

DISABILITY AND DIVERSION – CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION IN A WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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Nothing about us without us

These empowering words form a mantra that has fuelled the disability rights movement over the past years. To quote James Charlton, the term 'Nothing About Us Without Us' expresses the conviction of people with disabilities that they know what is best for them. This mantra became the rallying call for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and continues to be highly relevant more than ever. But why does it matter? First, it matters because people with disabilities must be visible leaders to share their voice and experience with businesses. Second, it matters because it reinforces the role of people without disabilities as allies and partners who share the road toward inclusion and equality. Third, it matters because it unites us with all the marginalised and invisible individuals and groups demanding a seat at the table. Finally, it matters because people with disabilities need to be whose voices must lead the way.

Guided by this disability movement's mantra, many foundations participate in the U.S. Disability Rights Program and actively implement the American with Disability Act (ADA) within their equal opportunity employment statement. Diversity, equity and inclusion are core pillars of a thriving, modern working environment. In every company, current employees and prospective hires alike should work and grow their careers. Some foundations have been implemented the ADAs. The civil rights law prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including work, education and transportation, to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The Ford Foundation builds a world where everyone has the power to shape their lives by reimagining philanthropy to catalyse leaders and organisations driving social justice and establishing global networks. Moreover, efforts are tied to their broader commitment to the three core pillars by confronting ableism and expanding participation and inclusion on institutional and individual levels. In addition, the MacArthur Foundation creates resilient, inclusive communities to combat structural racism and inequality and not discriminate based on race, colour, or disability.

Finabel, the European Army Interoperability Centre located in the heart of Brussels, is committed to equality, diversity and inclusiveness by being an equal opportunity employer. As a new organisation in this project, it adopts the core values of inclusion and diversity in its employment practices. As a result, Finabel nurtures a diverse range of professionals, which has created a rich pool of talents. This directly contributes to the value created and a real difference to Finabel's services. Bert Vanierschot, Finabel's human resources assistant, is an excellent contribution as he is working despite his motor disability at the office and is an inherent part of the organization. Although his past journey had its peaks and troughs, he chose to be proactive to integrate himself into society, be valued and recognized by other people, and follow his dreams. Working with Bert positively influences on the team, as it brings the people closer to work together and improves communication skills. When all employees at Finabel feel included, they are more engaged, bringing up fresh ideas in a diverse group. The high engagement at Finabel has a ripple effect on team morale, resulting in enhanced performance.

Several recommendations provide organisations with the necessary knowledge and expertise to achieve an inclusive working environment. Quoting Lee Brown's 'communication is the key', organisations have to make sure that the inclusion of all people is a crucial consideration and all people are welcomed. By acknowledging and understanding the widespread nature of the disability, the organisation is committing to enable people to develop social skills and provide adequate training to make inclusion successful.

Those means of communication can be that employees use appropriate language and etiquette, and the company updates facilities and facilitates access to communication.

To conclude, the mantra described above emphasises how people with disabilities must be valued as integral and essential contributions in a working environment in every sector. It ignites a vision for people that represents pride and power rather than stigma. It helps us realise that the disability community is an empowering community that unites us and works for our rights, and moves us to re-define and reimagine what it means to be a person with a disability in all aspects of today's global society. Therefore, inclusion can only occur if the organisation is willing to align its policy and make it evident that its policies are inclusive.

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