

Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Those Who Are Disabled or Have Special Needs

Finding employment is especially difficult for those with disabilities. Disabilities are as unique as the individuals themselves; some physical, some intellectual, some social and others behavioral. Finding a job often requires a degree of education or technical skills, social communication and interaction, confidence and a bit of luck. For people with disabilities, this process is always harder. Too often employers wrongly believe that those with disabilities are not capable of successful performance of work tasks. Today, this stereotype is changing.

Entrepreneurship is now becoming a viable opportunity for people with special needs, creating a business focusing on what people can do, not what they can't. The goal is for everyone to use their cre-

ativity and unique ideas to make products, services, and solutions for others. Done correctly, this can work great for many people with disabilities. There are many fields open to entrepreneurship, such as baking, crafting, assembling, designing, artwork, or problem-solving.

The main reason why entrepreneurship is so helpful is that it is inclusive. Traditional jobs can be rigid and restrictive and might not be adaptable to someone's unique skill set. Being an entrepreneur can provide freedom through flexibility. Hard work, imagination, and problem-solving are often in the form of a business. Differences are not always barriers but can be strengths that make someone's work successful.

There are many inspiring stories from people who have created successful careers despite their disabilities. Some artists with limited mobility use digital tools to sell their work online, turning creativity into income. Young people with autism have started businesses in technology and design, using their focus and attention to detail as big advantages. Adults with hearing loss have built careers in consulting and teaching, finding ways to connect with others and proving that communication has many forms. For every disability, there is a story of someone who create a way to succeed despite the natural challenges in their life.

These opportunities are closer than they seem. In Orlando, several organizations are helping people with disabilities become independent and even entrepreneurial. For example, Inspire of Central Florida trains adults with developmental disabilities in skills like woodworking and customer service, skills so people can lead to operating their own small businesses. The Inclusive Education Services program at the University of Central Florida provides training and internships to prepare students for work or self-employment. employU supports career preparation and teaches skills that people can use to run a business. Best Buddies Jobs is an international program with offices in Orlando that connects people to jobs that matter and helps them fill the independence they need to succeed on their own.

For people with special needs, entrepreneurship is not always driven by making money. For many it is about building confidence, earning respect, and contributing to their community and to society. Those with disabilities have innate value and can create value in their lives, entrepreneurship opens that door to new opportunities that benefit all.

PROFILE OF TWO LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

EDWARD

Lived the first 30 years of his life with no knowledge of Autism. Without a diagnosis this now 56-year-old man has a different perspective of autism. He never let this stop him from doing the things he loves. He's a former casino dealer, former professional wrestler, entrepreneur and accomplished singer. He enjoys speaking to and advocating for the autism community.



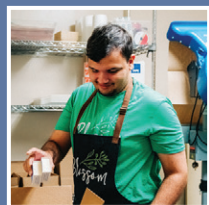
Shane Campfield and Edward Couture are the co-founders of a motivational speaking group called **HURDLE**. They are both on the autism spectrum, but yet have never let any of their individual challenges or hurdles define themselves or diminish their dreams.

Working as a team, using their life experiences, they speak at businesses, schools and conferences on the power of positivity an advocacy of autism.

HURDLE is gaining a wide reputation as one of the top speaking groups in Florida with aspirations to do so nationally. Shane and Ed are going out of their way to prove that any mountain can be cleared one hurdle at a time while bettering the understanding of the disabled community one speaking engagement at a time.

SHANE

Despite losing both his parents at a very young age he learned to live independently and managed to use his talents and passion for photography of celebrities. He's also a gifted speaker, DJ and has been featured on different podcasts and news stations for his talents.



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