

Beyond “Diversity”: Employment of Persons with Disabilities as a Sustainable Strategy

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Abstract

Despite increased opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs), their employment remains a challenge. Many firms seem to hire PWDs only under CSR initiatives or as tokens for “diversity.” With such motivations, the employment of PWDs cannot be a sustainable business practice. In this research, we study strategic/marketing implications of employing PWDs in the service sector, thus complementing the services marketing literature that has only looked at PWDs as customers. Using qualitative interviews, we examine how having PWDs as employees impacts customers, other employees, and the organization. We find that employing PWDs has many advantages. Not only are PWDs more focused and sincere than the “normal” employees but they also have much lower attrition rates. Having them, particularly in customer-facing roles, improves customer attitudes and enhances the corporate image. We finally discuss the constraining factors that prevent PWDs’ complete integration into the organization.

Keywords: *employment strategy; persons with disabilities; customer attitudes*

Track: Services Marketing