

Employability Potential of Differently Abled in the Indian Apparel Industry

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Abstract : The pilot run of 50 days was undertaken to test employability potential of people with visual and hearing & speech impairment. Various roles in an apparel manufacturing set up like spreading of fabric for cutting, folding, sealing and labeling cartons, pasting size barcode stickers on packed garments, removing tickets from the garments in the finishing stage were studied. Their performance was quantified basis timesheets for all the days and improvement per day was quantified. Their final day output was compared to that of the able-bodied worker. For example in the carton making activity on day one visually impaired worker was making one box every three minutes which improved to four boxes per minute on day 28 displaying 91.6% improvement compared or an improvement of 3.6% per day which was comparable to the able-bodied seasoned workers, who were making 5 boxes per minute. The performance of persons with hearing and speech impairment in the finishing department was 10% higher than that of able-bodied seasoned workers in the same process. Overall in all the activities the differently abled showed day to day improvement of 65% while able bodied displayed improvement of 52%. On the first day performance of able-bodied worker was 75% better than that of differently abled while on the 50th day it was only 20% better. Therefore the performance of persons with disabilities was found comparable to the able bodied person. The results, though on a small scale, showed a big promise of employment of persons with disability in the apparel industry. Armed with the promising result a full-scale study has been undertaken to identify the roles suitable for certain kind of disability in apparel production, work-aids required to assist the differently abled to improve performance and measures to be undertaken to make production floor 'friendlier' for them. The results have been discussed in this paper which opens doors for integrating differently abled into the world projected and assumed for only able-bodied.

Keywords : apparel sector, differently abled, employability, performance, work-aid

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