

Finding employment can be difficult even in the best of situations, but can prove even more frustrating if you have a disability. When you are disabled, conducting a job search can present you with an additional set of challenges those who aren't won't likely understand. That is why it is crucial to know your capabilities and be able to convey them in such a way that will show prospective employers you most certainly can be the right candidate for the job.

Considering Your Disability

Every disability is very unique, and presents different needs while on the job. For example, a person who is deaf may have difficulty with verbal communication, while someone who is blind has the task of figuring out how to access the plethora of print information he or she will undoubtedly be required to handle on a daily basis. It is because of this that every situation should be dealt with exclusively.

This, however, is not often considered in the work force where the objective is to get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible. That is where the burden of proof falls on you, the disabled individual. It is up to you, before ever embarking on your quest for a job interview, to be as prepared and informed as possible, so you will be able to impress upon the interviewer that you are not only capable of doing the job, but you are also the best candidate because of your knowledge and past experience, and your disability will not get in the way of this. The first step toward convincing others is understanding your particular disability and what special accommodations may be necessary to make it possible for you to fulfill the required job duties.



Understanding Your Needs

Whether you have been disabled all your life, or have recently suffered an accident or condition that has left you with a disability, it is important to understand the specific needs that go along with it. For instance, since many jobs now require the use of a computer, you need to know how you will operate one. This may mean completely rethinking your approach, especially if you were not previously disabled. In many cases, it will be necessary to relearn this skill in order to gain equal footing. Here, the responsibility is on you.

There are many tools and devices available these days that make using a computer possible. One unfortunate downside is the high cost that can be incurred when adapting computer equipment, but there are organizations that specialize in serving such needs. Rehabilitation is the key. The more accepting you are of your disability, the better able you will be to work toward living a productive life.



The computer is only one example. There are many other tools you may be required to use on the job, and it is up to you to know how you will use them. It is also up to you to be resourceful in finding alternate solutions when a particular tool is not accessible to you, and suggest these solutions when presented with the problem. Remember, it is very likely you will be interviewed by someone who is not familiar with any disabilities, and therefore, may not fully understand your abilities. As frustrating as it can be, the responsibility of proof is often placed on you, so the better prepared you are, the more convincing you'll be.

Assessing your Skills

When you begin your job hunt, you will probably have, at least a working idea of what you want to do. Whether you have chosen a specific career path, or just want to be employed in a position that makes you feel fulfilled, you will need to have a good understanding of the skills necessary to do the job. Once this is established, it is up to you to acquire them. Whether it means learning computer skills, how to read Braille, or using an augmented speech device to articulate spoken words, this step is important.

Acquiring the necessary job skills may mean receiving additional training, but this will serve you well in the long run. Employers aren't interested in what you know if you aren't able to apply it. That said, begin the process with an open mind. Remember you are employable, and though you will have to prove it, you will come out stronger and more prepared in the future. The more you know about the tools you need, the better off you'll be, both before and on the job. Most of all, keep a great attitude and don't be afraid to try new things. Learn about the continuing development of the tools around you, and how they may benefit you in the future. That way, when the job moves, you will be able to move with it.

<http://www.cvtips.com/job-search/before-the-job-search---disabled-people.html>



Discussing Your Disability — and Your Abilities

If you're qualified for the job and write a good resume and cover letter, you have a good chance of being invited for an interview. If you have an obvious disability — if you're in a wheelchair or wear a brace, for example, or if you have an amputation — it's a good idea to "warn" the interviewer before you arrive. It's common courtesy and good business to prepare someone in advance for the unexpected. The good news is that the interviewer usually will expect the worst and be relieved when they see you, dressed professionally and ready for the challenge.

During the interview process, it's smart to both discuss your disability or injury honestly *and* play up the positive things you can bring to the job. Be honest about your limitations and be ready to prove that you can handle the scope of the job you're applying for. You could even go through some of the job requirements as listed in the employment posting or classified ad (if available) and describe to the interviewer how you handled those requirements in a previous job.

Becoming physically disabled definitely does not mean the end of having a rewarding career. You can bring the same smarts, professionalism and can-do attitude to your job with a few accommodations, or to a new profession.



Career Development Services Department (CDS)

HEART Trust/NTA

Gordon Town Road, Kingston 6

Tel: 970-2139/977-1700-5

<http://cds.heart-nta.org>

Tips for Persons with Disabilities

