IBM Accessible Workplace Connection

A smarter, more inclusive, workforce

Highlights:

- Provides a simple, centralized way to request, acquire, and support accommodations

- Supports consistent processes in multiple countries, divisions, and lines of business

- Delivers comprehensive documentation and reporting capabilities

- Helps improve outcomes for hiring, accommodating, and retaining employees

- Supports compliance with government regulations (retention and hiring goals)

According to the Office of Disability Employment Policy, an estimated 20 percent of working-age people have some kind of disability.[1] Therefore, how an organization engages, develops, recognizes, and supports job applicants and employees is critical to creating a diverse pool of talent in the workplace, and, more importantly, optimizing the productivity of every worker to increase job satisfaction and business performance.

Every employee is different—from abilities to job needs, from how they consume information to how they prefer to collaborate and communicate with others. Employees with disabilities can make unique and significant contributions if organizations provide them with comprehensive and effective workplace accommodations so that they can perform to the best of their abilities.

A workplace accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the manner in which duties are accomplished that enables a mature worker or a worker with a permanent or temporary disability to perform the essential functions of a job. Examples of accommodations include assistive technologies (A.T.) such as screen magnifiers; building or work space adjustments; accessibility services such as sign language interpreting for people who are deaf, and reading services for people who are blind; job adjustments; alternative travel arrangements; and work schedule adjustments.

For many organizations, the accommodation process can be disjointed, reactive, and inconsistent across countries, divisions, or lines of business. This not only makes it difficult to enable employees to be productive immediately, but it can also lower an organization's retention rates, which can result in increased hiring and retraining costs.

By weaving accessibility into the fabric of business processes, organizations can improve the effectiveness of talent acquisition programs and create a smarter, more inclusive, workforce that empowers and engages employees, and that transforms the way business is done.

Automate accommodations to help increase employee productivity

IBM® Accessible Workplace Connection is a web-based, global workplace accommodation management solution that provides employees and their managers with a streamlined process of requesting reasonable accommodations that enable employees to be optimally productive in their jobs. This one-stop resource for employees with permanent or temporary disabilities or medical conditions is designed so that accommodations can be requested, delivered, changed, supported, and maintained both effectively and efficiently.

IBM Accessible Workplace Connection can help a variety of administrators and other staff—such as HR personnel, medical case workers, legal representatives, and local and county management—to facilitate the overall accommodation process. In addition, IBM Accessible Workplace Connection can help improve process efficiency and the ability to securely gather data and reports while maintaining privacy.

For instance, the onboarding process for new employees should enable new hires to become productive in the shortest time possible. IBM Accessible Workplace Connection helps drive efficiency in the organization by standardizing and automating the accommodation aspects of the onboarding process.

IBM Accessible Workplace Connection is designed to eliminate process confusion, reduce redundancy, fulfill requests in a timely manner, and provide consistent support across a global enterprise. Additionally, the solution helps support government regulations and keeps historical accommodation records for legal and personnel purposes.

IBM Accessible Workplace Connection can provide multiple benefits to:

Employees
- Enhances requesting, tracking and receiving accommodations
- Simplifies access to required accommodations, which can lead to improved productivity
- Provides accommodations that can help employees achieve career goals

Organizations
- Supports government regulations (retention and hiring goals)
- Potentially reduces regulatory fines and potential liabilities
- Enhances secure data collection, while maintaining privacy
- Increases process consistency and efficiency
- Potentially reduces costly short-term disability, long-term disability, and workers compensation insurance by enabling employees to return to work with the required accommodations for their disability

Support adherence to government regulations

IBM Accessible Workplace Connection helps organizations comply with government regulations, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.) and the United States Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 503).

The A.D.A. specifically prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and requires employers to accommodate the disabilities of job applicants and employees to ensure that qualified individuals with a disability have equal rights and privileges as employees without disabilities. By ensuring that proper accommodations are delivered, supported, and maintained, IBM Accessible Workplace Connection helps create a more inclusive workplace where individuals can advance and contribute. Additionally, it helps ensure that employers are creating a workplace where all employees can be productive, which can lead to the higher retention rates needed to meet the 7 percent utilization goal stipulated in Section 503 for Federal contractors.

IBM is actively involved in ever-changing government policies and regulations worldwide and offers accessibility solutions and services to enhance business processes, employee systems, or customer-facing solutions to assist organizations in meeting accessibility compliance.

Simplify and centralize processes

Intended for any commercial or government organization, IBM Accessible Workplace Connection provides the key user interface for all administrative and end-user functions.

When users first log in to the system, they will be directed to create a profile page that summarizes their settings (such as their participation in the anonymous communication process, accommodations survey and ratings, and accommodations collaboration processes), and provides views of their existing accommodations, historical documentation of all actions taken, and all requests made.

Within this page, they can also browse a catalog of available accommodations, receive help getting started and navigating the system, and follow links to additional resources, such as FAQs and documentation for every facet of the request process.

Once the necessary accommodations are selected, users (or others acting on their behalf) can create a new accommodation request if they are:

- Receiving accommodations for the first time
- Updating accommodations because needs have changed
- Updating accommodations because job functions have changed

Users can also renew and extend their existing accommodations, get supplies or accessories for one of their existing accommodations, or get help with a workplace accessibility or accommodation problem. IBM Accessible Workplace Connection also automatically generates emails during specific stages in the accommodation process, giving users a transparent view of all requests.

For more information

More information about IBM Accessible Workplace Connection and other IBM Accessibility projects is available at **ibm.com**/able

If you are interested in learning more about IBM's consulting services or how to license IBM accessibility technology or services components into your products or services, email us at apoffice@us.ibm.com

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[1] United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. Accessed September 9, 2014. www.dol.gov/odep/

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