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HCAA's Employment Toolkit

HCAA is committed to helping people with hearing loss be the best they can be on the job. We are here to help.

Since our founding in 1979, almost 35 years ago, HCAA has provided support, information and resources to people with hearing loss in the workplace. But 35 years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was not in place. Workplace accommodations such as volume-controlled phones were not required. Personal computers were not quite there yet, the Internet, email and text messaging were far from being there, and smartphones were a glimmer in some techie's eyes. Not to mention, hearing aids were still almost all analog and there were people who still used body aids.

With so few accommodations available in the workplace, many people with hearing loss were at a loss as to how to successfully compete in the marketplace. For some, hearing loss meant early retirement, a loss of their livelihood and their identity as well as their hearing.

Fast Forward to 2014

The ADA has been in place for employers who have 15 or more employees for 24 years. With the ADA in place, accommodations for people with hearing loss have codified in law, and accepted into the workplace, including: assistive listening devices and systems, CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation), notetaking and even allowing the employee to request work-area adjustments, such as moving from a work space next to a noisy copy machine, or eliminating non-essential functions of the job like answering the phone.

The Internet, email and text messaging are used by nearly all employees, not just those with hearing loss so that communication is much more likely to in fact be equal access for all. Smartphones that receive email on the go make voice calling far less an important aspect of many jobs than it once was. And when employees do need the phone, hearing-aid-compatible volume-controlled phones are required to be provided in the workplace, hearing-aid-compatible wireless phones are available, and captioned phones work when hearing over a phone is no longer possible.

It's a very different workplace—a very different world—than it was 35 years ago.

That doesn't mean that getting a job and keeping a job is a slam-dunk if you have a hearing loss. There are still many issues to be addressed, right from the interview stage: when should someone reveal his or her hearing loss? When does he or she ask for an accommodation? What kinds of accommodations are available to help on the job? In short, the question still is: how can a person with hearing loss be successful on the job?

HCAA Employment Toolkit

HCAA is here to help. Our Employment Toolkit for people with hearing loss includes strategies for success, including:

- Basic information about communicating with people with hearing loss
- Interview strategies
- Tips for success on the job
- Hearing aids, health benefits and insurance
- Hearing loss and the law in the workplace
- Information and resources for employers

We also provide a number of resources right on our website to help get and keep a job. <http://www.hearingloss.org/content/workplace>. **HLM**

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