

so you're going to hire the mentally retarded

So you have decided to hire a mentally retarded worker. Here are a few "Do's" to keep in mind.

And remember: You are gaining not a "retardate" but a human being who happens to be mentally retarded, and who can become your devoted, loyal, hard-working employee.

talk to him on a person-to-person level, as you would to anyone else. Only try to be more specific, more precise and crystal-clear—as if you were speaking to someone in the upper levels of grade school. Don't "talk down" to him as though he were a small tot. He's not.

speak in concrete terms, not abstractions. If, for example, you want him to put the pail away, show him exactly where "away" is.

demonstrate what you want him to do; don't just tell him.

show him where things are—time clock, lockers, restroom, cafeteria or lunch area, drinking fountain, supply room—same as you would for any new employee. Only DO take your time, don't rush, and be sure he understands.

take extra care to explain about working hours, proper clothes on the job, his work station, whom he reports to, what his pay will be, where the bus or streetcar stops. It's doubly important for him to know these six points.

ask a question now and then to make sure he's keeping up with you.

"Now show me your work station," or "Where does the bus stop?" or any kind of question that checks his understanding.

introduce him to his fellow employees and supervisors. He may seem a bit withdrawn at first, but he'll warm up once he gets to know the people. He'll warm up faster if he can find one coworker at first with whom he can feel free and easy; someone to answer questions and listen to problems.

let him know he's one of the work-a-day family. He may learn to mix with others at work, but tend to be by himself after work. After-hours friendships shouldn't be forced; he may be vocationally ready but not quite socially ready.

be ready to give him a guiding hand should new situations and new problems arise which he needs help in coping with.

Do make note of his on-the-job strong points.¹ When he turns out to be a good employee, pass the word on to other employers that . . .

IT CAN BE GOOD BUSINESS TO HIRE QUALIFIED MENTALLY RETARDED WORKERS.

¹ Strong points that most mentally retarded men and women show on the job:

- They want to make good. They will work particularly hard to make good.
- They want to stay put on the job. They're not anxious to job-hop. They're happy to learn the job and remain with it.
- Their attendance record usually is better than average.
- They are willing workers, and will stay at routine tasks.



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: JOBS FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Twelve years afterward

A mentally retarded person is placed on a job. How does he make out over the years? To find out, a Connecticut psychologist studied the records of employed retardates after they had been on the job 12 years. Results:

Employers ranked the retarded just as high as the nonretarded on promptness, regularity, friendly relations with fellow workers and steadfastness on the job. Median weekly earnings compared favorably with the nonretarded. Predicted the psychologist: because of their favorable work records, most will continue in their present jobs until they retire.

Beware of numbers

An IQ number isn't the only way to measure ability to work, said Pennsylvania's Department of Employment Security. It gave a battery of aptitude tests to retarded men and women recently, and found that of 109 cases, 90

scored high in all job aptitudes except general intelligence.

No diploma to operate an elevator

Gulfport, Miss., psychologists report that industries requiring a high school diploma for all jobs, high and low alike, have a costly turnover rate. They observe that mentally retarded persons with little academic ability actually turn out to be steadier workers in less-skilled jobs. They urged employers to adopt a realistic approach and judge each job on its own merits—and to hire the retarded when possible.

They can do more

Observed F. Ray Power, Director of West Virginia's Department of Vocational Rehabilitation: "We tend to underestimate the potential of the mentally retarded. Because they do not react as quickly at certain tasks, we write them off.

But given time and patience, they can do much more than we give them credit for. I have seen mentally retarded persons operating power machines safely and effectively."

Two nails and twelve eyelets

A Wilkes-Barre, Pa., shoe company spent \$300 developing a complex metal jig to guide workers who attach tiny brass decorations to the fronts of ladies' shoes. Only it didn't suit a mentally retarded young worker; it wasn't accurate enough.

So he took a block of wood, two finishing nails and a dozen eyelets and designed a jig of his own: total cost, 24 cents. It was more accurate than the high-priced metal device, and it's now being used widely throughout the entire plant. His mentality retarded? Yes. His ingenuity retarded? Not at all!

HIRE THE MENTALLY RETARDED • IT'S GOOD BUSINESS



The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped • Washington, D.C.