



MARCH 2003

CHANGE

In our lives, nothing seems to remain the same, but most of us are content as long as we can put food on the table and a roof over our heads. For individuals with learning disabilities the road has more bumps and turns. We often have to take a longer road to achieve our goals than would those who do not have invisible disabilities.

In my work in the security field, I had moved from being a part-time industrial Security Guard to being a full-time Corporate Security Officer. I was comfortable in my job. Over three years, I trained the majority of new employees by walking them through possible scenarios, explaining the steps to be taken and watching them perform the tasks new guards need to master. This gave them a good understanding of what to expect.

Two and one half years ago, my job was eliminated. I had the opportunity to join a cheque processing company as an entry level Stationary Officer. When I first heard the word "stationary" I had no idea what it meant. I soon discovered that my new job entailed driving a forklift, making deliveries, putting away stock and obtaining goods quickly. As you might imagine I was in shock ...the white gloves were off, my pressed uniform was replaced with jeans, polished shoes by steel toed boots. Had I made a mistake? The regimented atmosphere I was used to was replaced by a fast moving environment where timing and production was the focus.

Three months after I started I was offered a promotion with a raise in salary, but I would be working alone, responsible for ordering, receiving, delivering for the entire center of more than 20 departments. I was excited and scared. I thought about disclosing my LD, but chose only to say that I was a bit dyslexic. My boss said not to worry about it.

Past experience had taught me not to trust my short-term memory so I carry a black book to write things down. In the back of my book I wrote the product numbers and locations of our entire inventory. The pen I wear around my neck and my wrist watch calculator help me through the day.

In my new job, the initial learning was the most difficult for me. My cognitive skills such as memory, processing information and abstract thinking would be tested daily.

I spent many extra hours learning the day's work by recording my mistakes, correcting the problem and thereby ensuring it would not happen again. Since I was in charge of running "my shop" I implemented some guidelines:

1. No verbal requests would be taken – departments ordering stock had to complete a form
2. Stock numbers found on the products themselves would be used to order inventory
3. Twenty four hours notice would be preferred

4. Samples would be submitted if required

From my study of LD I knew the challenges I would be facing because of my processing aptitude. I would need to communicate well and use good organizational and time management skills. I decided to employ some strategies:

- Use a day timer to prioritize my day
- Break numbers into groupings, i.e. 123595 becomes 123 595
- Print a copy, highlight important information and make notes where clarification is needed
- Use an analog rather than digital clock for time management

I believe that adults with LD who have the will to succeed and the drive to persevere can do so. My boss gave me confidence and support and helped me to organize my desk with folders for purchase orders labeled Outstanding, Weekly, Short Shipments. Along with that I keep a daily record book of all transactions.

I have now been managing the warehouse alone for over two years. The learning curve has not been easy, the changes have been more challenging for me, but, then again, that is what being an adult with LD is all about.

Together we grow!!

By Edwin Ortiz, Toronto

FACT SHEET *CHANGE – LD & Technology*

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
323 Chapel Street, Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
(613) 238-5721
(613) 235-5391
email: www.ldac-taac.ca
website: information@ldac-taac.ca

March 2003

DISTRIBUTED BY: