



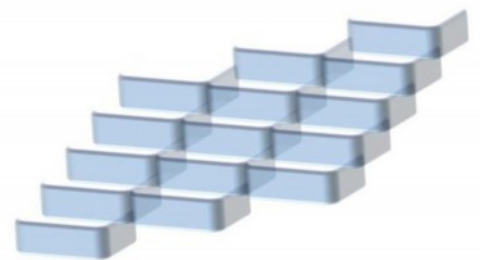
## **Empowering People with Disabilities in the Workplace: A Slow Paradigm Shift**



**Workplace Integrated  
Training Solutions**



**The Growth  
Group**



**Growth Institute**

The South African B-BBEE legislation places an obligation on businesses not to ignore the skills development of people with disabilities!

In recent months, the demand to put people with disabilities on skills development programs, has increased exponentially. At face value, it seems that such skills development initiatives create value, and that more people with disabilities are ready to enter the workforce than ever before.

There is, however, a dark side to skills development for people with disabilities.



Some recruiters who help businesses find people with disabilities, bluntly demand remuneration of R20 000, or more, for each person placed in a learnership program. Current legislation, however, limits learnership 'stipends' to less than R 5 000 per month. Businesses generally feel that a stipend of R 20 000 per month, for a person without qualifications or experience, cannot be justified. They feel that some recruiters exploit legislation and that this exploitation does not create the benefits that the Skills Development Act and the B-BBEE Codes envision.

Another issue requiring attention is that many businesses are not accessible to / geared for people with disabilities. Although businesses want a person with a disability, so that they can tick a box on a scorecard, there is a great unwillingness to make the workplace accessible for a disabled person. The concept of 'Universal Accessibility' does not, in our view, apply only to the Hospitality Industry. It should apply to all industries!

Making a workplace accessible means more than the installation of a wheelchair ramp or possibly adapting a work station or the toilet facility.

There are many types and ranges of disabilities, and businesses must carefully consider how to approach the thorny issue of skills development for people with disabilities. Deciding who to include into a skills development program, and who to exclude, could be interpreted as a form of discrimination.

Most European countries who do business in South Africa, take the position that all people stand an equal chance to participate in skills development programs. Discrimination against a disabled person is taken very seriously by these companies.



South African companies do not seem to have full appreciation, understanding and acknowledgement of what people with disabilities can actually contribute to their operations, company morale, and, essentially, their bottom-line. It is, for example, not uncommon for a quadriplegic to program a lathe to produce complicated shapes. It is not uncommon for the same quadriplegic to be a proficient journalist, accountant or media specialist.

Effective and 'real' skills development for disabled persons is critical. Let's not assume that a so-called 'soft skill' is sufficient – for your conscience, in particular.



**At the Growth Group we fully believe in Empowering People with Disabilities. Discover more about how you can assist them through our programs at [www.growthinstitute.co.za](http://www.growthinstitute.co.za).**

A green rounded rectangle containing three logos. The first logo on the left shows a graduation cap, a sun, and a building, with the text "Workplace Integrated Training Solutions" below it. The middle logo shows three graduation caps above three growing plants, with the text "The Growth Group" below it. The third logo on the right shows a set of stairs, with the text "Growth Institute" below it.