

Alan Hubbard, COO of NTI, Presents at NECCF: Business Operations Defined by Employing Americans with Disabilities

NTI, who employs Americans with disabilities, presented at NECCF how a partnership with Customer Lobby changed operations and provided bottom line benefits.

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Companies that score high on the DEI (Disability Equality Index) experience up to 28% higher revenue. Those same companies report twice the net income and are four times more likely to outperform those that don't make disability inclusion a priority ("Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage," Accenture 2018). As inclusion trends grow, more companies are discovering benefits not only to the

morale of employees, but to the bottom line as well. As unemployment rates have dropped across the United States, companies have been filling the gaps by hiring an increasing number of individuals with disabilities. They are now reaping the unique benefits employees with disabilities bring to the workforce.



Alan Hubbard, COO of NTI

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Allegra Lundy, Member Services Manager at Customer Lobby

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the current unemployment rate is 3.7 percent, a remarkable 49-year low. But for the disability community that rate is two and a half times greater, currently standing at 9.2 percent. Bridging that gap and increasing inclusion presents a great way for companies to increase revenue and performance, and [NTI](#) is available to guide companies within the contact center space to those benefits. Over the past 20 years, NTI has become the industry leader in work-at-home staffing solutions for individuals with disabilities.

At the recent Northeast Contact Center Forum (NECCF) in Franklin, MA, NTI's Chief Operating Officer Alan Hubbard shared how effective action taken by contact center leaders to accelerate inclusion brings benefits to the bottom line and helps grow business. Hubbard, together with Allegra Lundy, Member Services Manager of Customer Lobby, shared with over 200 contact center managers and directors in attendance how NTI's guidance changed Customer Lobby's methods of operation. NTI used their more than two decades of experience to assist Customer Lobby in a transition from using agents in a traditional brick-and-mortar call center to using agents in a virtual call center staffed solely by employees with disabilities working from their own homes.”

"From watching the presentation it's evident NTI has a firm grasp of effective training and management practices for virtual Contact Center employees," Holly Chessman, VP of Marketing at GlowTouch Technologies, who was in attendance said. "These practices are a great complement to NTI's mission to identify work-from-home employment for American's with disabilities."

By hiring agents who work at home, Lundy stated that Customer Lobby was able to draw from a much wider applicant pool with a higher skill set. This helped solve their problem of finding employees willing to work for an affordable rate in California where Customer Lobby is located. By hiring nationwide from NTI's pool of trained applicants, Customer Lobby saved 26 percent over their local payrate. Lundy shared how NTI also guided them through the process of making sure remote agents were able to work securely and still maintain strict performance standards and high customer satisfaction. NTI board member Bob Eaton, also in attendance, said "Attending NECCF was a win-win for NTI because we have the experience of leveraging virtual agents to achieve great customer satisfaction while maintaining business continuity. Attendees were able to see how hiring Americans with disabilities who had completed NTI's training programs made business sense."

By making sure applicants for jobs were fully trained and had needed skills to succeed in at-home jobs, NTI took the guess work out of the equation and made the transition to a virtual workforce seamless. In addition, NTI ensured Customer Lobby had tools in place to remotely train employees for job-specific tasks. Alan Hubbard, COO of NTI, said "When employing and training an at-home workforce, engagement is paramount. Using chat, having a direct line of communication to a supervisor, and maintaining regularly scheduled meetings to provide feedback are imperative to the success of at-home agents." Lundy explained how she worked hand-in-hand with NTI to develop a deliberate instructional plan to train and provide guidance to newly hired agents working in an at-home environment.

Switching to an at-home workforce composed of Americans with disabilities made sense for Customer Lobby. They gained flexibility within their workforce and employed loyal and talented agents who have a better than average retention rate. They also saved money on the cost of having to expand a traditional call center or rent a larger space. In fact, the partnership of NTI and Customer Lobby was so successful that they increased their virtual staff by 50% in 2018, gaining the ability to expand their services and at the same time save money on rental space and hardware. "Using NTI agents in combination with our onsite staff has worked better than we ever thought it would," Lundy said of the experience.

NTI is a 501 (c)(3) (<http://www.nticentral.org>) non-profit organization headquartered in Boston, MA. NTI has been providing job services to Americans with disabilities since 1995. The [NTI@Home](#) program provides free training and job search services for work-at-home customer service positions across the United States. The LandAjob program helps Americans on SSI/SSDI search for on-site jobs and get reimbursed for job related expenses. NTI pioneered staffing virtual call centers with Americans with Disabilities, including Disabled Veterans, who work from home.

NECCF (<https://www.neccf.org/>) is a non-profit organization of contact center executives and managers who meet to exchange ideas and address modern concerns and planning needs of contact center professionals throughout the region. NECCF was founded in 2001 by contact center specialists who wanted to assemble an unbiased group of professionals to facilitate the exchange of industry ideas. NECCF remains committed to addressing day to day management concerns and strategic planning needs of modern contact centers.

Customer Lobby (<https://www.clspotlight.com/>) is based in Oakland, California and provides

access to automated software that offers customer retention tools to local businesses. Founded in 2008, Customer Lobby allows service businesses to manage online reputations and generate positive reviews to boost online presence and increase revenue.

Glowtouch Technologies (<https://www.glowtouch.com>.) has been providing personalized business outsourcing solutions since 2002. At Glowtouch, trusted performance and execution are underpinned by a highly-educated, loyal workforce, with innovative solutions crafted by award-winning leadership.

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