



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

---

15 January 2004

### **Employing a Disabled Workforce**

Axon Computers provides high quality jobs to a disabled workforce and allocates revenues in excess of profits towards vocational rehabilitation and housing for them.

Employers who have taken advantage of this pool of talent, like IBM and NASA, have set very high expectations for their disabled employees while exposing them to the rigors of fast-paced mentoring programs. In most cases, these employees have exceeded the expectations of their employers, thereby putting the moderate costs of work site and job task modification into perspective. These should be seen as normal and reasonable costs of doing business.

Hiring disabled applicants is a good start, but an employer needs the support of a just and civil society, backed up by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to be sure that the new employee has a good chance of succeeding on the job.

For the sake of his physical and mental well-being, Phil Kosak, owner of Carolina Fine Snacks in Greensboro, N.C., had to re-evaluate the employees who worked in his company.

"I had to make some hard decisions about who had to go," recalls Kosak, whose employees had given him endless problems with tardiness and lackluster performance. At that time, he took a chance by recruiting a young man who happened to be legally blind and learning disabled. It was one of the best recruitment decisions he has ever made.

Ten years later, Kosak has nine employees with disabilities ranging from paraplegia to learning problems. His workers manufacture and package peanuts, popcorn, cookies and cheese curls for companies such as Weight Watchers, Heinz and Quaker Oats. Productivity is way up and a new line of diet and gourmet cookies is in the works.

Kosak is now one of the country's leading advocates for recruiting disabled employees. He's a sort of goodwill ambassador - crisscrossing the United States to point the benefits of employing a disabled workforce.