

New Skills

Alper Cakir

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Name various ways of communicating. Which ones do you use?
2. Have you ever tried to communicate with someone who didn't communicate the same way you do? What did you do?

Workers Who Could Not Hear

In 2014, I was working at a company in Turkey. They hired people who don't speak and don't hear. They sent one of these people to my area. We didn't know what to do. How could we communicate?

It was a really hard time for me and my colleagues. We wrote notes on our phones and showed them to each other. That was one way to understand each other, but we thought there must be another way. I asked this person, "How can we communicate with you without writing?" He tried to teach the alphabet in sign language. It was hard to learn. But I tried.

Learning Sign Language

When I started to learn, I was very slow. I could not make the letters with my hands. However, after a couple of weeks, I got better. I felt more comfortable. I used my hands to spell out words. I communicated very slowly, but I was communicating. Soon, my colleagues started to learn the sign language alphabet too. They were better than me! They learned not just the alphabet, but they also learned the signs for some words.

A Chance to Grow

I realized something about the situation. There are a lot of ways to communicate. Having this person in our workplace gave us a chance to learn something new. We learned about diverse ways to communicate. Diversity can make the team



stronger. We had a challenge, and we all looked for solutions. People with disabilities should be integrated into society. We can all learn from each other and grow.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What is the author's main point? How does it compare the main idea in the article on p. 19?
2. The author says, "Diversity can make the team stronger." In what ways does his team get stronger due to diversity? Can you share a story of confronting a challenge and learning something new as a result?

Alper Cakir came to the U.S. from Turkey two years ago. He studies ESL at the Thomas Jefferson Adult Career Education program in Charlottesville, Virginia, and he works at UVA in the Finance Department. He enjoys following NBA games. When he was in Turkey, he woke up before dawn to watch the games. Now he is happy because he can watch the games at normal times.