic assembly.⁴⁷

Once the Manufacturing Academy was ready for students, recruitment for the first class was initiated through the Employers’ Disability Resource. The Employers’ Disability Resource, which is funded by the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, had access to vocational rehabilitation counselors in the area. Leah Rhule, Executive Director of the Employers’ Disability Resource, said that when Manpower approached her about recruiting for the classes, “we put the word out and the classes were filled.”⁴⁸ Specific referrals were made by the individual vocational rehabilitation counselors. The classes were funded by Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico using federal Workforce Investment Act funding. The costs of housing and transportation for students who needed them were funded by the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Manpower provided pre-screening, post-screening, and job placement supports.

There were four classes of 12 to 14 students who completed the TechReach program. The fourth class was comprised entirely of people with hearing impairments. In response, the curriculum at the Manufacturing Academy was translated into American Sign Language and interpreters were provided to facilitate instruction. Martha Artiles noted with pride that technical terms were added to the sign language dictionary as part of this process.⁴⁹

The TechReach program was put on hold after its fourth class due to a lull in the demand for employees.

Outcomes from the Partnership

TechReach was able to meet a local workforce need through the recruitment and training of employees with disabilities. Manpower statistics indicate that 100% of the graduates of TechReach were hired by employers, with a 93% retention rate.⁵⁰ Leah Rhule said that employers felt “more comfortable” hiring people with disabilities because of the TechReach partnership. She said further that the TechReach program was a “win for the job seeker, a win for the employer, and a win for Manpower.”

The contracts administrator from the aerospace company was very pleased with its hires from TechReach. She said, “The quality of these graduates brought value to our business.” A production supervisor at the electronics company said, “We seek out the best employees for the job; these graduates get the job done.”

Denise Gardner echoed the employer sentiments. She said that when students graduate from TechReach, “They get work.” Ms. Rhule agreed, saying that through TechReach “people with disabilities are getting jobs.”⁵¹ Mr. Rael described the results of TechReach as “terrific” and said that Workforce Connection is willing to consider providing funding for the model in the future to meet workforce needs.

Manpower views TechReach as a successful model to meet local workforce needs through the recruitment and training of people with disabilities. Martha Artiles said that TechReach is “alive and well in the Manpower system” and is an important tool for facilitating employment for people with disabilities that is available to all of its offices worldwide.

Conclusion

The TechReach program is viewed as a success by Manpower, employers, and participating partners. The partnership provides important models for private-sector collaborations consistent with the *Ready and Able* findings:

- **Employers respond to a business case for employing people with disabilities**

The Albuquerque TechReach program was developed by Manpower in response to a local workforce need for skilled electronic assembly workers. Manpower recruits employees with disabilities because it improves the company's position with competitors. TechReach is one model the company uses in its recruitment efforts. Company leadership states firmly "it's about business."

- **Innovative collaborations with and between workforce-supplying organizations enable employer efforts to recruit, hire, train, and support employees with disabilities**

Manpower organized a partnership that included the vocational rehabilitation system, the workforce system, the local community college, and the Business Leadership Network (BLN) to address this need through the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. The TechReach program illustrates a staffing company successfully coordinating a partnership with the local disability, workforce, and community college systems to meet employer workforce needs through the recruitment and training of people with disabilities. This presents a model for Manpower and other similar types of companies to be the catalyst and coordinator for local partnerships that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

The New Mexico BLN played an important role in coordinating the outreach to potential employees with disabilities for the TechReach program. This highlights the potential for BLNs participating in local partnerships that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities.

- **Collaborations ensure that workers are qualified and productive**

Through the partnership, an innovative program of outreach, training, supports, pre- and post-program screening, and certification provided employers with a pipeline of skilled employees with disabilities to meet their workforce needs. People with disabilities in the TechReach program were funded through the local workforce system using Workforce Investment Act funds. The curriculum at the TechReach Manufacturing Academy was developed and adapted to meet the diverse needs of people with disabilities and resulted in certification upon graduation. This highlights the possible resources workforce agencies can provide in local partnerships that facilitate the employment of people with disabilities. The local community college developed and operated the TechReach Manufacturing Academy with the capability of training students with disabilities for skilled positions. This illustrates the potential for community colleges to provide training and certifications for local partnerships.

- **Successful collaborations nurture and reward continuous leadership**

Manpower assumed leadership to meet a local workforce need through the employment of people with disabilities. Using the TechReach model, it coordinated a partnership to recruit, train, and place people with disabilities in high-tech jobs. The result was a win for employers who received qualified employees to meet their workforce needs and expanded employment opportunities for people with disabilities.