

Transcript

January 30, 2013

Good morning everybody, Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley. I'm delighted to have with me today Mark Conway, who is the Chief Information Officer of Monster Worldwide. With us also is Dr. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind and our own Commissioner, Janet LaBreck of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

We're here today to announce an agreement with Monster Worldwide, that Monster.com will be the first website in the job search industry to provide people that are blind or visually impaired with full and equal access to the largest, one of the largest, job online resources, for job opportunities, for recruitment, and for career services. The agreement we have reached insures that job seekers who are blind will finally be able to have access to the same materials, opportunities, and to engage in the same transactions and enjoy the same Monster.com products and services as sighted users.

The wonderful aspect of this agreement is that it not only gives access in Massachusetts, but in the entire country as well as the world. So as we know, with screen access software that speaks the information provided on the website or displays the content in braille, there is no longer any excuse for companies to have inaccessible software or websites.

As for the blind community, who has a staggering unemployment rate, only one-third of blind adults are employed, Monster's use of this technology will now mean access to thousands of jobs worldwide. Access to jobs of course means opportunity of which state and federal law guarantee to all people. As our society becomes more dependent and, really, based upon technology, and our success in this society is based upon our access to and using technology, we must ensure that all individuals are included. We have made some steps in the past to do that, I see with many of you in the room here, and we are excited about the opportunities that technology and agreements like this offer us in the future. Technology should improve peoples' lives, not create obstacles or barriers, and we need to always keep that in mind.

For us, this agreement should serve as an example to other businesses as they strive to meet consumers' needs and to comply with the law. Those goals, by the way, are fully compatible as we found in the past and I hope going forward will also. I encourage all companies to follow this example and to respond proactively when they learn of barriers to access. In fact, I wanted to mention that the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton currently runs a program that helps companies make their websites accessible. Joseph Abely the CEO of Carroll Center is here with us today. Thank you Joseph for your work at the Center and on this project, it's really important.

No individual should be excluded from participation in commercial, educational or employment opportunities because of his or her disability. We are pleased to have worked with the NFB, as we have in the past and will in the future, and with Monster, to make the companies' valuable products and services accessible and to provide better employment opportunities to job seekers who are blind or visually impaired. It's my pleasure now to introduce Mark Conway who is the CIO for Monster Worldwide.

Mark Conway, CIO, Monster Worldwide:

Thank you and welcome everyone. Over the past year the team at Monster has been working closely with teams from the National Federation for the Blind and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office to enhance the Monster.com website in a way that would provide more opportunities for blind seekers to find jobs. Although portions of our site were already accessible, we all agreed we could do more. The importance of these enhancements cannot be understated and we are very pleased to be the first in the industry to work with the National Federation for the Blind on this important and exciting opportunity that impacts so many in Massachusetts and across the country. Together, we have further enhanced our site to accommodate the needs of the blind and by doing so have provided an accessible venue on par with sighted job seekers. But the website is not the only point of collaboration. We are sponsoring the National Federation's annual conference this where we will be conducting a workshop for attendees on how to use Monster.com.

As part of our mission to help seekers find better and to connect people with the right jobs, we're providing support to the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind summer internship program, that offers students who are legally blind the opportunity to develop professional skills in a work environment that relate to their educational pursuits.

I would now like to turn it over to Dr. Marc Maurer of the National Federation of the Blind for additional perspective.

Dr. Marc Maurer:

Thank you very much, I am Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind, and I want to add my thanks to Monster for the work that is being announced today and the work that we have done in the last few months and that which is coming and I want to thank the Attorney General, Martha Coakley here, for her comprehension of the reality that blind people want to be a part of the society. I have said on numerous occasions that we are currently in the midst of a technology race, and the race will either be won or not. That race is this, you can build technology that blind and disabled people can use if you think about it ahead of time, but if you don't, the technology does not help, it becomes a barrier. If we erect the barriers so fast that we can't find a way to get through them, then that whole population becomes cut out of the society of jobs, of participation, politics and the rest of it.

Having a job, is among the most important parts of building a life that can be joyous and free. Monster is helping us get access to those jobs and the Attorney General has recognized that this population is as much entitled to be a part of our society as any other. We thank you both, we look forward to the work to come. We appreciate the fact that you are with us to solve the problem and to win the race.

Commissioner Janet LaBreck:

Good morning everyone, I'm Commissioner Janet LaBreck with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and I'm very pleased and excited to be a part of this endeavor and partnership today.

This agreement really does position individuals who are blind with an opportunity to participate in activities that we would normally take for granted. And that conducting a job search or using some of the other tools that are available on the Monster site really will make a difference for our consumers. As Mark Conway mentioned earlier, the Mass. Commission for the Blind now is in its 10th year of operating an internship program. And this internship program for our consumers that we provide services to is critical to helping with preparing each individual with the appropriate job seeking skills that they will need to go out and seek out competitive employment. And our goal, utilizing technology for individuals who are blind and Monster's site, is really to even the playing field for these individuals and to give them every advantage that they deserve so that they can actively participate and become productive citizens and that includes in employment settings.

I really want to commend Martha Coakley for, again, her vision and these issues are critical to her as well as to our agency and to the blind community. And I also want to commend Monster for partnering with us as well as the National Federation for the Blind for keeping these issues at the forefront. So, thank you very much and we look forward to future endeavors together.

Attorney General Martha Coakley:

We're happy to take questions.