How Do I Create an Inclusive Workplace?

Four Steps to Creating an Inclusive Workplace

STEP 1 > **STEP 2** > **STEP 3** > **STEP 4**

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
Understand the meaning of diversity, inclusion, inclusive workplaces and measures of accessibility.	Assess and question your existing workplace in terms of accessibility and policy.	Explore the concepts of Human-Centered Design, Growth Mindset and Universal Design.	Leverage existing skills and implement changes to create an accessible and inclusive workplace.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission has developed an easy-to-read guide for employers: A Place for All: A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace, 2006. The guide is designed to help employers understand their legal obligations regarding the duty to accommodate, as well as to put together effective workplace accommodation policies and procedures.

[EXAMPLE] Diversity and Inclusive Workplace Policy: **Job Posting**

Our Company does not discriminate when selecting new employees. Race, colour, disability, religion, gender, national origin and sexual orientation have no place in our hiring decisions. We select the best employees based their qualifications, skills, knowledge and commitment.

When selecting new employees, our Company's prime consideration is that the individuals must be the most likely to fulfill their job-related responsibilities.

Our Company also recognizes that candidates and/or employees may request accommodations in order to participate or perform to the best of their abilities. As per regional labour standards and national human rights guidelines, reasonable workplace accommodations and adjustments will be granted.

DEFINITIONS: Adapted from: Bersin by Deloitte, Diversity and Inclusion in Canada-The Current State, 2014.

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STEP 1   Understanding Key Definitions

DIVERSITY: This concept refers to the variety of people and ideas within a company. Diversity is often defined according to unique differences including race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and maternity/marital status.

INCLUSION: This concept refers to creating an environment in which people feel involved, respected and valued. Inclusion allows individuals to use their ideas and perspectives in their work with colleagues and customers.

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES: This concept refers to fostering the variety of people and ideas within a company by creating an environment in which people have a sense of belonging and can bring their "authentic" selves to the team and the business.

MEASURES of ACCESSIBILITY: This concept extends to every phase of the employment continuum, from recruitment to retention. Protocols and systems often entail conditions that may create issues of inaccessibility.

REMEMBER:

Human diversity is multidimensional.

- Visible diversity may involve culture, ethnicity/race, nationality, gender, age and mental/physical status. (The last is often referred to as disability.)

- Invisible diversity may involve thoughts, perspectives and life experiences, including education, family status, values/beliefs, work-related style preferences and socioeconomic status.

- Other diversity dimensions that may or may not be visible may include sexual orientation, religion, language and veteran status.

STEP 2   Assessing Your Workplace

Few would argue that barriers and inaccessibility factors are deliberately designed to prevent people with disabilities from joining the workforce. Identifying barriers that may have been inadvertently created and perpetuated within a company's HR policies and protocols (perhaps by "doing things the same way as we always have") will help people without disabilities to see how policies and protocols could be modified.

Assessing and questioning workplace accessibility should take into consideration all aspects of employment, including the workplace and the hiring process (i.e., from posting jobs and screening resumes to scheduling and conducting interviews and orienting new employees).

ASK YOURSELF: What would each way of doing things look like if people with disabilities could participate without any disadvantages?

Remember that people with disabilities may be dealing with sensory, mobility, cognitive, mental health or other medical issues.

ASK THE QUESTION: If I had a disability, how would this work for me? What would need to change so I could fully participate on an equal footing with others?

Creating an inclusive workplace is all about changing our perspective!

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN: DesignKit, IDEO.org. Extracted from the website: www.designkit.org/human-centered-design

GROWTH MINDSET: What Having a "growth Mindset" actually means. Carol Dweck. From Harvard Business Review, 2016. Extracted from the web site: hbr.org/2016/01/what-having-a-growth-mindset-actually-means.

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STEP 3 — Exploring New Concepts

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN is a creative approach to problem-solving that seeks out and applies knowledge of the people for whom you are designing. Focusing on the end users, this method produces outcomes and outputs aimed at reducing systemic barriers while increasing inclusion and engagement.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN is an architectural accessibility term originally intended to describe buildings and public spaces. Today, universal design seeks to make products, environments and systems usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation (i.e., design with human diversity, social inclusion and equality in mind).

GROWTH MINDSETS is the belief that talent can be developed, learning is constant and improvement can be continuous, as opposed to regarding talent, intelligence and qualifications as fixed attributes required on the very first day of employment. For example, consider your company's last job posting and the various qualities and credentials that applicants were expected to have prior to being interviewed. Although some aspects of "fixed mindsets" are legitimate and necessary, understanding growth in terms of personal potential will expand the pool of candidates from which you can select the best person for the job.

PLEASE NOTE! In terms of use and implementation, none of these concepts require professional expertise in order to create an inclusive workplace. Familiarity with the appropriate mindset and a willingness to embrace it are all that are needed.

STEP 4 — Leveraging Existing Skills

An employer's willingness to improve work conditions for all employees is the most important factor in creating change and moving toward diversity and inclusion.

Implement changes in small and simple ways. Review all internal processes and protocols in order to remove barriers to employment.

Here are some examples of fostering accessibility during the hiring process:

1. RECRUITMENT
On the application form, ask if candidates would prefer to be contacted by phone, email, VRS (Video Relay Service), etc.
(Read more in Tool #4)

2. INTERVIEW
When contacting candidates for interviews:
  a. Provide a description of the interview location.
  b. Ensure that the location is fully accessible.
  c. Define the interview style.
  d. Ask whether candidates will need any accommodations for the interview.
  e. Let candidates know that they may bring support persons to accompany them to the interview.
     (Read more in Tool #5)

3. SELECTION
  a. Determine essential/critical skills and job requirements prior to the interview.
  b. Be prepared to acknowledge that making accommodations brings value added when selecting the right person for the job.
     (Read more in Tools #4 and #5)

4. HIRING AND RETENTION
Develop an accommodation policy addressing ongoing employment accessibility and promoting an inclusive workplace.
(Read more in Tool #6)

UNIVERSAL DESIGN: Trends in Universal Design, Publisher: Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, The Delta Centre, Tønsberg, Norway, 2013.

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