



"We'll help you grow!"



## The Benefits of Hiring Developmentally Disabled Individuals

### Blue Star Recyclers

Bill Morris, President/CEO of Blue Star Recyclers in Colorado Springs, CO, was recently named Colorado Springs Small Business Person Of The Year for 2011. In our visit with Bill and his team, we recognized immediately that this is a well-deserved award.

Blue Star provides electronics recycling service through their commitment to (impressively in this order) People, Planet and Profit. The People side of the commitment is about creating jobs for developmentally disabled individuals. It is also about modeling and mentoring for other employers, in an effort to reduce the 88% unemployment rate facing the population of disabled people.

Bill and VP Andy O'Riley have seemingly found a winning formula. "All people have things that come naturally to them and most employers (as a natural course of business) provide environments to leverage these talents. It's no different with the developmentally disabled."

Not all jobs are suited for the developmentally disabled. However, Bill and his staff are convinced that their team, comprised mostly of autistic individuals, excels when it comes to performing repetitive tasks that require a high degree of accuracy. The key is providing the environment for this to happen. "Most employers still shy away from considering this workforce and most employment situations fail because many employers continue to isolate, mismanage and marginalize this population" says O'Riley. Andy goes on to explain that, fundamentally, a disabled worker requires exactly the same conditions for success as a person without a disability. This includes an environment that values the person's contribution, and a supervisor that allows each individual to determine his or her own capacity for success. It is when employers manage to other than these same basic needs that the model breaks down.

While "on boarding" disabled employees often requires a steeper initial investment in training and development, there are many resources and incentives available through regional Vocational Rehabilitation Centers that support employers during this training period. Once they are brought up to speed, workers with disabilities often distinguish themselves as exceptional employees. Numerous studies have revealed that disabled workers outperform their non-disabled coworkers in attendance, levels of retention, customer service and overall performance.

There is increasing attention being given to the benefits (*profit* and otherwise) of factoring the disabled population into the staffing equation for business leaders and owners. Bill and Andy are committed to getting the word out and mentoring others in having the same benefits they have experienced. They welcome your questions and visits. Contact Bill directly at [bill@bluestarrecyclers.com](mailto:bill@bluestarrecyclers.com). Of course, you can always contact us at HR Choice for more on this topic.