



## Employer Webinar Series

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# Corporate and Organizational Strategy: Utilizing National Resources to Attract and Retain Employees with Disabilities

**Event Date:** December 10, 2009

**Presenters:** Beth Butler, Kathy West-Evans,  
Shelley Kaplan

**Facilitator:** Jill Houghton

## Overview

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**Jill Houghton:** I want to welcome you to our webinar Titled *Corporate and Organizational Strategy: Utilizing National Resources to Attract and Retain Employees with Disabilities*. This is the first of a 5 part series that has been developed in a joint partnership between CSAVR or the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and their National Employment team as well as the DBTAC National ADA Centers and with the US Business Leadership Network. So we are really excited about the opportunity to work together to deliver this webinar series. It is supported by

the Southeast DBTAC ADA Center and the Southeast TACE Center.

Our speakers today, I will give you a brief introduction to these 3 wonderful presenters that we have today. You can find their full bios online at our website which is at [tacesoutheast.org](http://tacesoutheast.org). our first speaker is Beth Butler. She is the vice president with Wells Fargo Corp. and works on a accommodation -- accommodations management team as a accommodations management consultant. She had an extensive background. She also currently serves as the chair of the national board of directors for the business leadership network and also as the chair for the state rehabilitation council for the rehabilitation Council for the North Carolina Division of Blind Services.

Following that we are also hear from Kathy West Evans. Kathy comes from the great state of Washington. She is the business relations director for CSAVR and the National Employment Team. She has an extensive background in the field of rehabilitation and

employment and has been an incredible resource to businesses across the country. We are really honored to work with Kathy.

Finally, we will be hearing from Shelley Kaplan. She is the co-principal investigator and director of the DBTAC Southeast ADA Center which is a project of the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University. She has an incredible background and a long history working with working with the DBTAC and is here speaking on behalf of the DBTAC national ADA Center. We are honored to have her as well. So, with that, I will turn it over to Beth Butler.

### **Slide 3: US Business Leadership Network**

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**Beth Butler:** Thank you, Jill. Thank you everyone for joining us today. This is an exciting time to begin sharing some of the great collaboration of partnerships that are being built around disability and employment. It is an honor to be here and thank you, Jill.

### **Slide 4: What is the USBLN?**

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I am on slide 4. Wanted to share just a little bit about what the US Business leadership

Network is for those that are not familiar with the organization. We are a national organization that promotes the business imperative of disability inclusion and employment retention strategies in marketing and sales strategies and also in supplier diversity programs as well. It is through the leadership of our board of directors that represent companies like Walgreens, IBM, McDonald's, Starbucks and many others as well as small businesses like Tech Access. And through of course the leadership and direction of our executive director, the US business leadership exists because those -- for those businesses that truly value the talents of people with disabilities in their hiring practices. Those businesses that support the entrepreneurial spirit and economic efficiency of people with disabilities including our injured veterans who own their own businesses, as well as those businesses who value the consumer buying power of people with disabilities.

## **Slide 5: About the USBLN**

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We are very proud. Moving on to slide 5, this tells you about the make up of our organization.

We represent over 5000 employers and that continues to grow it seems like every day. We have over 60 affiliates in 35 states across the country including the District of Colombia. As I said, these numbers continue to grow. I know our board of directors, in fact, we just had a meeting yesterday, we are always hearing about the work that our partners and our board members are doing nationally. In particular, some of you may know Catherine our former chair, the immediate past here of the US Business Leadership board. She continues to reach out to groups across the country and support the affiliate growth as well. Many of our other board members are also involved in that. The business to business model really provides opportunities to share open and honest dialogue around disability employment practices. What we have found that is such a necessity for employers in businesses that are interested and passionate about engaging in this work is that we need to provide a place where they can come with other businesses. Come together and talk openly and honestly

about both their successes and there are many, as well as their challenges. Again, having the support of partners like CSAVR and the DBTACs across our footprint make this very successful.

In addition to that, one of the things that I continue to hear and we continue to hear from employers who are somewhat apprehensive about engaging in the disability employment work, is the fear that comes from -- is it the fear that comes from not understanding or doing and saying the wrong things. I have always said that to me, fear really comes where there is a lack of education, awareness, and resources. What the US Business Leadership Network seeks to do is to fill those gaps for our business members.

## **Slide 6: The USBLN Difference**

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Moving to slide 6. What makes the US business leadership network different? What makes us different from other diversity organizations? Really, in looking at the make up of the US population, Americans with disabilities make up about 20% of our population. That makes this

the largest minority segment in the United States. Having an organization that focuses solely on this diversity segment has tremendous value. This has tremendous value to the businesses that are interested and supportive and passionate about promoting the employment of people with disabilities. The attitudinal barriers again continue to be the primary barriers to inclusion.

### **Slide 7: USBLN Connection**

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As we move to slide 7, you can see there that's really the US business leadership network focuses on providing a space for businesses to come where they can make connections, exchange ideas, and ultimately the benefit is to change those attitudes. That is what we try and do. Focusing on connection. That is where our partners come in as well. Many of our business partners listen and learn from each other and if they have found successes in partnerships with, for example, the National Employment Team through CSAVR, then those experiences are shared. And those success stories are shared. Ultimately, the benefit is that those partnerships

are replicated across the country. What really is a benefit, and I think particularly with larger companies like the Wells Fargo companies and the IBM and Walgreens, is to have a partner who is serves as that local connection, that local support.

Many of our affiliates benefit from the national partnership and the alliances that we create at the national level. The real work takes place at the local level. That is where those partnerships for the national employment team and your local DBTAC are extremely -- DBTACs are extremely important to our organization.

Our US business leadership network employers and business members truly send the right message to their workforce, their customers, and their communities as they continue their involvement and participation in our organization. Again, it is not possible without the valued partnerships that we share at the national level. With that, I have put in a shameless plug. While it seems like 1 million years away, I do encourage each of you to save the date of September 19 through the 22nd in

the 2010 where we will post our 13th annual US Business Leadership Network conference in Chicago, Illinois. Please mark your calendars. Despite the economic challenges that we have seen in 2009, remarkably, our national conference had an increase in attendees this year. I believe it was 14%. Which is truly send a message and demonstrates the importance of this disability work to our members and to businesses across this country. Thank you so much. With that, I am going to turn it over to my friend Kathy.

### **Slide 8: CSAVR - NET**

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**Kathy West-Evans:** Thank you, Beth. I want to say thank you to both -- well, not to both, just Beth and also our team with TACE. It is really exciting to be working together. I look forward to continuing to growing our partnership with Beth and Shelley and the teams that are behind them. My name is Kathy and I'm the director of business relations for the State Council of Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation the acronym is CSAVR. Obviously not developed

by a marketing company so I always like to say what it stands for.

### **Slide 9: What is the CSAVR – NET?**

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On the next slide number 9, there is a brief explanation of what CSAVR is and why we are involved in what we have called the National Employment team. What happened was the vocational rehabilitation organizations, and there are 80 of them across the country and in the territories and District of Columbia. CSAVR is the leadership organization of those 80 public agencies. The directors all come together through the Council State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

What happened was that we had been working with businesses in a variety of ways and a variety of states. Sometimes it was a state approach. Sometimes we thought a regional approach like Region 4. What we started to realize was as business changed and grew more national and global in scope, we needed to rethink how we were doing businesses with business. At our national employment conference in 2004, a group of the 35 of our

business partners came together with us to tell us how they would like to see us develop a network that would support them. Our commitment to this through CSAVR has been to build a system with business and not for business. We really wanted to figure out where we were doing good work, where we can replicate that and where we could work together across state lines and regional lines to support the business in their footprint and not ours. This project is national in scope. We have the leadership support of directors. I want to thank any directors on the phone and I know we have some points of contact. I saw North Carolina, Colorado and Texas popping up. Some of our great leaders in this initiative. What we created was the national employment team.

The whole concept of this is based on how we can make it easy for businesses to get to us. And when I say us, I use big term us. We have a lot of programs. There is a VR network nationally but we also network at the state to local and regional network with a variety of community providers, with our DBTAC partners,

with assistive technology providers. What business said is we don't understand your whole network and we don't need to. We just need to know how to access and make it easy. What they describe for us was a system which we have called the point of contact system. Each one of our 80 agencies has a lead person which works with businesses. For example, when the Wachovia, a Wells Fargo Company, needs help in Colorado or North Carolina or Texas, we have one person that we can connect with Beth. That person can look at what the need is in the local area and build a team around meeting the need of either the individual or company or manager. Whoever is involved. Our goal is to make it easy for people like Beth to access resources.

### **Slide 10: The NET Vision**

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Slide number 10. Here is the vision statement for the NET. It is to create a one company to serve business companies to a national team in it business consulting and corporate relations. Please remember that includes our partners.

What we are looking at is, how do we mobilize national resources to deliver locally?

## **Slide 11: National VR – Business Network**

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Next slide, number 11. Benefits by customer category. The goal of the NET is to have businesses have a direct access to qualified candidates and support systems provided by state VR agencies and their community partners on a national basis that VR consumers will have access to a national employment opportunity and career development resources. We are already seeing that blooming as we working with companies and understanding what company needs are and using that information back at the local level as our councils are developing career plans with individuals. Using those connections for people that we are working with that would be willing to relocate because there are great career opportunities. And we have seen that recently particularly with the federal agencies. They have a number of internships and we all know that federal jobs come with good pay and benefits and stability.

Our state VR agencies, we look at them as a customer because remember CSAVR is a membership organization. What we want to do is create a national system for sharing employment resources, the best practices and creating business connections. Our state VR agency network through an Internet system. We also have ongoing conversations. For example, if we are working with a Walgreens or a Wachovia, a Wells Fargo [indiscernible]. They are doing business in a number of states and what we do is build business teams around them. We are all on the same page and we can support each other when we are using a strategy that is successful we can share that with a company that also with all of our counterparts.

## **Slide 12: NET Foundations**

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Slide number 12 outlines some of the foundations. I will not go into depth. You can build a whole training program around this. Looking at the NET model as serving a dual customer. We always serve and focus on people with disabilities. We are federally funded

to do that but the employment outcomes that we are responsible for our tied to our business, customers and our employment customers. That is the dual customer. To develop the one company approached we are mobilizing to get her to continue to support the training and effectiveness of our single point of contact to share models and best practices within our networks but also with our partners and our businesses to build a team around the businesses. For example, Cooper does business in 35 states, we have those 35 point of contact on a monthly call with that company looking at updates and where they are wanting to increase hiring and effectiveness. We want to work with the business as a whole. We understand that our opportunity to work as a business may not just be through the HR pathway but it could be because the company is reaching out and they are looking at policies or marketing and outreach to the disability community. If we support them in being successful there, they will continue to broaden

that relationship and strategy within the company as a whole.

Our goal is to develop relationships with companies on an ongoing basis. It is not about doing it one job at a time. You will hear us talk business relations and not job placement. We want a system that is consistent so that when companies are doing business they can expect the same level of service around the country. We will deliver on what we commit to and we want a system that is sustainable and as I said, delivers national resources at the local level.

### **Slide 13: NET – VR Business Services Defined by Business Customers**

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Slide 13 and 14. We will start with a slight 13. It is a compilation of the services. When we got together in 2004 with our business partners, I said, here is what we value and here's where we want to see you focus or services. This changes and grows with time. I can tell you about some of those changes. I want to hit some of the high points.

A lot of businesses we are working with are looking at the pre-employment strategies for

people with disabilities. For example when we are working with the Hyatt and the hands on partnership, what we have in developing there is, they have a two-week training for granted was developed out of Tampa Bay, Florida Area. That training focused on a two-week business based: culinary arts type of training where the goal was the person would be ready for employment at the support of the company. They would have real hands on experience and would be paid while going through training. That program has been very successful. We have worked with Hyatt nationally to work to the DC Maryland and Virginia area. We expanded to San Antonio and recently our Texas team has grown to five locations within Texas. Yesterday we had a conversation with Nevada and Utah about growing it air. So again, it is using that model that has successful in different areas around the company. Also expanding it to different areas in the hospitality industry. I think it'll be very interesting working with the Nevada team around this because Nevada is all about hospitality.

HR and Staffing. This is an area that seems like a no-brainer for connecting but when we started learning as we had conversations with businesses. There are a lot of different components with HR and staffing. Each company looks different. When we are working with companies like Safeway, doing outreach to them and they also do business as Carl's Randall's ect. They did not even know how many people that they had hired. We went out for them and started looking at where the hires were from the VR system across the country and of course, that is not inclusive with every person with a disability but it gave this company and idea where they had already been hiring. They were shocked. In 2006 they hired by the 520 people from the VR system. In 2007 it was nearly 600, in 2008 it was nearly 700 even though we are in this economy and that is growing because they can see they are hiring people based on abilities which has always been our strategy. Look for the talent and you will find it. They were surprised that that talent in their expanding relationships.

Another area that I think we all need to pay attention to in that HR and staffing is the retention support. We have an aging workforce. We have veterans returning from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Those populations that we are helping retain jobs within companies are changing a little bit. That is so key. That is key in providing retention from bringing them back, working with employee advisory services for supporting them and those families. So that's just a couple of examples there.

Accommodations. I will not go into a lot of this because you know this is our business. We have a lot of AT providers, rehab engineers, and networks. In some cases we have stuff on our own team that can help look at individual assessments. And help look at what would be a good strategy. We have used that with companies in a location. Within a Lowes or Walgreens distribution center, we also use that strategy within individual cases and we rely a lot on our community partners.

Staff training. Disability awareness. We all know since attitudinal barriers are number one, we

can educate 24/7, we continue to focus on that and helping people realize what creates those attitudinal barriers. We are looking at training around the ADA employment laws and this is also where we partner with our DBTAC partners and where we have people on our own team that further with us. We have people that figure out what works on each state level.

Diversity programs. A big focus. Not all companies include disability with diversity. Fortunately the ones that we work with through the USBLN partnership are ahead of the game and they see that. We can work with them to help other companies look at how they made it work. It is all the way from diversity and the way they look in marketing to their recruitment strategies and what works best with the diversity supplier or disability program. We continue to work with EEOC and affirmative action and the federal office of compliance with DOL. Where individual companies are receiving federal funding money but they need help to be proactive.

## **Slide 14: NET – VR Business Services**

## **Defined by Business Customers (cont.)**

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Slide 14. Here is the second phase of what they told us. Universal design. How do you help a company, like a Walgreens, who we all know is just wonderful. They stepped out and said, how do we do this different? If we have an opportunity to build a new distribution center, how do we make it universally acceptable? There were a whole group of people that came together in Anderson, South Carolina, and in Connecticut and working with their distribution centers. Also 21 of them. What they were a new center or a retrofit center. With universal design, it is helping companies understand how you write contracts. How you look at facilities, looking information technology upfront and not after the fact. If you have not had the chance to see some of the Walgreens DVDs or visit their sites in person, I really encourage it because what you are seeing is companies embracing the concept that if they partner with VR and other agencies whether it is architects or designers around the way that we use pictures and processing. Then, what they are realizing

as they are developing distribution centers and workplaces that are accessible to everyone. What that has resulted in with Walgreens, is that in the distribution center in Anderson, their production has gone up their error rate has gone down. What they have found is that accommodations that work for people with disabilities, like taking print and adding graphics or photos to products, helps everyone be more efficient. It is helping continue that discussion in using that with other companies like our partners with Lowes.

Financial support. Companies continue to be interested in tax credit. VR counselors are able to work with that setting it up and we work with our community programs in setting that up.

Barrier removal. Legal and compliance. I'm going to group all the legal compliance risk management together. Here is a challenge in a company where you have an attorney that does not understand me ADA or is afraid of it or was trained to avoid any discussion around this disability. What you have is a company that is not open to doing anything. A lot of work and

partnerships may start around this area where we are doing education related to policy, outreach, helping people connect with resources where they can get that background. If we have people that are afraid of the litigation, they are going to write policies that preclude the company from doing business. Whether its hiring or reaching to customers with disabilities.

Product development. We work with a lot of companies like Microsoft where we bring in people with disabilities to test their products. If any of you are seeing Windows 7, there is a new phenomenal access features to that software and that is because they asked up front and they work with AT providers as well as individual customers to help develop that. It has speech recognition built into it, it has some great visual features but they are thinking and reaching out. We need to be responsive for helping them think that through.

Customer service marketing and outreach. Companies like Nordstrom want to meet the disability population and they want to do it in a

very respectful way. We help connect them with models for their catalog and help them talk through to how they reach out to their resources so they can connect. How do you make sure lines connect to people who are deaf? How do you make your product lines accessible to people who use magnification software? Etc. The more we can help them do that, the more they see the reality of customer base and the more they want to reflect that of them are based in their employee base so they hire more people with disabilities.

That is it for me but I have to put in a shameless plug as well. Our national employment conference is coming up September 15-17, 2010 in the DC area. Here is the plan. Book your flight be in DC. Spend the weekend fly into Chicago and be there for the USBLN.

### **Slide 15: DBTAC Liaison to the USBLN**

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**Shelley Kaplan:** Thank you. This is Shelley Kaplan. I am on the side 15. I'm the director of the Southeast ADA Center. I am privileged and honored to be the DBTAC liaison between the

US Business Leadership Network. Thank you, Jill, Beth, and Kathy for your collective vision as we continue to explore creative ways to leverage our resources and make it easier for others to understand what we all do and who to call for what I is the need arises.

### **Slide 16: What is the DBTAC?**

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Moving to slide 16. What is DBTAC? It has been a source of confusion for a lot of people for over 19 years. But, as we go and examine who we are and how we make ourselves more understandable to the customers that we serve, we have a new branding statement. What is said is that we are the leader in providing information, guidance, and training tailored to the needs of companies at local, regional and national levels. We have been around for 19 years. We are located across the country.

### **Slide 17: DBTAC Regions**

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Slide 17 shows you the location. Hopefully you have a map in front of you and you see how the federal government divides our country into 10 regions. There is an ADA resource Center in each one of those regions. We are all

connected by a national 800 number. And by a website. Through these 10 regional centers, we have over 2200 organizations or partners in each of the states that we served. Partners that are made up of a variety of organizations. They can be an individual business, they can be a state agency, in some cases, a state agency is the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. In many instances it is a Center for Independent living. These partner organizations are charged with developing an in state network of other groups, individuals and organizations and businesses that we spend our resources on building their capacity to be a resource wit in their own location. So that they can help facilitate voluntary compliance with the ADA. These organizations have their own individual partnerships with VR and with the US business leadership network member partners. We offer code training in many instances. We help answer questions. In some cases, where the need is great, and all of us cannot be in all places at once, we will divide and conquer and send out teams to be able to work with those

businesses, individuals and government agencies that want to learn more about the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## **Slide 18: DBTAC Mission**

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Slide 18, you will see the two primary missions of the DBTAC national network. One has been our mission since 1991, is to facilitate voluntary compliance with the ADA. We underscore the word voluntary. We are not a compliance, we don't monitor, we are there as a resource to our states to help them understand the Americans with Disabilities Act and how to effectively comply with it. That takes up about 80% of our time. We have a core of services include national toll-free hotlines. We customized training to the needs of our audience. We provide referrals. We share information about what others are doing as they comply with the law. Some call that best practices, we call that sharing a lot of guidance materials. I will get into that a little bit more in a moment.

The second mission which we have been doing for the past-- now going into our fourth year, is to conduct research. This has been a new

endeavor on the part of the national network of DBTAC or ADA centers. Our research is focused on reducing and eliminating barriers to employment and the economics of efficiency -- economic self-sufficiency to people with disabilities. We are trying to increase social participations. That takes up about 15% of our efforts.

When you go onto our website, and we will give you those resources shortly, you can click on the research tab and see the tremendous number of research projects that the DBTAC are now engaged with. Many of them involve partnerships with our vocational rehab organizations, with our Centers for Independent living, and with many businesses who are members of the USBLN.

### **Slide 19: DBTAC Customer Benefits**

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Next slide please. What I have tried to capture here is what I am sure many of you are saying, in some cases it sound like each of the organizations do the same thing. There is some overlap but there are also unique benefits and unique services for our DBTAC customers.

Those are number one. We too are a national network of multiple locations as you saw from the map that was just up on the screen. We have locations through the regional centers. We have locations where we are able to deliver services in every state and in just about in every locality across the country.

We have information specialist who are bilingual. These informational specialists are experienced in the world of answering questions and providing guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act. We have been fortunate in many of our ADA centers that we have the original staff with us were the past 19 years. These staff members eat, sleep and breathe the ADA. They are available to share their experience and to answer your questions...We have these information specialists who are bilingual and they eat, sleep and breathe the ADA. They are eager to share information and experiences and expertise with you in answering your questions and challenging situations that come across your horizon in a confidential and most importantly

unbiased manner. Some people who are not familiar with the ADA centers, and because many of our partners are Centers for Independent living, think that we keep our advocacy hat on and present information in a biased manner. That is not true. We are funded to insure that everyone understands in an unbiased manner what their rights and responsibilities are under the law.

We also provide training. Training customized for the needs of the clients we serve. We also share and provide the same training twice because every audience needs -- we try to tweak that training to meet the needs of the audience.

We share effective practices. People called these best practices, we like to refer to them as effective practices. We learn from everybody else's experiences. We know what the law says. We know what your rights and responsibilities are. We know what your defenses are. We know that you can draw a line in the sand but that line in the sand shifts and we learn from your experiences in shaping

how you can remove the barriers in the best way possible for you so that it is a win-win situation.

As a result, we have from 1991, continually translating knowledge into practices. We are taking legal information that may be clear to attorneys, is not clear to the general public. We have always been in the business of taking this information and translating it into a way that is understandable for businesses and individuals and for governmental agencies so that they, too, can create equal opportunities for people with disabilities. As I mentioned, the latest service we provide is research.

## **Slide 20: Groups Receiving Technical Assistance from DBTAC**

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Next slide, please. Just a quick overview. You see a chart of the groups that are receiving assistance from DBTAC. Business represents about 28% of the inquiries as well as the people who are requesting customer based training from the DBTAC. When we go out in training we are always partnering as the need arises

with others in order to insure that the customer's needs are being met.

The two other large groups that are recipients of our services as you see are public entities in the state and local government agencies at 29% and individuals in disability organizations at 18%. We like to view ourselves as building capacity in the states that we serve so that people have the resources and most up-to-date information to be a resource to the community they serve. As Beth said earlier, one of the things we are constantly faced is to why people do not comply is based on some fear. It is a lack of information or resources that seems to underpin this fear. What we are trying to do is get out the information to make it as easy as possible for people to understandable that there are ways that you can comply in a win-win situation for you. But you don't always have to be the expert. There are lots of people out there who have the expertise and the experience to work with you in partnerships so that you become the best that you can be in and creating an inclusive environment.

## **Slide 21: DBTAC Web Hits**

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Slide 21, please. You will also see from this chart a rapid rise in the amount of web activity that goes on at the DBTAC centers. We started out in 1991. The Internet really was not even in existence. I'm 1991 to 1997, this is where each of the ADA centers began to develop websites. We began to put information up and began to share what we were learning between the years of 1991 to 1997. You can quickly see a tremendous and the startling growth of the Internet usage where, here we are in 2009, and we have over 10 million visits to our website. People are now downloading information. They are downloading ideas and stories about what we are finding in our work with businesses and individuals and government agencies. We are generating new documents that share that expertise and we are constantly translating knowledge into practice so that others can benefit from this work.

## **Slide 22: DBTAC Partnerships with Customers**

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Slide 22, please. In order for us to do our work, we must partner with our customers. If we end our conversation and our interaction with just the services that we provide, we will fade into nonexistence should our funding base no longer be available. Therefore, we focus on partnerships and we focus on sharing and building capacity with the audience we work with. So that they can carry on our work with the most effective way should the ADA centers not continue to receive funding. We have every reason to believe that we will but we never want to create a dependence on our centers. We want our partnership organizations to be the beneficiary in all that we have the privilege to be a part of.

For employers, we provide employers and representatives with information and guidance that creates a welcoming corporate culture so that once somebody with a disability becomes employed, that corporate culture environment that they are working in is continually supportive

of that individual. We share best practices with businesses to improve the bottom line. We are always looking for a win-win. In our work with individuals, we want individuals to educate others as we know, people with disabilities are often the best resource we have. So we help individuals work with others so that they can be a resource.

We offer feedback loops for the federal enforcement agencies. This has been one of the fun parts of being involved with the DBTAC. We meet with the federal enforcement agencies on a routine basis, whether in person or via webinars or via conference calls. In the early years we were looking to the federal enforcement agencies for answers. We are now looking to them and they are looking to us to share information and also to be an ear from the states we serve in terms of what are people understanding and not understanding. Where do we need more guidance and materials? I just want to reassure you that even though we have those ongoing conversations, as we learn from each other, the information you share with

us is confidential. We do not name names. If you call us with an HR issue we are not reporting your company's name back to the enforcement agencies. I really want to underscore the confidentially aspect of our services.

We also want to stress the fact that when you do call a DBTAC center, you do get a live person. I know many of us are frustrated when you call somebody and get into that phone loop, press one for this, press two for that. At the DBTAC offices we answer the phone and that is becoming a increasingly unique service.

### **Slide 23: What DBTAC Customers Say...**

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Slide 23. I too, shamelessly in a different way, wanted to share some of the positive feedback we get from our customers. One of the few federally funded programs that has and takes a lot of something as comprehensive as the ADA and provides a hotline for people to call and have a safe haven to share. A safe haven to ask questions. No question is ever stupid. It could be very challenging. That is where we rely on all of our partners. If we do not know the

answer, we have a huge network of people with expertise that we can call upon and brainstorm together to come up with a solution with you that works for you.

I just want to put a quick slide up. I will not read it. We are pleased that people find our DBTAC ADA centers a valuable resource and we have many many repeat customers and we welcome those repeat.

### **Slide 24: DBTAC Web Resources**

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Slide 24. We have very many resources to share with you. Hopefully you had a chance to download the two handouts that were part of the packet that provides you with a marketing package with what DBTAC does and does not do. There are direct links to resources identified in that document and there is a second document that is just a resource page. Some of the resources I want to highlight is number one our DBTAC home. If you go to ADA.org you will come across an area that will link you to all centers.

We at the Southeast DBTAC have developed a training page, ADAcourse.org, where if you are

looking for training materials, that you want to use in your own training session, this is the location. It is a single point of reference where you can find links to training materials, handouts, online courses at the DBTAC , podcasts, monthly audio conferences and other webinars.

And another resource that is new this past year on the 19th anniversary of the ADA, it isn't ADA anniversary.org page. These are materials that the DBTAC posts for your use during any of your 19th anniversary activities. And with the 20th anniversary coming up in July of 2010, hopefully those materials will assist you in putting on a celebration that meets your needs in your community.

And other website that is continually being populated is ADAresources.org. You'll find a wealth of materials, DBTAC related, to meet your needs. If it does not meet your needs we encourage you to let us know that there is an unmet need and we can chat about how we can hopefully fill that void.

As everyone out has talked about their annual conferences, we too have a national ADA symposium. You have the website there at ADA Symposium ,org. this is another national project coordinated by our DBTAC ADA Center in Region 7. Our next conference will be on June 20 through the 23rd in Denver. When you come from the Midwest, hopefully you will head toward Denver and it is just beautiful that time of year and we are very excited about it.

One of the newest sites that we have is now one on acceptable technology. That is [accessibletech.org](http://accessibletech.org). I encourage all of you to go to that website. It has a wealth of resources on accessible technology for business employers and government and individuals.

With that, I thank you. Jill, I will turn it back over to you.

## **Q&A**

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**Jill Houghton:** Thank you Beth and Kathy and Shelley for sharing with us just about all of the tremendous resources that you each represent and how we as employers, VR agencies and members of organizations can tap into your

incredible resources to help advance the employment of people with disabilities. I have seen quite a few questions popping up. I will turn it over to Stephanie on our team who is going to help raise these questions. I will jump in if need be. **Steffany:** We have a question from Danny Markowitz. He said, has the NET established a working arrangement with the census 2010 workforce? And do they have regional contacts?

**Kathy:** This is Kathy. We have been contacted at the state level around the census however, we don't have the national connection. We are looking at how we can leverage our state connection to take a look at what is happening at the national Census Bureau. There should be more information on that. Right now it is just at the state level.

**Jill:** And Steffany, this is still. If I could jump in here. It seems like there has been a lot of questions raised where people are kind of probably really excited about what the NET is doing and what the USBLN and what the DBTAC is doing. There seems to be a lot of

interest in terms of, is there a list of businesses in my area that you have established relationships with that I can work with? Rather than reading each person that has asked for that list, I guess I would open it up for discussion with Beth and Kathy and Shelley about, what are the best ways, if I am a VR agency or a disability organization, what are the best ways for me to help find some of those businesses in my community or perhaps if I am an employer, what is the best way for me to tap into your services?

**Beth:** This is Beth. Still, that was a great summary of those questions. What I would say and this is coming from the business perspective. One of the beautiful things that businesses articulated over and over again as we partnered with the CSAVR and developed the National Employment Team. That is the whole idea around a single point of contact. When you are an employer or a business and there are so many service providers out there. Businesses don't understand how they all work together. What we continue to focus on was

that single point of contact model. What I would recommend is, and Kathy you can certainly give your response as well. Identify the Net contact, identify the business relations representatives and beginning to partner with them in those various regions across the country. Again, that is probably the most beneficial way for businesses because those business representatives are going to have some relationship or may have contact where they can give you the information you need whether it is around identifying candidates. Or the skill set that these businesses look for. They spend the time to get to know what that business is like. What is the environment like to work at their? What they're hiring practices may be. The types of skill sets that that they look for and leverage some of that work that has really already been done in establishing some of those partnerships and relationships. That would be my recommendation.

**Kathy:** This is Kathy and thank you Beth. Beth could do the presentation on the NET because she has been so involved in building this. We

so appreciate that because we are only as effective as our response to our customers like Beth. What I would recommend is at the end of his presentation, you have my e-mail, if you do not know who your point of contact is in your state, drop me an e-mail, let me get you that information and I agree with Beth, figure out how you are going to work as part of that team in supporting that business in your local community or your state or region. I think in some cases, the lead contact may be one of our community rehab partners but VR gets behind them and the NET contact is the key, we are working with our community rehab programs. I also want to mention because I saw those questions popping up, we are also partnering with the VA. The VA has 28 national employment coordinators across the country. 82 total staff on that team. We are partnering with them in various states because what we want to do is when a business reaches out to us. This is the big us, all of us. The VR agencies, Rehabilitation Centers, Independent Living Centers, the DBTAC, etc. When they

reach to our community to recruit people with disabilities, our biggest talent pools are within VR VA Social Security and we also do networking with EARN. I think I covered a lot of those questions.

What we trying to do is partner so that when they come to us, it doesn't matter what their referral is, it doesn't matter how the business get their needs met. Whether it is from our talent pool or service support network, they will come back to us. That is where we will change the numbers that we see for employment and unemployment for people with disabilities. Yes, we have a lot of partners. I would be happy to connect you with your point of contact.

**Shelley:** This is Shelley. I want to add one more thing. I keep stressing that we keep our customer base they are confidential. Certainly if an employer calls us, we will not share that contact information. But very often, employers call us and they want to know how can I let people with disabilities to know that I have a job opening? This is where we go into our partners and make sure that this leadership networks

knows about the job. CSAVR knows there is a job. Our Centers for Independent Living knows there is a job. We are a little bit more generic in that and we are happy to disseminate information out while keeping employer information confidential as needed. As we look at sharing best practices, if an employer is open to us posting their name, that this is what they do with a certain place of employment, that is great. If not, we develop new materials that will be posted on our website about practices in action and keeping it generic. Just wanted to underscore that point.

**Jill:** Back this is Jill speaking again. What I have gained from the presenters -- If you are an employer and looking for assistance, these are three individuals that you can contact and request specific assistance. They are there to help you network and get your needs met. If you are a state agency, and you are helping people with disabilities become employed or perhaps you are a local business leadership network or a community rehabilitation provider, and you're working specifically with individuals,

then what I hear the speakers saying is, specifically Beth, as an employer I hear her saying, build a relationship with me. Get to know me. Find out what my needs are. And then be responsive. Be responsive to what her needs are. Rather than requesting a list of who are these people, I hear Beth saying, it is important to get out there and develop relationships. And I hear Kathy and Shelley talking about being responsive to employer's needs. I hear Kathy saying that she's got a whole national network of business liaisons across the country that all work in different vocational rehabilitation agencies who are part of her National Employment Team and are all working together to meet the needs of businesses like what Wells Fargo Company Did I capture that correctly?

**Beth:** Yes, that is perfect.

**Kathy:** This is Kathy. The other thing I would add is to support what that is saying. If you're interested in working with the business at a still -- at a state, local, regional level, for those of us in the voc rehab but talk about how we do that

together. So that those businesses are not being overrun. I know between the three people that are speaking on the phone, there is easily 50,000 staff. I know we have 25,000 staff in our VR network alone. Let's think about how we do that collaboratively so that the businesses find easy access to us and are not inundated by a number of people.

**Beth:** Is a great point, Kathy. That is something that can be very overwhelming very quickly to employers. They just throw their hands up and say, I cannot do this. I think in particular, Walgreens. The great work that they are doing, you have success stories flying around out there and all of a sudden you are bombarded with calls and so forth. It just helps business when there is a methodical approach and organized approach to how you present your services and benefit of that company.

**Jill:** Steffany, do we have additional questions?

**Steffany:** I do not see any additional questions. But are there any other more questions?

**Jill:** There is a question out there, and perhaps Kathy or Shelley, there was a question from

someone form a Center for Independent living. They were wondering about, can they sign off on work opportunity tax credit documentation? Kathy, or Shelley?

**Kathy:** This is Kathy. As far as I know, there are two entities. The work opportunity tax credit program is managed by the Department of Labor. I know that if you go on their website and type in WOTC it will bring up the information around that program. As far as I know, there are a variety of programs under that tax credit. It is not just people with disabilities. They have tax credits available for youth and a variety of other populations. As I understand it, it is Department of Labor staff or their representatives and voc rehab around the disability issue. I believe the VAVR program is included in that as well. I do not know how that translates down to the community agency, it would be a great question for your state Department of Labor person. I would be happy to connect you with your point of contact so you could explore that together.

**Shelley:** I think if you go to the website, to the Internet, and Google Maximus.com, you will find a good resource online that explains exactly what the work opportunity credit is and how you can comply with it and who can verify.

**Jill:** Thank you Shelley and Kathy. Maybe this was already addressed. There was a question out there talking or asking about, how does the net work in partnership with project EARN?

**Kathy:** As I said earlier, and this is Kathy again, we have national partners like the VAVR and employment services program, and Social Security, who together, our systems represent the biggest talent pool of people with disabilities in the country. EARN is one of those partners. We have collaborated around our work with federal agencies and outreach to different businesses because as I said before, the key thing to the business or the public sector employer is that they get the candidates they need and support services no matter what that comes from. So, we have been working in partnership with EARN. They are going through changes and shifts right now in how they are

positioned with the office of disability and employment policy. I am not sure where that will go. The answer is, yes. We do partner.

**Jill:** This is Jill again. In other question that seems to be circulating out there is, how Kathy, Shelley, Beth, what is the best way for an individual to find out who their point of contact is in their area? For example, Kathy, if I want to partner with someone from being NET in my community or Beth, if I want to find out if there is a Business Leadership Network or Shelley, if I want to find out how to work together with my local DBTAC, how would you recommend that an individual proceeds?

**Beth:** This is Beth. I would direct you to our website. I apologize for having not provided that during my presentation. You can go directly to [www.usbln.org](http://www.usbln.org) and you can look through that. There is a lot of information out there but one of that is there are links to the various affiliates across the country. There is actually a US state map. That is probably your best way to identify the name. And I believe there is contact information but certainly an e-mail address is

also available for those individuals that are involved at the affiliate level.

**Jill:** And Beth, just before Kathy and Shelley speak up, I did see that Karen Walters, who heads up the Washington State BLN is in the chat area and she put her e-mail out there. She said, if there is anyone in Washington who wants to connect and to collaborate, she gave her contact information. Fantastic! So, Kathy and Shelley?

**Shelley:** This is Shelley. Same thing. I direct people to the National ADA Center website which is [www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org) where you will see that map that was on one of the previous slide that shows you where the DBTAC is that serves the state that you are in. You can also reach us toll-free at 1-800-949-4232. And interestingly enough, your call will be directed to the ADA Center that serves the state from which you are calling. If you call from Florida, you will get to the Southeast ADA Center. If you call from Chicago, you will get to the Great Lake Center. It does work, I would say about 99.9% of the time. Every now and then we get a wayward

call but we know how to refer those over. Those are the two best way to find out where your point of contact is.

**Kathy:** Thank you, Shelley. Our website is also listed there. When you go on the CSAVR website there is a link to the business relations page and you will see things we are doing there. You also have my e-mail address. Please let me know if you're looking to connect with your point of contact in your state. I am watching the chat area and our point of contact, Stephanie Vincent, one of the two out of North Carolina, is contacting everyone in the southeast region right now as we speak. Just let us know what you need and which state you are in and you'll be connected with your point of contact.

**Jill:** Steffany, this is Jill, and I think we have covered the questions that are out there. Unless we see anything new pop up, perhaps you want to wrap things up for us?

## **Closing**

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**Steffany:** Okay. Thank you, Jill. What a wonderful presentation. Thank you so much to

Kathy, Beth, Shelley and Jill for giving us all of the information that you have. We greatly appreciate it. I would like to remind all of the participants that a transcript of today's session along with the handout will be posted on the southeast DBTAC website. That is listed in front of you. Also, this webinar is available for CEU and CRC credits. Once you finish, you can take the test and get those credits. Also, your feedback is very important to us in continuing our planning for webinar is. These take the evaluation that is on the website after that so we can get your ideas and see if this series is something you would like to see more of.

As with all of our presentations that offers so much information, if there are any questions that you do not think of at this time, or that were not answered, please feel free to contact us. You can contact us through an e-mail at the TACE the southeast email website or at the southeast DBTAC website. On those sites there is a contact button and you can press that and get the correct e-mail addresses to send any questions or comments that you may have.

We thank you very much and look forward to your participation in our future sessions. With that, I will bring this session to a close. Have a great day.

**[Event Concluded, December 10, 2009]**