



ACHIEVING INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE



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INTRODUCTION

Inclusion ensures equal opportunity for all. *Achieving Inclusion in the Workplace* is a publication produced by the Disabled People's Association, Singapore (DPA). The underlying intention of this publication is to enhance the employment and employability of people with disabilities in Singapore.

This booklet provides an overview about the employment situation of people with disabilities in Singapore. It discusses the needs and concerns of people with disabilities in the workplace, factors responsible for their low employment rates and the practical solutions to eliminate those barriers.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) upholds the rights that persons with disabilities should have on an equal basis with others, regardless of their disability. Singapore became a signatory of the convention on the 30 November 2012 and ratified it on 19 July 2013. This means Singapore has a legal obligation to implement policies that promote the rights protected by the CRPD.

Article 27 of the CRPD deals specifically with work and employment. This article emphasises that persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to gain a living in an open, inclusive and accessible labour market and work environment. It requires the prohibition of discriminatory practices, protection of all relevant rights, access to employment services and promotion of employment opportunities and career advancement. The CRPD marks a positive shift in thinking about people with disabilities as beneficiaries of charity to empowered and independent workers.

This publication aims to share the experiences of people with disabilities in the workplace. It also highlights the inclusive practices adopted at various companies. In doing so, this booklet hopes to provoke a deeper and more informed discussion about creating inclusive workplaces, and in turn making our society one where people are accepted, valued and respected, regardless of their disability.

Methodology

On 14 February 2015, DPA held a focus group discussion to understand the current employment issues that people with disabilities face. Nine DPA members participated in this discussion. Participants were asked a series of questions to find out their views about various aspects of their employment journey - finding a job, career development and promotion, attitude of colleagues and management, reporting and resolution strategy when faced with difficulty in the workplace, and inclusive work practices. Participants shared their experiences and highlighted their individual needs and concerns.

DPA then consolidated the feedback into a draft document and sent it to the participants for vetting and endorsement. DPA has used this feedback, information extracted from relevant published news articles and online resources to create this publication.

Employment plays a significant part in everyone's life. Regardless of one's abilities and disabilities, having a job does much more than allow one to earn a living. It provides opportunities for social integration, develops self-confidence and fosters independence.

In Singapore, the majority of people with disabilities are either unemployed or underemployed, despite their ability and willingness to work. Although more people with disabilities are in employment today, there remain significant barriers to participating in the labour market. Thus, there is a need to set clearer targets for the employment of persons with disabilities and to establish projects with goals, including a structured developmental strategy for eliminating barriers.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN SINGAPORE

In Singapore, it is estimated that three percent of the resident population have some form of disability, ranging from mild to severe. Some are born with a disability, while others acquired a disability through illness, accidents or as part of an aging process. However, definitive data on the number of persons with disability in full-time and part-time employment is not available.

The employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Singapore have increased in the last two decades because of strong economic development (Bizlink, 1995). The Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced vocational education in selected special education (SPED) schools, while the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) introduced Centres of Training and Integration. In addition, many voluntary welfare organisations (VWO) provide various

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employment services for people with disabilities in Singapore.

The Government also provides funding support to employers who have hired or are interested in hiring persons with disabilities. The Open Door Programme, for example, encourages employment opportunities by providing funding to defray cost for apprenticeship, workplace modification, job re-design and job support. Since the Open Door Fund started in 2007, 220 companies have offered job opportunities under the scheme, and this has benefited 650 persons with disabilities. The Government has funded \$3.2 million worth of subsidies through this fund and has now extended this fund to be a more comprehensive policy called the Open Door Programme.

Moreover, the Government extended the Special Employment Credit to employers who hire persons with disabilities. This has already benefited some 1,200 employers who hired close to 2,000 persons with disabilities.

The Government also made efforts to enhance public transport accessibility for persons with disabilities so that they can get to work affordably. They are committed to creating at least one barrier-free route in all Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and Light Rail Transit stations (LRT), and making 95% of all bus shelters barrier-free. In addition, it is mandatory for all new public buses, registered from June 2006 onwards, to be wheelchair-accessible. Persons with disabilities may also apply for financial assistance for their transport needs from funds such as the Land Transport Authority (LTA) Cares Fund.

Support Services for Enhancing Employability

Previously multiple VWOs have offered job-matching services for persons with disabilities. More recently the Government has attempted to centralise these employment services.

At present, SG Enable serves as a focal point to support the needs of persons with disabilities. SG Enable is a relatively new agency dedicated

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to enabling persons with disabilities. One of the key functions of SG Enable is to enhance the employability and employment options for persons with disabilities by leveraging on the strengths of existing partners and schemes.

To facilitate training and employment services, SG Enable works with three agencies that are funded to provide vocational assessment (assessment of vocational needs and readiness for open employment), job placement and job support services for persons with disabilities. They are the Autism Resource Centre (ARC), Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) and SPD – all of which are dedicated to disability-specific employment support for persons with autism, persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with physical disabilities, respectively.

The main support schemes for enhancing employability of people with disabilities are as follows:

Open Door Programme (ODP)

The Open Door Programme (ODP) is an initiative that supports employers in enhancing the employment and employability of persons with disabilities. Under the ODP, Singapore-based or registered companies can apply for funding support to hire, train and integrate persons with disabilities. The ODP provides employers financial support to redesign jobs, modify workplaces and train persons with disabilities. The ODP offers up to 90% subsidies to employers of persons with disabilities to make their workplaces more inclusive.¹

At present, people with chronic mental health issues are not eligible for ODP funding and support, but the Government has indicated that they will be eligible for the scheme in the future.

¹ To find out more about the ODP, please go to SG Enable’s website at www.sgenable.sg

Special Employment Credit (SEC)	The enhanced Special Employment Credit (SEC) scheme was extended as an incentive to companies for hiring Singaporean workers with disabilities. Employers will get a credit of up to 16% of the wages of their workers with disabilities. ²
Workfare Income Supplement (WIS)	The enhanced Workfare Income Supplement Scheme (WIS) aims to supplement the wages and retirement savings of persons with disabilities. The amount supplemented is dependent on the salary of the employee. ³

Weekly Job Listing is a listing of jobs offered by employers open to hiring persons with disabilities. Jobs-ODP by the Open Door Programme encourages potential employers and employees to register for free at an online database of job postings and resources.

Beyond SG Enable, various VWOs in Singapore offer employment related services. These services include vocational training, job placement services, job counselling and onsite support services. The ARC, MINDS, Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS), Down syndrome Association (DSA) and The Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf) are some of the organisations that help persons with disabilities find open employment.

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² To find out more about SEC, please go to www.sec.gov.sg

³ For more information on the WIS, please go to <http://www.workfare.sg/>

ADDRESSING A CRITICAL CHALLENGE - ATTITUDE MATTERS

Employment for people with disabilities appears to be one of the greatest bottlenecks in the continuum of services for them and the attitudinal barriers reduce or narrow the possibilities to integrate people with disabilities into mainstream society.

In 2010, only 121 job vacancies were listed for persons with disabilities which increased to 275 job vacancies in 2012. This shows that the number of jobs available for persons with disabilities has more than doubled in the last two years. However, while some employers seem more willing to hire persons with disabilities, there is a lack of awareness of how they can successfully integrate a person with disability into their workforce.

One of the main reasons why people with disabilities are finding it difficult to gain employment seems to be the mind-sets of the employers. Some employers tend to have the erroneous assumption that people with disabilities will under-perform in most areas of their duties. This is far from the truth as many persons with disabilities are capable of working, provided their special needs are accommodated in the workplace.

Many offices are not set-up to accommodate employees with disabilities. Much of the discomfort people feel about disability may stem from a lack of understanding. Lack of awareness and sensitivity training for the colleagues and supervisors also reinforced the attitudinal barrier.

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office premises can be restructured to accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities.

Here, Universal Design can be made use of as it benefits all people, including those with disabilities. Universal Design takes into account the full range of human diversity, including physical, perceptual and cognitive abilities, as well as different body sizes and shapes.

By taking into account this diversity, we can create things that are more functional and user-friendly for everyone. Once a work environment is set up to be universally accessible, few, if any, modifications will be needed. The application of universal access eliminates many environmental obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from working. In short, Universal Design makes things safer, easier and more convenient for everyone.

Reflections from the Focus Group

DPA conducted a focus group discussion on 14 February 2015 to understand the current employment conditions and concerns of people with disabilities in Singapore. This discussion provided greater insight into the employment opportunities of the nine DPA members that participated in the discussion.

Out of the nine participants with disabilities, three are employed, three run their own business, one is self-employed and one is unemployed. Most of them were offered part-time jobs. They all use public transport to travel to their workplaces.

The following topics were discussed by the group:

Finding a job

The participants are of the view that their disability and the attitude of people towards disability were factors that affected their employment opportunities.

All experienced difficulty in finding employment and one participant faced complications at work due to her hearing impairment. All but one of the

participants agreed that there should be an anti-discrimination legislation to prevent employers from discriminating against people with disabilities in their employment practices.

Participants shared stories about the issues they had faced at work that were directly related to their disability. Three participants shared that they were dismissed from their jobs while another said that he was forced to resign, because of their disabilities. After working for many years, the company created an uncomfortable work environment in order to get him to resign.

Speaking from his own experience as an ex-employee at a company that underwent restructuring, another participant shared that some companies put pressure on their workers with disabilities resign because they think that people with disabilities cannot perform other job duties.

Promotion

The participants shared that they do not get promoted despite working efficiently in the organisations for years. One DPA member shared that he has worked for the same organisation for twenty-two years, was only promoted once and has been in the same role for 15 years since. This experience was echoed by another participant who has been working for 18 years in the same role, but has not received any promotion.

The participants opined that it may be easier for people with disabilities to get salary increments, but they may face greater difficulty getting promotions.

Yet the feedback was not all negative. One participant shared a more positive story of career progression. He said that his friend with a visual disability started work as an office attendant in the public sector, and has since worked his way up to a senior executive position.

Participants suggested that employers should attend disability awareness talks to better understand the needs of persons with disabilities and what accessibility in the workplace means. The talks will help the employers to

understand the circumstances of people with disabilities and be better managers or supervisors.

Resolution strategy when facing difficulties or obstacles in the workplace

Most DPA members said that they would approach their supervisor, Human Resources (HR) department or their boss if they encounter problems at work.

One participant approached his social worker when his colleagues tried to take advantage of his situation. He did not approach his supervisor due to fear of getting 'blacklisted'.

Another participant had issues with reaching his office on time because of the long distance he had to travel to the workplace. He approached his job matching company to solve this issue. His boss responded to his need by moving his work to a nearer, more convenient location.

One participant shared that he would first approach the HR Department of his organisation and then his job matching agent and social worker if the issue remains unsolved. His previous company met his needs by giving him the option of working from home, submitting reports to his boss via email, and doing video conferences. He was required to come to the office only for meetings and this accommodation worked well for him.

Another DPA member was provided with a better screen reader on his request, allowing him to better his performance at work.

Attitude of colleagues

Participants reported that they have experienced both positive and mixed attitudes from their colleagues and managers. One participant runs a company that educates the public about sign language and the employees are mostly people who are deaf or hard of hearing so the attitude towards employees with disabilities is generally positive.

Another participant said that his managers are good, but his co-workers are not comfortable around him. There is no sensitivity training in place for his colleagues to alleviate that tension.

One participant noted that the attitudes of his co-workers are mixed, but mostly positive. He opined that companies should provide sensitivity trainings for their staff. Though the attitudes of the co-workers are generally good, there were still uncomfortable experiences that training might have helped avoid.

Another participant shared his experience of working at a customer service counter, where the attitudes of his co-workers were not positive to the point that they tried to take advantage of him.

One participant praised his Chief Executive Officer for his willingness to lend him a helping hand. His manager told him that if he faced any issues at work, he could approach him for help.

Overall, the participants believed that most of their managers are open-minded and positive, but there remain some managers who had a mixed attitude.

Inclusive practices at work

Participants shared examples of the inclusive practices at their workplaces. One participant who is hard of hearing shared that her colleagues communicated to her by writing to her and there was interaction and sharing of deaf culture during lunch breaks.

The organisation where another participant works hires people with disabilities and offers sign language classes after work. Colleagues used to help one participant to buy food and other daily stuff, and they included him in their recreational activities as well. His manager and colleagues also helped him by collecting funds for his taxi fares. The company also has flexible working hours. The organisation where he works at invited him to work events, and that they have a harmonious working environment.

Another participant shared that his ex-colleagues bought lunch for him and invited him to their social events. His second company also made arrangements to ensure that the workplace premises are wheelchair accessible. But when there were no provisions for assistance, he informed his employers that he required assistance in such situations. The company responded by having a buddy system where his colleague would keep a lookout and provide assistance to him whenever necessary.

One participant shared that he faced no issues at work because his colleague assisted him in going to the restrooms and would buy lunch for him. He was also included in team bonding activities.

Real Life Experiences

Rajan Raju works as the Head of Retail Clients at Standard Chartered in Singapore. Raju, who damaged his spinal cord in a car accident in 2011, recalls his experience as one that opened his eyes to what he describes as “hidden bias against inclusion of people with disabilities at the workplace.”

Raju has recovered sufficiently to walk unassisted, albeit with a limp, but his time in a wheelchair made him realise that employees with disabilities are relegated to the “out” group at work, and it becomes more difficult to deliver results.

“As a disabled person, I may not be able to unbutton my pants like able-bodied people can,” Raju explains before asking the awkward but necessary: “Will my co-worker help me do that? It’s nice to talk about inclusion at the top management level, but it is the on-the-ground supervisor and individuals that

“As a disabled person, I may not be able to unbutton my pants like able-bodied people can,” Raju explains before asking the awkward but necessary: “Will my co-worker help me do that? It’s nice to talk about inclusion at the top management level, but it is the on-the-ground supervisor and individuals that makes or breaks the intent.”

makes or breaks the intent. For us to get to where we want to get to, the line between the 'in' and 'out' groups has to be blurred.”

He adds, “For that blurring to happen, a significant amount of investment must be made to make the incumbents who are working in an organisation to be aware, understand, give space, but hold the individual to the expected performance standard. “It does not matter if you are “white, black, green, yellow or whatever because if you don’t perform, you are out”, says Raju. Accountability should be expected regardless of a person’s disability, but society often views people with disabilities as needing help, and therefore less is expected of them. A successful person with disability, on the other hand, is hailed as some form of superhuman.

“What about just being a regular Joe or Jane who happens to have a disability?” asks Wong Meng Ee, who has a visual disability and works as an Assistant Professor at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. “We don’t need that framing of being either a tragedy or superhuman. Wong said, “For lack of a better word, we’re almost preaching to the converted. What about people who continue to discriminate and don’t think that inclusion is an issue? That’s where the challenge lies. How do we extend the awareness to those who really need it?”

The way forward in hiring people with disabilities is to judge them on their ability to meet the job requirements, and then to design the workspace and workflow accordingly to maximise their ability to deliver results. For that to happen, there must be an awareness of the need for diversity and inclusion within the organisation and, more importantly, among colleagues and top management.

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employability of people with disabilities.

But many employers are not fully aware of the accommodations needed for them to be productive in the workplace. Thus, there is a need for greater awareness on job accommodations among employers to build capability to hire, train and integrate persons with disabilities. Without accommodation, job seekers with disabilities cannot be placed in many job vacancies successfully.

For job seekers with disabilities, disclosure is a natural step that precedes a discussion for accommodation. However, with the low awareness among employers and the absence of legal requirement to provide accommodation, job seekers with disabilities have to carefully handle disability disclosure.

In Singapore, there is no legislation that requires employers to provide job accommodation. Instead, the Government provides funds to support employers who provide equal opportunities to persons with disabilities seeking employment.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOW EMPLOYMENT RATE

The low employment rate of people with disabilities is affected by a number of factors such as negative community attitude, transportation problems, environmental barriers, ineffective service delivery, lack of skills and inadequate facilities.

Negative attitude and social stigmatisation

Some people including employers are still prejudiced against people with disabilities who are often stereotyped as incapable or dependent and without any potential. People with disabilities are also viewed by some employers as an economic liability.

As mentioned above, some people with disabilities have been working in the same job for more than fifteen years and did not receive any promotion. In the feedback session, DPA members also opined that some colleagues created an uncomfortable working environment which forced them to resign.

Some people may discriminate against people with disabilities and treat them without respect. If any person with a disability politely rejects the help offered to them, people tend to ask “Are you sure that you don’t need my help? Can you really do this task on your own?”

These questions arise from the belief that people with disabilities are victims who deserve pity. The feeling of pity which is patronising can prevent people with disabilities from being independent. Some parents and managements of organisations are also too protective of their child and client with a disability that they fail to encourage them to learn to work independently.

Transportation hurdles

Lack of accessible transportation is one of the major issues faced by people with disabilities. Some people are not able to use public transport due to the nature and severity of their impairment. They have to use other means of transport like taxis, which are expensive to use on a regular basis to get to work. Without customised transportation arrangements, many of them who will otherwise be able to join workforce will be confined to their homes.

Customised transportation arrangements can reduce transport costs for employees with disabilities. Possible solutions can include transport allowance for employees who use paratransit vehicles, carpool services from willing employees who live close to persons with disabilities and shuttle services.

The inconsiderate behaviour of some people may also cause inconvenience to persons with disabilities while using public transport. Not giving way to wheelchair users or those with mobility issues who need to use the lift, parking vehicles in the area allocated to people with disabilities, occupying the reserved seats in public transport are common occurrences. However, it is encouraging to note that the Government and public sector are working to improve the affordability and accessibility of public transport.

Physical barriers

People with disabilities continue to face problems accessing public facilities and buildings. Generally, workplaces have not been designed with accessibility in mind and this is a deterring factor for employers who wish to hire people with disabilities. However, it is encouraging to note that more inclusive employers have taken active steps to make their workplaces barrier-free.

Inadequate vocational skills and education

The rehabilitation and training programmes for people with disabilities have not kept up with changes in the job market. Whilst many Singaporeans are being encouraged to widen and develop their skill, especially to keep up with advances in technology, many training programmes for persons with

disabilities are not following the same trend. Without relevant training to meet the job requirements in the market, people with disabilities become less employable.

Anecdotal evidence seems to show that the self-employment rate is rising among people with disabilities. This may be in response to the lack of good employment opportunities available to them, which leads many to start their own businesses.

REALISTIC SOLUTIONS

The range and scope of disabilities are vast. Each type of disability that a person has presents its own unique set of challenges in the workplace. Some impairments require little accommodation and others require specific support. A holistic approach must be taken to cater to the needs of people with disabilities, and a more proactive pursuit of workable accommodations must be adopted.

It is important to dispel the myths and misconceptions about the employability of people with disabilities. To do so, VWOs should offer all kinds of vocational training to persons with disabilities so that they may be equipped with the necessary skills to get a job, stay in the job and to climb the career ladder. There is also a need to identify the gaps in job market and see how persons with disabilities can be trained for those roles.

Although it may seem daunting to try and tackle inclusion in the workplace, it should be seen as a journey that an organisation can tackle in the way that suits their resources. Some may want to progressively implement inclusive practices and others may be able to re-structure the organisation as a whole. Regardless of how they chose to do it, organisations can utilise the large amount of Government and VWO support that is available to start their inclusive journey.

Public education and awareness programmes

Nationwide disability awareness programmes about the potentials of people with disabilities will foster greater understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities. When more people become enlightened about the potentials of people with disabilities, their employment opportunities will improve.

Changing the attitudes of employers and colleagues

The Enabling Employers Network (EEN) is an alliance of like-minded employers of persons with disabilities who champion and advance the employment

opportunities for persons with disabilities. Members of EEN have collectively employed a total of about 200 persons with disabilities. Their role should be showcased more to serve as an example of how companies can hire persons with disabilities in a successful and business-friendly model.

In addition, there should be a big push to publicise successful case studies of positive employment practices for persons with disabilities, the impact gainful employment has made on those with disabilities and the contributions they bring to any workplace. This will help to dispel the negative stereotypes about people with disabilities and change attitudes.

Separating the essential and the non-essential functions (in the job descriptions) helps to assure a fair selection process. This in turn increases the employment opportunities of people with disabilities. For example, MNCs have international and regional commitments to diversity and inclusion. But the human resource professionals responsible for recruiting may not be able to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential job functions. This may hinder the employment opportunities of people with disabilities despite the best intentions of the company.

Companies should also conduct disability awareness talks and sensitivity training to help other employees better understand their co-workers with disabilities. This will help to nurture fruitful relationships and may result in effective teamwork.

Greater publicity push on schemes

There are two schemes that provide funding support to companies to make their workplace and buildings more accessible to persons with disabilities. The ODP provides up to 90% subsidy of workplace modification while the Accessibility Fund subsidises up to 80% of the construction cost of basic accessibility features such as ramps, lifts, accessible toilets and signage.

However, not many companies are tapping onto these schemes because they either not aware of them or think that the schemes are too cumbersome. There should be a stronger publicity push to explain and familiarise companies with the schemes.

Affordable customised transport arrangements

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has funded current and new specialised transport companies to expand their fleet and reach. The Handicaps Welfare Association, for example, received funding support from MSF and the Care and Share Movement to purchase and retrofit 11 vans. The specialised vehicles will transport persons with disabilities from their homes to their workplaces or special education schools.

However, more needs to be done to fill this service gap at an affordable price. Some people with disabilities are unable to afford the cost of dedicated transport.

Shared services

Agencies serving people with disabilities can share their resources to serve a bigger pool of people with disabilities. Better use of space and facilities for vocational training could result with the pooling of agencies and their resources.

Promoting better strategies for the employability of people with disabilities and forming of an employer pool interested in hiring them can be useful to increase the employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Career grooming and consultancy services along with customised training will also enhance the employability of people with disabilities. This can be done at both schools and at job-matching agencies.

Cooperative workshops and enterprises

The prospects for setting up co-operative workshops and enterprises to take on contract work such as packaging, horticultural, information technology, communication, customer care, environmental and building maintenance can be explored more widely.

Viable co-operative enterprises through shared ownership by a person with disability and his or her family members, interested individuals, trade unions, and business could be established. These measures will generate more employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Accessibility

In order to have a fully inclusive workplace, the work environment must be physically, technologically and attitudinally accessible, including accessibility in structure, system and services provided. An accessible workplace will maximise productivity as it eliminates barriers, allowing people with disabilities to reach their full potential at work.

Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive technology (AT) can accommodate a wide range of disabilities. AT, whether a customised workstation, specialised software, or another type of technology, provide employees with the necessary tools to perform their jobs, and help organisations maximise productivity and enhance the skill set of the workforce.

Providing AT funds and schemes for both employers and employees will increase the employability and opportunities for people with disabilities. Building an AT centre focused on accommodation in the workplace and that is managed by the Government will help demystify AT. This AT centre could serve as a one- stop solution that addresses all aspects concerning assessment, training and use of assistive technology and devices for employers and employees with disabilities.

“For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible.” (IBM 1991, Training Manual)

Social inclusion audit

Social inclusion audits focus on employment barriers and examine the social inclusiveness of the workplace. As an incentive, organisations that perform well in such an audit could be rewarded by the Government with tax breaks, grants or some other form of incentive. This system will encourage companies to build an inclusive workplace.

Inclusive workplace and culture

An inclusive and harmonious work environment will help to facilitate positive interaction and understanding between colleagues with and without disabilities. This will increase the productivity among employees with disabilities as their talents are recognised and utilised at work.

Reasonable accommodations, such as flexible scheduling and tele-commuting, are helpful to all employees, not just persons with disabilities. AT can accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities so that they can realise their full potential. Managers, human resource professionals and employees at all levels have a role in creating and sustaining the culture of inclusiveness for employees with disabilities. Equal employment opportunity with fair and respectful treatment is an integral part of any inclusive practice and work culture.

In order to achieve the above, it is best to nominate a manager or supervisor to deal with any issues that arise after employing a person with a disability. As mentioned in the Focus Group it is not always clear who an employee with a disabilities should go to when they are facing issues in the workplace. Having someone clearly tasked with handling those issues would help clear up that confusion. In addition, that person can be specially trained used ODP funding to be able to investigate and implement inclusive practices in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Employment is the most effective means of escaping the vicious circle of marginalisation, poverty and social exclusion. Some persons with disabilities may be trapped in this vicious circle. To break it, positive action is required. This includes removing the barriers faced by people with disabilities through a variety of policy measures, regulations, programmes, and services.

Working with employers who are willing to make reasonable accommodations will increase the confidence and independence of their employees with disabilities. This will in turn enable the employee with a disability to enjoy his or her work and personal life like everybody else.

The Government, employers, private and public sectors, VWOs and committed individuals must work together to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It is important that persons with disabilities are valued and recognised for the talents they bring to the workplace and society.

“I don't have a dis-ability, I have a different-ability.”

Robert M. Hensel

WORKPLACE INCLUSION CHECKLIST

This checklist is designed to provide organisations with a tool to enhance their inclusive practices to build an inclusive work culture. It is best to view the checklist as something that can be progressively realised as opposed to being put into place all at once.

Inclusive strategy, policies and services are in place for the following	Yes	No
Hiring process and employee orientation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employee engagement and retention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistive technology and devices with specialised training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonable accommodations to enhance performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible work arrangements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible communication formats.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible designs for work related devices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodations to ensure access to all forms of communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning & development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performance management - The performance expectations are the same for an employee with disabilities and others (For example, clear career progression planning and availability of training to facilitate this).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mentorship programme to ensure that employees of different backgrounds receive development support and guidance in their careers. Building peer support / buddy system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equal opportunities of promotion and career building to all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equality and fair treatment at work and conflict resolution process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonable accommodation policy is in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership and Commitment to achieve inclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Accessibility		
Accessible route to workplace and within workplace.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accessible buildings and work areas including work desk designs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accessible toilets, lifts and socialising areas (for example, cafeteria / canteen).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Accessible meeting rooms and libraries (if any).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective emergency evacuation strategy and safety measures.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring Inclusive work culture		
Defined goals for workplace inclusiveness and harmony.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An employee resource group is formed for assistance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion Support Officer (ISO) – this can be an HR personnel or any other responsible employee. Big organisations can arrange for an employee to be the ISO in each floor / branch as applicable. This person undergoes training in order to be able to train the colleagues about inclusive practices and emergency management mechanisms.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Diversity and Inclusion department/network exists (with an employee overseeing the network).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sharing of inclusive practices (teams, departments, and within organisation).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Team building activities, recreational sessions, feedback sessions with people with disabilities and their family members.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Employee counselling services on request of the employee or recommendation from their manager.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All events, including retreats, trainings, and celebrations conducted at barrier free locations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The website of the organisation is accessible to persons with disabilities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Employees with disabilities found at all levels of the organisation, including at the management and board level.		
Sensitivity trainings and awareness trainings are conducted on a regular basis.		
Appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms and escalation procedures are in place to track and solve problems related to abuse, discrimination and denial of justice to the employees.		
Developing relationships with disability organisations for the purpose of recruitment, technical assistance, and training.		
Accessibility / Effectiveness of inclusion policy survey conducted at least annually with an action plan to remove barriers, if any.		
Application of universal design principles in employment settings to benefit all.		
Mechanism to identify /track identify, address and prevent anything that undermines inclusion and to monitor the organisation's performance in achieving inclusiveness at workplace.		
Research and development and continued quality assurance.		

GLOSSARY

Accessibility is the degree to which a building or other structure provides access for (mainly physically) people with disabilities. In Singapore, this is determined primarily by regulation 36(2) of the Building Control Regulations. (Code on Accessibility in the built Environment 2013)

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to express their views, to access information and services, to find out about options and make informed decisions, and to promote and protect their rights.

Assistive Technology is developed to assist people with disabilities. An example of assistive technology is voice screen-reading software for computers.

Attitudes are a complex collection of beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions which characterise the way we think or feel about certain people or situations. People's attitudes are a product of life experiences, including the relationships we build with the people around us.

Diversity is recognising and valuing differences between individuals and groups of people. It is an important concept in terms of the integration of people with disabilities into society.

Employability has been defined as the capability of getting and keeping satisfactory work. It refers to a person's capability for gaining and maintaining employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, in addition to the way they present those assets to employers. As such, employability is affected by both supply-side and demand-side factors which are often outside of an individual's control.

Inclusion addresses, first and foremost, the need for cultural transformation. It advocates that people with varying needs, backgrounds, beliefs and abilities should be accommodated. With regard to the context of this booklet, persons with disabilities should be integrated into a workplace on the same basis as

other employees for that workplace to be truly inclusive. The idea of an inclusive workplace goes beyond merely accommodating the accessibility needs of a person with disabilities and advocates for integrating that employee into social and professional community at that organisation.

Inclusive Practices comprise attitudes, approaches and strategies which ensure that persons with disability are not excluded or isolated from the society, and feel valued and confident that they will receive appropriate support to fulfil their potential.

Mainstreaming Disability describes a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of people with disabilities an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that people with disabilities benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve disability equality.

Universal Design (sometimes called Inclusive or Accessible Design) involves designing products and spaces so that they can be used by the widest range of people possible. As opposed to fitting workplaces with accessible features to accommodate new employees with disabilities, Universal Design builds in these features from the start so that if it is done right, you would not even notice the accessible features. For example, rather than having an entrance with steps on one side of it and a ramp on the other side, an entrance based on Universal Design may just have a ramp in front of it. Universal design aims to accommodate the diversity of people's needs and in that way is a necessary step towards an inclusive workplace.

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