

Communicating the Benefits of Self-Identification:

Five Steps to Success



IMPROVE for the future

IMPLEMENT the campaign

IDENTIFY messages

INVOLVE employees

INVEST in the idea

Today, more and more employers recognize the value of a workforce inclusive of people with disabilities. These employers are using a variety of innovative strategies to tap into this large talent pool. Reflecting the adage “what gets measured gets done,” some companies proactively recruit qualified people with disabilities and track progress toward specified goals. Moreover, under [Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), companies that are federal contractors are required to do so.

In either case, the primary method for measuring success and identifying opportunities for improvement is to invite applicants and employees to self-identify as having a disability. Self-identification is not solely about compliance or achieving certain numbers. With the right approach, the process of inviting applicants and employees to self-identification goes a long way in conveying a company’s commitment to a disability-inclusive workplace.

Encouraging Self-Identification

Some employees with disabilities may have already disclosed their disability and may therefore be more comfortable self-identifying. Examples of these situations may be people who have requested workplace accommodations or came onboard through a targeted hiring program that takes disability into account. However, other employees with disabilities may not. Often this is due to a lack of understanding about why the company is collecting this information. Encouraging employees to self-identify is essential to obtaining an accurate measure of success toward disability inclusion goals.

To help, many companies implement internal campaigns to educate their workforce about the benefits of self-identification. Such efforts may focus on self-identification of disability only, or a company may incorporate disability into a campaign to encourage self-identification across diversity factors. Either way, when planning a self-identification campaign, the following steps will help set the stage for communication success:



INVEST in the idea. Gaining buy-in from company leadership from the start is critical to the success of a self-identification campaign.



INVOLVE employees in the campaign's development and execution to ensure messages resonate.



IDENTIFY messages and channels for their delivery that reflect company culture and internal branding. An example of this is [PepsiCo's self-identification campaign](#).



IMPLEMENT the campaign. The timeline for the execution of the campaign should align with company self-identification processes.



IMPROVE for the future. Feedback allows companies to ensure future efforts build upon lessons learned.

One of your goals during any self-identification campaign is to help employees understand how you will use the information you collect. Make sure you explain that understanding your workforce enables you to better support their needs. Also make sure all employees know that you take confidentiality seriously and will work to protect their personal information. For more information about strategies to counter what research has shown to be the main barriers to self-identification, as well as examples of innovative approaches some companies have taken to increase it, read [Engaging Employees to Measure Success: Innovative Approaches to Encouraging Self-Identification of Disability](#).

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