

**READY** **PRÊTS**  
**WILLING** **DISPONIBLES**  
**& ABLE** **& CAPABLES**

# BUSINESS CASE

**HIRING PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY  
OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**



## Building an Inclusive Labour Force

In today's dynamic and competitive business landscape, there is rapidly increasing pressure on businesses both large and small to be on the cutting edge of innovative practices, processes, and products. A business that can build and retain a team where employees are engaged and invested, and where their skills and interests align with their roles, is much more likely to be successful.

Canadian businesses face a shrinking labour pool in an increasingly competitive business market. When suitable replacements are not hired, high turnover and absenteeism are costly realities resulting in a need for ongoing recruitment.

Across the country, there are important, valuable roles that do not get filled with the right people, or do not get filled at all. Ready, Willing and Able (RWA) is a nationwide initiative committed to helping Canadian employers find ideal candidates who are readily equipped to enter the workplace.

We have an untapped resource in unemployed and underemployed individuals with intellectual disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Nationwide, there are approximately 500,000 working age adults with intellectual disabilities or ASD, but only one in four are employed.

Why is this? A lack of information, understanding and experience.

**A 2013 STUDY BY THE CENTER OF AMERICAN PROGRESS (U.S.) ESTIMATED THE COST OF REPLACING A MINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYEE TO BE OVER \$3,000. A SALARIED POSITION (EARNING \$30-\$50,000) COSTS NEARLY \$8,000. ON AVERAGE, COMPANIES PAY ABOUT ONE-FIFTH OF AN EMPLOYEE'S SALARY TO REPLACE THAT EMPLOYEE.**

**THE AVERAGE TURNOVER RATE FOR WORKERS ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES IS 49%.**

**ONE IN EVERY 68 WORKERS IN 2010 WAS INJURED OR HARMED ON THE JOB AND RECEIVED WORKERS COMPENSATION AS A RESULT.**

**ABSENTEEISM COST THE CANADIAN ECONOMY AN ESTIMATED \$16.6 BILLION IN 2013.**

## PERFORMANCE COMES IN DIFFERENT PACKAGES

Outdated and incorrect perceptions of intellectual disabilities or ASD tend to focus on the ‘disability’ rather than ‘ability’. Too often, we fail to recognize the strengths and talents of this unique and specialized group, leading to misconceptions about capabilities.

Based on our research, the most common concerns employers have when considering hiring an individual with a disability include:

- Decrease in productivity
- Safety concerns for the employee
- Lack of time and resources to mentor and support
- Questionable return-on-investment
- Effect on team performance and corporate culture

In reality, experience-based evidence from employers around the world is proving, time and time again, that these assumed barriers are either exaggerated, or complete fiction. According to a report by the **Institute for Corporate Productivity**, preconceived concerns about hiring workers with intellectual disabilities or ASD averaged 42% higher than the challenges actually experienced employing them.

“**I AM BEYOND IMPRESSED. THIS WORK CAN BE MONOTONOUS AND REPETITIVE BUT BRIAN BRINGS AN ENERGY LEVEL THAT IS THROUGH THE ROOF.**”

— *Ingrid Rochard, Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex, Toronto, Ontario*

High-performance organizations are 37% more likely to hire people with intellectual disabilities or ASD because they see the talent and skill-matching potential. These leading businesses maximize potential by determining the best fit of job with individual strengths in order to create a well-balanced team.

Through **inclusive hiring**, employers can build engaged, efficient and high-functioning teams that get the job done.

## INCLUSIVE HIRING WORKS

Making a hiring decision should always come down to selecting the best person for the job. Employing individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD is no different. While every new employee has his or her own strengths, there are many positive performance trends that have been noted by employers who have experience in hiring people with intellectual disabilities or ASD.

**DID YOU KNOW: 75% OR MORE OF EMPLOYERS RATE WORKERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AS GOOD TO VERY GOOD ON PERFORMANCE FACTORS.**

An Environics Research study reports that employers rated employees with intellectual disabilities, with an average score of 84%, in the following categories:

- high productivity
- dependable
- engaged in their work
- motivated
- great attendance records
- strong attention to work quality

Employees on the autism spectrum have been evaluated by their employers as exhibiting the following:

- strong overall job performance
- great technical abilities
- high levels of accuracy
- acute attention to detail
- conscientiousness and diligence
- ability to work independently

When effectively placed in positions that align with their interests, individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD can truly excel, often exceeding employer expectations.



# It's more than the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

## THE VALUE OF RETENTION

When a workplace is a revolving door of new faces, the team spends more time catching up than it does forging ahead with new ideas and improved processes. It's also challenging to build a strong corporate culture, leading to further turnover.

“**WE HAVE A ZERO PERCENT TURNOVER RATE WITH OUR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES. WE HAVE ONE INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS BEEN WITH US FOR 30 YEARS AND HAS NEVER MISSED A SHIFT.”**

— Mike Stargatt, Regional Manager,  
Wendy's Restaurants of PEI



The average turnover rate for employees across all industries is 49%. High turnover is an extremely costly reality in business: training new employees, covering missed shifts and getting new staff up to speed with experienced staff takes time and resources.

In contrast, turnover rate for employees with intellectual disabilities or ASD is markedly lower, at just 7%.

In the quick service restaurant (QSR) industry, historically known for retention challenges, the average turnover rate is 75%. Only 25% of staff members have long-term objectives and commitment to their employers. However, employers in this industry have reported a 35% turnover rate among staff with an intellectual disability or ASD.

## THE VALUE OF RELIABILITY

### Attendance

The Canadian Economy loses an estimated \$16.6 billion annually due to absenteeism (2013). Depending on the industry, when an employee does not come in to work it can result in lost business, reduced productivity, distraught customers or missed deadlines; all of which hurt performance and profitability.

**DID YOU KNOW: 86% OF EMPLOYEES WITH A DISABILITY RATED AVERAGE OR BETTER ON ATTENDANCE THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES WITHOUT A DISABILITY.**

### Safety

The Government of Canada estimates that one in every 68 workers in 2010 was injured or harmed on the job and received Workers Compensation as a result. Not only is this emotionally traumatic for the employee, manager and team, it results in immediate absenteeism as well as other time and financial impacts during recovery.

One of the most common questions asked by employers who are considering hiring a person with an intellectual disability or ASD is “will my employee be safe?”

The answer: “Equally as safe, if not safer, as your other employees.”

**DID YOU KNOW: 98% OF EMPLOYEES WITH A DISABILITY RATE AVERAGE OR BETTER IN WORK SAFETY THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES WITHOUT A DISABILITY.**

## The Cost of Inclusive Hiring

Along with the numerous benefits, there are **virtually no exceptional costs** to hiring someone with an intellectual disability or ASD.

A study of 2,000 employers by the Job Accommodation Network showed that 57% of employers reported ZERO additional costs from hiring an individual with an intellectual disability or ASD.

37% reported a one-time minimal cost of under \$500. Considering the costs of high turnover and absenteeism, inclusive hiring **just makes sense**.

“**A DIVERSE WORKFORCE HAS A STRONG CULTURAL IMPACT. YOU ENGAGE YOUR STAFF AT A DIFFERENT LEVEL AND FROM A RECRUITMENT STANDPOINT IT SETS US APART.**”

— Kathy Earl, Deloitte, Calgary, Alberta

## The Impact on Corporate Culture and Teams

Although job performance tends to be the focus of most research on employees with intellectual disabilities or ASD, it is important to consider how inclusive hiring impacts the whole team.

Members of teams who undertake inclusive hiring practices consistently report they are **proud** to be in a workplace that values inclusion and diversity. An impressive 73% of these employees report that they **strongly agree** that their new teammates are contributing as much as others to their organization.

## Improved Public Perception and Enhanced Consumer Loyalty

People want to frequent businesses that reflect their communities and improve the quality of life for their families, friends and neighbours. If given the opportunity to engage with a business that participates in inclusive hiring, they will.

A 2006 survey found this to be overwhelmingly true: 92% of individuals regarded companies hiring people with an intellectual disability or ASD more favourably than their competitors and 87% of people indicated they would prefer to give their business to companies who hire people with disabilities.



## PROVING THAT INCLUSION WORKS

We asked employers who have adopted inclusive hiring practices in their workplaces to share their experiences. Here's what they had to say:

Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents said that employing individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD has been a truly positive experience and even one that has exceeded their expectations.

**DID YOU KNOW: 75% OF EMPLOYERS SURVEYED SAID EMPLOYING INDIVIDUALS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR ASD HAS BEEN A TRULY POSITIVE EXPERIENCE.**

There is significant evidence that hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities or ASD reduces turnover, improves attendance and either maintains or improves overall organizational performance. Other employees and customers of businesses who engage in inclusive hiring both report positive perceptions and experiences.

RWA is connecting qualified candidates to progressive employers who have vacancies to fill. RWA supports employers through the hiring process and beyond, to ensure the best fit for both the company and the candidate. Through the initiative, job seekers find jobs that align with their strengths, and employers gain talented and productive employees who enhance their bottom line.

*Funded by the Government of Canada and active in 20 communities across the country, RWA is a national partnership of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA) and their member organizations.*

[FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RWA AND HIRING INDIVIDUALS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER](http://www.readywillingable.ca)

[www.readywillingable.ca](http://www.readywillingable.ca)

*Funded by the Government of Canada's Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities. | Financé par le Fonds d'intégration pour les personnes handicapées du gouvernement du Canada.*