

Strategies for Engaging the Business Community in Disability and Employment Research

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Overall recommendation

Researchers should consider *layering outreach* to employers and policymakers in ways that address barrier of ‘time’

- Online products
- Summaries of highlights as first layer of information
- Use of plain language: see resources at <http://ktdrr.org/resources/plst/index.html#resources>
- Visuals (see Evergreen, 2013)
- Individualized conversational follow-up

Prerequisite: Information relevant to decisionmakers’ needs

Barriers, or What gets in the way?

Time: *Need findings in time.*

“By the time you do that research, we may have gone on to the next project.” (FG11)

How have employers used research?

- *Used to promote or support an approach to service:* “We assess current past research and other guidelines and resources along with relevant literature to give us the best high quality care to both of our patients and our employees.”(FG2)
- *To document that a product is effective:* “Clinical studies have been done of how beneficial our product is to a person’s health.” (FG12)
- *To analyze potential demand for a product or service:* “A lot of the research we have focused on is about the market itself (...) to prove our reason for focusing on disabled consumers.” (FG9)
- *To benchmark industry standards, especially in relation to salaries.* (FG7, FG13)
- *To select vendors.* (FG12)

How have employers used research?

To comply with a mandate:

“An employer researches how to handle an applicant that comes and has a disability. Maybe when they research how to handle that they come across the ADA legislation or something to do with a legal mandate.” (FG13)

How is research use related to PWD?

- *To learn about how to accommodate a particular population (FG2), (i.e. veterans with post-traumatic stress syndrome, FG13)*
- *To research selection of particular assistive technologies. (FG4)*
- *To learn about how to make web-based products accessible, including those used for hiring. (FG2)*
- *To select an approach to training employees:
“We use research to develop our competency models.” (FG4)*

Barriers, or What gets in the way?

Time: *Time is fragmented.*

No time for “a lot of research and a lot of reading and sifting through things. You’re just moving all of the time.” (FG3)

How do employers consume research?

Wide variation:

- Preference for data generated by in-house or highly trusted external sources. Talking one-on-one with “subject matter specialists” or other people in the business is the best information source – “it wouldn’t be written research, it would be verbal.” (FG2, 3)
- High value for information channeled through professional networks, either face-to-face or email, listservs etc.

Does ‘online’ mean social media?

- Some use of social media, but more individualized than at organizational level.
- Some businesses use Facebook and YouTube to market their product/service, but these tools are not generally perceived as a way of finding research-based information.
- Twitter to publicize “announcements, press releases or snippets of information” but only a handful used it to access research.

LinkedIn

- LinkedIn was the social media tool most often used a source of research-based information.
- Seen as a way to get an overview of a topic:
“I use it to get different perspectives when I’m doing my research to make sure that I’m covering things that I probably didn’t think of as an individual. So I do use it but it’s just more like a fishing trip.” (FG12)

“On LinkedIn I see different trends. I sometimes go to the different blogs to get a sense of where the market is, how people are reacting to that.” (FG9)

Barriers, or What gets in the way?

Time: *is money*.

Some perceive that customers do not value research-based nature of product or service. (So, it's not worth the time.)

Barriers, or What gets in the way? cont.

- *Perception that other kinds of information are more important:*
“Some of it is gut when I hire people. Obviously the criteria, the prerequisites have to be there but there has to be chemistry. And all the research in the world isn’t going to help that.” (FG11)

- “... using more boots on the ground stuff than looking to research because it’s just not there yet.” (FG13)



Defining research

- Information gathering: Research or research; primary vs. secondary
- Review of descriptive data such as demographic datasets, esp. from federal sources
- Collection and summary of their own client/customer data (for example, TV ratings)
- Results of scientific process: “The practice has been tested in a therapeutic or scientific process by which outcomes have been able to be measured and charted so that the practice is known to be an effective practice.” (FG5).

Defining evidence or evidence based practices

- Synonymous with best practices?
- *Sources of evidence*: “We created our own evidence I guess by what our program and project is. But that would not mean that I wouldn’t be interested in seeing research from other areas.”(FG3)
- Terminology used: “Tested, proven, measurable, effective, successful”
- In general, most people say their organizations value it, but not clear what referent they used when saying they valued “research”—could be any of concepts listed above.

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Disclaimer

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Appendix A

Study Context: KTER Center Research Activities

KTER Center Research Activities

Study #	Method	Sample	Data
R1.1 & R1.2	Systematic reviews	Studies of interventions that facilitate 1) RTW for adults with TBI 2) Employment for cancer survivors	Effect sizes pooled from various studies
R2.1	Online survey	VR professionals in six states (Northeast, East, South, South, Southwest, West)	N=535
R2.2	Interviews	Federal and state-level policy makers	N=25
R2.3	Focus group	Business people	13 groups
R2.4	Focus group	People with disabilities	6 groups

Appendix B

Sample Demographics

Individual-level sample demographics

- Gender: 70% women; 30% men
- Age: 50 years (both median and mean), range from 26 - 73
- Race:
 - 70% White
 - 17.6% African-American/Black/Black Caribbean
 - 7.8% Latino/Hispanic
 - 1.9% Asian
- Education Levels (terminal degree):
 - 70% college
 - 19.6% graduate
 - 3.9% high school
 - 3.9% missing

Participants' company size (# of employees)

