

# The Emerging Role of the Staffing Industry in the Employment of Persons with Disabilities

*A Case Report on Manpower Inc.*

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# Executive Summary

Eight years after passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the unemployment rate among people with disabilities remains at more than 60 percent. The ADA has set a foundation for increasing equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. More must be done, however, to enable qualified people with disabilities to join the American workforce.

This report explores how the world's largest staffing firm, Manpower Inc., generates and sustains competitive employment opportunities for qualified workers with disabilities. The report uses in-depth interviews, observations, and archival data sources to examine the employment practices of Manpower.

The overarching goal is to stimulate discussion of employment placement strategies and policy initiatives that address the unemployment problem faced by millions of Americans with disabilities who want to work and who are capable of working.

The findings suggest that the staffing industry provides one critical means for people with disabilities to move from unemployment to competitive permanent employment, using job assessment services, temporary job assignments, and work skills training.

## Five Core Findings

- **Unemployment to Employment.** 90% of the individuals studied were at work within ten days of applying to Manpower.
- **Workplace Accommodation Costs Minimal.** There were no direct costs to Manpower or its customer companies in accommodating the workers studied.
- **Staying at Work.** 60% of individuals moved from no employment to permanent employment. Annually, more than 40% of Manpower's entire workforce transitions to permanent work as a direct result of temporary job placements.
- **Choice in Work.** 90% of individuals were placed into an industry or job in which they expressed interest, consistent with individualized work skills.
- **Retaining Work that Pays.** 90% of individuals remained in the workforce from the time of their first job assignment, earning above the minimum wage.

# Part One: The Staffing Industry and the Employment of Persons with Disabilities

## A. Introduction

The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is a problem of national proportion. Even during this decade of the ADA, with the United States enjoying record low unemployment rates, there has been a relatively modest increase in the employment rate of people with disabilities. Data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey in 1995 revealed that fewer than one-third of the more than sixteen million working-age noninstitutionalized Americans with work-related disabilities were employed.

This study examines the central role the staffing industry plays in expanding competitive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. On a daily basis, the staffing industry places millions of persons in America's workplaces and assists them in making the transition from unemployment to employment, from one job to another, and from school to work.

*"We must look into the future, determine the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities the next century presents, and position ourselves so that we can benefit from these economic opportunities."*

— Tony Coelho, Chairman, President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

## B. Background

Every year the United States spends more than \$109 billion in private and public support payments on people with disabilities. More than three million Americans with disabilities ages 16 to 64 receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Less than three percent of these people are working and earning more than \$500 per month. Less than one percent of individuals who receive Social Security benefits ever leave the Social Security rolls.

The temporary employment staffing industry recruits and provides workers to companies on an as-needed basis. The staffing industry has expanded rapidly during the past twenty-five years. Temporary employment placement rose from 165,000 in 1972 to more than two million by 1995, reflecting an annual growth rate of more than 11 percent.

Nine out of ten businesses in the United States use the services of a staffing industry firm. More than one-third of the companies surveyed plan to increase their use of staffing industry services. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that between 1994 and 2005 temporary employment opportunities would expand by more than 50 percent.

Manpower Inc., a Fortune 500 company founded in 1948 and headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is the largest staffing industry firm. Manpower annually places

almost two million workers into employment through its 2,800 offices in 48 countries. Manpower's revenues nearly doubled since 1991, with sales of \$8.9 billion for 1997.

Manpower's U.S. employment placement mix is roughly 40% light industrial, 40% office, and 20% technical and professional assignments, covering positions from file clerk and production worker to software engineer and systems analyst.

## **C. Breaking Down Barriers to Work Facing People with Disabilities**

### **1. Focus on Abilities**

Manpower works with people with disabilities in the same way as it works with people without disabilities—providing accommodations that are necessary and effective for job placement. The focus of the job placement process for all applicants is on individual abilities, job skills, and interests.

Applicants complete job skill assessments selected according to their abilities and interests. For its industrial division, Manpower uses its Ultradex system, which assesses work skills and abilities for general job categories including inspection, sorting, coordinated rapid movement, tool-related assembly, PCB assembly, aiming, and logging production.

For office workers, Manpower's SURESKILL tests assess proficiency in software packages including word processing, spreadsheet, and database management. Additional assessments are available for clerical roles such as mailroom, customer service, and call center positions.

*"Manpower believes that there are no unskilled workers. Every individual has skills and aptitudes that can be measured, and every job can be broken down into required tasks and essential skills."*

— **Melanie Cosgrove Holmes, Senior Vice President, Manpower**

### **2. Match Worker Skills to Workplace Demands**

Manpower regularly conducts labor market surveys providing in-depth knowledge of local markets and economic trends. Manpower staff complete Work Environment Service Call reports to assess customer expectations, physical details of the work area, work pace, safety issues, accessibility, and required equipment.

The Work Environment Service Call report gathers information on customers' building accessibility and workplace accommodations available to workers with disabilities. This assessment, combined with individual applicant skill assessments, enables Manpower to place qualified workers into jobs through a 'reverse funnel' approach—where one individual emerges with multiple skills and job opportunities rather than one candidate being funneled into a single role.

### **3. Focus on Individualized Training**

Annually, the staffing industry invests hundreds of millions of dollars in job training and retraining. Staffing companies spend approximately \$260 million on formal job skills training and another \$75 million on soft skills training, reaching approximately 2.2 million people every year.

Manpower offers employees job skills enhancement through training programs at no cost, including:

- Skillware: Computer-delivered instruction in office software, data entry, and customer service skills; translated into nine languages and delivered to more than 60,000 workers annually.
- TechTrack: Self-directed training for technical professionals covering client/server systems, network, and operating system technologies, with paths to certification testing.
- Soldering Training: Approximately 30-hour course for light industrial employees, covering entry-level skills and Good Manufacturing Practices.
- 'Putting Quality to Work': Soft skills training via videotapes and workbooks covering phone, listening, and workplace interaction skills.
- Global Learning Center (GLC): An internet-based platform offering more than 300 TechTrack courses and the full range of Manpower training programs, accessible from Manpower offices or employees' homes.

## Part Two: Manpower and Its Emerging Workforce of Persons with Disabilities

The information in this section was gathered from in-depth telephone and in-person interviews with applicants and employees with disabilities, Manpower staff, and client employers. Names have been changed to protect privacy. The ten case studies represent a cross-section illustrating a diversity of disabilities, job placements, and geographical locations.

### Case Study: Shelly Tillman, Hillsboro, Oregon

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	6 days
Starting wage	\$8.00/hr
Training received	0 hours
Consecutive months employed	24 months
Disability	Limb difference (lost arm due to childhood cancer)

Shelly applied to Manpower in May 1996 seeking variety in employment. Within a week she was working as an administrative assistant at an insurance firm. After three months she was offered a permanent position but declined, seeking flexibility as a mother of three.

Her second assignment with a high-tech company led to a permanent job offer she accepted. She later returned to Manpower and within a month accepted another permanent position. Shelly works part-time by choice to accommodate her family responsibilities.

Shelly requested no workplace accommodations. Her experience highlighted Manpower's focus on what individuals can do: 'They saw me for the things that I could do, not what I couldn't do.'

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### Case Study: Brett Lawson, Portland, Oregon

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	4 days
Starting wage	\$7.03/hr

Training received	0 hours
Consecutive months employed	36 months
Disability	Blind

After twenty years of self-employment in food service, Brett applied to Manpower for assembly work in 1995. He completed an assembly skills assessment, demonstrating above-average job skills and work pace.

Four days later Brett was placed as an assembler at a factory manufacturing house locks. Two months later he accepted full-time permanent employment with benefits as an Assembler II. Brett became certified in six different assembly positions.

The only accommodation Brett requested was permission to use his seeing-eye dog for mobility around the factory. 'I think attitude is most important. I wanted to work, Manpower got me to work, and now it's my responsibility to stay at work.'

### Case Study: Jeff Tryon, Manchester, Connecticut

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	5 days
Starting wage	\$7.00/hr
Training received	0 hours
Consecutive months employed	60 months
Disability	Deaf

Jeff worked for Manpower for more than five years. He preferred temporary work for its flexibility, which allowed him to work as a ski instructor in New Hampshire during the ski season. In 1998, he accepted a permanent position in a hospital's maintenance department.

Jeff relies on a telephone relay system and lip-reading to communicate. His only accommodation request was that co-workers not turn away from him while speaking—a soft-skill accommodation with zero cost to the company.

### Case Study: Greg Alden, San Diego, California

Placement Detail	Value
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Time from application to placement	6 days
Starting wage	\$7.50/hr
Training received	0 hours
Consecutive months employed	13+ months
Disability	Amputee (right arm, military injury)

After a military accident resulting in the amputation of his right arm, Greg earned an associate degree in micro-computers and spent months applying for jobs without success. At a friend's suggestion, he applied to Manpower.

Manpower's skill assessments confirmed his exceptional computer skills. He was placed the next day testing educational software for children—a role matching his skills and personal interests. He requested no accommodations or assistive devices.

His disability was never disclosed by Manpower: 'We never disclose a worker's disability when placing an individual on a job assignment. If an applicant has the qualifications the employer requested, we make the assignment.'

### Case Study: Rico Arenas, Washington, D.C.

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	1 day
Starting wage	\$14.12/hr
Training received	12 hours
Consecutive months employed	26 months
Disability	Spinal muscular atrophy (uses wheelchair)

Rico encountered Manpower by chance while seeking employment at U.S. Postal Service headquarters. His mother described his skills to Manpower manager Cheryl Lyons, who arranged an interview the next day.

Rico started work quickly in the consumer affairs division of the Postal Service. He held a series of long-term assignments and declined one permanent offer because the salary was lower than his Manpower wages. He continued on a long-term database management assignment at the Postal Service.

His only accommodation was a parking spot close to the building. 'When I finish an assignment, Manpower has another one waiting. I like the temping arrangement because it exposes me to new jobs and new people.'

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## Case Study: Valerie Meyer, Vernon Hills, Illinois

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	9 days
Starting wage	\$9.00/hr
Training received	32 hours
Consecutive months employed	4, then 12 consecutive
Disability	Uses wheelchair

A recent college graduate with a business management and marketing degree, Valerie found employment difficult to obtain due to limited work experience. Through Manpower, she built work experience and completed computer skills training.

After several shorter assignments, Valerie received a temporary placement at Nursing Spectrum magazine. After one year, she was hired permanently as a customer service representative—selected from among 60 Manpower employees who had worked on a project there.

Valerie requested no accommodations. The employer installed an automatic door opener for a restroom, benefiting all visitors. 'Disability is a non-factor,' her supervisor stated. 'We had no fears about hiring individuals with disabilities.'

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## Case Study: Linda Hibbs, Rochester, New York

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	10 days
Starting wage	\$10.10/hr
Training received	400 hours
Consecutive months employed	6+ months
Disability	Mental health disability; hip replacement

Linda sought employment after earning an associate degree in food service, but her physician advised against the physical demands of that field due to hip and knee

limitations. She was referred to Manpower's Skillware training program through vocational services.

She completed the training at her own pace and used lunch hours during training to seek permanent employment. She secured a position as a customer representative at a computer tech company before finishing the program.

'Without the Manpower training program, I would not have gotten this job.' She has nearly achieved her goal of leaving Social Security benefits, now earning enough with health insurance and benefits to support her independence.

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### Case Study: Zach Freeman, Forest City, Iowa

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	10 days
Starting wage	\$5.88/hr
Training received	0 hours
Consecutive months employed	12 months
Disability	Blind

Zach wanted packaging and assembly work and applied to Manpower at the suggestion of a friend. His work history clearly demonstrated relevant skills.

Zach uses the same shrink wrap and taping machines as his sighted co-workers and relies on his seeing-eye dog for mobility around the plant. He works 20–25 hours per week by choice, which allows him to pursue other activities. He hopes eventually to work as an emergency dispatcher.

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### Case Study: Bart Duggan, Iowa City, Iowa

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	1 day
Starting wage	\$6.00/hr
Training received	0 hours
Consecutive months employed	12 months
Disability	Epilepsy

Bart graduated from Wayne State in Nebraska in 1994 and sought office or clerical work in Iowa City. His epilepsy prevents him from driving, which created transportation barriers and limited the jobs he could accept.

Over the year he worked for Manpower, Bart had multiple short-term assignments in telemarketing, packaging, and assembly. He eventually accepted a long-term position as a customer service representative, with hopes it will lead to permanent employment.

## Case Study: Jack Lind, Rochester, New York

Placement Detail	Value
Time from application to placement	1 day
Starting wage	\$10.10/hr
Training received	490 hours
Consecutive months employed	18 months
Disability	Wrist injury (lost 50%+ strength/mobility)

A former co-owner of a moving company, Jack was unable to continue that work after a severe wrist fracture. He was referred to the Rochester Rehabilitation Center for Manpower's Skillware computer training program.

Jack enrolled in the Client Support Administrator curriculum, a 14-week program. Before completing training, Manpower offered him a permanent position as a Skillware training administrator—a role he found a natural fit given his enjoyment of working with people.

Jack estimates that more than 90% of trainees from the Rochester Rehabilitation Center find permanent employment after completing the training. 'That kind of success sells the program.'

## B. Summary of Findings

### Placement Summary

Measure	Finding
Time from application to placement (range)	1 to 14 days

Starting hourly wage (range)	\$5.88 – \$14.12
Starting hourly wage (average)	\$8.47
Training received (range)	0 – 490 hours
Placed in industry of choice	9 of 10 participants
Consecutive months employed (range)	4 – 60 months
Direct workplace accommodation costs	\$0
Work site injuries	0

### Nature of Workers' Disabilities

Disability Type	Count
Physical disability	3
Visual impairment	2
Amputee	2
Deaf	1
Epilepsy	1
Mental health disability	1

### Job Types

Job Type	Count
Administrative assistant	3
Computer operator and trainer	3
Factory assembler and packager	2
Maintenance	1
Data entry	1

# Part Three: Conclusions

## A. Core Findings

This report examined Manpower's effort to assist people with disabilities to secure and maintain competitive employment. Five core implications emerge from the study:

- **Unemployment to Employment.** Manpower effectively and promptly transitions people with disabilities from unemployment to employment. Ninety percent of the individuals studied were at work within ten days of applying to Manpower.
- **Workplace Accommodation Costs Minimal.** Consistent with prior studies, the direct cost of accommodating workers with disabilities is low. There were no direct costs to Manpower or to its customer companies in accommodating the workers studied in this report.
- **Staying at Work.** Sixty percent of the individuals studied moved from no employment to permanent employment. Annually, more than 40 percent of Manpower's entire workforce transitions to permanent work as a direct result of temporary job placements.
- **Choice in Work.** Ninety percent of the individuals studied were placed into an industry or job in which they expressed interest, and job placements were consistent with individualized work skills.
- **Retaining Work that Pays.** Ninety percent of the individuals studied remained in the workforce from the time of their first job assignment, earning above the minimum wage, either through temporary assignments or permanent employment.

## B. Related Efforts by Manpower

### 1. High School/High Tech

Sponsored by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, High School/High Tech is designed to engage and prepare students with disabilities for competitive employment in technology-based industries. The program incorporates corporate site visits, mentoring, job shadowing, job training summer camps, and paid internships. There are seventeen programs across the United States.

The Cedar Rapids, Iowa, program serves five local school districts and has more than 15 local business partners. Manpower is an early supporter, making its computer training facility available at no cost to participants and providing paid employment experiences. Cedar Rapids is the only High School/High Tech program in the country partnering with a staffing industry company.

### 2. Rochester Rehabilitation Center

The Rochester Rehabilitation Center and Manpower completed the first year of a partnership that helped more than 50 individuals with serious disabilities obtain permanent employment in the Rochester area. The Rochester Rehabilitation Center

contracts with Manpower for skills training in roles such as client support administrator, information coordinator, information process specialist, and service representative.

Training programs are based on the labor market needs of Rochester employers and take approximately 11 to 14 weeks to complete, incorporating Manpower's Skillware and a soft-skills component. New York's Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities provides referrals and funding; training costs approximately \$4,000–\$5,000 per participant.

Manpower's self-paced Skillware program is a key strength, allowing trainees to proceed at an individualized pace. The program may serve up to 100 trainees in its second year.

### **C. Closing**

This report is part of a series examining issues central to employment integration and economic growth for the workforce of persons with disabilities. Although the past two decades have seen a dramatic shift in attitudes toward persons with disabilities, disability policy continues to reflect an under-emphasis on initiatives for equal employment opportunity.

Three central factors stand out as necessary for persons with disabilities to obtain and retain equal employment: access to education; access to job-skill assessment, development, and training; and access to adequate health insurance. Manpower has developed useful and economically sound employment placement strategies in support of these goals.

More dialogue, research, and corporate leadership are needed to further these discussions. This undertaking will shape the lives of the next generation of citizens with disabilities who have experienced integrated education and who will become an integral part of America's competitive workforce.

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