

Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

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>> Welcome to Disabilities At Work Radio where every week we explore issues, ideas, initiatives and innovations involving the employment of people with disabilities. We feature employers that go beyond compliance in supporting people with disabilities in the workplace and elsewhere. We bring you prominent members of the business community, service providers, government officials, researchers, educators and people who successfully manage their disability and careers. Join us now for Disabilities At Work.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Hello. I'm Donna Custard, sitting in for Ray Zardetto, and welcome to Disabilities At Work Radio here on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. Each week at noon Eastern Time, Disabilities At Work explores, issues, ideas, initiatives

and the innovations involving the workplace and people with disabilities and we discuss them with prominent members of the business, government and disability communities.

This week Disabilities At Work Radio is brought to you this week by Prudential Financial Inc. And joining us on our first segment today is Emilio Egea, and he is the vice president of Human Resources and he is also the chief diversity officer at Prudential Financial. Welcome to the show, Emilio.

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Well, thank you, Donna, it's great to be here.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Well, it's great to have you. Can you explain to me a little bit about Prudential's approach to diversity and inclusion?

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Of course. At Prudential, there are three key drivers to our approach for diversity and inclusion. And the first driver is the marketplace. We want to expand market share while improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. In order to do that we must tap into an increasingly diverse customer base and it's our belief that companies that don't focus on diversity or focus too narrowly and don't make the most of its power in relationship to the marketplace just aren't going to be as successful.

The second driver is talent. We have to attract, develop, engage and retain the talent we need to be successful in the markets we compete in.

And our third focus is on organizational effectiveness,

and that means creating a workplace environment where it's both safe to say what's on your mind and safe to be who you are so our employees can bring their whole self to the work of the firm. And we are doing that in order to maximize our employees' contribution to the business. So at the end of the day, everything we do in this area of diversity, it's all about the business and the people in it. And--

>> DONNA CUSTARD: I think this is amazing that you have these three different components to, um, approaching diversity in such a large corporation. Now, you have about 40,000 employees worldwide, correct?

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Correct.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Now, how - how do you do this in such a large corporation?

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Well, there are a couple of things. One thing, let me just elaborate a little bit on our approach, because I have told you about the three key drivers, but our approach to diversity involves three things. And it's what we know, how we act and how we feel. So we work the head, the hand and the heart.

And for us, diversity change begins in the head as we learn more about people and markets that are different than us. And it continues as a process of modifying behavior, the hand, as we learn how to be more affective with those differences. And real diversity change involves emotional growth, the heart,

as we develop authentic relationships with people who are different than us.

So it's been my experience if you work any two of those three, the third consistently follows. So when it comes to implementing diversity across our company, the process starts with leadership.

So when I came on board, we began a new dialogue with the senior leadership team and they told me three things. First thing they said they wanted to be proactive. So they were going to personally determine the areas of diversity measurement. So the CEO, in his direct reports, they are our diversity counsel. You know, this is just an example of how we operate here; we integrate diversity into existing processes. So instead of having a separate diversity counsel, we just integrate diversity topics as part of the senior team's meeting agendas.

Then the second thing they told me was that they wanted to hold people accountable. So we ended up incorporating diversity results into the bonus plan. And during that discussion with the senior leaders, I asked them what prevented us from making more progress in this area and they said, well, diversity is important, but sometimes it's placed on the back burner when other pressing business issues arise. And when I asked, well, what are the things that stay on the front burner; they said those things that are in the bonus plan. So

consequently we ended up integrating diversity requirements into our bonus plan.

And then the third item that was brought up about a year and a half into the process, we had a discussion on what it takes to be world class. And that led us to identifying and aspiring to some world class benchmarks, and, uh, basically using that approach of integrating diversity into business and HR processes are able to move diversity into Prudential.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Wow, that's terrific and it sounds like it's really integrated from the top down.

>> EMILIO EGEE: Yeah, absolutely. Uh, you know, although we have key drivers and, you know, and an approach, strong leadership is the key to achieving our goals. And our senior management is definitely engaged, they are accountable and they are committed to diversity here at Prudential.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And it doesn't help that you are tying the performance with the bonus plan either.

>> EMILIO EGEE: Well, yeah, that does help. But, uh, you know, people are doing this because they understand it's the business thing to do and the people thing to do.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Absolutely. Absolutely. Now do you involve people with disabilities in your approach?

>> EMILIO EGEE: Yeah, people with disabilities are definitely incorporated into our approach. And part of that comes into the work that happens -- well, let me just explain a little bit

about what we measure over here, that could help.

There are three things that we measure. We measure profile representation, so our goal is to build visible diversity in order to help us meet and better serve our customer needs.

The second area of measurement is environment. And so, we are basically looking for an environment with zero tolerance for discrimination, ethical behavior and access to development and job opportunities, which is inclusive of all our employees.

And the third is leadership. Uh, we talk about commitment, ownership, active involvement, role modeling behavior, and removing obstacles for all employees. So as we shifted the Prudential strategy from measuring activities to results it became necessary for us to develop an accountability model with a major focus on leadership. And so every year we meet at the beginning of the year and establish these high impact objectives that include both organizational and personal leadership objectives. And these objectives basically are meant to fit into each business model and strategy because we are not trying to change anybody's business system; we are just trying to understand the system so we can integrate diversity requirements into those.

And so when we measure organizational leadership, we are talking about marketing to diverse segments. So what are we are doing with the disabled market? When we talk about

vendors, what are we are doing with vendors with disabilities? What are we are doing from a procurement perspective and a business development perspective? Advertising, how are we are doing -- how are we penetrating the media when it comes to people with disabilities?

And then we look at personal leadership where we try to optimize the sensitivity and understanding of difference of our leaders. And what we do there is we take people out of their comfort zone and have them participate in organizations where they are the person who is different. Another way of looking at that is they are the person in the quote, unquote, minority, so to speak. So they can learn about issues that affect people with disabilities, people with color, people of difference in our corporation and so that's how we work, uh, people with disabilities into our approach.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's terrific. Now, why is this so important? Why is diversity integration so important to Prudential?

>> EMILIO EGEE: Well, if you are going to be successful as a business, as I mentioned earlier, if a company doesn't focus broadly enough on all of the aspects of diversity and inclusion, they do it very narrowly and they don't look at the marketplace and they don't look at talent, they are just not going to be as successful as they could be. I mean, it's as simple as that.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Yeah, you had said if they didn't focus on all three of those initial factors, the marketplace and attracting talent and organizational effectiveness, that they would just be doomed at any other organizations.

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Well, they might be successful, but they are not going to achieve the levels of success that doing diversity and inclusion appropriately allow you to achieve.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-hmm. Now, does Prudential have any kind of employee resource groups, uh, for people with disabilities?

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Yes, we do. We have a variety of employee resource groups. And over here at Prudential we call them business resource groups. In fact, they self proclaim themselves, the folks in these groups as business resource groups.

So these are groups that have formed on a grass roots basis by people who traditionally shared demographic characteristics and have been traditionally underrepresented in the company.

So the groups in Prudential are around women, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, uh, people with disabilities, the LGBT community and veterans, and I should say the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Thank you for that clarification. So you have a lot of different groups. It's terrific.

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Yeah. And the groups have a dual purpose.

They serve as networks to promote professional development and they also help the company achieve business objectives, hence the business resource group, uh, name. So -- I'm sorry.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: No, go right ahead.

>> EMILIO EGEE: They do a lot of what traditional network groups do. So the original basis for a lot of the network groups was just to have a network for people of difference who could share with their experiences in the corporate setting, uh, could also help people when they were relocating to a different part of the country to get a sense of where the foods they might not know where to get access to and other things that were important to them as a group, but not necessarily known or widely known when someone is new to an area.

So they do a lot of what traditional groups do, but they also provide and participate in education programs that increase awareness and understanding of diversity. And our, um, group, which is called ADAPT, has basically done a lot in - in the way of professional development and also education.

So they have done programs called Welcome to My World, which allows people to get a sense of what it might be like to be a person with a disability in a work environment. They continue to promote the professional development, as I mentioned, they serve as advisors to management and they are liaisons in the community. They support our hiring efforts as Marietta will explain in a bit. And they assist with marketing

efforts aimed at targeting consumer communities, such as people with disabilities.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Well, that's terrific. Then they are really integrated into every aspect of the business. Now, you said ADAPT, is that an acronym for something?

>> EMILIO EGEE: I'm sorry, that is an acronym. It's Abled and Disabled Associates Partnering Together.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's great. So they are heavily involved, so they help educate other employees and they serve as consultants as well for your senior level management and also for your marketing strategies. That's terrific.

Um, we are actually going to need to take a short break, but when we come back, we are going to be joined by your coworker, as you mentioned before, Marietta Cozzi and she is the vice president of staffing. She will talk to us a little bit more about the ADAPT program and how Prudential attracts and recruits qualified people about disabilities. So stay with us, I'm Donna Custard and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> DONNA CUSTARD: Welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. The show this week is brought to you by Prudential Financial Inc.

I'm Donna Custard and I have been speaking with Emilio

Egea, who is the vice president of Human Resources and chief diversity officer at Prudential. Emilio and I are now joined by Marietta Cozzi who is the vice president of staffing.

Welcome and thanks for joining us, Marietta.

>> MARIETTA COZZI: Thanks for having me, Donna, I appreciate it.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: We were just talking with Emilio about the ADAPT program and I wanted to talk to you a little bit more about the staffing end of things, which is what you do. Now, because you are in charge of staffing, I'm sure you are incorporating diversity and inclusion into your staffing efforts. Can you tell me how you do that?

>> MARIETTA COZZI: Yes, I certainly can. So the first thing I would say is that the staffing function has built our diversity recruiting strategy to align with the company's overall commitment to diversity that you heard Emilio speak about earlier. And so, the long term goal of our strategy is really to develop a pipeline of diverse top talent for, um, all of the businesses across Prudential. And, uh, much in the same way Emilio described the company's commitment to diversity, our strategy integrates diversity into, um, the everyday recruiting efforts at Prudential. So it's not separated, it's engrained in what we do on a day-to-day basis.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-hmm.

>> MARIETTA COZZI: And with that we have been able to identify

local and national organizations where we have built relationships with that help us seek out and recruit, uh, top talent from a diversity standpoint for the company.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Now how do you do that? How do you recruit people with disabilities to the company?

>> MARIETTA COZZI: Well, we do it in a couple of different ways. Um, part of our strategy includes posting all of our jobs on websites that target people with, um, disabilities and other folks from a diversity standpoint. So some of those websites from a disability standpoint specifically include Disabledpersons.com, Disabledvets.com is another one, um, Accessibility.com is another one. So we have a multi-pronged approach, so websites is one.

We participate in career fairs that target people with disabilities and some of those are The Career of the Disabled Career Fair, um, Commission of the Blind Career Fair. And in some cases, Donna, we have also conducted resume writing and interviewing workshops to some of these organizations so they, um, can have the benefit of a little bit of training around resume writing and interviewing as well.

In addition, you heard Emilio talk about ADAPT, which is one of Prudential's business resource groups, and we also use ADAPT to help us find and identify disabled persons that we could, um, recruit here to work at Prudential. So we use them on a regular basis as part of our recruitment strategy to help

us seek new organizations to align with and, um, have relationships with.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: I imagine that they have got a lot of connections within the community and they can help to guide you and your staffing efforts.

>> MARIETTA COZZI: They do. We certainly take a lot of direction and ideas and thought leadership from them because they, quite frankly, know better than we do, and so they are able to open up doors for us as well as, you know, introduce us to new organizations and give us new ideas about how we can find, um, folks from a recruiting standpoint.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: I think it's a tremendous effort that you are putting forth to recruit individuals with disabilities, because it sounds like you are covering so many different areas and you are casting a very wide net in order to reach the most qualified individuals that you possibly can.

>> MARIETTA COZZI: Yeah, it's important to cast a wide net and to be consistent with the approach that you use and it does take time and effort and we are definitely committed to that.

Um, I think a good example of Prudential's commitment lies with our ADAPT summer hire program. So we had talked about Adapt being one of our business resource groups for abled and disabled associates partnering together, and so for the past couple of summers we have had a summer hire program, and its evolved from a pilot over the last couple of years to this

summer, where we actually had ten folks at Prudential working during the summer from an internship standpoint and that has grown from just three folks last year. So you can sort of see, um, over the last couple of years how our commitment has increased and we have had requests for students to return, uh, in several cases back to the same department that they worked for.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's terrific. Now, because you are working on hiring such a diverse workforce, is there anything in place, I -- I know we talked a little bit with Emilio about sensitivity training, is that across the board or is that department specific or how does that work?

>> MARIETTA COZZI: Well, we do have a learning organization at Prudential which is -- which helps us coordinate and administer training for all types of associates. And so as Emilio did mention, we do have sensitivity training for our associates. At the same time, we do have training to help, you know, managers and colleagues get ready to interact with people with disabilities and it really does give them a chance to, um, understand what they should be doing and how they should be communicating. And from a recruiting standpoint specifically, we do, uh, work with our hiring managers who go with us to job fairs and who will then be responsible for interviewing and making hiring decisions just so that we can make them aware of, you know, different things that they should be responsible.

>> EMILIO EGEE: If I may add, uh, Donna?

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Go ahead.

>> EMILIO EGEE: In addition to what Marietta just shared with us, there is training that, uh, takes place in the business units and in our corporate centers. It's everything from basic diversity and inclusion, uh, to training that includes biases and helping people understand how biases prevent them from being as successful as they can be. So we work a lot with our leaders, we work with our salespeople, we work with, uh, people from the various departments to help them better understand how diversity and inclusion is a tool to their personal success.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-hmm. That's terrific. What do you think is the single most important lesson that you have learned from either the ADAPT program or the training that you have been doing?

>> MARIETTA COZZI: I think from a recruiting standpoint, um, my single biggest lesson is that you do have to cast a really wide net when you are putting together your recruiting strategies and your plans to do that. Um, and you have to seek out various different sources to help you do that, sometimes folks who know more than you do about how to find the right individuals for the positions that we are trying to recruit for. And then the second thing I would say is that, you know, there are a tremendous amount of folks available from a disabilities standpoint who are interested in working and so

the wider net that we cast I think, um, the better off that we are in what our results will be.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And that's how you really tap into your ADAPT group as well, to reach out to those sources. Emilio, would you agree with that, or do you have a different lesson?

>> EMILIO EGEEA: No, I agree with that. One thing that I could share is that when we do training relative to personal biases, we help people get in touch with their unconscious, what we call their unconscious incompetence. And what we are trying to do is to move them from this unconscious incompetence to becoming unconsciously competent, so that diversity and inclusion become second nature in the way they operate and in their thinking and how they behave with the people. But some of the biggest ah-has that occur there is when you expose people to their weaknesses, they are not necessarily embracing that with open arms until they really get to understand how that is preventing them from being more successful.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Do you have any specific examples of that? Where you might have seen that, where people have an ah-ha moment where they didn't realize that they had a bias and suddenly you shined a flashlight on it and point it out to them?

>> EMILIO EGEEA: Sure, I'll try to make this quick, but I was working with a senior leader in another company, and they had an issue relative to people of color in the workplace. They

didn't quite understand some of the dynamics of why they, uh, weren't contributing to the same degree.

So to help this person, uh, really get in touch with their unconscious biases, I had them first join an organization where they were the person who was different. So I took them out of their comfort zone and, in essence, they became a trustee in a historically black college.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-hmm.

>> EMILIO EGEE: And finally I got a call from this person after their first trustee meeting, and they said I finally get it. I said, get what? I'm here; I'm the only white face. I'm looking for another white face. I'm uncomfortable. I'm unsure of myself. I'm hesitating. These characteristics were totally not anything that anyone relates to who knew this senior leader. And all of a sudden, the person realized that when you are in an environment that is not inclusive and you are the person of difference, you will have the tendency not to want to contribute, not to want to interact and feel totally uncomfortable. And his realization was, this person was a CEO of another company, but this person's realization was, and I do that because of the environment I create, so he set out to create a more inclusive environment and business results just went through the room.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's terrific. Now, do you guys have any advice for other companies who may want to diversify their

workforce?

>> MARIETTA COZZI: My advice would be that you have to try different things, um, and you have to be committed the way that Emilio has talked about Prudential's commitment to diversity. And I think when you do that and you do spend the time understanding what might be available to you as a company that it does make a difference in the long term, but you have to be committed and you have to stick with it. It's not going to be something that will happen easily or that will come quickly.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-hmm.

>> MARIETTA COZZI: I think that would be my biggest piece of advice.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: How about you, Emilio?

>> EMILIO EGEE: And I would just add to that. And one was integrate. Integrate, integrate, integrate. Integrate diversity and inclusion requirements into your business and your human resource processes.

The next piece of advice would be, understand the dominant logic. So how do things get done in your company, what has worked in the past and see if there is a parallel relative to diversity inclusion. Uh, commitment, the more senior leaders feel they own this process the better off you are. And I would also say measure the vital few items with the most impact.

A lot of companies get caught up in measuring activities

as opposed to outcomes, and our approach is let's look at the vital few with the most impact.

And then, lastly, I would say create tools to help organizations win, because sometimes people in the staffing and the diversity organizations, uh, develop metrics and they position themselves as evaluators and we are in all this together and if you partner with folks and help them win, it's amazing what gets done.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's great advice. We have to take another quick break; we have been talking today about diversity and inclusion in the workplace. But before we go, I'd like to invite all of you listening to Disabilities At Work Radio to join our team at DisabilitiesAt and also friend us at Facebook at Disabilities At Work. And if any of you listeners have comments or suggestions, you can always e-mail them to info@DisabilitiesAtWork.org. I'm Donna Custard, and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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Welcome back.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: We are back on VoiceAmerica Business Network. This is Disabilities At Work Radio and I'm Donna Custard sitting in for Ray Zardetto. Today's show is sponsored by Prudential Financial Inc. Disabilities At Work Radio would like to thank Prudential for their consideration in sponsoring

this week's show.

I'm joined now by Craig Gray, the vice president of the Return to Life Program at Prudential. Craig is here to discuss his experience as a wheelchair user working for Prudential. Welcome, Craig.

>> CRAIG GRAY: Hi, Donna. Thanks for having me.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Thanks for being here. How long you have been with Prudential?

>> CRAIG GRAY: About five years now.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And how did you get your job with Prudential? We had just talked with Marietta and Emilio about the wide net that Prudential casts to attract the most diverse workforce, so I'm curious to hear your story.

>> CRAIG GRAY: Well, in my particular case, um, I work for a part of the organization that's in group insurance. We sell disabilities insurance, which provides income replacement for people when they become disabled and unable to work. So, actually, having a disability and the knowledge and experience I have as a wheelchair user helps me be able to be better at my job.

So having been in the disability insurance industry for quite some time, when Prudential decided that we were going to strategically expand the way that we manage disability claims, they said, ah-ha, we think Greg could help us do that. So they gave me a call and I was more than happy to come over and work

with a company that is so in tuned to disability.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Okay. Now tell me a little bit more about your role in the Return to Life program. That really intrigues me.

>> CRAIG GRAY: Yeah, I love that. The Return to Life program is based on the simple idea that before anyone can actually return to work with a disability, which is the predominant kind of way that the disability insurance industry works, what we recognize is that, uh, before anyone can ever really return to work they need to return to their own life. They need to make sense of what has happened to them in their social structures, all their situations. And then what we found is that when we leverage the experiences of people who are already successfully living with disabilities, to provide coaching and guidance and connections, then many of these people who have become disabled are -- want to return to work naturally, and when that happens it's good for them and it's good for the business too.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Yeah, we had talked with Emilio in the first segment about bringing your whole self to the job. So I imagine that is part of what you are trying do with the Return to Life program. If they don't, uh, become whole and return to their own life and deal with their newly found disability, then they can't really bring their whole self to the job. Would that be correct?

>> CRAIG GRAY: That's exactly it. That's exactly it, Donna.

And, in fact, it works for, for us with our hiring model too. Because when you are effective disability claims managers and when you are part of our Return to Life philosophy, you need to leverage your own relationship with disability, whether it's your own personal experience or that that you have intimate knowledge through a family member or a friend, you have to bring that to work. And when you do that, you can adjudicate claims, but you also have a different way of looking at things that helps you examine life through the lens of somebody who may be newly disabled and not know where to turn.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: So, in Prudential, this program that is communicated, I guess, to just your department, or to the entire company?

>> CRAIG GRAY: Well, the entire company knows about our program because Return to Life focuses partners very closely with our ADAPT group that you talked about before. But where it really hits the road, if you will, is, um, when our group insurance division, our claims managers, are all working with this kind of common understanding of how to approach disability and how to work effectively with our customers who have been disabled.

But in addition to that, there are many other activities that are going on through the Return to Life program that are demonstrated to, uh, educate our other Prudential associates about the abilities of people with disabilities through some of

the activities and sponsorships and things like that that we are involved in.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: So walk me through the claim process. If someone has this -- if they acquire a disability and they submit a claim and you are working with the Return to Life program, what happens with the participant in the program?

>> CRAIG GRAY: Well, first they would, as you said, they would file the claim with us, um, and then they would come into a process where the claim manager would start taking a look at kind of the medical background around their disability. But they would also take a look at who the individual is, where they are in their own life, what is important to them, what is the social structure they are in, what's their relationship with their family. You know, are there issues related to transportation? All of the key things that you have to deal with when you become disabled. And, of course, it's never a one-size-fits-all. It's always unique to that individual.

Spending the time with that individual, you find out what is important and then you might be able to leverage some of our experience to help people make those connections and suddenly, you know, everything clears up. It could be something as simple as being, you know, not having reliable transportation, where we might be able to help that individual find para-transportation. It could be a number of other things; it's unique to their own community. It's not the same

to be disabled in Seattle, uh, as it is in Tampa. You know, there are different types of issues that you deal with.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-hmm. And do you work with them to help them get the proper accommodations when they do return to work?

>> CRAIG GRAY: Yeah, their accommodations. Um, it's really a function of accommodations if they need them. Their own education, their own attitude is probably the most important thing, and their relationship with their family. So if they know that they can, you know, if they have experience that says, yeah, this is going to be different, but it's going to be okay, then they can work it out, but it's a, you know, function of attitude and education and, if they need, the physical accessibility.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And we are talking about a little bit of the accommodations that you are reaching out to people who contact you. And we have talked with Emilio and Marietta about the net that they cast to recruit people with disabilities, but you have a unique perspective being a person with a disability working for Prudential. Describe for me a little bit about your work environment at Prudential.

>> CRAIG GRAY: Well, you know, it's changed. When I first came to work in -- my primary office is in Portland, Maine. And you probably know, Portland is a very old city, it's a waterfront city. And, you know, despite everyone's best intentions, when you are put together some buildings, sometimes

there are ways that you just cannot make the physical structures work.

In fact, in the first office I was in for a short period of time, to go from one side of the building to the other side of the building, I'd actually have to go outside along the sidewalk, which is okay, it's actually beautiful when that happens in August and September. But, you know, the other ten months of the year when there could be snow any time, it's not always a predictable kind of thing.

Um, so we have done everything that we can with regard to accessibility within certain places, but when we get to a certain point and we said, okay, we're -- this business is expanding, we moved into a very new space and then we built space out that was going to be accommodating and welcoming to all types of peoples with disabilities and it went beyond what, you know, the minimal compliance would be to a place that is downright disability friendly.

So the physical environments, we have always taken care of those things. But the -- I guess -- and let's talk about knocking down the walls and building ramps, that's kind of the easy stuff. The harder stuff is the attitudinal accessibility. And what I have found here at Pru is a willingness to understand and explore what we don't know, we don't think we have all of the answers, we, uh, rely on the individuals who have disabilities to help us guide, you know, where we should

be. And more so than that, the way that we integrated the, the fact that anyone can work through, you know, whatever the unique deed is to find a way for them to bring all of themselves to work at Pru is really the key for it all happening.

For example, in the flexible work schedules or things like that, it's not just people with disabilities that need that, but because we are able to use that in so many, um, different aspects of your business, it's a pretty important differentiator for us.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's great. I like that you said flexible work schedules and it's not just for individuals with disabilities, and being a mom of two small children, I can surely appreciate the value of having a flexible work schedule.

So I think it's really interesting how you said that Prudential went beyond being compliant and they really incorporated attitudinal accessibility, which I think if they have gone above and beyond, that really showcases Prudential's commitment to people with disabilities and it showcases it to other employees and to the public who might come into the building that this is really important to us and we are really taking this seriously.

>> CRAIG GRAY: Yeah, that's right. And as you can tell, it's important for us to have good people with disabilities working for us because it's an important part of our business strategy.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And as someone with a disability, do you feel any different? We talked with Emilio a little bit about putting people into situations where their bias comes out, and I'm sure you have had that experience before, but how do you feel when you are in those kinds of situations where people may look at you a little differently?

>> CRAIG GRAY: Well, I mean, it happens, it kind of happens all of the time and I think regardless of where you are people will look at you differently, but there is a difference that is almost kind of a benign neglect and there is a difference that says, okay, you are different and I'm interested in you. And I think that what we have at Pru is you might be a little different, I'm interested in you and I'm interested in what you have to say. And that's a real key difference. I have found that to be, um, you know, a very big thing here at Pru.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: So Prudential turns to you and asks you for your opinions and your advice from your own unique perspective?

>> CRAIG GRAY: Yeah, and there are some people that would say that I give it to them anyway.

(LAUGHTER)

But, you know, in fact it's welcomed and part of the reason that we have the Return to Life program and the strategy that we have that differentiates the way that we treat people with disabilities and our claimants is because we are listening to the advice of people who are successfully living with

disabilities.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: So you feel like you are a valued employee then?

>> CRAIG GRAY: Yes, very much so.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's terrific.

We need to take another quick break, but when we come back, we are going to be joined by Dr. Andrew Crighton, who is the chief medical officer for Prudential and also Carlton Chambliss, who is the director of accounting, and they are going to talk to us about how Prudential retains and supports people with disabilities. Stay with us. This is Donna Custard, and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> DONNA CUSTARD: Welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio. Remember that Disabilities At Work can be heard each Wednesday at noon Eastern Time on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. We have been talking today about diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and now we are going to include accommodations in this discussion. And before the last break, I let you know that I'm going to be joined by Dr. Andrew Crighton, who is Prudential's chief medical officer, as well as Carlton Chambliss who is the director of accounting. Welcome Dr. Crighton and Carlton.

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: Thank you, Donna.

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: Thank you.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: It's great to have you hear today. I'd like to start with Dr. Crighton. I was just speaking with Craig Gray about the Return to Life program and about his experience as an employee at Prudential. Can you explain some of the efforts that are in place at Prudential to retain people with disabilities?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: Yes. Prudential has a unit just specific for accommodations, and the focus is to really be a bridge between that individual with an impairment and in the workplace. The goal of this is to have the knowledge of the impairment and the business to be able to negotiate something that is successful for the business as well as the individual, but also maintain the confidentiality of that employee so that, you know, the manager, the business, doesn't need to know what the condition is or anything like that. They just really need to know how the workplace needs to adapt in order to be -- in order for that employee to be successful.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And bring their whole self to the job as we have been discussing earlier. So I think that is great how you are working to really, um, make that happen. Now what are some of the common requests that you might get for accommodation?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: Some of those are related to anything from musculoskeletal impairment, so it just may mean some additional equipment in the work station, uh, keyboard tray, maybe a headset, those are some of the more common frequent ones. Some of the more complicated ones have to deal with, you know, uh, you know, a hearing device, so something that will allow somebody to be able to hear conversations that may have a hearing impairment. Or, um, in the case of a visual impairment, large monitors, some zoom techs, that we really need to work with our technology group to make sure it

functions on our systems.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Okay. I want to switch some questions over to Carlton now and ask you, Carlton, about the nature of your disability.

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: Yeah, I have low vision, glaucoma, and over the last six years it's become progressively worse. So, for example, I can't see the "E" on the eye chart.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Oh, wow. And how has Prudential accommodated you?

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: As Dr. Crighton indicated, I put in an accommodation request and they were superbly, um -- the members of the accommodation unit were superb. Uh, they worked with me to provide the tools that I needed. So I worked with them to get a unit to, uh, magnify my written material and then Windows computers have ease of access tools like, what is called the Narrator, which reads text on screen. It comes, you know, with any Windows computer or the Magnifier is a tool that you can turn on on a Windows machine that magnifies text on the cursor. These and others tools were provided to me in order for me to be able to do my job, uh, effectively.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Now, this is a question for both of you, regarding the process for requesting an accommodation, what do you have to do? I -- I guess, Dr. Crighton, somebody comes to your department or is there an online application? How does that work?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: There is a number of different ways. First of all, you can go to your manager and, and just say, you know, I need something to, you know, help me function better in the work place. There is an online form then that we ask the employee to fill out, to give us more insight and what the need is. And then that is sent to our unit to be able to identify this. We also have a number of, um, clinics that are staffed by nurses that will interact with an individual in the workplace too.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Okay. And did you find that process fairly easy, Carlton?

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: Very easy. They -- I put in an accommodation request, and because of the training that people had, they knew what their roles were and -- a very efficient process.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Well, good. Now Dr. Crighton, you had mentioned something that kind of sticks out to me, you said that they can request an accommodation that will help them function better in the workplace. Now, to me, that could be a lot of different things, that isn't necessarily a disability, is that correct or are you speaking only about disabilities, per se, and not necessarily an illness?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: No, some people have a temporary impairment. So, there maybe something just for a short time that they need assistance with. We look at that too. So, and

there is a number of people with what we would call hidden disabilities. So diabetes, cancer, things like that, that people wouldn't normally look at an individual and think they have an impairment or disability, but they need something changed in the workplace, may not really want to come forward, uh, and say they have this condition, and so they can come through our health and wellness group, maintain that confidentiality while still, uh, you know, improving their job performance.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And you are finding that people tend to be very reluctant about, not reporting, but requesting an accommodation, do you think?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: I don't think so here at Prudential. In some other companies, yes, but at Prudential, again, I think with what Marietta and Emilio said, we have set the stage of acceptance and really wanting to work with that employee for a better solution.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's great. Carlton, what stands out to you about how Prudential supports its associates with disabilities?

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: Well, due to the excellent leadership by senior management, I think we have units that are dedicated to doing the right thing for people with disabilities. As Dr. Crighton said, we have the accommodation unit, we have employee health, we have corporate technology management, we have local

management.

We have all been trained, everything works together efficiently. And this goes to even things like when we have an emergency fire drill and we, um, you know, where we have -- we want to make sure that there are no injuries for people who have low vision and the expecting mothers, people who have surgery on their legs, and so we take them down the emergency elevator on, uh, building evacuation drills. This is just integrated in our processes. It's just so well coordinated. Well, you know, our policies and procedures have things just embedded in them.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Mm-mmm. Now, Dr. Crighton, why is it that Pru is investing the time and the resources into all of this? I mean, I know we talked about recruitment of individuals with disabilities, I'm assuming that there is always a cost associated with this. What is the benefit to Prudential?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: First of all, it's the right thing to do. Second of all, um, we value not only diversity of, you know, we value the diversity of thought and life experience and bringing in individuals with disability gives you a whole different perspective of life experience that is invaluable to our organization. And the cost of it, when you look at the total cost of all of the accommodations we do on a yearly basis, it's minimal.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Now, Carlton, I'm going to ask you about job

satisfaction with regard to, not only the accommodations that have been made for you, but working for Prudential, in general, and the acceptance of your other associates of you and your particular disability.

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: There is a high degree of job satisfaction and I am able to do my job. The associates at Prudential interact very well with me and I'm accepted as a full participating member, because, you know, I have the tools to deliver, you know, first class [inaudible] for business partners.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And are you tapped as well? When I was speaking with Craig, he was telling me how he gets tapped for advice for interacting with the community and reaching out to the public, are you tapped for your expertise as well, and your advice?

>> CARLTON CHAMBLISS: Whatever the company needs, I'm able to support, you know, the company and the community. You know?

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Now, Dr. Crighton, are you the point person worldwide for Prudential with regard to the, uh, health and well-being of your associates?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: Yes, I am.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: So that must involve a lot of travel, or do you stay put?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: No, it does involve a lot of travel.

And--

>> DONNA CUSTARD: And are you finding across Prudential, across the board, that this type of program, where you are providing accommodations, is well received and utilized across the board?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: It is. I think it varies from country to country, uh, but, you know, when we address this, you know, people are very interested, and they are willing to look at any kind of solution that would improve the workforce.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Are you finding that any one particular country is a little bit more challenging than any other?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: No, I don't think so. I think it's more the awareness and it's just when you start talking about the benefits of this, it's one of those things that if they have never really looked at it, they weren't aware of it.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: Okay. And are you finding that the employees are very appreciative of this?

>> DR. ANDREW CRIGHTON: Yes. Yeah, again, bringing the employee into the solution, bringing the employee into the equation, does solidify that relationship.

>> DONNA CUSTARD: That's great. I want to thank both of you, as well as all of the other participants today from Prudential for joining me today on Disabilities At Work Radio. And I'd like to thank Prudential Financial Inc. overall for your sponsorship of this week's program.

Next Wednesday at noon Eastern Time, we will be back

with another show exploring ideas, innovations and initiatives solving the workplace and people with disabilities. Until then, I am Donna Custard sitting in for Ray Zardetto, and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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