Virtual Vision Technologies

www.VirtualVisionTech.com

Since 1991 Incorporated as Young Opportunities, Ltd

Workplace accessibility for people with disabilities
Access solutions that *work*.

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Skills for Sighted Staff (S3):
Working with People Who are Blind or Who Have *Low* Vision

Combine this course with a [T3] half-day course to form an integrated all-day event!

The goal of Skills for Sighted Staff (S3) training is to increase knowledge, skills, ease and comfort of sighted staff working with people who have vision-related disability.

Each learning activity has a concrete task outcome. By the end of the half-day session, your sighted staff (HR, managers and supervisors, executive stakeholders) will be able to demonstrate increased comfort and ease relating to visually impaired customers, jobseekers, new hires and employees. They will demonstrate how to guide someone on your campus and learn "what to do" and "what not to do" around people who are blind or low vision. In this half day hands-on workshop, individuals and teams learn specific how-tos in order to work comfortably with blind and visually impaired employees. Participants learn concrete helping tools to help new hires adjust quickly to their role in the new company, so they can produce their best work.

- The workshop is led by a blind professional Virtual Vision Technologies instructor who navigates with the aid of a white cane or a dog guide. They will demonstrate hosting and guiding techniques, as well as guide dog and white cane etiquette.

- They will address issues important to the disabled person and the manager: holding everyone to the same Corporate Standard for productivity and norms.

- Course design is flexible and can be custom tailored to meet your company or department's changing goals and needs.

Overview

Formats include mini-lecture, demonstrations, large group and breakout groups, FAQ session, Assistive Technology hands-on activity, and open group dialogue to ask questions. Learning environment is risk free and informal.

Mini-lectures include tips for actual accommodation and methods for achieving company performance Standards for the new hire who is blind or visually impaired.

Participants have the opportunity to hear first hand what it is like for a vision-impaired person to get oriented to a new building or campus, and to fit into corporate culture, norms, and work teams. Participants engage in hands-on demonstration and practice of proper Sighted Person Guide technique, and learn workplace etiquette for people using canes and Seeing Eye dog guides. Facilitators speak from experience about the challenges facing today's blind and visually impaired working professional.

Overall, our goal is to create an open atmosphere for sharing thoughts and asking the hard questions that employers may not feel comfortable asking new hires with vision impairment.

Workplace Norms and Culture

The S3 workshop focuses on what it's like to be blind and newly employed the challenges of navigating new surroundings, and the need to fit in to the cultural norms of the work place.

Sample lesson: We know this in junior high school, but sometimes forget as adults that an important element of work success is simply fitting in with peers. More people are fired for interpersonal and communication misfit behavior within than for not possessing technical skills required for the job. Yet without visual cues, a blind person can become the odd person out. For example, dress code can be problematic if the person is totally blind and can't see what colleagues wear to work—e.g., too casual, too formal, low neckline, tennis shoes, etc. Or, the blind person may not realize their shirt has gotten a stain. Participants will learn appropriate ways to communicate these kinds of delicate matters. For example, if a blind man has a stain, a male trainer or supervisor might approach him discreetly and say something like, "Just a heads up; you have a stain on your collar on the left side near the front." This alerts the person to the stain location so he can remove it.

- Orientation to work spaces, buildings and offices.
  - When sighted people enter a room they take a quick look around to know exactly where find tan empty seat, exit doors, computers, or other people are in the room. Hands-on exercises offer quick, practical techniques that give a blind person a "quick look" at a large room, including tips for directing someone to peripheral places like elevators, stairs, rest rooms and employee cafeterias.

- Understanding unique work styles and communication patterns of people with visual impairment: e.g., effects of sensory deprivation, focus/ alertness,
- Learning inclusive accessible strategies for managers and supervisors.

Conclusions

This workshop is a flexible design that can be tailored to meet the needs of any corporation that seeks to actively hire people with visual impairments. This program is a very effective tool for HR, training, managerial and supervisory staff seeking to gain a better understanding of how to work with people who have a visual impairment.

Make a day of it: Combine this half day course with the *Technology Training for Trainers (T3)* workshop that teaches alternative teach methodologies for blended classrooms (sighted and non-sighted employees), and you have a compatible event to orient all your staff to introducing employees with disabilities to your workplace. Be sure to include Human Resources, Trainers, Supervisors and Desktop Support or Information Technology staff members to the event!

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