


EVENT REPORT



> B S Nagesh, founder, TRRAIN with Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Here, they are clapping in sign language

RETAIL: AN 'ABLE' CHOICE

Hiring PwDs could just be the answer to bridging the manpower gap in the retail sector

PANKH, an initiative to train Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and employ them in the retail sector, along with TRRAIN (Trust for Retailers and Retail Associates of India) and Youth4Jobs and Accenture, launched a whitepaper titled 'Breaking New Ground – Empowering Persons with Disabilities to Succeed in Retail Sector', which focuses on how the Indian retail industry stands to benefit by hiring PwDs. It was launched in Mumbai on 22nd January, 2014.

"India has the largest number of visual and hearing impaired people – 70 million disabled in all, which is the size of an average country in Europe. But they hold less than one per cent of the total number of jobs," pointed out Meera Shenoy, founder, Youth4Jobs. Shifting the focus to why the retail sector is apt for assimilating PwD, B S Nagesh, founder, TRRAIN averred, "India is a consumption story that no one can stop. We are a nation of shopkeepers."

The paper covers three aspects of employing PwD in the retail sector – sourcing, hiring and retaining, and provides strategies for the same. Modern retail is set to see a cumulative annual growth rate of 34.9 per cent by 2020, thus providing employment opportunities.

According to the study conducted by Pankh, the average attrition rate in the retail sector is 6.8 per cent annually whereas among PwDs, the rate is only 3.3 per cent. PwDs also report seven per cent higher productivity than non-disabled employees. If these factors aren't incentives enough, the government pays EPF and ESI for PwD for the first three years of employment. In conclusion, an organisation can save upto eight per cent in annual CTC for every PwD it hires.

The stories moved Kishore Biyani, founder and CEO, Future Group so much that he pledged to employ a greater percentage of PwDs at his company. He said, "We will need to build sensitivity to PwDs among existing employees, cater to their training needs and ensure that the intent is reflected from the senior levels."

- Ankita Shreeram

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For editorial queries, contact:
Editor (Ascent): Viren Naidu
(viren.naidu@timesgroup.com
022-6635 3679)

TEAM ASCENT:
YASMIN TAJ,
ANKITA SHREERAM

DESIGN:
Resp-Art, Mumbai