



ADA Live!

Episode 73: Do You Want a Job or a Career? Reflections on National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

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Host: Pamela Williamson, Assistant Director of Southeast ADA Center

Liz: This is Liz Weintraub, and you're listening to "ADA Live."

[Music]

Pam: "ADA Live" is brought to you by the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, and the ADA National Network. I am your host Pam Williamson, assistant director of the Southeast ADA Center. It is National Disability Employment Awareness Month or N-D-E-A-M, NDEAM. The theme for 2019 is the right talent right now. We have real talent with us today, and I'm excited to have Liz Weintraub, a colleague and friend, as we recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Liz Weintraub is a senior advocacy specialist with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities or AUCD. She is also a graduate of the Georgia Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, GaLEND. It is an interdisciplinary training program at the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University. Liz, we're really excited to have you with us today, and we want to know about advocacy, some of the changing policies or laws in self advocacy. Is it right to think that advocacy can be

general or focused on one issue or a community while self advocacy is more personal?
Can a person be both an advocate and a self advocate?

Liz: Yes, Pam, and thank you for inviting me to be here. To answer your question, a person can be both an advocate and a self advocate. And I'll give you an example. I am a self advocate when I talk to my husband about what to eat or where to go on vacation or even when I talked to my bosses about what I wanted to do in my job. Starting "Tuesdays with Liz," which I know that we'll talk about that later, was a time that I advocated for myself at work. However, when I'm on the show or when I'm advocating for others, I'm an advocate just like you are. Today when I'm here talking about employment, disability employment policy, I'm an advocate, and I would like to be an advocate just like you are. So thank you.

Pam: Thank you for that excellent information and the examples you shared. So what roles do advocacy and self advocacy play in employment?

Liz: Roles could be that a person with a disability who wants a job, a career, and they're separate, and we can talk about that in a minute, but a role is how much you pay, how much is the salary. Those are the kinds of roles I think of.

Pam: So that sounds like self advocacy to me. So how does advocacy play a role in employment? How would a person who is just an advocate work through an employment setting?

Liz: For example, right now we're having one of the bills that is aiming -- we're working on -- It's been introduced. It hasn't been passed. It's called the Transformative Competitive Employment Act. And it was introduced in July. And it says that people with disability have the right to have a job like anyone else in the community. And they don't need to necessarily have to be sitting at the special table or get special help. When you use your work week, you can work alongside people with and without disabilities.

Pam: So, to clarify, self advocacy is when a person may advocate for him or herself on the job either seeking accommodations or equal pay or something like that. And then advocacy in employment really is more dealing with systems issues and legal issues and things of that nature. Would that be correct?

Liz: Yes.

Pam: Great. Great. So, well, you mentioned something a while ago about having a career versus a job. What is the difference between the two?

Liz: A job is something that you're just taking to do. A job might be your first job out of school, out of your workshop, whatever the case might be. But a career is something that will have -- A career is something that you will have for the rest of your life. I believe that people without disability can have careers. They go to school and say, "Okay. I want to be a lawyer." Or, "I want to be a doctor." That's a career. But when I go to -- When I get a job, all my parents wanted for me is a job. I want a career just like you do. Like you.

Pam: Liz, thanks for the great information about a job versus a career. So now at this time "ADA Live" listeners, if you have any questions about this episode, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA, submit your questions online any time at www.adalive.org. You may also call the Southeast ADA Center at 404-541-9001. Now let's pause for a word from our featured organization, the U.S Department of Labor, and National Employment Disability Awareness Month.

VoiceOver: Held each year in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month or N-D-E-A-M began in 1945 following the return of service members with disabilities from World War II. National Disability Employment Awareness Month seeks to educate and promote the employment of people with disabilities as well as celebrate the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities in the workplace across the United States. The U.S Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy or O-D-E-P 2019 theme, the right talent right now, emphasizes the essential role that people with disabilities play in America's economic success, especially in an era when historically

low unemployment and global competition are creating a high demand for skilled talent. Learn more and get resources at www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam.

Pam: Welcome back to "ADA Live." I am talking with Liz Weintraub about the importance of a career path, and the crucial role that both advocacy and self advocacy play in employment. Liz, the U.S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks something called the employment population ratio. The employment population ratio is the percentage of the population that is employed. In 2018 the employment population ratio for people without a disability was 66%, and only 19% for people with disabilities. Why do you think the unemployment rate remains so high for people with disabilities?

Liz: Thank you for that question. I think one of the reasons for such high unemployment among people with disabilities is attitude. I think that attitudes for -- against people with -- attitudes of people with disability, people without disability, is such that people can't do the job, people don't have the stamina of working nine to five, an eight hour day. Sometimes not nine to five, but most of the time it's nine to five. Or people just -- People will think about causing issues about working in a job. People who might have medical issues, employers will think that it will cost them money for lost wages. I think that people with physical disability, businesses don't want to adapt their offices because -- for people with physical disabilities. So I think there's lots of issues.

Pam: Yeah. You have mentioned a lot of issues here. Attitudes. Stamina. Potential accommodation. Cause of lost wages. And we look at these issues as well as the numbers that we talked about with the employment population ratio. We look at them a lot. And they seem to stay right around this 19%. They don't move very much. So as we look at this obviously we want it to change. We want it to get better. So what's the number one thing that you think is important to get people with disabilities employed?

Liz: I think attitude. I think that if businesses have the right attitude, and they're willing to take a chance on us, then people will have a job. Take a risk on us. And yes. I say a risk because it may or may not work out. I can tell you that I work in the policy area on the policy team at -- for AUCD. I never have gone to college. The highest degree I have ever gotten was a high school diploma. And though lots of people might think, well, how can

Liz work in the policy field? Well, you just need to take the chance on me and see what I can do. And I'll show you what I can do. And it's been four years since I've been on the policy team here at the AUCD. Then I guess people like that.

Pam: Liz, I love that you shared your personal example because it is a risk. It's a risk to hire anyone no matter what, but the fact that you talk about your own personal risk, and the risk AUCD took on you, and the fact that it's going so well, to me shows the way it should be done on both sides.

Liz: Yes. And if they're willing to take a risk on you as a person without a disability, why can't they take that risk on me as a person with a disability?

Pam: Excellent. Well, actually Liz, this segues nicely in to my next question because I would like for us to talk more about your role at AUCD, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. What does AUCD do to promote the employment of people with disabilities?

Liz: Oh, we do a lot. First of all, we work with Congress on legislation regarding employment, the Transformative Competitive Employment Act which says that you need to take out 14C, and that people be put to work in a regular job. We have a center around helping people learn how to work with people with disabilities. We do research around employment. So those kinds of things.

Pam: So you actually have a wide range of things at AUCD. The legislative advocacy and policy work. Learning to work with people with disabilities. Training. And many -- And research, and many other things I'm sure.

Liz: Yes.

Pam: That is great. That is great. Now I understand that you also host a popular weekly video series called "Tuesdays with Liz, Disability Policy for All." Tell us a little bit more about how this came about, and what the focus of the program is.

Liz: Okay. It started really as me being selfish. Oh good. There is -- Some ways begin that way. Isn't that true, Pam? So when those -- Probably at the dinner table -- When I

was probably eight or nine, whenever, most of the dinner conversation was about policy, and politics. And I sat at the table. I was included in the family discussion. But I wasn't really included because you know what? I didn't understand what was going on. And when I asked my parents what a policy was or who that person is, they said, "Look it up. Look it up. Look it up." And I said, "No. That didn't do it. I don't understand what you're talking about." And so I wanted to make sure my friends and I would be able to understand what was going on. So when I had the chance to make a video about four years ago, I started this YouTube show. It's now a podcast. It's a YouTube show where I sit down with policy makers, anyone who's involved with politics, and talk about what a policy is, and I make them explain it in language that my friends I know would understand. And it has grown beyond my friends. It has grown to people that might not understand policy. Believe it or not. I -- Who wouldn't understand about policy. Not everyone likes policy, and that's fine. So therefore my show helps that, helps with that.

Pam: Liz, I knew I liked you from the time I met you. We're like two peas in a pod. So policy and learning go hand in hand for me. So -- And I love the fact that you have your own YouTube video series and show, and I want to encourage people to subscribe because it will be an excellent learning experience for all of us. So, well, Liz, I cannot believe we are at the end of our time together today. I am so grateful to have you with us, and really excited about listening in to your show, "Tuesdays with **Liz**: Disability Policy for All." And we do want to make sure that folks know that you are a senior advocacy specialist with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities or AUCD. And a graduate of -- And I want you to give me the name.

Liz: The Center for Leadership and Disability at Georgia State.

Pam: Okay. At the Center for Leadership and Disability at Georgia State University. Excellent.

Liz: Can I just add my final thought is by 2020, next year, employment month, I would like to challenge your viewers and tell everyone that we can increase the labor force by 10% for people with disabilities.

Pam: Liz, I think that is a great goal for all of us to aspire to, and one that we really should work with employers and employees with disabilities to make sure it happens. And also too, to make sure that folks know it's okay to identify if they choose to do so because I believe that we have a lot of people out there who may have a disability who choose not to identify for whatever reason.

Well, folks, if you have any questions about this episode and the topic of disability employment, please submit your questions online at any time at www.adalive.org or call the Southeast ADA Center at 404-541-9001. "ADA Live" is available in a variety of formats. You may find archives, transcripts, and resources at adalive.org.

You may also listen to the program on our SoundCloud channel at www.soundcloud.com/adalive. You may download podcasts by going to the podcast icon on your mobile device, and then search for "ADA Live."

As we celebrate the ADA throughout the year, and the ADA anniversary on July 26th, check out the toolkit of monthly themes, social media posts, and more at www.adaanniversary.org.

If you have any questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, submit them online any time at www.adalive.org or contact your regional ADA center in the ADA national network at 1-800-949-4232. Remember all of these calls are free and confidential.

"ADA Live" is a program of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton-Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, and the ADA National Network. Our music is from 4 Wheel City, the movement for improvement. We look forward to having you join us on the next episode.

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