Reasonable Accommodations in the Lodging Industry

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Background

- About 1 million employees work in the Lodging Industry
- Less than 10% are estimated to be people with disabilities
- Recent studies have explored employer perceptions and hiring practices in the hospitality industry
Brief Findings from Prior Studies

• Employers skeptical about the capacity of people with disabilities to perform the work in this sector
• Employers concerned about costs of accommodations & liability issues
• “Physical appearance” represents a hiring bias in this sector
• Larger companies report being more open to hiring and accommodating workers with disabilities
The Current study

• Our previous work has explored business factors contributing to employer decisions to accommodate employees with disabilities

• These studies have explored attitudes across business sectors; the current study drilled down into the hospitality sector, specifically the lodging industry
Current Study

• Our aim is to describe employer practices in accommodating workers with disabilities in the lodging sector

• Method was an online survey nationally disseminated via ADA Centers, national hotel/motel associations, industry representatives

• We had 175 respondents from across the country
Methods

• Online survey
  – Brief 35 items
  – Adapted from our prior published studies using the Reasonable Accommodation Factor Survey (RAFs) to identify what influences employers in their response to accommodation requests
  – Also looked at type of property, size, respondent role
Results

- Majority of respondents were from independently owned & operated hotel properties
- Number of employees within these properties ranged from 2 – 12,000; **Mean** = 444 and **Median** = 75
- **70%** of respondents had at least one employee with a disability
- **85%** had responded to an accommodation request from an employee
Results

We asked: What is the purpose of providing an accommodation to an employee with a disability?

• 47% believed it was to make the employee more competitive in the workplace
• 40% believed it was to enable the employee to perform the essential functions of the job
• 14% believed it was to make the workplace more tolerable for employees with disabilities
Results

• We gave respondents a list of **15 factors** influencing the decision to provide an accommodation derived from our prior studies.

• These factors included issues regarding:
  – Company factors (size, resources)
  – Accommodation factors (type, cost, ease)
  – Person factors (nature, severity)
Top 5 Factors: All Companies

- Formal company policies regarding the ADA and RA
- Anticipated effectiveness of the accommodation
- Type of accommodation requested
- Perceived support of coworkers
- Role of the individual handling the request
Top 5 Factors: Small Companies

• Whether supervisor involved in the request
• *Company policies on ADA and RA*
• Cost of requested accommodation
• Overall company resources
• Structural modifications required
Implications

• Need for training and technical assistance in the industry to increase understanding of ADA and accommodations
• Need for training and TA to dispel persisting myths and stereotypes about disability & accommodations
• Tailor training and TA to company characteristics
 References


