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EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS IN INDUSTRY

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At Tektronix we currently employ 25 deaf people, and we are continuously receiving deaf applicants for employment. This exposure to the deaf person in competitive employment has given us some insight into problems he faces in seeking, finding and holding a job, as well as a realization of some of his favorable attributes.

We have discovered, for example, that most deaf people cannot properly complete an application for employment; that they frequently make annoying sounds when they try to communicate orally; that they often depend on others (when as an employer, we are looking for people who are independent); that they tend to lack social skills, at least by our standards as hearing people; that many appear naive and immature, and that when they are employed in a group of hearing people, they take longer to train and require more supportive personal and work-related counseling than most other employees.

But we have also found that once they are properly placed and become relatively adjusted, they are loyal, stable, reliable and productive employees, and the extra time spent with them is usually worth the investment. Through our Special Placement Program, we have employed people in virtually every disability category. The deaf comprise our largest single disability group. They are employed primarily in electronic assembly and related production jobs, but you will also find one or more in our warehouse, our printing department, our clerical areas, and our photography department. One is also employed as a highly skilled draftsman, and another

serves as a liason between our engineering and production areas.

Once they are employed with us, they normally can enjoy comfortable job security as long as their jobs exist, and as long as they continue to produce at a level prescribed for those jobs. But additional problems sometimes occur when deaf employees who have been with us for awhile start developing new needs for achievement and job satisfaction. Like their hearing co-workers, they become bored doing the same thing day after day and would like to seek advancement and more challenge. In most of these cases, the deaf employee sees others around him advancing, or at least taking concrete steps to prepare for advancement, and he realizes he is limited in a highly competitive environment like ours by the restrictions imposed on him by his disability.

I am pleased to say, we have had some outstanding deaf employees advance to more challenging and more responsible positions. But, for the most part, success in modern industry depends greatly on ability to communicate, and, although many deaf people compensate admirably, most are unable to improvise well enough to qualify for supervisory positions. Obviously this limitation affects the deaf person in many ways on the job, but the most discouraging aspect is that it impairs his chances to be even considered for advancement. That is what the deaf worker faces within the framework of our current job families but, with automation taking a foothold, we can foresee some additional uncomfortable situations which could develop.

Automation is in our picture now and plans call for it to become more prevalent over the next ten years. Our company, like most other modern industries, is experiencing dramatic changes in technology. New concepts, new processes and some current activities are being more efficiently implemented through the use of computers. Until quite recently, most of our instruments were wired almost solely by hand, and many of our deaf employees are currently working in hand-assembly jobs. In one area of our company, however, a new procedure has been introduced whereby components on miniaturized circuits are being soldered to etched circuit boards automatically in a flow-soldering machine. In this operation, the components are still hand-inserted prior to soldering, but it is only a matter of time before an automatic component-insertion machine arrives on the scene. Recently, in our Metals Fabrication Plant, we installed two computer-operated machines that replaced close to seventy drill-press operators. Computers are driving equipment similar to this in other parts of our company, turning out parts in less time, at low-

er costs, with less tooling and to closer tolerances than did the manual processes which preceded them.

Since utilization of deaf workers cuts across all our production processes, some have been affected by automation already and more will be in the foreseeable future. So far, no one has lost a job in our company because of the computer; however, those unable to prepare for a role in modern technology could eventually be downgraded or possibly even terminated. This notwithstanding, the computer is of tremendous worth to industry and has also benefited many workers by upgrading their jobs. In fact, one of our deaf employees recently advanced to a more challenging, technically advanced job because the routine pantograph operation in which he worked became automated. In many cases, we are not replacing people with computers, we are just supplementing skills that are in short supply by extending an individual's capability with the machine.

But we are really only in the beginning stages. Technological advances in the past 100 years have certainly been profound. Look at the advances in the automobile, aviation, space, home appliances and the list could go on indefinitely. But, just think about what the next 100 years will bring! It can tax the imagination, and you can bet it will be fantastic!

The better jobs in the future will be with those industries that spearhead these advancements, and people who wish to be a part of this future will have to prepare. We are conditioning our own employees, especially production workers, to prepare for new roles in the event their jobs should become automated. For the bright, well-motivated worker, this can mean an opportunity to do something more interesting and challenging than anything he ever hoped for. Some preparation for the more technical role can take place on the job, but chances are that the successful worker will need to augment work experience and on-the-job training with classroom work in courses like mathematics, mechanics, electronics and other disciplines directly related to the operation in which he hopes to work.

The question arises, then, how does the deaf worker prepare when the communication barrier precludes him from taking advantage of classroom work and other remedial steps designed for the hearing? As an example of what might be done to help fill these gaps for the deaf worker, I would like to outline a tentative program we hope to implement at Tektronix.

We have a rather comprehensive educational program for our employees in which for the usual reasons, it has been

difficult for our deaf people to participate. Within the framework of this program, we hope to offer our deaf population some special assistance. When five or more deaf employees would like to take a remedial course, perhaps math or English, for which a qualified teacher of the deaf is available, we would hire a teacher of the deaf to conduct the class in our company education program; when deaf employees enroll for existing courses in our company program, we would provide a "signing" interpreter for the instructor. When a deaf employee takes a course at a public institution that his supervisor feels will enhance his value to the company, we would pay for an interpreter to "sign" for him. Further, to provide better communication between our deaf employees and their hearing co-workers and managers, we would provide a course in our education program in the language of signs, so the hearing employees can communicate with the deaf when oral communication is inadequate. A program like this would help break down the communication barrier and would put the deaf worker in a better competitive position.

The unemployed deaf with good work potential can be greatly aided, it seems to me, through the cooperative efforts of educators, vocational rehabilitation people and industry working to alleviate problems that impede satisfying employment opportunities for many employable deaf. Vocational rehabilitation personnel and educators by making contacts with industries in their areas, could learn the requirements for modern jobs to use as a standard for teaching useful vocational skills and preparing the deaf for employment. When rapport is established between industrial representatives and educators, they could jointly develop methods for allowing deaf workers to participate in public and company education and training programs, utilizing qualified instructors and interpreters.

Vocational rehabilitation representatives, it seems, should make frequent contacts with industries in their areas in an effort to learn current and projected requirements for jobs for which they might prepare clients. They should provide interpreters and other assistance to qualified deaf clients in order to enroll these clients in appropriate vocational schools, community colleges and other adult education facilities where training can be obtained to prepare them for employment in local industry.

The schools for the deaf should emphasize techniques of seeking employment, good work habits, employee-employer relationships, and social skills, especially during the last two years of high school. Vocational training programs should

include the language of local industry, and work samples from local industries should be utilized in these vocational training programs. Educators should maintain contact with industry to insure that their vocational programs remain current.

Educators of the deaf and vocational rehabilitation people should be working together so that the step from the school to employment can be coordinated and tailored to meet the individual's needs. The deaf person who is ready for employment right out of school could be directed to appropriate prospective employers, while those who might benefit from further vocational training could be processed through vocational rehabilitation offices. Students seeking employment right out of school might also benefit from the placement services of the vocational rehabilitation offices. Programs could also be developed through these offices to provide re-training, remedial preparation, job seeking guidance, and placement services to older hard to place deaf clients.

Some of these things are probably being done and I know that some sort of what I propose here is easier said than done. But the point is that despite the problems I mentioned earlier in this presentation, it can be done. And, if the high potential of many of our deaf people is tapped, it will be an advantage should receive immediate attention. tage to industry as well as to the individual. This cooperative