

More can be done to encourage hiring of disabled people

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Ms Loh May Pin suggested that companies hire persons with disabilities, among others, as a way of giving back to society ("Firms fulfil social responsibility in hiring of disabled"; Forum Online, last Wednesday).

Through providing job support to persons with disabilities, SPD has seen more companies opening up to the idea of hiring such individuals, and we hope to see the trend continue.

In the recent research, "People with Physical Disabilities in Singapore" by the Lien Centre for Social Innovation, it was found that factors such as the presence of a support network, employers who carve out roles based on the employees' skills and strengths, workplace modifications to accommodate employees' needs, and flexible work arrangements contribute to positive experiences of employees with disabilities.

Hence, besides encouraging more firms to hire persons with disabilities, it is also important to develop an inclusive mindset and support network within and throughout the organisation, so that employees with disabilities would be able to perform their job effectively and work cohesively with their co-workers.

SPD offers such assistance to employers to ensure that persons with disabilities whom we have placed in their companies are able to adapt and cope with the job and working environment. We also conduct disability awareness training to co-workers to enable them to communicate with and understand the needs of their colleagues with disabilities better.

Besides encouraging more firms to hire persons with disabilities, we could also explore other employment models. There are examples of successful businesses in other countries and in Singapore, like cafes and restaurants that are staffed by persons with disabilities.

Some of these businesses are social enterprises or set up in collaboration with voluntary welfare organisations. Such partnerships help to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities while maintaining a revenue-generating business model to ensure financial sustainability.

In addition, perhaps the Government could also take the lead in hiring more persons with disabilities, so as to encourage more businesses to follow suit.

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