

Feature Story

The Unsung Heroes & the Online Rehab Platform

Siu Ming, 7, found it hard to understand the concept of morning and afternoon. With an intellectual disability, he was also puzzled by the clock, and could not figure out the difference between the long and the short hands, no matter how hard his mother tried to teach him. That was until he started using the C-Rehab website. Through playing games on the website, he was soon able to grasp the abstract concept of time.

Mr. Wong, who is 68, experienced a decline in his attention span and cognitive power following a brain trauma. Through C-Rehab's interesting online games he has been training his power of concentration. As a result, he is now much better at paying attention and listening when people talk to him. His family is delighted. "It's much easier to communicate with him now," they say.

This fun-packed C-Rehab website, formally called Computer Rehabilitation Resource Station, is the result of a labour of love and much devotion on the part of several members of the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services (EMV). Their objective is simple and clear: "We want to extend our help to those in need, to make life easier for them." These thoughtful people are professionals from a variety of disciplines; they include a social worker, an occupational therapist, a software engineer and a web designer. They want to help people who face difficulties in daily life as a result of intellectual and learning disabilities, autism, stroke or brain damage, so a website was designed to develop their potential and enhance their ability to look after themselves. The one-stop-shop, free-of-charge platform C-Rehab was received with great enthusiasm and popularity as soon as it was launched. It won one of the Hong Kong ICT Awards 2007 - Best Digital Inclusion Grand Award.

In Their Own Words

The C-Rehab developers come from different professions, and bring with them particular insights and skills, and these help to address different aspects of user needs. "We visited a number of rehab organizations to find out more about the potential users in order to design programmes that cater to their needs," says the occupational therapist. "We experienced many restrictions in the implementation phase," says the software engineer "but fortunately we managed to solve all the problems, one by one." The web designer adheres to a working principle whereby webpages are created to be "user-friendly, easy to understand and attractive". The social worker, who is also the project coordinator, concludes, "It's undoubtedly a good thing to help disadvantaged people to integrate and have a better chance of participating in society. It's based on this conviction that we built C-Rehab!"

During production, the honorary consultant of the project Dr David Man, associate professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, made valuable contributions to the strategic development of the project. He proposed, for example, that there should be a resource database to facilitate parents and rehab workers to find useful reference materials. He also suggested that the teaching material must be easy to learn, and that there must be room for future expansion in the web structure.



The unsung heroes -- the developers of C-Rehab (<http://crehab.emv.org.hk>): web designer Ms. Felicia Kong (left), social worker and executive secretary Ms. Venus Au (centre-back), occupational therapist Mr. Wilson Wong (right) and software engineer Mr. William Wong (front).



The occupational therapist demonstrates the therapeutic functions of the website.

Therapeutic Value

The teaching materials provided in C-Rehab are all encompassing; there are six areas of training: common knowledge (such as names of toiletry accessories), living skills (such as names of different dim sum), perceptual ability (such as hand-eye coordination), cognitive ability (such as games of logic), mathematical practices and art appreciation. Although there are similar online training programmes developed overseas, they are not free of charge and are not quite suitable for Hong Kong people because of cultural differences. C-Rehab draws its references from local life, and this is one of the keys to its success.



C-Rehab is produced by the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services, and is sponsored by the HK Jockey Club Charities Trust. The website provides all-round training, in areas such as life skills, cognitive ability and mathematics.

Upgraded Version

C-Rehab has taken an initial giant step in promoting digital inclusion. But the developers of C-Rehab are already setting their sights on further improvements. Their short-term target is to enhance the software and enrich the content. The long-term goal is to strengthen the scientific research behind the website and improve its therapeutic value, and also, to offer versions in different languages so that more people can benefit.



Feedback from C-Rehab users

- The various design elements address a wide range of user needs. For example there are enlarged icons designed for people with visual impairment, and special sound effects and animation to capture the attention of those with attention deficiency.
- C-Rehab provides an alternative interface for people to acquire life skills. It is accessible anytime, which is really handy.
- C-Rehab provides a rich resource of visual materials, and it has inspired many rehab workers to make their own training materials. I hope to upload teaching materials which I have developed to C-Rehab, to share with everyone.

Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services (EMV)

Established in 1982, EMV was formed by a group of volunteers from engineering, medicine, para-medical and related fields, with a shared vision of helping people with disabilities, through professional volunteering services, to enhance their ability to live independently.

Website : <http://www.emv.org.hk/>

Disability Discrimination Case – Latest Court Ruling

Latest Court Ruling on Disability Discrimination Case

The latest case of disability discrimination confirms that it is unlawful for employers to dismiss an employee on the ground of his/her disability.

The Judgment

The District Court ruled on 7 March 2008 that the defendant had unlawfully discriminated against its former waiter because of his disability when he was working in the defendant's Chinese restaurant. The defendant was ordered to compensate damages to the plaintiff at HK\$94,545 for injuries to feelings and loss of income.

The Case

The plaintiff had worked at the restaurant since 1 July 2004. There was never any verbal or written complaint from customers against him. His performance was rated as satisfactory and he received bonus payment. He injured his right wrist in May 2005 and produced medical certificates to take 9 sick days. When he returned to work even though his right wrist had not completely healed, the restaurant manager told him his employment contract would be terminated the next day. He was given 7 days' wages in lieu of notice but no reason for his dismissal. The manager said the plaintiff had not been dismissed for his wrist injury but because of his poor performance. He further alleged that during rush hours, the former waiter had failed to clean tables even though customers were waiting to be seated. The manager also said he received one complaint from another employee against the plaintiff that he was found playing video games and making phone calls in the toilet during busy periods. However, the manager did not witness such behavior. The plaintiff, on the contrary, claimed that the toilet cubicles were small and smelly, and it is impossible for him to have stayed in the toilet cubicles for long.

The defendant could not satisfy the court by proving the plaintiff was guilty of misconduct, and the decision to terminate him was made because he had a disability, since the defendant thought that he was unable to wait on tables as he had not fully recovered from his injury. The Court ruled that his dismissal was unexpected and unfair.

Conclusion

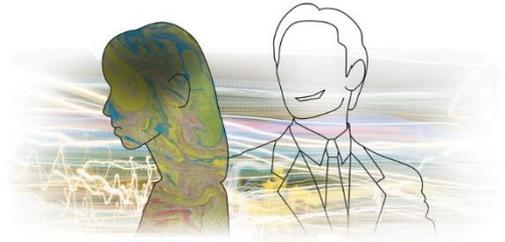
The case made it clear that it is wrongful for employers to dismiss employees on the ground of their disabilities. Employers should be mindful that employees who are sick or injured are entitled to protection under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance. The EOC urges all employers to adopt an equal employment opportunities policy for eliminating discrimination at work.



Sex Discrimination Case – Power Imbalance

Sex Discrimination Case:

Power Imbalance



The Complaint

Miss C never imagined that she would leave the trading company she had worked with for over 10 years in such a way. "My performance was always consistently good and I was promoted three years ago. Due to the nature of my job, I had to engage in social activities outside the office, as well as overseas business trips with Mr. Cheung, my boss who is the manager of the company. Mr. Cheung frequently asked me to sit next to him, and he made every chance to touch me. He even described the shape of my body in front of the others. I gave him hostile looks and it should be obvious to him that his behavior was totally unwelcome. Later I avoided seeing him but he threatened that I would be demoted if I did not talk to him face to face," said Miss C.

Miss C was distressed and suffered from insomnia. She could no longer concentrate on her work. Her complaint to the Personnel Department was ignored. She then sought help from the senior manager, who promised to transfer her to work in a subsidiary, holding a post similar to her present job. However, she was eventually offered a junior post with lesser pay. She then left the company.

What the EOC did

Miss C lodged a complaint with the EOC against her boss Mr. Cheung for sexually harassing her, and against the company for (a) victimizing her, i.e. treating her less favourably, and (b) being held vicariously liable for the unlawful act of its employee.

What the law says

Sexual harassment interferes with a person's work performance, can cause stress and sometimes forces people to leave their jobs. Under the SDO, sexual harassment in employment is unlawful. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature which a reasonable person regards as offensive, humiliating or intimidation. Acts of sexual harassment may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal. Examples of such acts could be indecent or suggestive remarks, inappropriate touching and demands for sexual favours, etc.

While employees of an organization are personally liable for their own acts of sexual harassment under the law, an employer is also vicariously liable for the unlawful acts of sexual harassment committed by employees in the course of their employment, whether with or without knowledge or approval of such behavior. It is also unlawful for employers to treat a person less favourably because he or she has lodged a discrimination complaint under the SDO. This treatment is defined as "victimization" in the SDO. In this case, the trading company was at risk of being regarded as having victimized Miss C by asking her to take up a junior post with lesser pay.



Discrimination Hurts: In Memory of Li Ching

Discrimination Hurts: In Memory of Li Ching

(extracted from EOC webpage "Reflections in Brief")

March 1, 2008 was a sad day for us - it's the day we lost Li Ching. An admirable fighter who braved hearing impairment to achieve academic success, Li finally decided to put an end to it all by taking her own life. Ten years ago, Li Ching passed the HKCEE with flying colours. At that time she inspired readers with these words: "The only way for me is to go forward. The more obstacles I face, the harder I fight. "Yet, just a decade later, she gave up her life.

Words cannot describe the stress which people with disabilities are often under as a person, a student or a job-seeker. As Li had said it herself, she felt helpless and angry from all the scorn and jeers she had received throughout her short life. It was so painful that her first thought of suicide emerged when she was in Form 1. The pressure and hostility did not subside as she channelled through the other milestones in life: going through college, seeking employment. The grief-stricken father recalled how his daughter was shooed away at job interviews when the interviewers found that she was hard of hearing and how some potential employers simply said, "Sorry, no need for you to come for the interview."

The tragedy has put the predicament of people with hearing impairment in the limelight. Indeed, with their "invisible disability", their needs are easily overlooked. Facing numerous obstacles in their studies and daily life, it is only with community support that they can realize their potential and fully participate in society.

Well aware of such difficulties faced by job-seekers with hearing impairment, rehabilitation groups have called upon employers to put aside their prejudice and give all applicants the equal opportunities they deserve. This is exactly the message which the Equal Opportunities Commission has been trying to drive home throughout the years. It is often the case that people with disabilities have to work doubly hard and be doubly determined before they can land a job. But we believe that with reasonable accommodation and proper equipment, people with disabilities can contribute just like other members in the team.

In setting aside prejudice and providing equal opportunities to people with disabilities, employers get to benefit as well since these talented and often more committed staff will help their organizations achieve their business goals. Before saying "no" without second thoughts, perhaps employers should take the time to consider if the disabled applicants are capable of what is expected from them and contribute to the organization.



New Webpage "Reflections in Brief"

THINGS WEDO, PEOPLEWEMEET - In our quest for an inclusive society we come across people and situations that cause us to reflect upon our work. By recounting our reflections in brief, we share our vision and experience with our community partners through this new webpage, which contains articles on topics such as the mainstreaming of equal opportunities, barriers facing people with disabilities and the recent online circulation of indecent photos.

EO Club Corner: An Useful Tool in Handling Workplace Disability Issues

EO CLUB CORN

An Useful Tool in Handling Workplace Disability Issues

As an employee or an employer, you may have puzzled about workplace disability issues, such as:

- Can an employee who has taken a long period of sick leave be dismissed?
- Can a prospective employee be asked to attend a pre-employment medical check-up? Can an offer of appointment be withdrawn if the person is found to have an infectious disease?
- What possible accommodation should be provided to staff with disabilities?
- Does an employee in a company (such as the human resources manager) personally liable to pay damages for discrimination?



Our current Code of Practice on Employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (the code) has been in use since January 1997 providing general guidelines to employers in Hong Kong on implementing equality of opportunities between persons with disability and those without in the workplace.

With accumulated experience in handling employment-related disability complaints, the time has arrived for the Commission to update the code so that it continues to serve as a useful reference tool for human resources practitioners. Most importantly, the revised guide will assist them to deal with disability issues more effectively and appropriately.

On 29 February 2008, a group of EO Club members, mostly senior human resources practitioners from a wide variety of companies got together with our Senior Compliance Officer, Ms Maggie Wu where views and experiences on the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) in the workplace were exchanged. The participants were given a tough sick leave scenario to solve applying the entwined concepts of "Inherent Requirement", "Reasonable Accommodation" and "Unjustifiable Hardship" which are uniquely related to DDO. Many members gave examples of incidents they found difficult to tackle while others shared their experiences in handling such.

EOC Chairperson Mr. Raymond Tang explained that the code will assist employers to prevent discrimination. If employers follow the guidance in the code which contains examples of reasonably practicable steps taken by employers, it may help to avoid an adverse decision by a court in case of legal proceedings relating to disability discrimination.



Ms. Wu briefed the audience the Commission's plan to revise the code and sought their suggestions for the best approach. Mr. Josiah Chok, the EOC's Chief Officer (Operations) and Ms Esther Chan, our Senior Officer (Policy and Research) provided general advice and solutions to most of the problems raised during the discussions. It was found that cases human resources practitioners face nowadays are complex topped by many circumstantial factors. Everybody agreed a comprehensive and detailed code written in day-to-day language with case illustrations would be a useful reference that provides guiding principles to facilitate an equitable decision mutually beneficial to both the employee with a disability and the company. With the valuable contributions of our EO Club members, an improved code will be issued at a later stage.



Seminar: 10 Years under the DDO – Moving Forward, Changing Cultures

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"In recent years, there was an important paradigm shift in the approach to deal with disability issues..."

The Equal Opportunities Commission hosted a one-day seminar "Our Ten Years under the DDO - Moving Forward, Changing Cultures" in January 2008, to review the impact of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) since its implementation from 1996. The seminar was officiated by Mr. Stephen LAM, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs.

In his welcoming remarks, EOC Chairperson Mr. Raymond TANG said, "In recent years, there was an important paradigm shift in the approach to deal with disability issues. A right-based approach is gaining increasing popularity in the community in Hong Kong and abroad. With the introduction of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it seems timely to review the development of disability rights in Hong Kong in the last decade and to find the right way forward, especially on mainstreaming disability rights."



Officiating guest Mr. Stephen LAM, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (left), international human rights law expert Prof. Andrew Byrnes (centre) and EOC Chairperson Mr. Raymond TANG.

In the last two decades, our country has been developing rapidly and there has been an influx of information. People become more aware of their civil rights and legal protection. They are increasingly concerned about matters relating to equal opportunities and anti-employment discrimination. In 2004, a provision on the respect and protection of human rights by the State has been added into the Constitution.

An international human rights law expert, Prof. Andrew Byrnes, Associate Dean (Research) of the University of New South Wales, gave a keynote presentation at the seminar. "Compared with the situation 15 years ago, enormous progress has been made. We have legislative and policy arrangements addressing disability discrimination and endeavouring to achieve equality. But it is equally important to recognize how far we have to go, and that the progress we have made started from a relatively low baseline. The struggle is a long-haul one and will continue to require the commitment of considerable time, resources and energy by all of us," said Prof. Byrnes.

Experts and authorities from the mainland attended the seminar and participated in the discussion of the various colloquium sessions. Professor ZHENG Gong Cheng, Deputy Dean of the School of Labour and Human Resources Renmin University of China, presented a paper on the social security system for people with disabilities in China. Mr. Eric Guozhong ZHANG, Director of China Disabled Persons' Federation, and representatives from Guangdong Disabled Persons' Federation spoke on the key lessons and experiences in the context of future implementation of the UN Disability Convention in China.

Local experts and stakeholders including the Hon. Dr. Fernando CHEUNG, Legislative Councillor; Dr. Joseph KWOK, Chair of Rehabilitation Advisory Committee; Mr. HUI Chin-yim, Director of Education Service of the Hong Kong Council of Church of Christ in China; and Mr. Chong Chan-yau, EOC Co-opted Member, also chaired different colloquium sessions to discuss the way forward for building a level-playing field for people with disabilities in the areas of employment, integrated education, mental health services and barrier free community.



Over 250 international human rights academics, representatives of rehabilitation organizations, educators, human resources practitioners and government officials attended the seminar.

The Inclusion Solution Series: Simplicity Meets Functionality

The Inclusion Solution Series: Simplicity Meets Functionality

Many would think that creating an accessible environment is expensive and difficult. On the contrary, it often just involves easy modifications. Take a look at this example: "a ramp" at the entrance of a convenience store at street level. The ramp with a gentle slope is easy to install and it benefits not only wheelchair users, but also customers with baby strollers or walking aids (e.g. crutches). The ramp also facilitates store employees and delivery persons to unload store items. Improved accessibility not just attracts more potential customers but also enhances company image.



Improved access attracts more customers

Information source: Environmental Advisory Services of the Rehabilitation Society

<http://www.easrs.org.hk/>

EO Reaches the Community

EO Reaches the Community

EOC Chairperson Mr. Raymond Tang meets the presidents and delegates of the Law Societies and Bar Associations from the Asian Pacific Region at the Presidents' Roundtable Conference, during which Mr. Tang explains the EOC's statutory role and functions.



Fun and games at carnival organized by Teen AIDS - an EOC funded activity to promote acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS.



Volunteers gain better understanding of people with disabilities through playing games together in a programme organized by the Spastics Association of Hong Kong (SAHK), another EOC funded project.

Around the World

Taiwan



The First Two Female Frogmen Win Plaudits

Two women made history after completing nine weeks of intensive training to qualify as the marine's first female frogmen in Taiwan.

The 123rd Amphibious Training includes physical training, military combat training and underwater demolition training. In the middle of the programme, trainees have to endure a "three-day-stay-awake" exercise that sees them take up the physical challenges at sea and on land without sleep for three consecutive days.

Information source:

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2008/01/09/2003396348>

Belgium

Fighting Crime with Acute Listening

Sacha van Loo, a blind police officer in Belgium, has joined a unit that specializes in transcribing and analyzing wiretap recordings in criminal investigations. His power as a detective rests in his ears. After the Belgian police had spent hours struggling to identify a drug smuggler on a faint wiretap recording, they assumed that he was Moroccan. However, Van Loo, who has a "library of accents", listened and deduced he was Albanian, a fact confirmed after his arrest.



Beyond his keenly developed ears, van Loo is also a trained translator who speaks seven languages, including Russian and Arabic.

Information source:

http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2007/11/04/in_europe_blind_officers_aid_fight_against_terrorism/

London



Police Officer Wins Discrimination Case

Gurpal Virdi, an Asian police officer, sued London's Metropolitan Police (the Met) for racial discrimination and victimisation after failing to secure promotion in 2005. Kingsway Employment Tribunal ruled that he had been treated less favourably than someone who did not have a history of litigation with the Met, but dismissed his race claim.

Mr Virdi won damages and an apology from the Met after he was wrongly accused of sending racist mail to black and Asian police officers and was subsequently dismissed. However, the Met maintained that Mr Virdi was turned down for the detective inspector job by an appeal panel because he did not have sufficient experience in leading investigations. The police force agreed to provide him with appropriate support to meet his professional development needs.

Information source:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/7037369.stm

Japan

A New Solution to Work-life Balance

Concerns about the declining birthrate in Japan led to the passage of the Act to Promote Support for the Fostering of the Next Generation, a law that required all companies with more than 300 employees (including temporary and contract employees) to come up with child-care action plans, including on-site day care centres. Under the new child care scheme, building costs and operating expenses for the first three years of the services of a child care centre are undertaken by the Japan government.



Workplace supervisors are encouraged to adjust shift times for employees using the day care service to avoid taking children on crowded rush-hour trains. Some companies also offer subsidized baby-sitting services.

Information source:

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fs20080122a3.html>

平等機會標語創作比賽

Equal Opportunities Slogan Competition

主題 Theme

推廣種族融和、傷健共融、兩性平等及尊重有家庭崗位人士的訊息
Racial harmony, inclusion of persons with a disability, gender equality and respect for persons with different family status

主辦機構
Organisers



參賽組別 Divisions

青少年組 - 18歲或以下人士
Youth Division - 18 years or below
公開組 - 19歲或以上人士
Open Division - 19 years or above

獎品 Prizes

冠軍：現金獎港幣\$2,000元及獎座
Champion: Cash prize HK\$ 2,000 & a trophy
亞軍：現金獎港幣\$1,200元及獎座
1st Runner-up: Cash prize HK\$ 1,200 & a trophy
季軍：現金獎港幣\$800元及獎座
2nd Runner-up: Cash prize HK\$ 800 & a trophy
優異獎(10名)：精美禮品及獎狀
Ten Merit Prizes: A certificate of merit & a gift

截止日期
Deadline for Submissions
30/6/2008

查詢電話 Enquiries
2511-8211

網頁 Website
<http://www.eoc.org.hk>



社區活動巡禮 EVENTS CALENDAR



良心品牌大獎
Brand-with-a-Conscience Award

5/5/08
開展禮及論壇
Launching Ceremony & Forum

30/6/08
提名截止日期
Nomination Deadline

26/9/08
頒獎典禮
Recognition Ceremony

香港市務學會
Hong Kong Institute of Marketing (HKIM)
www.hkim.org/BCaward.html



16/5/08-1/8/08
(逢星期五 Every Friday)

手語班I (初班)
Sign Language Class

香港聾人福利促進會將軍澳綜合服務中心
Tseung Kwan O Multi-Services Centre, the
Hong Kong Society for the Deaf
2711 1974 <http://www.deaf.org.hk/>

24/6-1/7/2008
「精神健康藝術」工作坊、座談會及表演
Arts in Mental Health- Workshops,
Symposium & Performances

社區文化發展中心
The Centre for Community Cultural Development
28918482 www.cccd.hk



22/6/2008
香港傷殘人士
輪椅籃球錦標賽
Basketball
Competition for
Persons with
Physical Disabilities

香港殘疾人奧委會暨傷殘人士體育協會
Hong Kong Paralympic Committee & Sports
Association for the Physically Disabled
26028232 www.hkparalympic.org



05/06/2008
「工作與生活平衡」研討會
(語言：主要為英語)
Seminar - Achieving Work-life
Balance: Towards a Happy and
Productive Hong Kong
(Language: mainly English)

香港浸會大學人力資源策略及發展中心
Centre for Human Resources Strategy &
Development of the Hong Kong Baptist
University
香港董事學會
The Hong Kong Institute of Directors
34117531



全年活動
Year-round Programme
非華語青少年文化交流
與融合學習計劃
Cross-cultural Learning
Programme for Non-Chinese
Speaking Youth

香港特別行政區種族關係組
HKSAR Race Relations Unit
<http://www.cmab.gov.hk/>



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