# **Interview Preparation**

# **Addressing Liability, Accessibility, and Transportation with a Potential Employer**

Chances are you will be the first person who is blind or vision impaired your employer has interviewed or met. In the context of your professional relationships, your job is not to educate your potential employers, but to make them more comfortable about working with you. By law, employers can't ask candidates about disabilities or impairments, but they likely have concerns and questions. If you proactively address the areas most employers have concerns about and discuss your situation with tact, grace, and a positive spin you increase your chances of getting hired.

# **Liability**

Liability consists of safety on the job and productivity.

# **Safety**

Businesses are always concerned about any employee getting hurt on the job or causing conditions that might lead to someone else having an accident. In today's world, employers must consider worker's compensation, liability insurance, and potential legal issues. Typically, employers who are uneducated about disability will assume that, if they should hire a person with a vision impairment, he or she will have a higher accident rate on the job. The truth is that people with disability have no more accidents on the job than any other employee.

There will be employers who are disability confident, but there will also be employers who are scared of you using the stairs. Employers who have safety concerns may not be trying to be insensitive; they may not know the facts. Bringing up activities that you participate in such as sports, outdoor activities, working out, and such can help them get a more realistic perspective on safety issues.

# **Productivity**

Productivity concerns can be handled in many ways. Having good references and recommendations who are willing to express to an employer that you were able to complete past job duties can make a big difference. Having a potential employer speak with a former colleague or supervisor is sometimes the most efficient way to communicate your abilities and potential. It's a good idea to talk openly about this with your references before you pass along their contact information to any potential employer.

Make sure that your references are comfortable discussing your ability and make sure they know you are happy with them discussing your performance with a potential employer and answering any questions about your vision impairment in the workplace. If you do not have prior work experience, then a volunteer supervisor, coach, work experience placement, or someone besides friends and family who can talk about your work abilities is a good substitute.

# **Accessibility**

A common concern is how you will be able to acquire the information contained in written materials. Will they have to provide braille versions? What do they have to do to make a computer system accessible to you? Will you need special equipment? It's a good idea to explain to an employer that, if you have a scanner, you can access any hard copy print material as long as it's typed, and that most electronic material is accessible to you via computer.

These days the vast majority of office communication is via phone or e-mail anyway. If you have low vision then you can explain about your use of, electronic magnifier, or screen magnifier. Screen reader users will want to explain how the software works in simple terms and can refer employers to web sites if need be. Braille should not be an issue because you should be able to convert your own documents if that is needed. There may be a need of an embosser or refreshable screen reader depending on your needs.

You don't need to go into detail about how the technology works—again, you are not trying to educate the employer—but you should talk about it in a way that demonstrates that you can join an established business workflow easily and with little disruption to your co-workers’ standard business practices.

# **Transportation**

Transportation is another area potential employers can have concerns about. Let them know that you regularly use the bus system, ride share services, taxis, trains, or good old foot power to get around. Mention how you got to the location on that day such as, "Oh, I took the bus here today and had time to stop to get a bottle of water in the lobby. It's great that your building has those vending machines downstairs." You want to ease their fears and show them that your transportation is not their concern.

Do you have any more questions? Email [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au) with your question. Using Employment Project’ in the subject line and we can respond with an answer.

*This article is based on the 2nd edition of* The Transition Tote System*, by Karen Wolffe and Debbie Johnson (1997, American Printing House for the Blind).*