

A NEW APPROACH

Retail outlets begin hiring differently-abled

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Celebrity hair stylist Jawed Habib is launching a new format salon, HairYoga, this Diwali but with a difference. The hair and head massage salon will only employ persons with different abilities.

Hair Yoga has tied up with the New Delhi-based non-governmental organisation Sarthak Education Trust, which works towards providing education and employment to differently-abled people.

"We already have about 5-6 different abilities persons working for us in our Jawed

Habib salons. With Hair Yoga, the numbers are bound to go up. We need to identify their talent and train them accordingly," Habib said.

With the retail sector getting organised, the need for trained workforce is rising. Currently, the sector employs about 33 million people and is likely to add a similar figure over the next decade, according to industry experts. However, retailers are facing a severe challenge in getting good talent, and are zeroing in on persons with different abilities.

Retailers such as Shoppers Stop, Costa Coffee, Café Coffee Day (CCD), McDonald's, and KFC have



Retailers need to get more proactive towards hiring persons with disabilities. — K. Pichumani

already inducted persons with different abilities. "Hearing and speech impaired people have strong olfactory (smell) sense and make good brew masters and coffee makers. We just need to put the right

effort and time to train them as to how to face customers. We also sensitise other employees to be more responsive towards them," said Vijay Kar, Senior Manager (West), CCD. B. S. Nagesh, former

Chairman of Shoppers Stop and founder of Trrain (Trust for Retailers and Retail Associates of India), said that retailers have to get proactive towards such people. At Trrain, Nagesh said, 130-odd jobs such as cleaning, vegetable chopping, jewellery assembling and handling cash have been identified where such people can be accommodated after providing them with 75 days of training. He added that retailers should make it mandatory to induct at least two differently-abled people in a store.

Hyderabad-based NGO Youth4Jobs along with Trrain has been able to place around

102 people with disabilities in retail outlets across Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad. Meera Shenoy, Founder-CEO, Youth 4Jobs, said though traditionally the sector has been ignorant towards such people, it has now become receptive towards employing them and giving them an equal status in society.

"Organised players are trying to make their retail outlets or malls disabled-friendly. Most malls are 100 per cent wheel-chair accessible and have special restrooms for them," said Barkat Charania, CEO, Beyond Talent Management.

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