

Success and the Filipino Deaf Employee



Working with the Deaf



Success and the Filipino Deaf Employee

A Manual for working with the Deaf

Table of Contents

Introduction

Understanding Deafness

1. How hearing work
2. Understanding Deafness
3. What's in a name

Employing the Deaf (why employ the Deaf)

Costs of accommodating Deaf employees

The hiring process: step-by-step on how
to employ the Deaf (based on SDEAS strategies)

Foreword

Focusing on Filipino Deaf employer-employee relations, this manual aims to provide answers to the following questions that employers and would-be employers commonly ask:

1. What is deafness?
2. Who are the Filipino Deaf?
3. How do we go about employing the Deaf?
4. How do we communicate with our Deaf employees?
5. How do we create an effective working environment for the Deaf?
6. What are the resources available to employers of the Deaf?

Advocacy efforts for the Filipino Deaf experienced a major breakthrough in 1991 when then President Corazon Aquino passed R.A. 7277 which is also known as the “Magna Carta for People with Disabilities.” By far the most comprehensive legislation for Filipino PWDs, R.A. 7277 bills itself as “An act providing for the rehabilitation, self-development and self-reliance of disabled person and their integration into the mainstream of society and for other purposes.”

Sadly, the full effect of the Magna Carta has yet to be felt. To date, there are few and limited support services available for the Deaf particularly those in the workforce. Even then, those who are presently part of the workforce are more the exception as a great number of Deaf persons remain steadily unemployed.

Studies have shown that employers are wary of working with the Deaf citing

difficulties in communication and safety concerns (Hansen, 1999; “Employer”, 2001). Limited contact as well as uncertainty regarding appropriate behavior towards Deaf employees can also make companies and organizations hesitant to work with the Deaf (“Answers to the questions,” 2003).

To counter this, other countries have developed and produced materials to help placement specialists develop skills to approach employers who may be resistant due to negative attitude or lack of knowledge about deafness (Johnson, 1990). Educating the employers by providing access to information has helped pioneering employers develop an effective, harmonious relationship with their Deaf employees.

“Success and the Filipino Deaf: A Manual for Working with the Deaf” aims to fill the pressing need to come up

with a tool that can help employers of Filipino Deaf workers (and encourage hesitant employers) to learn the skills to effectively deal with their Deaf employees. Culled from various material published

by international and local organizations, results of surveys conducted among our supportive partners and DLS-CSB’s own experiences in placing our students and graduates in different work settings, this manual was put together to create a ready reference for local employers who are working with or contemplating on hiring a Deaf employee.



Background

This employer education manual is one of the target outputs for Year 2 of the 5 - year partnership between DLS - CSB SDEAS and the Postsecondary Education Network - International.

In 2003, as part of its ongoing efforts to improve its advocacy regarding the employment of Deaf workers, two staff members from SDEAS joined a seminar/workshop on Working with Employers held at the National Center for Employment of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf of the Rochester Institute of Technology (NTID-RIT). The workshop/seminar directly influenced the development and implementation of this manual guide.



This manual is by no means the only material available for employers for the Deaf but it is unique in that it integrates international and locally published material with personal anecdotes of individuals who have had experience working with the Deaf. It is our hope that through this manual, we can help foster and maintain a healthy and productive working environment for both the Deaf and hearing Filipino workers.

Deaf people, just like their hearing peers can excel professionally if given appropriate training, effective support services and the right opportunities. DLS-CSB hopes that with this manual, companies and organizations will be encouraged to take on a more active role in employing and developing the skills of the Filipino Deaf worker.

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Understanding Deafness

“ Deafness is viewed as a difference, a difference which in no way connotes inferiority ”



Rather than look at deafness as a handicap (as what the prevailing medical/pathological perspective does), the socio-cultural model views deafness as something that differentiates the normal Deaf person from the normal hearing person.

It also recognizes that the Deaf individual is a visual being and “strongly emphasizes the use of vision as a positive, efficient alternative to the auditory channel.”

Here’s a look at how the socio-cultural model differs from that of the medical view: (Compiled by Chris Wixtrom, founder and president of ASL Access, a non-profit organization that seeks to place American Sign Language (ASL) video collections in public libraries.)

DLS-CSB adheres to the socio-cultural model of deafness that identifies a Deaf person as someone who belongs to a cultural minority with its very own language, values and traditions.

Two Views of Deafness

| 1st View: Deafness as a Difference | 2nd View: Deafness as Pathology |
|--|--|
| With this perspective, a person might: | With this perspective, a person might: |
| Define deafness as merely a difference, a characteristic which distinguishes normal deaf persons from normal hearing persons. Recognize that deaf people are a linguistic and cultural minority. | Define deafness as a pathological condition (a defect or a handicap) which distinguishes abnormal deaf persons from normal hearing persons. |
| Openly acknowledge deafness. | Deny, downplay, or hide evidence of deafness. |
| Emphasize the abilities of deaf persons. | Seek a “cure” for deafness; focus on ameliorating the effects of the “auditory disability” or “impairment”. |
| Give much attention to issues of communication access for deaf persons through visual devices and services. Examples: telecommunication devices, captioning devices, light signal devices, interpreters..... | Give much attention to the use of hearing aids and other devices that enhance auditory perception and/or focus on speech. Examples: Amplifiers, tactile and computer-aided speech devices, cue systems.... |
| Encourage the development of all communication modes, including—but not limited to— speech. | Place much emphasis on speech and speech reading (“oral” skills); avoid sign and other communication methods which are deemed “inferior”. |
| | are deemed “inferior”. |
| Strongly emphasize the use of vision as a positive, efficient alternative to the auditory channel. | Promote the use of auditory-based communication modes; frown upon the use of modes which are primarily visual. |
| View sign language as equal to spoken language. | Describe sign language as inferior to spoken language. |
| View sign language as the most natural language for people who are born deaf. | View spoken language as the most natural language for all persons, including the deaf. |
| In education, focus on subject matter rather than on a method of communication. Work to expand all communication skills. | Make mastery of spoken language a central educational aim. |
| Support socialization within the deaf community as well as within the larger community. | Support socialization of deaf persons with hearing persons. Frown upon deaf/deaf interaction and deaf/deaf marriages. |
| Regard successful deaf adults as positive role models for deaf children. | Regard “the normal hearing person” as the best role model. |
| Regard professional involvement with the deaf as “working with the deaf” to “provide access to the same rights and privileges that hearing people enjoy”. | Regard professional involvement with the deaf as “helping the deaf” to “overcome their handicap” and to “live in the hearing world”. |
| Respect, value and support the language and culture of deaf people. | Neither accepts nor supports a separate “deaf culture”. |

“Deafness: A Pathological Condition? Or Just a Difference?”

Deaf culture



Deaf individuals who claim a socio-cultural identity call themselves “Deaf” with an emphasis on the capital D. The Big D distinguishes them as a people with their own unique language (FSL) and culture.

Carol Padden (1988) defined culture as a set of learned behaviors of a group of people who have their own language, values, rules of behavior, and traditions. Culture results from a group of people coming together to form a community around shared experience, common interests, shared norms of behavior, and shared survival techniques. Such groups as the deaf seek each other out for social interaction and emotional support.

Aside from sign language, here are a few examples of how Deaf culture manifests itself as cited by Kevin Mcleod in his article

(1) Personal boundaries. Among hearing people, getting someone’s attention by tapping them on the shoulder may startle them and maybe construed as rude. Among deaf people, it’s accepted and customary. Another aspect of personal space - whenever possible, deaf folks prefer to sit opposite each other, the better to see each other’s signs. Sitting side by side is awkward in an ASL discussion.

(2) Facial expressions - watching a signed discussion, you’ve surely noticed how animated faces become. That’s because it’s an important part of the language. Facial expression can convey subtle nuances of the conversation the sameway toneis used in voiced discussion. A flat face during a signed discussion feels...flat. But the level ofexpression common to a

signed discussion would be distracting during most voice conversations. It’s a cultural and linguistic difference.

(3) Light - sometimes deaf people will flash a room light switch to get the attention of someone or a group in the room. This is practical among deaf people, but would be merely annoying for most hearing folks. Speaking of light, you’ll often see deaf people gather in the kitchen during discussions, because it’s often the best-lit room in the house!

(4) Eye contact - what would be considered staring among hearing people is considered normal in the deaf community. In a culture that communicates by eye, this makes sense





It is important for schools, work sites, even the Church, social welfare agencies and the legal system to recognize and appreciate Deaf culture so that they can determine the proper and relevant accommodation for the Deaf.

This recognition also frees the hearing from the tendency to use hearing standards on the Deaf. Deaf culture and traditions mean that the Deaf see and approach life from a different background of experience, perspective and worldview. To effectively interact with the

Deaf, the hearing need to look at situations from the eyes or experiences of the Deaf.

It is equally imperative that the Deaf themselves also recognize their culture. Many of them grew up in hearing environments imbibing the aspirations and dreams of their hearing families, friends and neighbors.

In a sense, recognition of the Deaf culture both by the hearing and the Deaf individual is a surefire way of ensuring that the Deaf have dignified, productive lives in a world that is predominantly hearing.

For the Deaf, recognition of their culture is the first step towards finding their true identity and nurturing it. Recognition of their own culture also helps the Deaf strengthen their place in the under the sun. It ensures that their legacy can be passed on to succeeding generations.

*Deaf Culture,
[http://www.aslinfo.com/
deafculture.cfm](http://www.aslinfo.com/deafculture.cfm)
(retrieved 12 December 2005)*

*Kevin McLeod, Deaf Culture
Explained: A Primer, [http://
www.deafprofessional.net/](http://www.deafprofessional.net/)
retrieved 10 October 2006*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Ma. Regina de Gracia

TERMS TO USE

Deaf (upper case D) or culturally Deaf

The term 'Deaf' refers to a group of Deaf individuals that identify with a particular culture and language (Schirmer, 2001). They are part of a community with its own set of beliefs and practices shared by other Deaf individuals. They rely on sign language as their primary means of communication. Members of the culturally Deaf group view deafness as a linguistic and ethnic minority culture.

Hearing-Impaired

In the hearing dominated society, governed by rules of propriety and political correctness, the term hearing impaired is considered appropriate and culturally sensitive. It is a term that hearing people most often use.

From the Deaf's perspective however, the label 'hearing-impaired' focuses on what they cannot do i.e. hear. It implies, albeit not intentional, a standard being set i.e. a hearing standard which a person needs to measure up to in order to be considered acceptable in the mainstream society. This puts the Deaf at an unfair, and undeserved, disadvantage simply because they cannot hear.

Deaf and Dumb

One's ability to communicate well is often confused with one's intelligence. When a Deaf person is unable to either speak clearly nor express himself in a language understood by their hearing counterparts, they are viewed as intellectually inferior. However, one's ability to speak does not correlate with his intellectual ability. (Sheetz, 2001). How we speak and the content of our speech are two different things. It is grossly

inaccurate for a person to be considered dumb simply because he is deaf.



deaf (lower cased)

The term 'deaf' is a general term used to describe the medical view of deafness i.e. lack of the ability to hear. Deafness, from this perspective, focuses on the impact of deafness in education, socialization, development, etc. and not so much on the cultural component of the community (Schirmer, 2001).

www.hearinglossweb.com



Hard-of-Hearing

This is a general term to refer to people with varying degrees of hearing loss. People who are hard of hearing generally have the following characteristics

1. Have some degree of audiological hearing loss, from mild to profound.
2. Can benefit to some extent from the use of hearing aids and assistive listening devices (ALDs)
3. Rely primarily on spoken or written English for communication with others
4. Generally know no or very little sign language
5. Function in the hearing world in all aspects of their lives (friends, relatives, employment)
6. Are uninvolved in the Culturally Deaf community.
7. May or may not have taken steps to deal with their hearing loss (audiological assessment, use of hearing aids, etc.)

Deaf and Mute (*Pipi*)

TERMS NOT TO USE

This is a term that many people use, even until now. The dictionary defines mute as being unable to speak (“Merriam-Webster,” n.d., para. 1). Whereas speech is produced by when mechanisms like the voice box (larynx), throat (pharynx), vocal chords etc. work together to create a person’s voice, unless there is an abnormality in the speech mechanism, a person is capable of producing sound.

Mindel and Vernon, 1987 (in Sheetz, 2001) writes that critical in the development of sound is the child’s ability to hear himself speak and monitor sounds he produces. Many prelingually deaf children (i.e. they became deaf before they learned how to speak) do not develop comprehensible speech sounds because they were unable to hear any speech sounds and have no way of monitoring the sounds they made (Sheetz, 2001).

many Deaf individuals opt not to use their voices. Past experiences of feeling ridiculed or misunderstood may lead some to refrain from speaking as well (Sheetz, 2001).

Because of their inability to hear and monitor their speaking,



Employing the Deaf

When companies and organizations look for people to employ, they basically share the same basic considerations: Does the applicant have the skills competency needed for the job? Will the applicant be able to contribute to the bottom line of the company? Will the candidate be able to work well with his colleagues?

If a job applicant is able to fulfill these basic considerations, the fact that the candidate happens to be deaf shouldn't pose as an obstacle to being hired for the position.

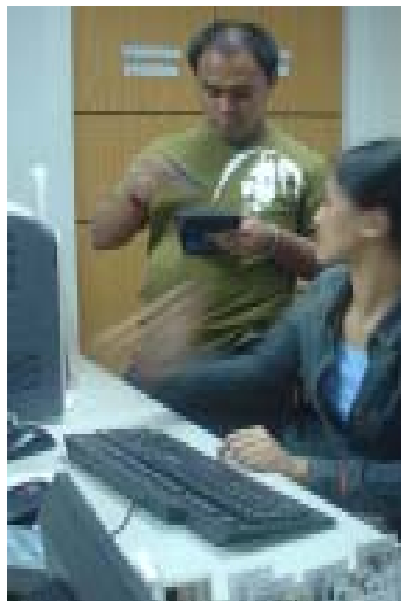
Sure there are other considerations that may yield different situations from that of a hearing candidate, but it doesn't mean the Deaf applicant is any less suited to the job. It just means a different way of accomplishing things.

Accommodating Deaf employees within the Philippine work setting still has a long way to go. But as demonstrated by a growing number of pioneering

companies and organizations, successful integration of a Deaf employee within a predominantly hearing company can be done. And when done properly, the rewards are ultimately satisfying.

Why employ a Deaf Benildean?

Being mostly scholars, the Deaf graduates of De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde are focused, hardworking and exude the enthusiasm to succeed.



The School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies has been offering a four-year degree course since 2001. The Bachelor in Applied Deaf Studies (BAPDST) has two specialization tracks: Multimedia Arts and Business Entrepreneurship.

Whether graduates of multimedia arts or Business Entrepreneurship, Deaf Benildeans share the following characteristics:

Skilled
Competent
Reliable
Focused
Dedicated
Hard working
Loyal

Furthermore, the Deaf have their own unique culture which is sure to enrich the diversity in your organization.

Adds diversity to your company

Employing the Deaf: The CSB Experience

Ma. Regina de Gracia

The De la Salle-College of Saint Benilde, through the School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies (SDEAS) formerly known as the School of Special Studies, has been involved in Deaf education for 15 years now. Over the years, we have educated and trained countless young Deaf men and women to become productive members in the predominantly hearing work force. This experience has not been without its own share of trials and triumphs. This article explores the common concerns and strategies used by superiors and co-workers of our Deaf interns or graduates in dealing with real issues faced by companies that employ Deaf workers.

During the course of the year, I decided to take up sign language classes myself. I also have an employee who knows sign language and that helped.

Credit also goes to my deaf employees themselves. **Their being deaf in no way hinders the normal personal interactions that occur within the office.** Out of 15 coders, only one hearing coder knows sign language but my deaf workers are able to interact with all of them anyway. They are able to tell each other jokes, share in problems and contribute suggestions for improvements that can be made to the office.

“How do I tell them what to do? How do I tell them how to work?”

In a recent survey of SDEAS partner companies, employers and co-workers cited “communication” as the major source of apprehension upon hiring a Deaf worker. “How do I make sure they understand the new concepts they should [learn] within a week?” “Being their supervisor, I feared that they would not understand my instructions.” These are just some of the more common concerns expressed

Deaf employee which in turn will lead to greater productivity and personal satisfaction in the workplace.

Being able to establish effective lines of communication IS the key in establishing and sustaining a good working relationship between a supervisor or a co-worker and a

Employers speak...

Initially, we chose to use instant messaging programs such as YM [Yahoo Messenger] and MSN [Microsoft Network messenger]. However, these programs are not always available in an ordinary office. When I trained a deaf employee for the first time ...we mainly wrote on pieces of paper.

Isabel Beatrice Canto, Assistant Manager. iNCODE, Inc. iNCODE, Inc. is the Philippine subsidiary of Apex Solutions, a US-based firm involved in legal encoding. She currently has 2 Deaf coders in her employ.

According to the survey, most employees communicate through the use of sign language, gestures, hand written notes, electronic media (SMS or email) and sometimes, lip reading. Most of the companies employ some form of basic sign language as learned through informal sign language sessions during breaks or actual formal lessons to facilitate the communication process between the hearing and the Deaf workers.

Other areas of concern include: limited knowledge regarding the Deaf's skills and capacities, possible discrimination arising from comments from other hearing employees, pay equity and training, probable dependence on the hearing people, and other special considerations.

"...Deaf workers are industrious and are focused when they work..."

"Hard-working," "focused," and "industrious" are just some of the terms used by employers to describe their Deaf workers. Recognizing that their "inability to talk," in the conventional sense, leads them to become more focused on their work. One of the supervisors believes that the Deaf's diligence is partly influenced by the "need to prove themselves as capable as any other hearing employee.... They are enthusiastic and often choose to work over-time....helps them earn more and....extra hours...help them develop into better workers."

In any working environment, it is important to determine if the employee's skills match the tasks to be accomplished. If the Deaf is able to clearly demonstrate the skills needed vis-à-vis the nature of the work, there would be less apprehensions regarding work output.

"Consider the nature of the business and the nature of the work before jumping in."

Depending on the nature of the business, certain accommodations were made in order to facilitate the communication, training and productivity of the Deaf employee.

One company allotted a longer training period and installed instant messaging programs in their computers. Another allowed the use of cell phones only for the Deaf employee (but not for the hearing employees) so they could contact him easily. Most companies assign a supervisor for the Deaf employee to establish clear lines of supervision and accountability. Tasking, as well as other issues concerning the Deaf worker are often coursed through the supervisor to avoid confusion and miscommunication. Setting up a mentoring system has also been proven effective in providing feedback and monitoring work output.

A general orientation regarding company rules and regulations and physical lay-out of the office (e.g. locations of fire exits, toilets, cafeteria etc.), constant updates on current company issues and special events that they might not have been informed about, and introducing them to the other employees help facilitate the working environment.

Any involvement with the Deaf must be supported by the top management of the company, as confirmed by one employer. It facilitates the effective implementation of programs and the work flow.

Employers speak...

They [the Deaf] are more focused and can finish the job more than the normal limits [i.e. longer than their hearing counterparts] “but” since their English is quite different from us, we have to keep on repeating instructions or make special drawings in order for them to understand our message we encourage them to ask as many questions and when in doubt, revert back to the person concerned.

Janice Sevilla Uy, Vice President, Sevilla Candle Factory, Inc. Sevilla produces the popular Liwanag candles available in the local market. They have one Deaf employee and regularly takes in practicum students.

Some tips from employers of the Deaf....

“...patience...”

“...they [employers] must learn about their [the Deaf] culture so that they may understand them...”

“...make sure that the entire organization is willing and capable of catering to the needs that will come with hiring a deaf worker...”

“You should be willing to spend time learning their language. Once you have established a line of communication, there should be no problem...”



In conclusion

As one employer puts it, “the decision to hire a deaf worker is a big one...” Albeit difficult, it is an achievable endeavor. In working together, employers and institutions like SDEAS, can continue to create opportunities for Deaf workers.

Employers speak...

I never imagined working with deaf people. I thought it was impossible for me to communicate with them effectively. Being their supervisor, I feared that they would not understand my instructions.

When I'm dealing with an ordinary applicant, the first thing I'm concerned with is if he is skillful or talented enough for the job. But when a deaf applicant was introduced to me, **my initial concern was if we could understand each other.**

They have been with me for about a year now. I guess we found a way to understand each other. **It started when I agreed to learn their language** ...and we lived happily ever after.

They are generally kind, peaceful and obedient.

I observed that deaf people are more focused in what they are doing. The more deaf, the more focused.

It is seldom that my co-employees talk to my deaf staff directly regarding projects. I often mediate to make sure everything is clearly discussed. This set-up worked to our advantage because my subordinate would not get confused on [sic] following instructions coming from other people.



I can play loud music in our room and no one complains.

I encourage our co-employees to join us when we have sign-language sessions. Some of them are actually learning. I, sometimes, intentionally let my deaf staff talk to our client directly and close-out the project themselves.

No special accommodations. We just oriented them on rules and regulations which must be observed, updated them on current issues and special events, showed them around and got them to know some people.

If you plan to hire a deaf worker, you should be willing to spend time learning their language. Once you have established a line of communication, there should be no problem. See if your company's working style, structure fits a deaf worker.

John Crisostomo, senior graphic artist at the post production department of the ABS-CBN Foundation, Inc. He currently supervises 2 Deaf employees.



For more information regarding sign language classes, you may contact:

The Coordinator
Filipino Sign Language Area
De la Salle College of Saint Benilde
School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies

2544 Taft Avenue, Manila PHILIPPINES 1004
(632) 526-7441 to 47 loc. 131 or 210

For issues concerning Deaf employment, internship and partnership development, you may contact:

The Coordinator
Employment and Business Opportunities
De la Salle College of Saint Benilde
School of Deaf Education and Applied Studies

2544 Taft Avenue, Manila PHILIPPINES 1004
(632) 526-7441 to 47 loc. 239

Though mainly relating to situations abroad, you may refer to the following online references for further information regarding Deaf employment:

Work-Site Accommodation Ideas for Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard Of Hearing

By Tracie DeFreitas Saab, MS, Job Accommodation Network <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/media/Hearing.html>

This document was produced by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). JAN is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the U.S. Department of Labor.

***Breaking the Sound Barriers
Employing people who are Deaf, Deafened
and Hard-of-Hearing***

*By the Canadian Hearing Society
<http://www.chs.ca/info/es/welcome.html>*

This manual provides a comprehensive overview of workplace issues for people who are deaf or have hearing loss - and a unique opportunity to learn about their communication styles.