



AIRPORTS COMPANY SOUTH AFRICA

DISABILITY TRADE AND LIFESTYLE EXPO & CONFERENCE



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PRESS RELEASE

ACSA Disability Trade and Lifestyle Expo and Conference

Employing People with Disabilities Brings Multiple Rewards

Almost 90% of people with a disability in South Africa are unemployed, even though South African Labour legislation advocates equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Current statistics indicate that both the public and private sectors fall well short of the 2% equity target for employing people with disabilities.

“Most employers are simply not ready to accommodate people with disabilities, for several reasons. The most common reason is that the workplace is not accessible to people with physical disabilities,” explains Les Sebueng, Corporate Manager: Employee Wellness at ArcelorMittal SA, one of the ACSA Disability 2011 Conference participants. However, if employers make a few necessary adjustments to the workplace environment in line with the accessibility needs of the individual, almost anything is possible.

These challenges and opportunities will be discussed at the ACSA Disability Conference, which takes place from 6 to 7 October at Sandton Convention Centre, Sandton, Gauteng.

“Employing people with disabilities can be highly rewarding for the company and fellow employees,” adds Sebueng. “It really should not be viewed as a social or financial burden to a business. On the contrary, it can add to the diversity, versatility and camaraderie of an enterprise.”

Sebueng lists a handful of simple steps that employers can do to help integrate an employee with a disability into the workplace. “Educating and training able-bodied employees is the next step to success and fulfillment in employing a person with a disability,” continues Sebueng. “Disability awareness training programmes are important aids in sensitising co-workers and management at orientation and induction workshops and other relevant training programmes.”

“Many employers wrongly believe that employing people with disabilities is very costly,” says Sebueng. “However, this assumption is false. Hiring people with disabilities usually results in many direct and indirect benefits including improved productivity; lower absenteeism and staff turnover; higher retention of skills, experience and knowledge; improved staff morale and reduced recruitment and training demands.”

Sebueng recommends that employers adopt the most cost-effective means to effectively remove barriers to performing the job, so that employees with disabilities can enjoy equal access to the benefits and opportunities of employment.

Depending on the type of disability, some examples of the changes that might be needed in the workplace to accommodate people with disabilities include:

- adapting existing facilities to make them accessible;
- adapting existing equipment or acquiring new equipment including computer hardware and software;
- re-organising work stations;

- changing training and assessment materials and systems;
- restructuring jobs so that non-essential functions are re-assigned;
- adjusting working time and leave; and
- providing specialised supervision, training and support in the workplace.

Sebueng adds that people with disabilities are not a homogenous group. “Whether disability is physical, mental, sensory or intellectual – each grouping has their own particular needs.”

Workplace Success for People With Disabilities

Specialist debt recovery company Debttec, an exhibitor at this year’s expo, has played a huge role in integrating people with disabilities into the workplace. The company’s Project 1000 training programme aims to train 1000 young people with disabilities in the business of debt collection.

“Our pilot project proves that the circumstances of people with disabilities, and the discrimination they face, are socially created and have little to do with their impairments or abilities,” says Debttec Managing Director Kevin Hogg.

About the ACSA Disability Expo

“Through ACSA Disability, we aim to promote independence throughout life and work for people with disabilities,” explains Bette McNaughton of Fair Consultants, the event organisers. There are many products and services that will be on show at the Expo which people are not aware of, all of which can assist people with disabilities in leading more independent lives”. These include adapted vehicles; ADLS (assisted daily living equipment and service); communication aids; computers; easy reaches; emergency medical supplies; hand cycles; hearing aids; hospital furniture; mobility aids; occupational products; patient handling devices; physio equipment; products and aids for the deaf and blind; prosthetic artificial limbs; showering devices / building products;

sports equipment; training institutions; walking sticks; wheelchairs; wheelchair clothing and, much more!

Admission into the expo and sporting events is free and parking is also free for visitors who present the free ticket (available from bettemc@fairconsultants.com). There is an attendance fee for the conference. For the full events programme, visit www.fairconsultants.com

For more information on exhibiting at or visiting the show, contact: Bette McNaughton, Event Director. Tel: (+27) 11 784 4279 E-mail: bettemc@fairconsultants.com

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