



## USBLN and Specialisterne USA Formalize Strategic Alliance

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WASHINGTON, DC (September 24, 2014) – The US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®) Executive Director Jill Houghton and Specialisterne USA Chief Executive Officer Thorkil Sonne have signed a strategic alliance agreement to formalize their mutual collaboration to drive disability inclusion awareness and to advance, improve and expand employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The USBLN is a national 501(c) (3) non-profit, non-partisan business-to-business network that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace.

The USBLN serves as the collective voice of nearly 50 Business Leadership Network affiliates across the United States, representing over 5,000 businesses. It provides business members with opportunities to network with other businesses and to gain information and valuable resources on disability inclusion practices across the entire business, to enable them to:

- Recruit and retain the best talent regardless of disability;
- Broaden their supplier bases to include diverse supplier groups, such as Disability-Owned Business Enterprises (DOBE®s), including service-disabled veteran-owned businesses, certified through the USBLN Disability Supplier Diversity Program® (DSDP), the nation's leading third party certification program for disability-owned businesses; and
- Increase their companies' share of diverse established and emerging markets.

"The USBLN alliance with Specialisterne strengthens our commitment to work together to support the employment and advancement of people with disabilities," said **Jill Houghton**, Executive Director, USBLN. "The partnership fills a unique need for our member companies, filling jobs in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) field. We are confident that our collaboration with Specialisterne will move the needle forward in working with employers to recognize the value and talent that people with disabilities bring to the workplace, supply chain and marketplace."

Specialisterne brings public and private employers access to a huge untapped pool of talented people with a good memory, pattern recognition skills, attention to detail, high accuracy during repetitive actions and innovative thinking. Specialisterne works with the individuals and managers to set up the work zone where people with autism can excel in tasks such as software testing, programming, quality control, data-entry and data management for the public and private sectors.

"We are extremely happy to work together with USBLN in our joined ambition to remove the barriers in the labor market for the huge untapped pool of talented people with autism and similar challenges," said **Thorkil Sonne**, Specialisterne USA CEO. "Because of our 10-plus years of global experience we have seen the value that people with autism and similar challenges can bring to the employers. We have already experienced a lot of interest from USBLN affiliates and we are excited by this strategic alliance which will give us a unique opportunity to scale across the US. The USBLN members with a global footprint can leverage our services for a more inclusive workplace worldwide."

#### **About the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN)**

The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) is a national non-profit that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. The USBLN serves as the collective voice of nearly 50 Business Leadership Network affiliates across the United States, representing over 5,000 businesses. Additionally, the USBLN Disability Supplier Diversity Program<sup>®</sup> (DSDP) is the nation's leading third party certification program for disability-owned businesses, including businesses owned by service-disabled veterans. [www.usbln.org](http://www.usbln.org)

#### **About Specialisterne**

Specialisterne is a not-for-profit socially innovative company with more than 10 years of experience from 12 countries in assessment, training, education, transition and retention of people with autism and similar challenges. Specialisterne harnesses the special characteristics and talents of people with autism in tasks like quality control, software test, data management and logistics. The goal for Specialisterne USA is to enable more than 100,000 jobs for people with autism and similar challenges through social entrepreneurship, corporate sector engagement and a global change in mind-set. [www.usa.specialisterne.com](http://www.usa.specialisterne.com)

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