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Appendix A. Disability Information

Table A1. Demographic and Disability Information of Disabled Recruits

No.	Gender	Age	Education Level [†]	Disability Classification*	Disability Grade*
1	Female	21	4	Physical	Grade 3
2	Female	27	5	Physical	Grade 3
3	Female	31	3	Physical	Grade 4
4	Male	24	2	Physical	Grade 4
5	Male	33	4	Physical	Grade 2
6	Male	32	2	Physical	Grade 2
7	Male	30	2	Physical	Grade 2
8	Male	22	4	Physical	Grade 3
9	Male	22	5	Physical	Grade 2
10	Male	30	2	Physical	Grade 3
11	Male	23	4	Physical	Grade 3
12	Male	31	2	Physical	Grade 2
13	Female	18	2	Physical	Grade 4
14	Male	29	3	Visual	Grade 2
15	Female	26	5	Physical	Grade 3
16	Male	32	3	Physical	Grade 3
17	Male	28	3	Physical	Grade 3
18	Male	33	2	Physical	Grade 3
19	Female	23	4	Physical	Grade 4
20	Male	25	2	Physical	Grade 3
21	Male	22	4	Physical	Grade 4
22	Female	27	5	Physical	Grade 3
23	Female	34	2	Physical	Grade 3
24	Male	25	4	Physical	Grade 2

Notes:

[†] Education level is coded from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a middle school degree, 2 a secondary vocational school degree, 3 a high school degree, 4 an associate's degree, and 5 a bachelor's degree.

* Classification and Grading Criteria of Disability provided by TLC.

Grade 2 Physical Disability

- Hemiplegia or paraplegia, with the limb retaining minimal function (unable to walk independently).
- Missing both upper arms or both forearms.
- Missing both thighs.
- Missing an entire upper limb and one thigh.
- Missing an entire lower limb and one upper arm.
- Missing three limbs in different parts (excluding situations covered in grade 1).
- Severe dysfunction in two limbs or moderate dysfunction in three limbs.

Grade 3 Physical Disability

- Missing both lower legs.
- Missing a forearm and above on one side.
- Missing a thigh and above on one side.
- Complete absence of both thumbs or all other fingers except the thumbs on both hands.
- Missing limbs in different parts (except for the situations covered in grade 2).
- Severe dysfunction in one limb or moderate dysfunction in two limbs.

Grade 4 Physical Disability

- Missing a lower leg.
- Both lower limbs of unequal length, with a difference of more than 5 centimeters (including 5 centimeters).
- Spinal rigidity (ankylosis).

- Spinal deformity, with a hunchback deformity greater than 70 degrees or scoliosis greater than 45 degrees.
- All four fingers other than the thumb are missing on one hand.
- Complete absence of the thumb on one side.
- Missing above the tarsometatarsal joint on one foot.
- Complete absence of toes or loss of function in both feet.
- Dwarfism (adult height not exceeding 130 centimeters).
- Moderate dysfunction in one limb or mild dysfunction in two limbs.
- Other similar limb functional disabilities.

Grade 2 Visual Disability: Blindness

- Best corrected visual acuity from 0.02 to less than 0.05; or
- Visual field radius less than 10 degrees.

Appendix B. Outcome Variable: Distribution and Alternative Forms

This appendix reports robustness checks using alternative specifications of the dependent variable. Specifically, we (1) winsorized the dependent variable at the 95th percentile to address the influence of extreme high values, (2) estimated models with a log-transformed dependent variable, (3) used a normalized z-score specification, and (4) applied the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation. Results from these alternative specifications are consistent with our main findings. To illustrate the underlying distribution, Figure B1 presents a histogram of the dependent variable (monthly productivity bonus).

Figure B1. Histogram of Monthly Productivity Bonus

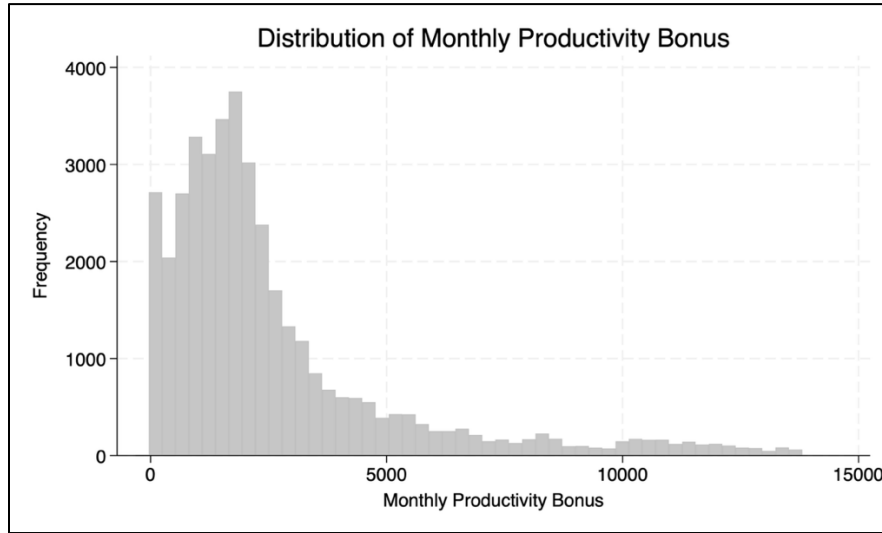


Table B1. Results of Alternative DV Specifications

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
DV specifications	Winsorized at 95 th percentile (upper tail)	Log-transformed	Normalized z score	Inverse hyperbolic sine
Post × Treated	-743.261*** (150.603)	-0.464*** (0.120)	-0.262*** (0.054)	-0.482*** (0.128)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agent FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	40,334	40,334	10,218	11,112
Number of agents	4,74	4,745	4,745	4,745
Number of projects	16	16	4	4
Number of year-month	24	24	24	24

Notes: TWFE OLS regression. Robust standard errors clustered by teams are reported in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Appendix C. Treatment Timing and Cohort-in-Isolation DID Estimates

This appendix provides additional background on the timing of recruit arrivals and the consistency of cohort-specific effects. Figure C1 shows the distribution of recruit arrivals across the two-year study period, illustrating that disabled recruit arrivals were staggered across 17 of the 22 months, while non-disabled recruit arrivals occurred in every month. In five months (Feb 2021, Sep 2021, Mar 2022, May 2022, and Nov 2022), only non-disabled recruits arrived. This pattern underscores that treatment events were spread out rather than bunched, and that a continuous pool of contemporaneous controls was available throughout the study period. Figure C2 reports cohort-in-isolation DID estimates, using same-month non-disabled arrivals as controls, with 95% confidence intervals. Although individual estimates are imprecise due to smaller sample sizes, the vast majority are negative and consistent with our main DID estimate. This analysis demonstrates that our main result is not driven by one or two treatment months but is instead broadly consistent across cohorts.

Figure C1. Treatment Timing - Recruit Arrivals by Month

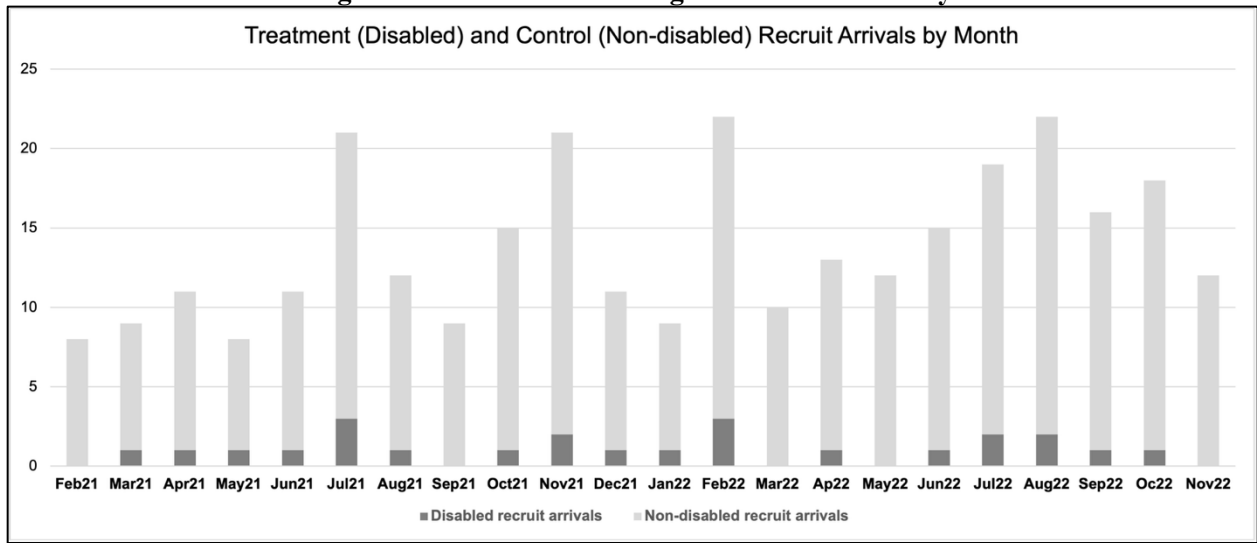
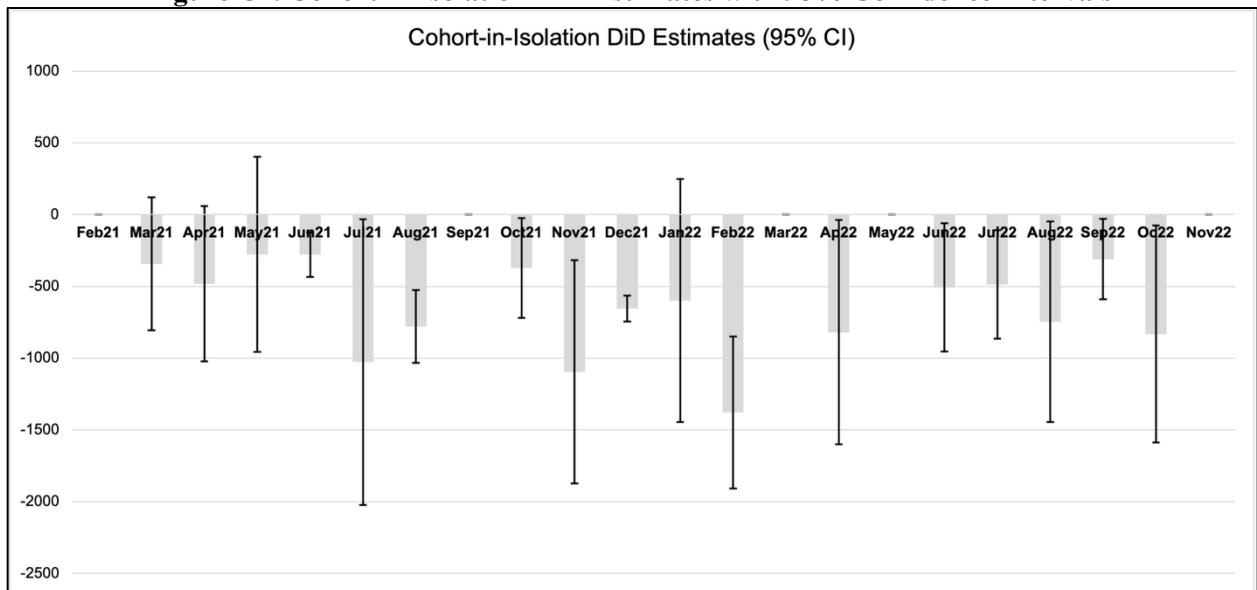


Figure C2. Cohort-in-isolation DiD Estimates with 95% Confidence Intervals



Appendix D. Evidence Against Alternative Mechanisms

We conduct additional analyses and collect supplementary data to assess alternative explanations that might account for our findings. Specifically, we examine whether (a) non-disabled coworkers provide extensive assistance to their colleagues with disabilities, which could reduce their own performance, or (b) recruits with disabilities have lower job competence than their non-disabled counterparts, negatively impacting the entire team.

First, non-disabled coworkers may assist their colleagues with disabilities out of benevolence, which could consume their work time and hinder their own performance. To probe this possibility, we explored two measures, agents' online time and busy time ratio, using data obtained from the company's backend system.

Online time refers to the total duration an agent remains logged into the customer service system, as agents must be logged in to assist customers. Logging out indicates that they are not actively working. In our sample, agents' online time ranges from 526,882 to 633,599 seconds, with an average of 599,817 seconds per month (equivalent to 166.62 hours or 8.33 hours per business day, assuming 20 business days per month). To assess whether the presence of a recruit with disabilities affects online time, we conduct a DID analysis comparing agents in the treated and control groups, with results reported in Table D1, Column (1). The coefficient on *Post* × *Treated* is positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = 112.131$, $p = 0.900$), suggesting no statistically detectable differences between treated and control agents on this measure.

Furthermore, *busy time ratio* measures the proportion of time an agent is marked as “busy” while logged into the system. Agents use this status for brief breaks—such as restroom visits or refilling a water bottle—to prevent new customer calls from being routed to them. Since logging out and back in is time-consuming, agents typically avoid doing so frequently. The busy time ratio is calculated as total busy time per month divided by total online time per month, with a higher ratio indicating more frequent short absences. In our sample, the ratio ranges from 0.01 to 26.7 percentage points, with an average of 6.58 percentage point. Given an average online time of 599,817 seconds per month, the corresponding busy time is 39,491.951 seconds ($599,817 \times 6.58\%$), or approximately 0.5 hours per business day. To determine whether the presence of a recruit with disabilities affects the busy time ratio, we conduct a DID analysis comparing treated and control groups, with results reported in Table D1, Column (2). The coefficient on *Post* × *Treated* is negative but not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.192$, $p = 0.339$), suggesting no statistically detectable differences between treated and control agents on this measure.

It is worth noting, however, that online time and busy time ratio are coarse indicators and may not directly capture informal coworker assistance. These results should therefore be interpreted with caution. Importantly, when considered alongside our interview evidence, the two sources of data point in the same direction. Whereas the quantitative measures show no systematic differences between treated and control agents, the qualitative interviews provide richer detail: employees reported that assistance to colleagues with disabilities was often non-work-related (e.g., commuting or lunchtime help) rather than assistance with job tasks. Employees did not describe leaving their workstations during regular working hours to help colleagues with disabilities complete their work. Instead, supervisors were commonly identified as the primary source of work-related support. Taken together, this convergence across methods provides support for our interpretation, while we acknowledge the limitations of each type of evidence.

Second, another possible explanation is that newly recruited employees with disabilities may have lower initial job capabilities than their non-disabled counterparts, which could negatively affect the entire team. To examine this possibility, we gathered quantitative evidence from the onboarding training department. As previously noted, all recruits—regardless of disability status—undergo the same hiring and training protocols, including a qualifying exam administered by the client under a double-blind procedure. A t-test comparing exam scores shows no significant difference between recruits with physical disabilities and those without ($t = 0.877$, $p = 0.381$), suggesting similar initial job-related capabilities.

In addition, we analyzed performance trends during the first 12 months of tenure for disabled and non-disabled recruits. Using an OLS regression with recruit-level random effects, project and year-month

fixed effects, and controls for team-level characteristics (average age, average tenure, average years of education, team size, and gender composition), team supervisor-level characteristics (manager age, gender, tenure, and education), and individual-level characteristics (recruit age, tenure, education, and gender), we found that disabled recruits often outperformed their non-disabled peers in terms of monthly productivity bonuses—the coefficient on the dummy variable, *recruits with disabilities*, is positively and statistically significant, as shown in Table D2. To further examine this trend, we used marginal effects to estimate the predicted performance difference at each tenure month. As shown in Figure D1, disabled recruits received, on average, higher bonuses during the first eight months, with the estimated performance gap appearing to widen over time and peak around month 12. While statistical significance tapered in later months due to increased variance, the overall pattern suggests that disabled employees performed well from the start and may have improved at a comparable or faster rate than their peers—possibly reflecting effective supervisory support.

Table D1. Agent Online Time and Busy Time Ratio

	(1)	(2)
	<i>DV: Agent online time</i>	<i>DV: Agent busy time ratio</i>
Post × Treated	112.131	-0.192
	(890.270)	(0.201)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Agent FE	Yes	Yes
Project FE	Yes	Yes
Year-month FE	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.139	0.148

Notes: TWFE OLS regression. N=40,334. Robust standard errors clustered by teams are reported in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

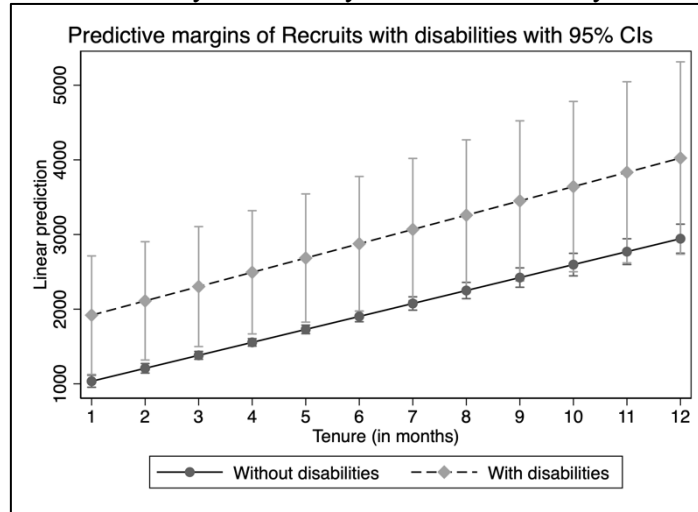
Table D2. Performance Differences Between Disabled and Non-Disabled New Recruits

	<i>DV: Monthly productivity bonus</i>	
	(1)	(2)
Recruit with disabilities	973.202*	870.122*
	(455.585)	(416.741)
Recruit with disabilities × Recruit tenure (in months)		17.516
		(47.523)
Recruit tenure (in months)	174.749***	173.800***
	(12.217)	(11.674)
Recruit education	55.191*	55.141*
	(24.923)	(24.858)
Recruit being female	-77.671	-77.946
	(62.989)	(63.124)
Recruit age	31.427***	31.462***
	(9.380)	(9.358)
Team average age	33.928	33.581
	(25.676)	(25.631)
Team female percentage	-2.090	-2.077
	(1.551)	(1.552)
Team average education	-88.863+	-88.626+
	(48.834)	(48.877)
Team average tenure	1.522	1.668
	(6.875)	(6.867)
Team size	-0.378	-0.407
	(3.187)	(3.145)
Team member absences	-1.331	-1.287
	(11.614)	(11.599)
Team member exits	11.526	11.370
	(36.754)	(36.777)
Manager age	13.054+	13.023+
	(7.428)	(7.421)
Manager education	-53.715**	-53.442**
	(18.517)	(18.372)
Manager tenure	-0.409	-0.446
	(2.579)	(2.591)
Manager being female	-133.967*	-133.209*
	(59.209)	(58.974)
Project FE	Yes	Yes
Year-month FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,708	2,708
Number of agents	304	304
R-squared:		
Within	0.1598	0.1599
Between	0.4106	0.4105
Overall	0.2872	0.2872

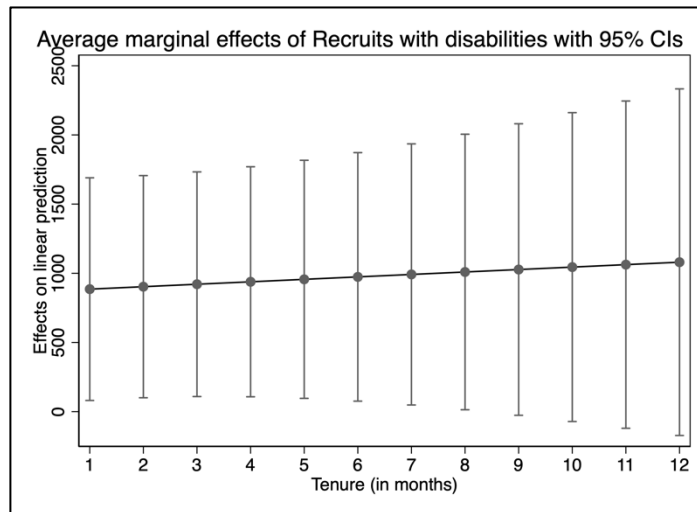
Notes: OLS regression with recruit-level random effects. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Figure D1. Performance Differences Between Disabled and Non-Disabled New Recruits

(a) Predicted Monthly Productivity Bonus over Time by Disability Status



(b) Marginal Effect of Disability Status on Monthly Productivity Bonus by Tenure Month



Notes: Positive numbers in X-axis indicate months since a recruit joined. Panel (a) plots predicted margins by disability status, and Panel (b) plots average marginal effects. Estimates are based on an OLS regression with recruit-level random effects, project and year-month fixed effects, and controls for team-level characteristics (average age, average tenure, average years of education, team size, and gender composition), team supervisor-level characteristics (manager age, gender, tenure, and education), and individual-level characteristics (recruit age, tenure, education, and gender).

Appendix E. Interview Protocols, Data Coding, and Data Analysis

E1. Protocols for Interviewing Employee Subordinates

[Instructions for RAs]

Ensure confidentiality at the start of the interview. Address each topic in sequence. This is not a survey questionnaire; this is a semi-structured interview. Let interviewees express their feelings and perceptions freely and encourage them to illustrate their points with examples and stories. Follow-up questions should be asked based on interviewees' responses, and follow-up questions are unplanned and thus not listed here. Build relationships with the interviewees and keep the conversations causal and relaxing.

[The following three sets of questions are for interviewing all agents.]

1. About work
 - 1) How long have you been working at this company?
 - 2) Which project are you on? What are your specific job responsibilities?
 - 3) How do you feel about working as a customer service representative?
 - 4) What part of your job do you like the most? Why?
 - 5) What part of your job do you dislike the most? Why?
 - 6) What is the biggest challenge you face at work? What/Who do you think could help you address this challenge?
 - 7) What is your primary concern for your work at the moment? Why?
 - 8) What is the most memorable experience you ever had at work?
2. About the company: TLC
 - 1) In your eyes, what kind of company is TLC? What do you feel the culture/atmosphere of TLC is? What makes you feel this way? Examples?
 - 2) How do you feel about working at TLC? What makes you feel this way? Examples?
 - 3) What aspects of TLC do you like the most? Why?
 - 4) What aspects of TLC do you dislike the most? Why?
3. About their frontline manager
 - 1) What do you think a frontline manager's job responsibilities are?
 - 2) What support does your frontline manager offer? Examples?
 - 3) What kind of support has he/she provided to you? Can you give examples of assistance in both work and life?
 - 4) When will you reach out to your manager? How frequently do you need your manager at the work site?
 - 5) You mentioned earlier about challenges, difficulties, and pressures at work; has your manager helped you with these?
 - 6) What are the most memorable things about him/her? What happened at that time?
 - 7) Based on your observation, what are the differences between your manager and other frontline managers? Examples?
 - 8) Where would you like your manager to make changes? Why?

[The following three sets of questions are for interviewing agents in the treatment group.]

4. About colleagues with disabilities
 - 1) Was this your first time working with a disabled person? What physical disability does your colleague have? How did you know your colleague is a disabled person?
 - 2) What do you think about how other agents in the company feel about having colleagues with disabilities? Why do you think they feel that way? Examples?

- 3) Many people have concerns about having colleagues with disabilities, such as the need for extra accommodations, uneven workload distribution, and interpersonal sensitivity. How did other team members react? Did you notice any changes to your team after he/she joined? How do you feel about having him/her on your team? Examples?
- 4) What support does your frontline manager offer to your colleague with disabilities? Examples?
- 5) Do you feel that having a colleague with a disability has directly or indirectly impacted how you work? Examples?
- 6) Other thoughts to share?

E2. Protocols for Interviewing Frontline Managers

[Instructions for RAs]

Ensure confidentiality at the start of the interview. Address each topic in sequence. This is not a survey questionnaire; this is a semi-structured interview. Let interviewees express their feelings and perceptions freely and encourage them to illustrate their points with examples and stories. Follow-up questions should be asked based on interviewees' responses, and follow-up questions are unplanned and thus not listed here. Build relationships with the interviewees and keep the conversations causal and relaxing.

[The following two sets of questions are for interviewing all frontline managers.]

1. About working as a frontline manager
 - 1) How long have you been working at this company?
 - 2) How long have been working as a frontline manager?
 - 3) Which project are you on?
 - 4) Do you have any influence over which new recruits are assigned to your team?
 - 5) What are your specific job responsibilities?
 - 6) Do reps reach out to you? What are they reaching out to you for? How frequently do they do it?
 - 7) What are the most memorable things that happened during your working as a frontline manager? What happened at that time?
 - 8) What are the challenges, difficulties, and pressures that reps commonly face? What do you do to help reps address them?
 - 9) How did you handle new recruits? What do you typically do with a new recruit?
 - 10) What part of your job do you like the most?
 - 11) What part of your job do you dislike the most?
 - 12) What is the biggest challenge you face at work? What/Who do you think could help you address this challenge?
 - 13) What is your primary concern for your work at the moment?
 - 14) What is the most memorable experience you ever had at work?
2. About the company: TLC
 - 1) In your eyes, what kind of company is TLC? What do you feel the culture/atmosphere of TLC is? What makes you feel this way? Examples?
 - 2) How do you feel about working at TLC? What makes you feel this way? Examples?
 - 3) What aspects of TLC do you like the most? Why?
 - 4) What aspects of TLC do you dislike the most? Why?

[The following questions are for interviewing frontline managers in the treatment group.]

3. About subordinates with disabilities

- 1) Was this your first time working with a disabled person? What kind of physical disability does he/she have? How did you know that she/he is a disabled person?
- 2) Why does your team have new recruits with disabilities? When did you find out? What did HR and your upper-level manager say about working with subordinates with disabilities?
- 3) How did you handle new recruits with disabilities? What was the on-boarding process like?
- 4) What do you think about how other agents in the company feel about having colleagues with disabilities? Why do you think they feel that way? Examples?
- 5) Many people have concerns about having colleagues with disabilities, such as the need for extra accommodations, uneven workload distribution, and interpersonal sensitivity. How do you feel about having him/her on your team? Did you notice any changes to your team after he/she joined? Examples?
- 6) Do you feel that having a colleague with a disability has directly or indirectly impacted how you work? Examples?
- 7) Other thoughts to share?

E3. Coding and Iterative Analysis of Qualitative Data

Data from the interviews were coded and analyzed iteratively. We primarily used a deductive approach, examining the data for evidence of mechanisms suggested by theory and previous research that might help explain differences in employee performance between the treatment and control groups. First, we established six broad categories: agents' (1) perceptions and feelings about the company and their work, (2) interactions with disabled or non-disabled recruits, (3) interactions with frontline managers, and managers' (4) perceptions and feelings about the company and their work, (5) interactions with disabled or non-disabled recruits, and (6) interactions with other subordinate agents. Within these categories, we developed more specific codes such as "care", "help", "protect", "coach", "fair", "justice", and "compare". We also adopted a supplementary, inductive approach, allowing relevant concepts to emerge from the data, which led to the addition of codes such as "warm", "transparent", "emotion", and "failure". After compiling the final list of codes, we coded each interview a second time to investigate the full data set for all the codes that emerged in the first round of coding.

We then wrote analytic memos focusing on prominent dimensions of the differences between the treated and control groups. From our codes and memos, we abstracted the data into second-order themes that linked our observations to theoretical accounts of how the presence of recruits with disabilities might shape frontline managers' and agents' perceptions and reactions, and how these could in turn be associated with agents' performance, compared to those in the control group. Examples of second-order themes include "Socially responsible, ethical", "Inspired self-reliance, refraining from seeking supervisory help" in the treatment group, and "Competitive, task-driven" and "Proactive in seeking managerial support" in the control group. After identifying these themes, we revisited the full data set to tally the raw frequency of each second-order theme among the interview participants. Following Miles et al. (2014), these tallies are not intended as statistical evidence, but rather as a descriptive indication of how often participants mentioned each theme, complementing our analysis.

Appendix F. Supplemental Analyses of Interview Data: Agents' Perceptions and Reactions

Table F1. Supplemental Analysis of Interview Data and Illustrative Quotes: Subordinate Agents' Perceptions and Reactions

Mechanisms	Agents in the treated group (N=11)			Agents in the control group (N=16)		
	Second-order Themes	Illustrative quotes	N	Second-order Themes	Illustrative quotes	N
Perception of organization's values and work environment	Fair, transparent : Informed by pay and bonus policy	"Management clearly outlines how our performance links to potential bonuses, and they ensure everyone understands the criteria. There is no black box." (#Agent-T3 _a)	11	Fair, transparent : Informed by pay and bonus policy	"The company's pay and bonus policies are transparent. I can view my daily performance data whenever I request, and I know how much I will get based on my data. It's common practice in this type of companies." (#Agent-C4 _a)	14
	Fair, transparent : informed by the presence of disabled recruits	"It was quite moving. I've never encountered a disabled person before, so from that moment, I felt the company was really doing something right. Seeing this company, it's like they have a bigger vision, you know. The company is taking its social responsibility seriously. Here at this company, everyone, regardless of their disability status, is treated equally. All the policies are transparent. The company is very fair and transparent. It's not like other places where people might judge or look at someone by their physical conditions through a biased lens." (#Agent-T3 _a)			"I feel there is no complicated political stuff, at least at the frontline level. agents are paid based on data, not on whether someone likes you or not. I know I just need to work hard, and I will do well if my data look good. The company discloses all important criteria related to performance bonus. They keep things simple." (# Agent-C6 _b)	
	Socially responsible , ethical	"When I first met him, I was quite surprised, honestly. I was like 'Wow.' At the same time, I felt really good about it—the company really looks out for everyone, treating everyone equally. That's the vibe. Our company takes special care of people with disabilities, providing them employment opportunities." (#Agent-T1 _b)	8	Competitive, task-driven	"Ranking is important. I know if I am at the top, I will be paid more. It does not mean that I won't help others. I share my tricks with my colleagues, if they ask. But if they really need personalized guidance, our frontline manager will take care of that. It's their job. I focus on my own data." (#Agent-C1 _a)	15
Supportive , helping, and close-knit	"I just naturally feel inclined to help someone with physical disabilities. You know, in our day-to-day work, every one of us on the team is always ready to lend a hand. And it's not like our supervisor has to tell us or anything; no one is explicitly directed to help. We all just kind of chip in with our kindness. " (#Agent-T5 _a) "I feel people are closer and warmer... Seeing how everyone is proactive about helping WT (pseudonym) and other colleagues, I feel we are more than colleagues. I recall one day after a night shift, I left the office with my colleagues, we were laughing and joking. I recall feeling something special in my heart." (#Agent-T3 _b)	"People are helping, but only to some extent. I mean, if you ask for help, they will help. But at the end of the day, everyone has their own tickets to work on. It's a professional environment. I will buy them lunch if I ask people at the top for help. I mostly rely on my manager to review my data. She gives hands-on feedback." (# Agent-C7 _b) "Here, it's about being on top of your game because the performance ranking is important. Everyone's pushing hard to meet their targets—how many calls you take, what is your customer rating, etc. We do help each other, but it's usually only if someone asks for it." (#Agent-C8 _a)				
Reactions to managers' differential treatments	Fair and legitimate	"I've been around a long time. Our manager was definitely more hands-on with him. That didn't bother me. Everyone's got different needs when they start, and giving someone a bit more support doesn't mean	11			

		<p>they can't do the job. He is doing great. To me, it just shows the company takes care of its people, and I respect that." (#Agent-T2a)</p> <p>"You can tell the management is looking out for him in a really supportive way. My manager makes a point to stop by him a few times when we are onsite. Most of us get a quick pass-by maybe once during a shift. Onsite patrols are helpful, but he is busy and is not always around. We cannot rely on him all the time. I never saw it as unfair. Our disabled colleague brings so much to us. He is so kind, so hardworking, and he is very thoughtful in how he talks to customer. Honestly, he's better than me at this job—I don't have that level of kindness and patience." (#Agent-T1b)</p> <p>"My supervisor definitely pays a lot of attention to CB (pseudonym). I sat close to CB. He always asks me about CB, like 'is he in good moods lately?' 'Does he seem stressed about work?' 'Does he hang out with you guys after work?' He does not want to ask him about these sensitive questions directly. A lot of our regular 1-on-1 meetings are about CB, not about me, hahaha. But I think he is doing a good thing in the right way. We all care about CB, and I'm happy to be part of it." (#Agent-T5)</p>		
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