

# How Inclusive Workplace Technology Benefits Employers

*Note: this resource is also available at [PEAT](#) – the Partnership on Accessible Technology.*

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When it comes to human capital, taking steps to improve the accessibility of your workplace technology infrastructure can result in significant rewards in terms of enhanced employee productivity and bottom-line benefits. What is more, it can widen your pool of potential talent by sending a clear message that all qualified individuals—including those with disabilities—are welcome to apply.

Collectively, these benefits comprise what is often called a "business case," and developing a written one can significantly help in your quest to advocate for an accessible workplace. To be most effective, an accessibility business case, like all business cases, should be customized to reflect your company's unique mission. It should clearly map to established corporate goals and objectives and identify how improving the accessibility of your workplace technology infrastructure can advance them.

Once developed, a solid, comprehensive business case can serve as an important tool in justifying your company's accessibility initiative and communicating about it, both internally and externally. Given the nature of technology, however, a business case should be considered a living document and be assessed and updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in your organization's systems and processes.

In fact, your organization may have a specific process for developing a business case, so you may be able to find internal resources to help you get started. For instance, some companies incorporate business case development into management training or maintain an intranet resource on the subject for individual employees or employee teams to access. If you've never developed one before, it's not difficult. It basically entails laying out facts and logic.

Some of the factors in your business case may need to be quantified. Others may only require a sound argument and concrete examples. Again, while each business case for accessible workplace technology should be tailored to reflect a company's unique needs and circumstances, most have several aspects in common. These include:

- **Improved and expanded recruitment.** Technology tools often aid in the recruitment of talent, so it's important to ensure that such tools are accessible. First and foremost, an accessible website and online job application system ensures—and clearly communicates—that your company is interested in all qualified people, including those

with disabilities. It's an obvious way to expand your applicant pool, allowing more people to get their foot in the "virtual door," and seek opportunities for advancement once on board. Furthermore, in today's competitive recruitment and hiring environment, it's increasingly important to consider other communication channels. For instance, if your company uses social media to spread the word about employment opportunities, [there are steps you can take](#) to make your postings more accessible.

- **Increased retention.** Accessible technology is a smart corporate continuity strategy. Employees who become ill or injured, or who develop age-related functional limitations, may require accessible technology to do their jobs. Their experience and institutional knowledge should be retained whenever possible, since it is far more expensive to onboard new employees than it is to keep the talent you have. In fact, according to a report by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), eliminating the costs of training a new employee is one of the primary benefits of ensuring existing employees with disabilities have the tools they need to maximize their productivity.
- **Productivity.** The reality is all employees need technology tools to do their job, from computers to online forms to mobile phones. And some accessibility features actually help many people, with and without disabilities, increase their productivity. Usability features such as volume control, highly readable screens, open video captioning, and plain language are just a few examples of universal design (UD), an important trend in product development. The bottom line is that ensuring all employees have what they need to be as productive as possible simply makes good business sense. This principle is at the very heart of the argument for providing accessible workplace technology.
- **Cost-effectiveness compared to assistive technology (AT).** While AT devices may be necessary for some employees with disabilities, mainstream technologies that work well for everyone without additional AT are usually less expensive overall and easier to manage. That's because they help optimize the productivity of many employees, not just those with specific accommodation needs.
- **Diversity.** Savvy businesses know that a diverse workforce, inclusive of people with many backgrounds and experiences, leads to more innovative solutions for confronting challenges and achieving success. In his book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, University of Michigan researcher Scott Page summarizes this principle, noting that "diversity trumps ability." So people with disabilities add an important dimension to diversity, and accessible technology can ensure they're represented in your workforce, at all levels.
- **Corporate image.** Accessible technology is a way to highlight and communicate your commitment to workforce diversity and equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. What's more, people with disabilities reflect an important and expanding customer base.

- **Reduced legal costs.** Some organizations, such as certain federal contractors and subcontractors, are required by law to proactively recruit and retain qualified people with disabilities. Having an accessible technology infrastructure can be a key part of delivering upon these requirements and avoiding penalties for non-compliance. It can help streamline recruitment processes and reduce costs associated with making individual technology-related accommodations for employees—ultimately leading to increased compliance.

Technology is a powerful productivity tool, and making sure all employees, including those with disabilities, can use it to optimize their performance on the job simply makes good business sense. A clear business case that outlines the benefits of accessibility in the context of organization-wide goals is a key part of ensuring others understand its ability to enhance the bottom line.

1. [If you were riding in an elevator with a Fortune 500 CEO, what's your pitch for why implementing accessible technology matters?](#)
2. [If you were riding in an elevator with a Fortune 500 CEO, what's your pitch for why hiring people with disabilities is important to their company?](#)

## Additional Resources

Employers who make accessible technology a priority gain significant benefits—but don't just take our word for it. Use the following research to make the case to the executive level about why accessible technology matters, and how it will benefit your organization.

### [Accommodation and Compliance: Low Cost, High Impact](#)

59% of accommodations needed by employees cost absolutely nothing, while the rest typically cost only \$500. And employers who make accommodations for employees with disabilities report significant savings in retention and increased productivity.

### [Amplify Accessibility: Bridging the Digital Divide for People with Disabilities](#)

This 2018 white paper by Accenture explores how technologies have the potential to bring an estimated 350 million people with disabilities into the workforce over the next 10 years—provided we design with accessibility in mind today.

### [Assessing the Value of Accessible Technologies for Organizations: A Total Economic Impact Study Commissioned by Microsoft](#)

Forrester Research surveyed companies from across both the private and public sectors about the impact of implementing accessibility. Over 80% of organizations surveyed reported that

their accessibility strategies have helped them build a more diverse workforce from a broader talent pool, or retain employees who have become disabled.

### [A Hidden Market: The Purchasing Power of Working-Age Adults With Disabilities](#)

Employees with disabilities can help businesses gain a better understanding of how to meet the needs of this important customer base—currently the 3rd largest market segment in the U.S.

### [Disabilities and Inclusion](#)

This Center for Talent Innovation report found that 30% of white-collar employees have a disability. The numbers are similar across gender, race, and generation.

### [How is the Department of Justice Addressing Website and ICT Accessibility?](#)

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has taken the position that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers Internet website access, mobile applications, and other forms of ICT. Explore detailed analysis about the employment implications of 171 DOJ settlement agreements addressing website and ICT accessibility, and how to proactively comply with existing rules and guidance.

### [How Diversity Makes Us Smarter](#)

Decades of research by organizational scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists and demographers shows that being around people who are different from us makes us more creative, more diligent and harder-working.