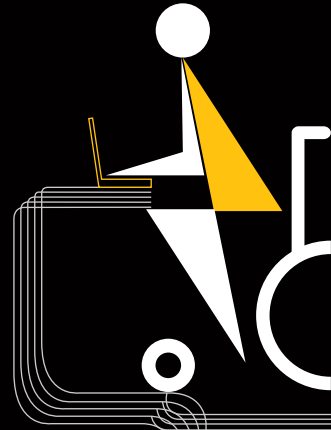


Champions of change

Catalyzing Inclusion
at Workplace



Partner:



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Champions of Change: Catalyzing Inclusion at Workplace is a compendium of eight impactful business cases where the industry adopted innovative approaches to enable inclusion in the workplace.

The publication has been developed showcasing the efforts put in by companies to facilitate accessible and barrier-free workplaces through technology, communication, sensitization, training, compensation, policies, etc.

We are grateful to Mr Vasudev S., Business Lead - Governance and Business Planning, ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre; Mr Vineet Saraiwala, Lead Inclusion, Big Bazaar - Future Group India; Mr Rishabh Tandon, Area Director Human Resources, North India, IHG; Ms Neha Verma, Human Resource Manager, South-West Asia, IHG; Mr Nisheeth Mehta, Founder & CEO, Microsign Products; Ms Priyanka Mohanty, Vice President - Global Corporate, Startek; Mr Nihar Mehta, Senior Corporate HR, Sarovar Hotels, Mr Praveen Karn, Group Head - CSR, Spark Minda; and Ms Padmaja Saxena, CSR Head, Titan Company Limited for their contribution in developing the compendium.

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Foreword



Piruz Khambatta

**Chairman, CII National Committee on Special Abilities 2019-2020
and India Business & Disability Network
and Chairman and Managing Director, Rasna Pvt Ltd**

The passing of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016, has been a game changer as it not only mandates provision of accessibility for persons with disabilities by the government, but stresses on private sector engagement as well.

With the vision of promoting and enabling inclusion, CII's National Committee on Special Abilities has been driving a myriad of initiatives towards creating champions from within the industry, making workplaces accessible, and promoting inclusion of PwDs at workplaces. Recognizing the important role that the industry can play in empowering the PwDs - both as employers and customers - further action is being strategized to catalyse induction of PwDs in the industry.

Champions of Change: Catalyzing Inclusion at Workplace is testament to not only how corporate India is capitalizing on the diverse talent and experience that comes with PwD workforce, but also how it is walking the

extra mile to attract and enable such talent in the workplace. The publication illustrates eight comprehensive business cases where distinguished organizations adopted unique human resource management practices to successfully attract, engage, and retain PwDs in the workplace.

Capitalising on the untapped talent pool that the PwDs form works not only towards societal development but makes business sense by providing productive manpower resources which can be refined with suitable training and support from the corporate world.

It is encouraging to see the Industry members recognizing this fact and embracing the Disability-Inclusion Agenda. We hope that as industry witnesses a paradigm shift towards a barrier-free and disability friendly ecosystem, more thrust will be given to weave inclusion and accessibility in the corporate DNA, contributing to India's economic and social growth.

CII Initiatives on Special Abilities

Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities: Mainstreaming the Marginalised

CII believes that Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) form a vast pool of manpower resource which can become productive and be contributing members of society, with suitable training and support from the corporate world. This initiative has the potential to enhance diversity and motivation while contributing positively to human dignity and organizational social responsibility.

Empowerment of PwDs has been an important part of CII's agenda for promoting and enabling inclusion. With the focus on creating champions

from within the industry, making workplaces accessible and promoting inclusion of PwDs at workplaces, CII has been driving initiatives under the aegis of the National Committee on Special Abilities.

Since 2006, CII has been working towards mainstreaming PwDs into the workforce, by sensitizing our members through workshops, webinars, advocacy campaigns, manuals and other facilitative programs to assist companies with hiring processes.

- **Corporate Code on Empowerment of PwDs:** One of the first Corporate Codes meant for PwD empowerment, the 'CII Corporate Code on PwDs' was formulated in 2006 and disseminated among CII members for guidance and adoption. Presenting a set of standards, the Code acts as guidelines to assist employers in developing an equal opportunity policy and provides a guidance framework to adopt inclusion practices at workplace as well.
- **Sensitization and capacity building of corporate sector** especially HR managers, through workshops, presentations and seminars has been conducted across the country. The objective has been to promote diversity in workforce through inclusive employment practices, accessibility in built environment, and the importance of skilling and upskilling of PwDs.

In 2018, a four-part webinar series was rolled out which was a 360degree comprehensive program delving into the government policies and practices to promote inclusion at workplace; industry best practices; career progression of PwDs at workplace and increasing the "includability quotient" of leaders. More than 300 representatives from companies, institutions, students and PwDs participated in the webinar series. Given the response, CII plans to develop an institutionalized annual program to build capacities of professionals on inclusion & diversity.

- **Knowledge Resource:** To educate companies and to handhold them on different aspects of inclusion, CII has been developing publications, manuals, and films. “A Value Route to Business Success – The Why and How of Employing Persons with Disability” is a well-known CII Disability Manual containing useful information and advice that would help companies that wish to employ people with disability but do not know how to get started and have a desire to accomplish the task both smoothly and successfully. A DIY booklet on Inclusion is a practical guide that offers simple and easy steps for enabling inclusion of PwD in the Corporate Sector. CII has also developed a range of films on disability showcasing the employability aspect of Persons with Disabilities. The primary objective is to sensitize the private sector and promote private sector’s engagement with PwD community.
- **Job Fairs and special recruitment drives** to place PwD candidates in private sector has been undertaken across different cities. CII leveraged its connect with corporates in inviting companies to participate and recruit suitable PwD candidates. This initiative has also led to CII forging partnerships with NGOs, Vocational Rehabilitation Centers, and Disabled People’s Organization to help identify and invite potential PwD candidates.

To sustain the hiring and placement initiative, CII partnered with Monster.com to set up an exclusive job portal for PwDs (www.ciispecialabilityjobs.in) catering to the needs of employers and deserving PwD jobseekers. The portal houses information of more than 5000 PwD candidates seeking job opportunities.

- **Sector Skill Council on PwDs (SCPwD):** CII facilitated setting up of the PwD Sector Skill Council to bridge the skill gap between what the industry wants and what the skilling curriculum ought to be for PwDs. The Key objective of the Council is to create a robust and vibrant ecosystem for quality education and skill development for Persons with Disability in the country. Key goals of SCPwD are - Reduce skill gaps and shortages; Improve learning supply; Improve productivity; Create Vibrant Labour Market Information System and Increase opportunities for all individuals in the workforce.
- **India Business and Disability Network:** While there has been an increasing effort by companies to drive the agenda of inclusion over the past few years, There is a need to amplify the work, engage in cross-learnings; and broaden the scope and engage with many more companies in a sustained manner to help them understand and achieve the inclusion agenda.

This led to the creation of a unique platform – the India Business and Disability Network (IBDN) which was launched on 21st January 2019 hosted by CII in partnership with ILO – Global Business and Disability Network and Employers’ Federation of India.

Vision - IBDN

The IBDN has been set up with a vision to engage, enable and empower persons with disabilities, thus promoting and facilitating an inclusive, accessible and a barrier-free workplace within the corporate sector.

The Network not only promotes employment of PwDs while responding to the needs of the private sector, but also provides a common platform for companies’ mutual learning and engagement with other stakeholders.

IBDN is a one stop solution to share best practices, create context-based solutions, facilitate partnerships, facilitate inclusion, and create & dissemination knowledge.

Action Areas

1. Knowledge Creation and Dissemination-

- Enhance and strengthen the capabilities of employer organisations - Training Programs and Webinars to create a cadre of Diversity Champions at workplace
- Promote sharing and exchange of experiences - through events and fora including conferences, sessions, Roundtables.
- Good practices and models that promote inclusion - CII-IBDN is developing and promoting publications documenting inclusion practices; Studies being conducted to develop standardized framework for companies to initiate their inclusion journey; Accessibility tool-kits, advocacy materials and manuals developed disseminated.

2. Advocacy & Dialogue-

- A platform to deliberate, dialogue and recommend policies to Government that would build a strong and enabling inclusion ecosystem at workplace
- A platform for dialogue and advocacy with industry that also offers a space for companies to raise concerns & issues. IBDN has developed a Corporate Code on Disability which presents action-oriented points for the companies to adopt.

3. Facilitation of partnerships and services-

- The network serves as a bridge for companies to connect with suitable service providers / NGOs / Disability organizations. IBDN is developing an information repository to connect the demand-supply gap
- Facilitate inclusion - accessibility audits, employee trainings, capacity building, hiring & recruiting

Over 60 companies have joined IBDN as members over the past one year (2019). The membership onboarding continues as more companies express interest to join IBDN.

IBDN has been forging partnerships with Government, Multi-Lateral Agencies, NGOs and think tanks to drive the action agenda of the network.

CII-IBDN, as a National Network partnered with 'The Valuable 500', a global movement launched at the World Economic Forum, Davos, that seeks to bring together 500 CEOs across the globe to commit to get disability inclusion included in the boardroom agenda.

As the India Country partner, CII-IBDN has been mobilizing industry commitment to the Valuable 500 statement in India. Over 50 companies in India have committed to The Valuable 500 statement.

To accelerate the inclusion movement, there is a need to seed-in diversity leaders across companies who can champion inclusion within their work environment. The key would be to equip and build capacities of the existing managers and leaders and convert them to diversity leaders through learning & training. The IBDN now plans to institutionalize a program to develop this cadre of inclusion leaders and champions that will be strengthening the inclusion ecosystem at workplace and beyond.

Introduction

In an ever-changing competitive global economy, talented employees are vital to an organization's performance. Today, most organizations are embracing and weaving in diversity in their workforce for building and sustaining an inclusive culture.

While building an inclusive and conducive environment for PwDs, organizations need to consider their specific needs, preferences and motivational factors, and design suitable HR practices to attract them.

Champions of Change: Catalyzing Inclusion at Workplace documents the efforts made by eight organisations to enable an inclusive, accessible, and barrier-free workplace by employing practical solutions and human resource management practices. This study maps the strategies adopted by the organizations in successfully attracting, engaging, and retaining PwDs and its impact on their performance, career progression, and attrition level.

Through this compendium, an effort is made to inspire and engage more corporate leaders to partner in the journey of building an inclusive society.

Providing Careers, not just Jobs, to People with Disability

ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre

ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre (ANZ India) started its operation in 1989, providing support services to ANZ Bank (one of the four largest Australian Banks). The modest operation, which started with 40 personnel has now grown to over 6,000 employees providing 24 hour support, 6 days a week to the bank's network across Australia, New Zealand, Asia Pacific, Europe & Americas.

ANZ India is an industry champion when it comes to Equal Opportunity at the workplace. The company has shown the way forward in workplace inclusion, by including employees with disabilities very early on, when not many other companies were exploring the possibilities.

ANZ India firmly believes that diversity is the key to success in today's industry. A diverse workforce ensures that there is a talented pool of resources that will be able to handle a host of responsibilities and intensities at different points in time.

Discussing the beginning of the journey of inclusion, SV Venkataraman, Managing Director, Bengaluru Service Centre mentioned that when the company decided to start hiring people with disability, it did not have any business case. The company just

wanted to replicate the society at the workplace. Society is made up of men, women, people with disability, people from the LGBTI++ communities, and the company welcomes all in its workplace without any discrimination. Since inception, people were hired in mainstream jobs and not just for support functions or less critical roles. In its eight-year journey of inclusion, the company continuously overcome hurdles, by finding solutions to different challenges and kept on moving and making a success of the initiative. The sign language library is a fine example of that.

ANZ's Abilities Network is made up of ANZ employees who are passionate about making a positive difference in the lives of people with a disability, including fellow employees, our customers and the wider community. Any ANZ employee can be a supporter and/or volunteer in the Abilities Network to contribute to creating a diverse and inclusive workforce and community.

Key Purposes of the ANZ Abilities Network:

- Raise awareness of disability and accessibility
- Represent employees in issues relating to disability
- Foster an environment of inclusiveness and diversity

Industry/ Sectoral context

In the 30 years of its existence, ANZ India has become widely known for its culture of learning, innovation, and inclusion. ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre truly believes in the inherent strength of a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive workforce where the backgrounds, perspectives and life experiences of its people help in forging strong connections with all its customers, innovating and making better decisions for its business.

29% of ANZ managers are women, and the company has employed nearly 120 Persons with Disability in its workforce. ANZ's purpose is to shape a world where people and communities thrive That is why they strive to create a balanced, sustainable society in which everyone can take part and build a better life. To this extent, ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre helps people progress through areas like Diversity & Inclusion, Financial Inclusion & Capability, and Environmental Sustainability.

ANZ's belief and passion is fulfilled through robust funding, support from a dedicated team of volunteers who have presented tangible results, partners such as Enable India, Samarthanam and V-Shesh Learning Services Pvt Ltd, and most importantly, the ANZ leadership take personal interest in realizing these goals.

Disability Inclusion at ANZ

Building an inclusive workplace culture at ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre



Our staff with disability is fully included in all elements of our employee lifecycle and we work hard to ensure there is no bias.

*S V Venkataraman, Managing Director
ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre.*



ANZ started its accessibility and inclusion journey with a small pilot in 2010, by hiring 6 people with hearing and orthopedic disability. It took very little time for these new hires to move along the learning curve, which helped the company establish a strong business case for hiring more people. The company has not looked back since and has slowly expanded the scope and scale of its engagement to include about 2% of its employee base with employees with different disabilities (including about 10 employees with severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, muscular atrophy) across various departments.

ANZ's hiring efforts over the last 8 years are not only testament to its commitment to disability inclusion, but also speak volumes about their grit, determination skill, and passion towards this cause That is the success story of this initiative, one that initiated with only one business unit, but today, has representation in all business units of the company.

Accessibility, Reasonable Accommodation and Other benefits

ANZ ensures an inclusive eco-system and nurturing work culture that is conducive for employees with disabilities to perform to their fullest.

Accessibility

To ensure the facilities are accessible for people with diverse disabilities, ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre has conducted accessibility audits, and implemented the recommendations, such as ramps for easy movement, accessible workstations, braille name plates on the doors of conference rooms, etc.

The organization provides assistive devices such as wheelchairs, joysticks and pedals to help employees work conveniently. The organization is always open to adopting innovative ideas that help the employees with disability (e.g. a foot operated computer for an employee with cerebral palsy).

As there are several employees with hearing impairment, ANZ organizes sign language training for managers and team members, to promote ease of communication with their colleagues with speech and hearing impairment. Such trainings are an on-going initiative available for all the employees. In FY17, 350 people were given sign language training in ~80 sessions.

Emergency evacuation is modified to include the needs of employees with disabilities. Emergency evacuation chairs are in place for easy access by the PWD employees. Emergency lights are installed in the washrooms which light up automatically in the event of power disruption. The company has constituted a 'Buddy System' and has trained the buddies in evacuation process, to help employees with disabilities during emergencies.

Sensitisation

ANZ India, believes that sensitization is a continuous process. Therefore, it organizes a series of sensitization workshops for all stakeholders, from the leadership to HR/recruitment leads and teams, facilities and operations teams and peers of the new recruits. These training sessions, facilitated through a dedicated Learning and Development training program, demystifies the world of disability and create a levelled playing field for PwD's to enter and grow in the organisation. All the hiring managers mandatorily go through a sensitization brief before an interview with a candidate with disability.

Other facilities

- House nurses/assistants are available to help employees with disability in their movement and other personal requirements at work, if needed.
- The company has special medical cabs for persons with disability. For hearing and speech impaired employees, the Transport team is trained to communicate through SMS. About 85+ employees with disabilities are using this facility to

commute to the office. The vendor partner for this service is Kickstart – who specializes in providing accessible cabs for people with disability.

- The company realized that there were no signs in Sign Language for financial terms used in the day to day work of the organization, so the company invested in developing a library of finance related terminologies in Sign Language. This library is used in process training for the employees using sign language.

Empowering communities with disability

CSR & Volunteering Initiatives

- 25-30% of ANZ's annual CSR budget goes towards supporting not-for-profit organizations that support the PwD cause
- ANZ supports 14 NGOs on a regular basis, with a special focus on PwD employability, healthcare, education, sanitation, etc.
- Since 2014, ANZ co-sponsors/volunteers for the India Inclusion Summit, a well-known platform that fosters diversity and inclusion in the society
- Since 2014, ANZ organises/volunteers for Walk-a-thons along with India Inclusion Summit, and their NGO partner Samarthanam, to create awareness on disability
- To promote a culture of sports among the community, ANZ sponsors a Blind Cricket Tournament, organized in partnership with Samarthanam
- Introduced Mitti Café, an organisation which solely employs PwDs in its cafeterias and pantries. ANZ is proud to be the first marquee client for this vendor and has also become a reference point for other organisations to hire Mitti Cafe
- Funded skills training hub for persons with intellectual disability at the not-for-profit organisations, Amogh and Amba. More than 40 people are undergoing training in these skills labs
- Funded physiotherapy lab for the NGO Association of People with Disability (APD), which has catered to about 1,500 people with disability in FY19
- Encouraging and leveraging vendor partners such as 24/7 to hire PwD staff; they hired 3 people in their housekeeping for ANZ.
- ANZ actively engages with NGOs to organize stalls during various events such as World Environment Day, International Women's Day, and festivals. ANZ has engaged about 12 NGOs so far to sell various products such as saplings, handicrafts, etc.
- Organized 'Money Minded' sessions, its flagship financial literacy program, for staff with disability at ANZ, APD and Voice of Needy. ANZ has trained over 4300 external participants, and for the first time, they facilitated 700 differently abled participants. Two of their Money Minded Facilitators are specially abled. Partnerships with NGO's, Govt and private institutions have been the most crucial and effective in our Disability Inclusion journey.

Empowering Employability & skill building of people with disabilities:

- In 2015, ANZ partnered with Enable India to set up a 100-seater training institute for persons with disabilities. The lab, built with the company's contribution of INR 26.67 lakhs, helps empowering students with disabilities by providing them employability skills and industry endorsed training programs.
- ANZ is working towards creating a multiplier effect. Not only are they building an agile, outperforming organisation, they are also making an impact in the larger community that they represent. They have joined forces with Mission 1000, 'The Valuable 500' campaign, Part of India Business & Disability Network under CII.
- In 2017, ANZ joined a 120-member strong network of disability NGOs, committing to the project Mission1000. Mission1000 focuses on inclusive employment as mandated in the GOI initiative, "Inclusive India". This campaign aims to provide 1000 opportunities to persons with developmental, severe, and multiple disabilities in 1000 days. Under the initiative, ANZ has so far sensitised 931 people and provided 1365 opportunities. One 'Opportunity' equals one person getting training/exposure/employment.
- ANZ has also organised a roundtable in partnership with Mission1000, wherein 35 organisations participated and discussed various initiatives and efforts. This helped in sharing best practices and helped more organisations in adopting Mission 1000.

Recruitment/Manpower Methodology

ANZ is committed to giving people every opportunity to learn and grow by creating a thriving and inclusive workplace. The company focuses on building long-term employment opportunities for people with disability, as it goes with the company's goals to include people from all sections of society in its workforce.

ANZ's hiring process is the same for all candidates with or without disabilities. All candidates go through an aptitude test, voice and accent assessment (if applicable), followed by an in-person interview. The teams that are hiring a person with disability for the first time, mandatorily go through a sensitization session. The organization ensures that each candidate experiences an exceptional interview process. From the time the candidate with disability enters the premises, he/she comes across an environment which helps the candidate feel confident about facing the interviewer. The company provides reasonable accommodation even during the interview process, e.g. providing a sign language expert to a candidate with hearing impairment. The company has several employees who are trained in sign language, either one of them or an external interpreter provides support on request.

It's the HR and Recruitment teams are equipped with exhaustive training on career mapping, designing inclusive job descriptions, making reasonable accommodations during interview, placement and post placement accommodations. This training ensures that each candidate feels welcome and comfortable during and after the interview process and performs to the best of their abilities.

ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre conducts targeted outreach programs to get a continuous flow of candidates with disabilities. As a part of this initiative, the company works with non-profit organisations such as V-Shesh, Enable India and Samarthanam. ANZ provides mentorship programs to the candidates and has open sessions with NGO partners to understand the candidates' progress and their requirements. On successful completion of mentorship, ANZ offers employment opportunities.

Training and upskilling for the current & future roles

ANZ is very proud of the fact that they are able to attract and retain employees with disabilities. The proof lies in the fact that about 80% of its staff with disability has been promoted to the next level at least once. Regular trainings and career advancement sessions are organised to advance their learning, and rising professionals are given opportunities to interact with the leadership/clients.

Impact of PwD Employees

- a. **Productivity gains:** ANZ has experienced productivity gains with the inclusion of employees with disabilities. The attrition rates among the employees with disability have been observed to be lower, as ANZ provides them with a supportive and welcoming work environment.
- b. **Brand image:** Hiring PwD staff is aligned with ANZ's vision and is a way of fulfilling its commitment to the community. ANZ has won the prestigious Hellen Keller award reflecting its commitment to creating an inclusive environment at the workplace. Hiring people with disability has enhanced its brand image as an inclusive employer.
- c. **Corporate reputation:** ANZ is seen as a company that welcomes people with disability to its workforce and extends all the support required to make the work environment convenient for them. The company also provides them all the support and opportunities for their growth within the organization. This has boosted the company's goodwill and has created a positive image in the society.
- d. **Corporate culture:** Having colleagues from all sections of the society helps the staff to be more receptive to the differences, be sensitive to their needs, and be more inclusive. Inspired by this internal experience, ANZ employees also participate in volunteering work at different NGOs that work with PwDs to impart necessary skills.
- e. **Compliance related processes:** ANZ has ensured compliance to RPWD16. The company has an Equal Opportunity Policy for People with Disability in place as mandated in the Act, apart from a generic Equal Opportunity Policy. ANZ has conducted physical infrastructure access audit and has made its facilities accessible for people with disabilities.

Employee Speak



Jayanth Chandrashekar

Trade Processing Officer,
ANZ and National level swimmer



I joined ANZ in September 2016. My job is to verify documents for credit assessments.

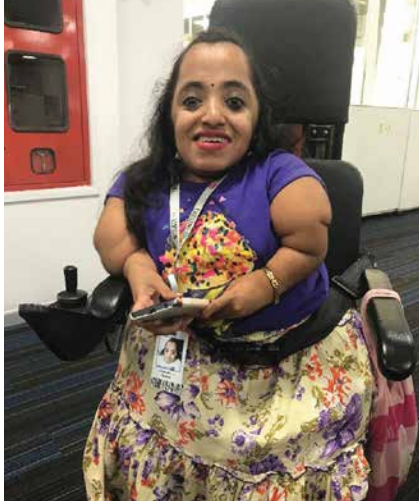
When I came to ANZ Bengaluru for the interview, I was impressed with how it was arranged. My hiring managers, who are now my mentors, were supportive and empathetic. They motivated me to take up this role and helped me perform to the best of my abilities.

I want to progress well in my career. Early this year, I took CATS1 exam in Trade, and now I am preparing for CATS2. These exams are crucial for my career progression.

I also have an amazing team which is helping me succeed. I go with my colleagues for lunch and they are the ones who feed me.

I think there is something about ANZ. Whoever joins this organisation automatically embraces inclusion.





Sirisha KV

Analyst,
Winner of National Award from
President of India in
multi-disabled employee category



I work in Trade process, wherein I track details of imports and exports. It's been two years since I joined. I love coming to work because of its friendly culture, accessible facility, and inclusive environment.

In a recent fire drill, ANZ's Security team helped staff with disability vacate the office building with the help of special evacuation chairs and stretchers. It was nice to see that the organisation has considered accessibility in this area as well.

I have Osteogenesis Imperfecta. That means my bones have been brittle since childhood. Understanding that I need assistance, the organisation has provided me with a house nurse and cab for home pick-up and drop. My team also helps me immensely.

All these facilities ensure that I give my best shot at work.



Learnings

ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre boasts of having a 360-degree approach to inclusion.. The company not only has employees with disability in core business areas, their cafeteria has a kiosk selling coffee, which is manned only by people with disability. The company's procurement team is also motivating their vendor partners to be inclusive and hire employees with disability. The company has been increasingly engaging with NGOs who work with people with disability to procure products such as gift items, etc.

The success criteria of the inclusion initiative, based on the learnings, are as follows:

- a. It is important to have complete leadership buy-in for such an initiative to be successful. The top-down approach works better.
- b. The initiative must touch all employees, thereby becoming a part of the DNA of the organization.
- c. All employees must be sensitized about disability and related topics to understand the world of people with disability and how to work with them.
- d. The organization's facilities must be made accessible.
- e. The initiative should be part of mainstream hiring and not just a CSR initiative.
- f. People with disability must be hired in core job roles and not only in support roles/ less significant jobs.
- g. The recruitment should be based on the requirement of the job role and competencies and the skills of the candidates.
- h. Provision of reasonable accommodation is a must and should be offered to all candidates from interview stage onwards
- i. The company must have a dedicated budget to provide assistive devices and other additional support.
- j. The company must work towards creating a non-discriminatory and inclusive work culture. All the aspects of an organization must be accessible and inclusive of persons with disability.
- k. There should not be any salary disparity between disabled and able-bodied employees.

The Way Forward

ANZ Bengaluru Service Centre is now shifting from responding to single infrequent ad hoc requests, to proactively seeking disabled individuals who may benefit from the opportunities when offered. ANZ sees this as building a talent pipeline for the future, both for the bank and for the wider local labour market.

The Bank will continue to be part of Mission 1000 program, an initiative that transforms and scales employment prospects of “persons with severe, developmental and multiple disabilities, as well as those with physical and sensory impairments” - while simultaneously transforming the employment cultures & worldview of participating companies.

Awards & Recognition

Internal

STAR AWARD - ANZ celebrates its colleagues who have gone above and beyond to shape a world where people of all abilities can thrive. This is organisation wide initiative.

External

In its eight-year journey of being disability confident organization, ANZ has achieved several awards and accolades:

- **Avtar 2019**- Most Inclusive Companies Index
- **Zinnov Award 2019**- Inclusion and Diversity
 - **Top 5 Most Innovative Practices 2019**- Diversity Programs
 - **Top 20 Companies in Diversity 2019**- (Large Enterprises)
 - **Top 20 Most Innovative Practices 2019**- Diversity Hiring

- NASSCOM D&I Award
- NCPEDP- Lemon tree Helen Keller Award
- Equal Opportunity Award 2016 by Nipman Foundation
- NCPEDP-Mind tree Helen Keller Award 2016 – Role Model for championing the cause of persons with disability (Recipient: Pankajam Sridevi GGM Group Service Centre)
- NCPEDP – Lemon tree Helen Keller Award 2015 – Role Model organisation for inclusion of persons with disability
- World Congress - 2017 - National Award for Excellence in Training & Development
- People Matters League Awards – Diversity and Inclusion – 240 applicants – 2018
- ANZ also takes immense pride in the achievements of its employees with disabilities. Two staff members, Ashwin Karthik and Sirisha KV, have been recognised by the President of India as best PwD employees and role models.
- Some of ANZ's disabled staff excel in sports and have won prestigious international sporting events.

Sab ke Liye Big Bazaar: Empowering Persons with Disabilities

Big Bazaar - Future Group India

In a confident, self-assured voice, Sheena spoke over the phone about how she enjoyed being part of the Big Bazaar family for the past two years. Having joined as a team member at a Big Bazaar outlet in Dehradun, today, Sheena, a person with a speaking disability, was one of the best performing team members in the northern region.

Hari, a frontline salesman with Big Bazaar at its 37,000 square feet outlet in Ambience Mall, Gurgaon, had been at the retailer for the past five years. He had to take a one-year sabbatical due to an accident and underwent surgery on his right leg to get a metal rod implant. After his medical break, he came back to work for Big Bazaar because “nowhere else does a company look after persons with disabilities like Big Bazaar”.

Pandey, a warehouse inventory keeper and stock receiver would have lost his job had it not been for Big Bazaar’s employee-friendly leave policies. When he had joined Big Bazaar, he had a

pronounced limp. He was recruited and given empathetic treatment by a sensitive store manager and the HR team. The result was that a physically challenged employee stayed with the company that took care of him.

These are a few case stories of the many who have benefited significantly by Big Bazaar’s commitment to persons with disabilities (PwD’s). Steered by Vineet Saraiwalla, Manager, Future Group, a PwD himself, with more than 90% visual impairment, the strategy has looked at various aspects of recruiting, training, placing, and empowering PwD’s across the 30,000 employee-strong organization. As a promotional TVC says, “Shopping is liberating. Shopping is Freedom. Shopping is about discovering new things every day, striking up new conversations and meeting new people every time one shops.” So why can’t this be for Sabke Liye? Big Bazaar wants to change the way shopping is experienced by Persons with Disabilities and has embarked on an inspiring journey of bringing joy to them.

Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

According to the Journal of Applied Psychology, a “disability” is an impairment that may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some combination of these. It substantially affects a person’s life activities and may be present from birth or occur during a person’s lifetime. Disability, thus, is not just a health problem. Disability is an overarching term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, according to the World Health Organization.

Big Bazaar Mission

We believe that shopping should be accessible to everyone. The joy of shopping is a feeling which everyone - senior citizen, pregnant women, the temporarily disabled & people with disabilities should experience - to navigate, bargain, talk, discover and shop like any other shopper. Big Bazaar wants to foster inclusiveness and is on a mission to make everyone shop irrespective of race, religion, income, age or disability.

With that mission guiding every activity at Big Bazaar, disabilities have been broadly categorized into mild and severe:

- Mild Disability- It is an impairment of cognitive skills, adaptive life skills, social skills and low IQ skills.
- Severe Disability- It is a physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capabilities such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills and work skills.

At Big Bazaar, this categorization helps in choosing the right work profile for every individual PwD (Refer Exhibit 1 for a disability type-based work-option grid).

Big Bazaar’s PwD Philosophy

Big Bazaar is a format of Future Retail Limited (FRL) group company of the Rs. 30,000 crore¹ multi-business Future Group, headed by Kishore Biyani, a.k.a. “The Father of Indian Retail”. Big Bazaar’s philosophy behind the adoption of an organization wide PwD strategy was simple: Diversity and Inclusion. “At Future Group we recognize that diversity within our workforce will bring several benefits. It will act as an essential factor in determining efficiency, productivity and overall business success of the organization”, states Saraiwalla. Retail Spaces have been the biggest social equalizer, where there is no discrimination between rich and poor, and all are welcome. There may be entry barriers while entering a temple, hotel, or school but not in a retail store. Nevertheless, India had never considered Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in an inclusive “All” till recently. Big Bazaar decided it wanted to bring this “joy of bargaining, talking,

¹ “Economic Times Bureau, “Future Group Plans to Open 10,000 Small Stores”, The Economic Times, May 26, 2018; <https://economic-times.indiatimes.com/industry/services/retail/future-group-plans-to-open-10000-small-stores/articleshow/64327191.cms>, accessed Dec 29, 2018.

and choice” at retail to “ALL”. It also stemmed from the realization that accessibility at the retail level benefits not only PwDs, but a host of other marginalized and unaddressed consumer segments such as senior citizens, pregnant women, young mothers, the temporarily disabled, and children.

The prime PwD employment objective at Big Bazaar is to support and empower the right of livelihood for Persons with Disabilities in compliance with the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act, 2016). This has positive business impact consequences too, as the PwD policy is a three-pronged approach to running a better business aligned with the heightened consumer-consciousness prevalent today:

- ✓ A way to add value to the organization and customers
- ✓ A strategic way to strengthen the workforce and
- ✓ An informed business decision

The “Sabke Liye” Mantra at Big Bazaar

The new mantra coined at Big Bazaar to incorporate this philosophy was “Sabke Liye” (For Everyone). Started in January 2018, the “movement” gained considerable currency in a short period of time. Big Bazaar approached the initiative from two perspectives- infrastructure and sensitization.

Infrastructure thrust

Of the approximately 275 Big Bazaar stores in India, nearly 60 have already been modified to be PwD-friendly, according to Manmeet Singh Bakshi, Senior Manager, Operations, North. Having done a stint at McDonald’s, in the early 2000s, which already had a policy of working with PwDs as part of their global strategy, Bakshi was familiar with the concerns and challenges involved. He brought that knowledge to bear upon the store modifications and design elements that award-winning Chief Design Officer Vishal Kapoor created to make several stores PwD-compliant for customers as well as employees with disabilities. Big Bazaar conducted extensive shopper-feedback and expert-opinions based research on the reasons why PwDs were not venturing outside their homes for shopping. From the insights mined from this research, a new approach was born. One of the biggest realizations was that millions of people had never experienced the delight of shopping and this was a significant untapped business opportunity. The entire Store Design detailing was revamped to incorporate Accessible Design principles with accessible trial rooms, ramps, washrooms, and obstacle free passageways (Refer Exhibit 2). Trial rooms do not only comply with Universal Access guidelines but also have sliding doors, anti-skid flooring, mirrors at the proper angle, Emergency Bell and, above all, spacious layouts designed for easy navigation. Accessibility has now been ingrained from the store conceptualization stage itself. Henceforth, Big Bazaar’s new stores will be designed for accessibility from inception.

In its commitment to make PwD customers feel comfortable and cared for at their stores, Big Bazaar has placed at least one wheelchair in each store. At least one trial room must be designed in a PwD-compliant fashion and reserved exclusively for their use. 60 “Accessible Spaces” across the country were created. They are PwD-friendly in terms of special parking places, wheelchairs, assistants, ramps, PwD-friendly toilets and trial rooms, and most importantly, intensively trained employees sensitized to their needs. Big Bazaar training manuals are divided based on functions through easy-to-understand video modules for learning at every level.

Sensitization thrust

Employees from different departments of the organisation, take the Sabke Liye mantra seriously. Talent Acquisition, CRM, Operations, Design and Marketing teams at Big Bazaar are visibly passionate about the PwD initiative. This commitment from the existing non-PwD employees who have internalized the mantra has been a big reason for the significant success of “Sabke Liye”. As Shilpa Kochchar, Neha Pahuja, and Deepak Kumar of Talent Acquisition, CRM, and Operations teams respectively, stated,

“The work we have been involved in with PwDs has given a whole new meaning to our work and life and a deep sense of purpose and fulfilment. It has made us so much more sensitive to the special needs of physically challenged people”.

Big Bazaar realized early on that PwD-enabling physical infrastructure was the easier thing to do, but overcoming the cultural stigma associated with disability needed more work. The project was internally code named “Sabke Liye” to drive home the point that Big Bazaar stood for inclusivity and dignity for all shoppers and employees. The employee training curriculum was revamped in partnership with various specialized organizations. 60 sessions were conducted, and large-scale sensitization drives were undertaken to train each member of the 30,000-strong Big Bazaar family. Every store has an Accessibility Champion whose key responsibility is to create happy moments for PwD shoppers.

PwD Policy Adoption at Big Bazaar

Coming as it does from the very top, this organization-wide commitment to PwD-compliance has Ashni Biyani (Managing Director, Future Consumer Limited) & Sadashiv Nayak (CEO, Future Retail Limited), taking a keen interest in what the retail giant is doing for PwDs through regular updates and review meetings with key employees. Top management commitment to this movement has helped the brand make a significant impact. These initiatives are funded by specific budgetary allocations so that the executives driving it do not have to look at other departments for funds. These two factors – top management’s

active support and dedicated budgetary allocations - have worked as accelerators for getting the PwD initiative off the ground in record time. To further ensure that the PwD initiative is on target, that it is utilizing allocated budgets in the intended way, and to measure impact, Big Bazaar has instituted quarterly PwD audits.

PwD Policy Implementation at Big Bazaar

The new mantra coined at Big Bazaar to incorporate this philosophy was “Sabke Liye” (For Everyone). Started in January 2018, the “movement” gained considerable currency in a short period of time. Big Bazaar approached the initiative from two perspectives- infrastructure and sensitization.

Key Implementation Facilitators-Customer Facing

On the customer front, every store will have or already has an accessibility champion for PwD customers whose primary mandate is to assist, in a dignified manner any PwD who might require assistance with shopping, advice or mobility. The accessibility champion’s work is supported with sensitivity training at every touch point in the retail service blueprint starting with the parking attendant, security guard, doorman, cloakroom assistant, all the way to salespersons, cashiers, and overall supervisors.

Key Implementation Facilitators-Employee Facing

To help a newly hired PwDs assimilate smoothly into the rigorous work environment of a retail organization, Big Bazaar has created a Buddy System. This support system allocates a person who has been specifically trained to take care of a PwD employee from a physical and mental support level. A buddy is the go-to person within the organization in case of any requirements that the PwD might have. If the buddy is not able to solve the requirement or problem, the system is designed for it to be escalated to a higher level. The buddy system plays the critical role of an assimilation/induction agent for a period ranging from 3 to 6 months. The initial results from this program have been described as “encouraging” by the team driving the initiative.

According to the Sabke Liye team, when PwD employees witness the PwD-friendly environment for special-needs customers, it gives them more confidence that as a group of people who are physically challenged, they are going to be looked after well. It reinforces their belief in the Big Bazaar brand. For the retail PwD employees that were interviewed, Big Bazaar was the place to be. Their leave policies for all employees was generous and especially helped PwD employees in seeking medical treatment, or therapy lasting from a few days to months. Nikhil Gulati, Store Manager, Big Bazaar, Ambience Mall, Gurgaon stated that with approximately 250 on-roll team members (first line employees), it was easy to fill in for PwD employees requiring medical attention and availing leaves for it.

Empathetic Training has been at the heart of the Big Bazaar way of making PwDs (both customers and employees) feel completely at home. The emphasis has always been to avoid sympathy and deliver empathy. Every employee is sensitized and conscious that PwDs only need respect and to be treated equally. It is reiterated and reinforced in every training session that new and existing employees undergo under the Avesha (Empowerment) training.

One major educational need that has received due attention is the need to sensitize non-PwDs to the needs of PwDs. Specific training programs have been created by Saraiwalla in English as well as select regional languages to educate everyone from security guards, front line staff, and cloakroom employees on the right way to deal with PwD customers as well as PwD colleagues. This educative process is a very important step in assimilating employees seamlessly into the workforce with dignity and catering to the needs of PwD customers who often “for the first time ever” have shopped on their own without being chaperoned by family members. In one testimonial, a visually impaired young woman gushed about the unprecedented level of PwD-friendliness that Big Bazaar has within its stores. Avesha is the flagship programme which sensitizes the entire organization on disability and is conducted quarterly at every Big Bazaar store in the country. It is a one-day programme and is conducted through a TTT (Train the Trainer) methodology, where Trainers cascade the entire learning to all stores.

PwDs - Assets for Big Bazaar

Kochchar emphasized that the PwD employees have a lot going for them. The employees at Big Bazaar are dedicated, their loyalty is unmatched and they are very respectful. She spoke with great satisfaction with Sheena in Dehradun as a possible future Team Leader. Big Bazaar strongly feels that these qualities that the PwDs exhibit with unfailing regularity are big assets in terms of both social sensitivities, as well as business outcomes such as longer serving employees, and more acceptability in the market as a socially sensitive retail brand. In the words of Saraiwalla:

“The advantages of hiring disabled persons are many, some of which can be observed in the form of key attributes they bring to the workforce -

Loyalty - Hiring people with disabilities gives them hope and they in turn strive to show distinction. The employees show up regularly and are happy to work. They are proud to do meaningful work and gain a sense of accomplishment in the process. They are meticulous about their duties and desire to make Big Bazaar proud. Attrition in retail is a challenge with churn levels going up to as much as 10%. PwD churn rate was as low as 1-3% at Big Bazaar. This had implications for continuity, recruitment, and training. In simple terms, having more PwDs on board impacted the bottom line in a positive way.

Optimism - PwDs respect their job and feel their contribution is bringing positive change, which is true. Their light spreads to all the employees, inspiring them and keeping their spirits high. “If they can do it with a smile, anyone can do it”- is a strong ethic that builds among non-PwDs.

Perspective - Diversity in a business always helps one see things from a different perspective. Disability recruitment allows one to think of ideas that wouldn't normally be thought of.

Other benefits that stem from employing PwDs that Big Bazaar has received include a positive rub off from conscientious capitalism; brand boost among customers stemming from employing marginalized members of society; and improved productivity. This is not to say that there are no areas of concern. Low-income backgrounds of many PwDs, PwD-unfriendly public spaces, protective mindset of parents, and difficulty of cultural acceptance are all barriers that Big Bazaar must overcome as they seek to make the PwD initiative more inclusive (Refer Exhibit 3 for more details).

PwD Recruitment, Training, and Career Planning at Big Bazaar

All team members (entry level positions in Big Bazaar retail) must have cleared at least class 12. To move higher up, it is required that they pick up a graduate level qualification. This eligibility criterion is applicable to all front-line staff, including PwDs. Equality, inclusivity and diversity require that PwDs be given equal, not special, opportunities.

Big Bazaar's HR Department is closely connected with various NGOs that work with PwDs. These NGOs become the recruitment pools from which Big Bazaar hires. Any PwD having cleared Class 12 examinations can apply to Big Bazaar for retail positions. They are invited to Big Bazaar stores to take a site tour in order to clearly understand the work environment before they accept any job offers that may be made. During the interview process, it is mandatory for interviewers of PwDs to not ask anything questioning the person's ability to do a particular job. When the candidate has been found to be suitable in all other respects, the interviewer informs the person of the profile, and asks if he or she would like to take up the offer. It is completely up to the PwD to express doubt or regret. HR at Big Bazaar strongly believes that this is the best way to get acceptance. (Refer Exhibit 4 for Hiring Guidelines for PwDs at Big Bazaar).

Step 1: Skill Matching – Identifying suitable jobs

The first step towards employing persons with disabilities (PWD) is to do a skill charting of all the job profiles available within the Organization, where their fitment is apt (Refer Exhibit 1). This exercise enables identification of job roles that may be carried out by PwDs and indicates the types of Disabilities that may be suitable for specific job profiles. The overriding direction is to "focus on ability rather than disability".

Step 2: Selection Process

Big Bazaar presently employs the following selection procedure:

1. Based on person specifications and job descriptions, Big Bazaar works with a combination of NGO / Organizations working for PwDs to source candidates
2. There are no other short-listing Criteria - Big Bazaar does not use any separate criteria on grounds of disabilities
3. After these steps, a personal Interview is conducted

In the induction training for new PwDs, as well as non-PwDs, information on the Avesha programme (which deals with communication to Persons with Disabilities) is imparted. Every effort is made to familiarize them with the jargon of the trade. Terms like “credit/debit card”, “checkouts”, “trolleys/shopping carts”, “shelf/bay/floor”, “card reading machine”, etc., are taught as part of a carefully crafted glossary of important terms. This builds the confidence of PwD employees instantly. The usage of trade jargon helps them “belong” to the trade they have chosen to make a living in.

The organization is proud of the higher productivity levels and a lower margin of error in most of the activities assigned to PwDs.

From a career growth perspective, Big Bazaar focusses on running various training programmes such as STRIDE and LEAP for all employees without discriminating between PwDs and non PwDs, and therefore consciously not encouraging special skilling programs for PwDs alone but encouraging them to grow within the organization.

The emphasis has been to create pathways for PwDs to rise as much as possible based on merit and a supportive environment. As the number of PwDs increase more and more, career paths will open, thereby encouraging the movement.

PwD Policy as an Embedded and Ongoing Activity

It is imperative to make PwD inclusion and sensitization a mainstream, everyday theme. Saraiwala understands this only too well. As part of an activity calendar, Big Bazaar recently organized a series of very creative and well received initiatives for PwDs.

In the first event, Big Bazaar executed a campaign where 1000 blind individuals were invited from across India and were taught how to cook and groom themselves well. Blind PwDs who were never allowed to touch a pair of scissors, or enter the kitchen, chopped vegetables; others who had never seen or heard of a ‘palazzo’², touched, felt and purchased them at FBB (Fashion at Big Bazaar); yet others who could not see themselves in a mirror learnt how to use makeup to embellish their beauty; and families with autistic children came to know that shopping malls can be relaxing and fun places because they felt cared for. It was a list of firsts for these shoppers who did a bunch of things that non-PwDs take for granted. It was also a first for Big Bazaar.

² Pants fitted closely at the waist which flare out towards the feet

In another event, members of a blind women's cricket team were invited to walk the ramp for a fashion show.

In a third event, Big Bazaar conducted India's first Quiet Hour on December 3, 2018, for autistic persons in one store at Matunga, Mumbai. Sounds from the cash till, trolley movements, and announcements were minimized/eliminated for two hours. This was a significant step as autistic persons are extra sensitive to sensory stimuli, and this was Big Bazaar's true attempt to meet their special needs. Families of 70 autistic individuals benefited from this initiative.

In yet another initiative to accommodate PwD's requirements, Big Bazaar piloted a service called "Special Assistance" where PwDs could pre-book a Shopping Assistant or request for a wheelchair or even assistance in reaching the store. The Shopper simply needs to choose the store he or she wants to visit, and the time of visit; Big Bazaar takes care of the rest. This initiative was started by inviting organizations working in the disability sector to experience the service firsthand, and conducting multiple listening sessions where more than 15,000 shoppers participated. The response was phenomenal. Thousands of physically challenged people ventured out and shopped for the first time. It was a revelation how visually challenged shoppers embarked on a journey of product discovery, those with locomotion challenges enjoyed using the well-designed trial rooms; while hearing disability shoppers went about their shopping activities with the help of similarly challenged Big Bazaar employees.

Finally, a shopping guide in Braille for visually challenged shoppers was also created for their convenience (refer Exhibit 5).

The movement is well underway, despite many challenges. Big Bazaar is constantly improving its offering for PwDs. The entire organization leadership team is fully committed to the Accessibility Agenda. The whole rank and file from front line staff to the top own the Sabke Liye movement and are committed to sensitization at the store. This results in improved customer service and in attracting PwD talent to work with Big Bazaar. Currently, there are more than 300 PwDs working with Big Bazaar and contributing immensely to the business. People at Big Bazaar strongly believe that the Sabke Liye movement will revolutionize the entire retail arena and the objective is to give everyone the right to shop with dignity and self-confidence. Big Bazaar's goal is to employ persons with all kinds of disabilities and is presently working actively to find suitable job roles for persons with visual impairment. The goal is to have a significant number of PwDs working in Big Bazaar with at least 1 PwD in every store. The organization envisions an empowered and inclusive culture which, while making profits, will continue to do so with dignity for all concerned, especially for persons with disabilities.

Exhibit-1: Disability Type Based Work Option Grid

Band 1	Physical Disability		Speech & Hearing Impaired		Vision Impaired	
	Mild	Severe	Mild	Severe	Mild	Severe
Profile						
Cashier	*	*	*			
Warehouse	*	*	*			
CSD	*	*	*			
TM Replenisher						
* Fashion	*		*	*	*	
* Food	*		*	*		
* GM	*		*	*	*	

Mild Disability -

It is an impairment of cognitive skills, adaptive life skills, social skills and low IQ skills.

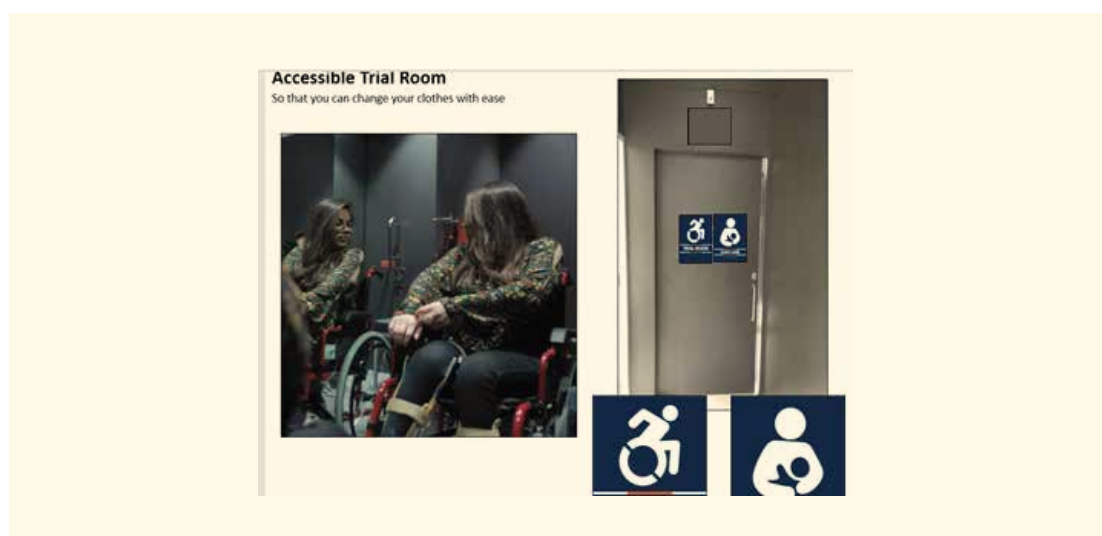
Severe Disability -

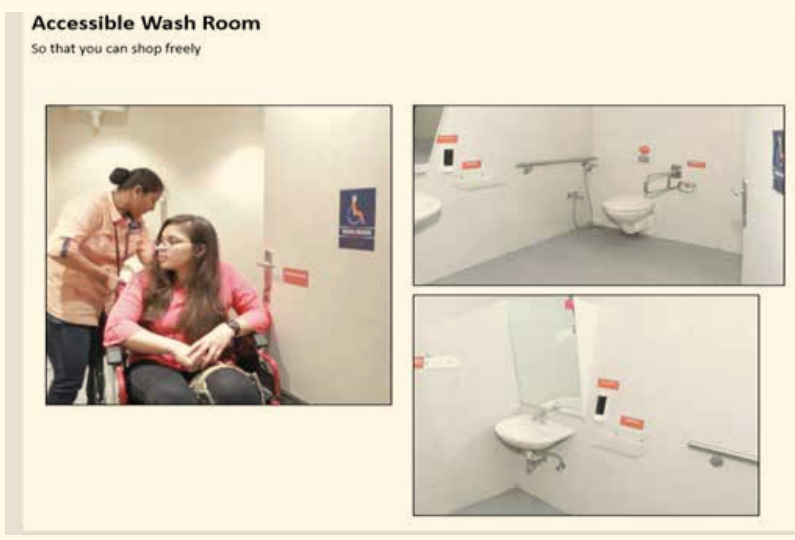
It is a physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capabilities such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills and work skills.

Source:

Big Bazaar/Future Group

Exhibit-2: PwD Friendly Retailscapes





DISABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE



The Triggers

Conscience caplta:

Amid rising inequality, single-minded pursuit of profit has become a dirty word. Hiring persons with disabilities adds a positive touch

Brand boost:

Employing people who are marginalised socially due to their disabilities has a great rub-off on the brand, the company and customers

Low attrition:

PwDs are loyal workers and a big edge in high-attrition sectors like hospitality

Productivity edge:

PwDs, often socially ignored and even ill-treated, are less distracted and have low absenteeism



The Hurdles

Conscience caplta:

Low-income backgrounds: Many come from economically - weaker families with low education or skill levels with poor access to jobs in the corporate world

Ill-equipped public spaces:

From public transport to malls, India is poorly equipped to cater to the needs of PwDs, thereby worsening their mobility and handicaps

Mindset issue:

Protective parents, who treat them as special case all their lives, find it difficult to let go and expose them to the mainstream

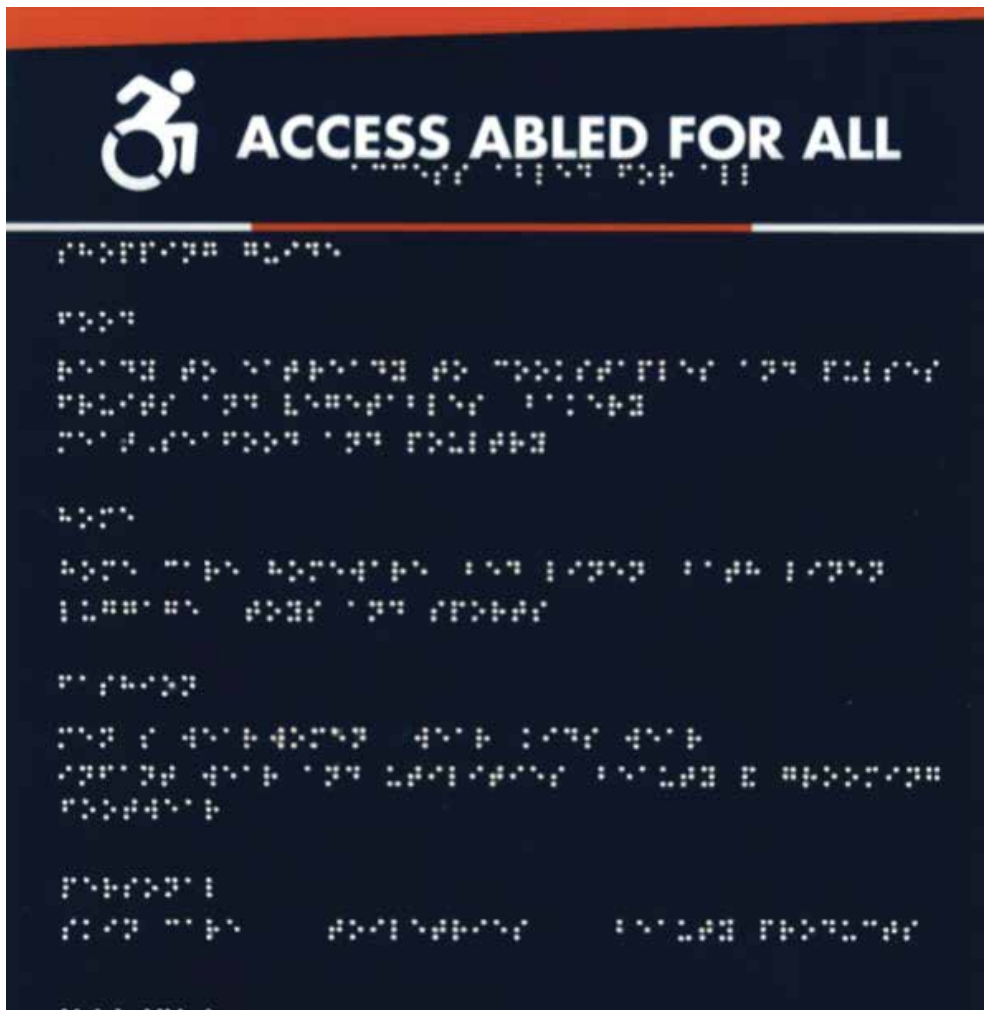
Cultural acceptance:

Often the resistance comes from workers who fear PwDs colleagues may be a drag on the team

Exhibit-4: PwD Hiring Guidelines at Big Bazaar

- ✓ Do not ask an applicant if they have a disability or ask about the nature or severity of their disability.
- ✓ Do focus on the applicant's qualifications and skills.
- ✓ Do use a list of questions and ask every candidate the same questions.
- ✓ Do ask every applicant to describe or demonstrate how, with reasonable accommodation if necessary, they will perform the duties of the job.
- ✓ Don't eliminate a qualified applicant based on assumptions about their disability.

Exhibit-4: Big Bazaar Shopping Guide in Braille



Hospitable to PwDs in the Hospitality Sector

InterContinental Hotels Group

Inclusivity initiatives have become prevalent across the hospitality industry in the recent years. One such area of focus has been the employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), a British multinational hospitality company, has been at the forefront of this movement. Headquartered in Denham, Buckinghamshire, England, IHG has more than 840,000 guest rooms in nearly 5,700 hotels across 100 countries. IHG South West Asia is headquartered in Gurgaon, India, and administers hotels in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. In India, the group has 38 hotels, and more than 6,500 rooms under four brands - Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express and Intercontinental - to cater to both leisure and business travelers.

When Rishabh Tandon, Director HR North India at IHG Group, states proudly

that the loyalty exhibited by PwDs is very high, one appreciates the fact that the well-known hospitality chain is “doing good by being good”. In 2014, Major Chauhan joined IHG as a Group HR Head. He brought his passion and experience from his former employer, another mid segment hotel chain famous for its PwD inclusivity initiatives. From 2016, Inclusion is a part of IHG people strategy and there has been no looking back.

From a humble beginning of hiring employees being PwDs, today IHG has kept a healthy target of 2.5% of average manning from the PwD category in all properties, as a matter of standing policy directive. Tandon explains that some properties have already gone above the policy benchmark with PwD inclusivity being aggressively pursued.

IHG's PwD Inclusivity Philosophy

As a worldwide equal opportunity employer, IHG embraces inclusivity as part of its global policy. "It's our initiative towards inclusion and providing equal work opportunities to PwDs, thereby empowering them economically and socially", states Tandon.

A meta study by Lindsay et al (2018)³ of 20 years of research work states that benefits of hiring people with disabilities include improvements in profitability - profits and cost-effectiveness, turnover and retention, reliability and punctuality, employee loyalty, company image; competitive advantage - diverse customers, customer loyalty and satisfaction, innovation, productivity, work ethic, safety; inclusive work culture, and ability awareness. Secondary benefits for people with disabilities included improved quality of life and income, enhanced self-confidence, expanded social network, and a sense of community. Thus, there are wide ranging benefits to hiring people with disabilities.

In the case of IHG, improved profitability, positive brand image, and competitive advantage have all been incidental byproducts of an inclusivity policy that is focused on economic and social empowerment of PwDs through their inclusion in the workforce. Tandon firmly believes that being a part of the IHG workforce had elevated the self-confidence and social status of PwD employees. "This has been IHG's real contribution", He says.

IHG offers access to all. The group understands that differently abled guests have different needs. The same philosophy is applied to their PwD employees. IHG fully appreciates that to achieve customer satisfaction and operational excellence in the service industry, it is imperative to promote internal marketing where every employee is treated with respect and dignity. This has a marked impact on profitability through a service profit chain linkage. When other employees observe how IHG human resource policies are considerate of PwDs, they too are motivated positively.

PwDs in the IHG Group - India Operations

PwDs are currently recruited for roles in Food & Beverage Service, Housekeeping, Security, Laundry, Concierge etc., through various NGOs across the country, including Sarthak Educational Trust, Noida Deaf Society, etc.

The recruitment process is the same for PwDs and non PwDs. "One of the things that we have realized is that for PwDs one of the most important facets is to be treated equally and with respect", states Tandon. "The PwD employees usually do not want any special treatment, except for tools to help level the playing field. The larger the number of people who have a working knowledge of how to interact effectively with PwDs within the organization (including during the interview process), the more empowered PwDs feel".

³ Lindsay S, Cagliostro E, Albarico M, Mortaji N, Karon L, (2018), "A Systematic Review of the Benefits of Hiring People with disabilities", Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, Vol 28, Issue 4, pp 634-655.

Interviews are conducted with the heads of Functional Departments, Human Resources and the General Manager of the recruiting property. Based on their existing skill set, positive attitude and eagerness to acquire job knowledge, candidates are selected for employment. Almost 90 % of PwDs employed with IHG establishments in India are speech or hearing impaired. Some are physically challenged.

Making PwDs Feel at Home

In the initial stages, having PwDs working with non PwDs can be a challenge. IHG India operations was no exception. However, after the initial teething troubles, things smoothed out, mainly through training programs. Non PwD team members across each property were (and are) sensitized on the appropriate ways of working with PwDs, through structured training programs employing domain experts from NGOs like Sarthak Educational Trust. These training programs are repeated every six months, so that all non PwDs are fully aware and conversant with the appropriate ways of engaging and working with their PwD colleagues.

In addition, special assistance toolkits are provided to PwDs to enable their interactions with customers and colleagues. These toolkits contain several tools, such as, writing pads (to take orders from customers and check with them for correctness), badges (indicating their disability for the benefit of colleagues and customers), whistles (to signal emergencies), etc.

Sign language posters have been made a part of the “Heart of the House” (kitchen, laundry, pantry, etc. – also called the Back of the House, or BOH). PwDs are also assigned responsibilities in the Front of the House (FOH), where customers and hotel employees interact in the visible zone. At least one person from the hotel team in every IHG property has gained basic proficiency in conversational sign language. This instils tremendous confidence in PwDs in the organization. This way IHG impacts more people who become sensitized to the special needs of PwDs - a welcome contribution to society.

Performance Evaluation

The performance evaluation process for all employees is the same. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are defined at the beginning of the year, and quarterly checks are conducted via informal conversations to provide constant feedback. End of year self-assessment is then followed by managerial assessment, based on which final performance ratings are given. This is a morale booster for the PwD employees: that their growth is not due to any special considerations or relaxing of norms. It increases their self-esteem and self-confidence multifold. IHG's equal opportunity methodology to assess employee performance goes a long way in offering respect to PwDs.

Training and Upskilling for Current & Future Roles

Trainings are provided with English subtitles. There is a dedicated video library for training PwDs, which serves as an effective training intervention tool. Monthly catch up meetings are conducted to understand the aspirations of PwDs and their way forward.

IHG also schedules an annual Career Week, when PwDs are made aware of other IHG Hotels / departments. Special events like National Abilympics (Culinary and Bakery competition) in collaboration with Sarthak were also organized by IHG hotels across key metro cities in India to fully appreciate the hotel's wide range of activities.

Charting Growth Paths for PwDs

At IHG India, HR policies are being designed to use competency mapping to perfectly match the new PwD employees with jobs and career paths best suited to them. Since it has been just a few years, PwDs who joined as Associates are still making their way to Supervisor and Executive levels in the organizational hierarchy. The management is confident that in the years to come, PwDs will take up supervisory positions. Currently, as they advance to the Supervisory level, they handle 8-10 team members. "In the future, the number of PwDs at higher levels will surely increase and we are working towards merit-based elevation to the supervisory cadre", says Tandon.

IHG encourages growth outside of organizational roles too. "Necessary approvals are provided to PwDs in the organization to pursue their talents, especially if it is in the public domain. "IHG Crowne Plaza Okhla has two PwDs who are athletes and often participate in national level competitions. We encourage them to do so in every possible way, including availing specific approved leave to travel and participate in such events", avers Tandon.

Internal Appreciation

IHG's weekly appreciation townhall event, "Winning Ways Wednesdays", is a great platform for appreciating special extra-mile employee contributions to enhance guest satisfaction as well as internal teamwork. PwD and non PwD contributions to both "Front of the House" and "Back of the House" are highlighted for commendations. Thank You (TY) cards are awarded to the winners every week, and an employee graduates to the next level when he or she has collected 10 TY cards. PwDs make the cut just as much as non PwDs in this weekly appreciation activity.

PwDs are also a constant feature in the IHG's coveted Brand Hearted Heroes book (published annually), where stories of colleagues that have gone above and beyond the regular call of duty are featured. PwDs are regularly featured on IHG Careers facebook page with their inspiring stories at workplace.

Moreover, when an employee (PwD or otherwise) has contributed significantly, the Human Resources department organizes events where selected employees get to have lunch with senior members of the IHG group executive body. This brings a higher level of motivation to the employees, especially PwDs. “The time senior management spends with them has a very special meaning to our PwD colleagues, and we intend to find more ways to do this”, states Tandon.

Impact of PwD Employees

Currently, productivity gains from hiring PwDs have not been assessed separately, at the India level. However, from a brand image perspective, their presence creates an inclusive culture and customers are appreciative of this initiative. IHG Hotels have received accolades from NGOs like Sarthak Educational Trust and the World HRD Congress for their efforts in building inclusivity. IHG is known worldwide for its racial, religious and gender-based diversity. Further, the Human Rights Code of Conduct speaks about the workplace ethos and stresses on the need for fair treatment and equal opportunities for all people coming from different parts of society. At a corporate culture creation level, such inclusivity fosters the values of inclusion, equality, mutual respect, acceptance of diversity and sensitizes all employees on the needs of PwDs outside the workplace as well. The customers also appreciate service by PwDs and share positive feedback on social media platforms.

Customer Appreciation

One of the greatest rewards for an organization pursuing an inclusivity policy, especially involving PwDs, is the happiness it brings to its customers. IHG takes pride in the fact that often guests share their compliments about the presence of PwDs in the service delivery process at IHG facilities. Loyal customers, upon returning for another stay at IHG properties, have even borne gifts for certain PwDs who served them well during their previous visits. “It is highly satisfying for us to see such a deep connection that is created by our inclusivity policy”. Customers’ appreciation may or may not always result in returning customers, but the IHG brand image gets a positive boost. The word of mouth impact is significant, and in the hospitality industry referrals are key to business growth.

Loyalty – Building Commitment

It is no secret that the best way of promoting loyalty among employees, whether PwD or non PwD is by creating a supportive and empowering environment. IHG has successfully created precisely such an ecosystem where the PwD employees are respected, empowered, empathized with, recognized, and rewarded.

A 2007 study by DePaul University⁴, USA found some salient points about employing PwDs-

<p>1</p> <p>Disability employment agencies and disability advocates were critical for recruiting and hiring workers with disabilities. IHG India has a close relationship with NGOs working with PwDs and has held it in good stead in sourcing PwD employees.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Managers were viewed as having biases against workers with disabilities and concerned regarding the cost of accommodations. At IHG, through regular structured training programs, such biases are identified and eliminated successfully.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Promotion opportunities were limited for workers with disabilities, with many identified as holding and remaining in entry-level positions. IHG has successfully moved PwDs beyond the entry level, in a short span of five years since PwD inclusivity took root and the current focus is on taking them to the managerial level.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Costs associated with workers with disabilities were minimal and worth the expense. Through training and cost benefit analysis, IHG has been able to educate managers about the low overall cost of hiring PwDs, given their long tenure and low absenteeism.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Benefits associated with workers with disabilities included having dedicated and reliable employees, a more diverse workforce, and an overall positive organizational environment.</p>
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Tandon emphasizes, “As a senior HR functionary at IHG, I have observed that our PwD employees exhibit loyalty, and are committed to the goals of the organization. They are often exceptionally motivated to prove to everybody else that hiring them was a good decision. Going forward, IHG is keen on increasing diversity and inclusivity across its global footprint and PwDs will continue to play a significant role in this”.

⁴ Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities, (2007), DePaul University and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; http://bbi.syr.edu/_assets/staff_bio_publications/McDonald_Exploring_the_Bottom_Line_2007.pdf, accessed February 1, 2020.

Business Success through Social Responsibility

Microsign Products

The story of Microsign Products, a small and mid-sized (SME) enterprise, is unique in the context of how they successfully integrated the employment of persons with disabilities (PwD) as one of the cornerstones of their business model, all because of the foresight and zeal of the promoter and CEO, Mr. Nisheeth Mehta. Microsign is a leading manufacturer of plastic fasteners like cable ties, clips, clamps and markers in India. Established in 1979, the company was set up with a clear focus on meeting the requirements of the automotive industries for high quality plastic fasteners. Microsign provided its clients a clear advantage by enabling them to substitute high cost imported fasteners with locally manufactured parts, improving their operational efficiency as well as reducing component cost.

The company worked closely with their customers to develop and manufacture

customized fasteners in their Neswad, Bhavnagar based plant, in the western Indian state of Gujarat. The plant was equipped with globally benchmarked technology and used state-of-the-art injection-moulding equipment from world-renowned manufacturers like BOY of Germany, and Fanuc from Japan. The injection-moulds were sourced from Taiwan, China and from leading mould manufacturers in India, having the latest technology. Thus, the focus was on operational efficiency through cutting-edge technology, and peak productivity with zero-defect quality, which demanded very high levels of training, proficiency, motivation and commitment of their workers.

The company is very successful in its chosen domain, and caters to leading manufacturers across automotive, defence, aerospace, tele-communication, electrical, electronics, and packaging Industries.

High Performance Culture and Core Company Values

Microsign Products is IATF 16949 certified by Bureau Veritas for last two decades. The company has always had a culture of continuous improvement and had successfully implemented projects in the areas of quality, productivity, and energy conservation, which clearly manifests the involvement of top management driving the entire team.

One of the key values driving the company was its concern for the society. This was manifested by the strong engagement Microsign had with PwD, in creation of employment opportunities for them, and providing training and motivation for them to succeed in their chosen roles. Microsign had a strong footprint of PwD in its human resource pool, with about 60 per cent of their employees being 'specially-abled'. The company had consistently met its business and operations performance goals, proving that there was no correlation between high corporate performance benchmarks and having PwD as employees.

The success of Microsign and their highly skilled and motivated personnel was clearly validated by the illustrious client list including Tata Motors, Mahindra, Honda Motorcycle and scooters, Mothersons, ISRO, New Holland, and Daimler. As the Founder and CEO, Mehta was committed to build Microsign as a socially responsible company and had personally championed the cause of CSR at Microsign for the last four decades. To employ PwD in the organization was his idea, and he was personally involved in the recruitment, training, and supervision of PwD hired by Microsign. He was also in-charge of a development centre in Bhavnagar. The key objective of the centre was to identify and nurture the hidden youth talent and mobilize their energy in the right direction.

PwD and Manpower Planning at Microsign

At the inception stage, Microsign's policy was not structured. The company hired PwD whenever Mehta happened to have a chance meeting with any one of them. Later, as people became aware of his initiative, they referred their disabled relatives and friends for employment. References would also come from local schools and even existing or former employees. Mehta was actively involved in the recruitment of PwDs because he felt that his personal attention was required.

PwD employees at Microsign Products belonged to different backgrounds and socio-economic strata. The PwD employees were normally uneducated (school dropouts), with few of them with higher secondary (12 years of schooling) certificates. Communicating and training them to acquire and demonstrate skill was a big challenge. Hence, the skill development focus was to train them to fulfil the basic requirements specified for a particular job, defined by the motto - 'Nothing More, Nothing Less,' which focused on defining very specific training programs for different types of roles and delivering zero-defect work output at all levels.

The Need for PwD

Mehta had a personal experience of the challenges a person with disability faces, as he had closely witnessed the plight of his niece with hearing impairment. Regardless of her having attained the best possible education and training, she was not able to find a suitable employment. However, when she was eventually employed at a company as Administration Assistant, she performed with great diligence and accuracy. To Mehta, it was clear that providing a chance like this to a PwD can work wonders. This life experience and the long process of soul searching after having attended a 'Gyan Yagna⁵' held by Swami Brahmattmanandji of Bhavnagar in Rishikesh in 1985, acted as a clarion call for Mehta, and he thought of formalizing a strategy and structure at Microsign that proactively looked at employing PwD for various roles without any preconceived biases. There was a clear realization in him that he must repay the society for all the largesse and opportunities to grow he had had been blessed with.

Human Resource Management at Microsign for PwDs

The first thing that Microsign realized was that they should not differentiate between different types of disabilities. Instead, they devised a classification of the various work processes at their shop floor, and based on their experience of working with PwD, they associated specific broad types of disabilities to specific operations processes where the PwD were an asset rather than a liability. (See Exhibit-1).

For instance, their experience of working with orthopedically disabled personnel had revealed that they were very efficient in performing high precision work because they displayed more patience and perseverance. Thus, such PwD were best fit for finishing, assembly, counting and packaging activities. The hearing-impaired employees were found to possess greater grasping power and ability to focus on a task for sustained period, enabling them to work with heightened efficiency on machines. The hyper-active people and slow learners were good at working on set procedures and work which demanding precision.

Induction process:

On-job induction process was followed as in conventional induction programs, but with a difference. PwDs were found to be needing extra support in the form of group and individual counselling, especially to feel comfortable in a work environment where they sometimes felt overwhelmed by the demands. Having disabilities especially in the prevalent societal milieu where PwDs are considered helpless liabilities; and their own past failures in being considered unfit for most jobs; conditioned many PwD with a mind-set that they are not good enough compared to their able-bodied co-workers. However, personal counselling at Microsign worked very well, many times with the direct intervention of the CEO. All managers and supervisors were sensitized to the need to make the PwD feel like valued team members.



⁵ Literally translated as a Hindu ritual to make one realize the ultimate truth and meaning of life. Usually, led by a seer wherein small or large groups of people go through a process of self-realization and learning.

Training and Upskilling:

Development of employees is enshrined as one of the core values of the company. In this direction, Microsign had invested a substantial amount of time and money in employee training and upskilling. Employees were exposed to new and emerging technologies; trained on industry best practices; and underwent team-building exercises to coalesce in the routine work culture of company where they were not perceived as any different from able-bodied employees.



All employees at Microsign, whether PwD or able-bodied personnel, underwent rigorous and targeted training and skill enhancement programs as per a structured training calendar. Depending on achievement of assigned skills, the next set of skills were determined, and training was imparted accordingly.

Performance evaluation:

At Microsign, all employees performing individual operations filled their job cards regularly. For group activities, section heads had the responsibility of filling out the work sheets. At regular intervals, data from these cards were collated and analyzed for evaluating performance of individuals. The two key parameters that were always tracked and analyzed were productivity and in-process rejection levels, for which acceptable norms and standards were discussed and communicated beforehand. In case of non-performance, the individual or group concerned were communicated about the deviation from laid down norms, followed by individual counselling and/or group meetings with specific interventions being designed and delivered.



Compensation, Retention and Reward Strategies:

Compensation and benefits schemes at Microsign were at par with the industry labour norms. All employees were covered under health and accident policies. In some cases, family insurance was provided. The education expenses of deserving employees were borne by the company. Advances were given to meet individual needs, such as weddings, house construction, illness in family, etc.

Microsign encouraged involvement of all employees in Continuous Improvement Program, conducted from time to time. All employees actively participated in “Kaizen” schemes. Open house and communication meetings were held every month for communicating and updating employees on company performance, as well as the external challenges and opportunities that the company was facing. During these monthly meetings, individual employees were awarded for their achievement. The company also schedules an annual outbound program with a clear emphasis on team building, trust, and employee morale, especially focusing on increasing camaraderie, and acceptance between the PwD and other employees in the workforce.

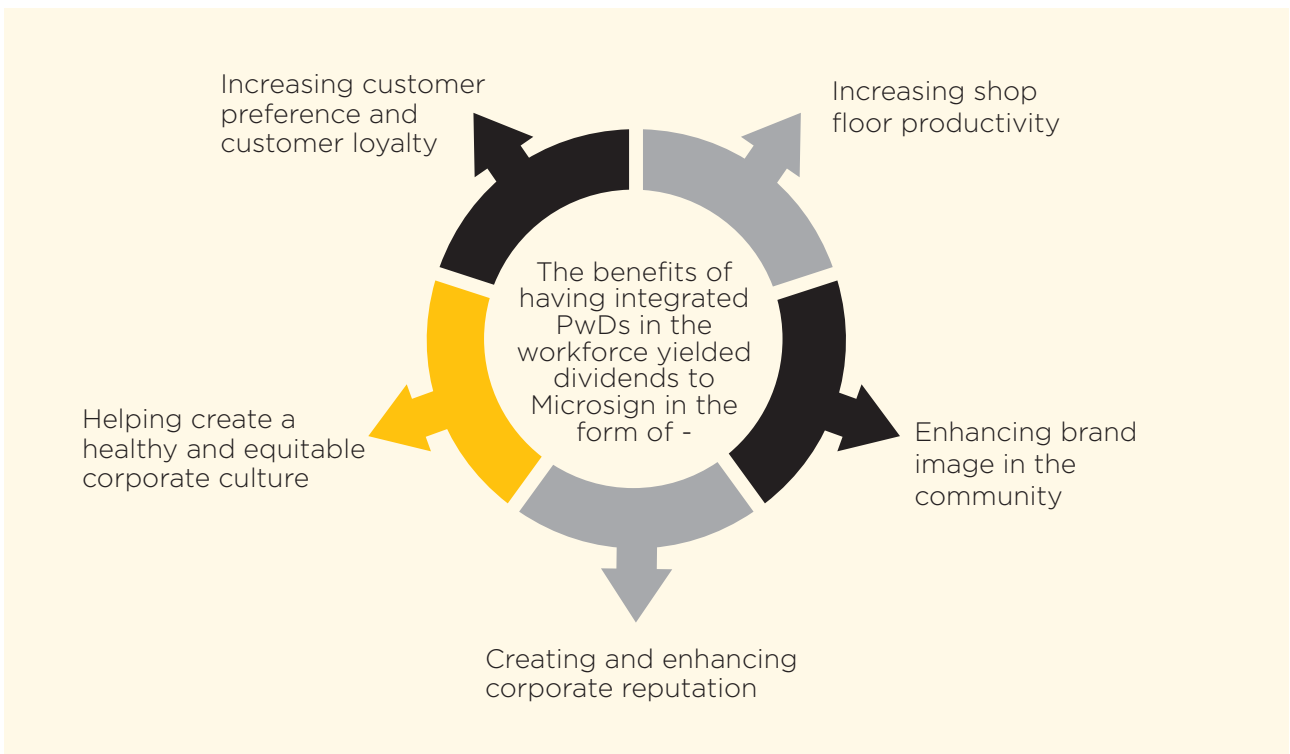


Career Development Initiatives for PwD:

Microsign aimed at providing a kick-start to the careers of PwD, and integrating them into an efficient team of workers, which includes able-bodied workers, and PwD working together as high-performing teams. The engagement philosophy was founded upon the simple value of identifying and matching the right kind of job suited to a specific type of disability. The core belief was that if one can strike the right combination of PwD with the right job, the workforce would greatly benefit. The company has showcased that if assigned at the right place and job, the productivity of the PwD was superior in many ways as compared to able-bodied employees. Since 1990, the company had given preference in recruitment to PwD. Only in circumstances where the job required an able-bodied worker, the company specifically looked for able-bodied candidates.



Impact of PwD Employees



At Microsign, the dedication and perseverance of employees with disabilities became a motivator for all employees to work harder and achieve better outcomes for themselves as well as the company. There was clear evidence that the output of able-bodied employees had also improved since the PwDs started working together with them.

Mehta, in his tireless effort in building non-discriminatory workplace, found repeated appreciation, awards and felicitations, both at the national as well as international levels. Some of these were –

- The National Presidential Award to Outstanding Employer for the PwD for the year 1999;
- The NCPEDP - Hellen Keller Award for the year 1999;
- FICCI Outstanding Achievement in Empowerment of Physically Challenged for the year 2003-2004;
- IMC Ramkrishna Bajaj National Quality Award for the Year 2007;
- CNN IBN Real Heroes Award for the year 2009;
- A business case study on Microsign Products, for their path-breaking effort in creating profitability through social responsibility, was registered at the prestigious Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad for use in classroom teaching and training programs.
- Another case study on Microsign was awarded with 3rd Best Paper at the International Conference on CSR and Sustainable Development - 2013 at Thailand.
- Mehta was invited in 2016 to a talk show, namely “Aaj Ki Raat Hai Zindagi⁶” hosted by the renowned Indian thespian Mr. Amitabh Bachchan at Star Plus (Popular entertainment TV channel). The program idea conceived by BBC and adopted by Star Plus (India) identified and invited Indian individuals for an interview on the channel, who had an exceptional record of accomplishments in contributing to nation building at a personal level.

Microsign has created a unique and integrated workplace where 60 % of their employees were PwD (See: Exhibit-2). At the shop floor, 85 % of employees were PwD (See: Exhibit-3) who had various disabilities like hearing impairment; orthopedically disabled; hyperactive or slow learners (See: Exhibit-4). Each of them was identified, recruited, trained on a specific skill, and inducted into the workforce. The skill selection process was carefully operationalized ensuring that the disability did not hamper their performance in their designated job. These PwDs were engaged across all manufacturing activities like operating injection-moulding machines, right from conventional hydraulic to imported servo-controlled machines, finishing operations, assembly operations, counting and packing etc.

⁶ A talk show hosted by a legendary Indian film actor. The title of the show literally translated as “Tonight an Ode to Life”

Attrition versus sustainability

The first PwD appointed at Microsign in 1986 was a person with hearing and speech impairment. Mr. Tukesh Bhatt was then working as a newspaper distributor in Bhavnagar. Bhatt was appointed as an operator of the injection-moulding machine. He is still working with Microsign. Over his long tenure, Bhatt excelled in his job and graduated successfully operating high-end all-electric injection-moulding machine with a robotic arm.

Mehta had always described himself as an individual who accepted all human beings as equal, and had the conviction that each individual, despite their abilities/disabilities, could be successfully moulded, enabling them to explore their inherent potentials and live a satisfying life with dignity. He credited Microsign's success in profitably integrating PwD in the workforce to their perseverance and ability to identify the 'right job for the right disability'. The credo at Microsign was that the disabled were unutilized human resources which if utilized correctly and adequately can certainly enhance the production capacity manifold. Employee attrition, especially in the PwD category was not even an issue at Microsign, as their tenure was characterized by loyalty and commitment to the company and being fully engaged in the tasks assigned to them as productive and valued team members.

PwDs who work at Microsign Products believed in the motto, "We wish, we can, we will and we must". Their determination emerged from their struggle for survival. The employees had this intense motivation to excel in whatever they were expected to do. In the process, they learnt industry specific skills with zeal, while the financial independence enhanced their confidence.

There were instances when the company had to meet a deadline, the work was tedious and had to be done meticulously. Employees with Disabilities usually came forward and took the ownership to finish the work on time. This behaviour demonstrated by the employees proved that they were just as industrious as any other employee. Absenteeism was almost negligible among the PwD employees, they did not take frequent breaks while working. They worked with unwavering attention and speed for hours together. Thus, as far as performance was concerned, hiring PwD was clearly a win-win strategy for Microsign.

The Challenges and Coping Strategies

Work allotment at Microsign was strategized based on the types of disability for the PwDs. While the work allocation system was designed completely in-house, it evolved over a substantial period. The implementation was based upon the experiencing, observing and understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and capabilities of PwD, as manifested in the workplace.

Equipment and machinery ordered for the plant at Microsign were suitably modified keeping in mind the necessary features required for the employees who

would operate them. The company had identified the suppliers who were ready to provide customized machines. Orthopedically disabled persons were not allocated to machine operations jobs, as there were risks of accidents. Instead, they were mainly engaged in finishing, assembly, counting and packaging activities.

Most of the design changes that were commissioned in equipment and machinery, required additional investment on part of Microsign. For example, a special lighting feature was added in all machines, which were intended for hearing impaired workers. This lighting system provided a visual cue in case of any fault in the machine, based upon which the machine could be stopped.

To accommodate PwDs in the workplace, special features were incorporated in the physical design of the work environment and company premises. For instance, ramps were constructed for smooth mobility, toilets were renovated to make them handicap friendly, and the workstation placement of the orthopedically disabled persons work were located nearest to the toilets and entrances/exits, such that they don't struggle while making quick ingress and egress.

Learnings

Microsign, which started engaging PwDs as an experiment in social service, evolved to a stage where PwD became a crucial and integral part of the business model of the company. The essence was the work culture and company core values, which considered all differently abled employees as having equal status and responsibilities as other able-bodied employees. The credit went to the dedication and perseverance of both the PwDs and the management, which wholeheartedly championed the cause of being an 'employer of equal opportunity' in the real sense of the term. The support and trust shown by the able-bodied employees in Microsign, gave the CEO the required strength and motivation to take this movement forward.

The company's experience is that PwD asked for more work of their own accord because for them work was like food – a physiological need. In the case of hyper-actives, especially, work seemed therapeutic as being engrossed in work tended to calm them down, which had obvious positive impact on output and morale in the workplace.

Microsign attained the goal of 'unity in diversity' by seamlessly integrating PwDs into their workforce. This integrated workforce led to a two-way learning as the able-bodied employees willingly trained the PwDs in technical work, while the PwDs reciprocated with life lessons on hope, perseverance, dedication, faith, respect, regard, tolerance, and trust.

The Road Ahead

Microsign has persisted with this unique initiative ever since its inception in 1986. Over a period, a customized methodology was developed for recruiting, inducting, training PwDs for being deployed in targeted roles best suited to them and where they did a better job than the average worker. This was reiterated by the outcomes that the PwD delivered.

With the growing market, and opening up of new markets like Metro rail and Bullet trains, they were confident of the company's continued growth. They were convinced that these opportunities would create more job opportunities for the PwD. Also, with the Government of India giving an impetus to the rehabilitation and integration of PwD in mainstream society, Microsign will be right there to facilitate achieving this goal by increasingly inducting PwDs in their workforce.

APPENDICES

Exhibit-1: Nature of work assigned at Microsign Products, based on type of disability

Disability Type	Nature of work found to be specially suited
Hyper-Active	Assembly, Packaging
Slow learner	Assembly, Packaging
Speech and Hearing Impaired	Machines operation
Orthopedically challenged	Finishing, Assembly, Counting, Packaging

Exhibit-2: Ratio of able-bodied employees and PwD employees at Microsign Products

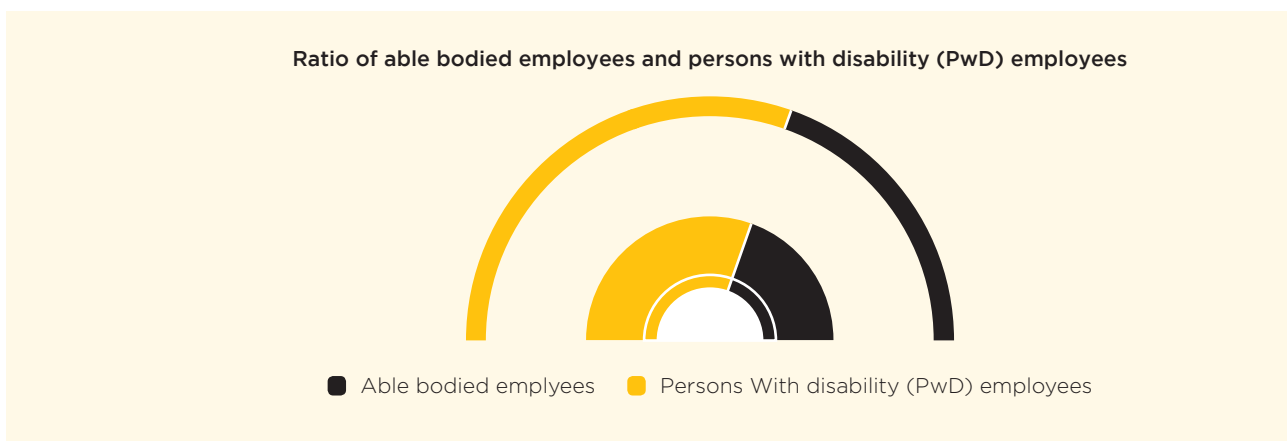


Exhibit-3: Workforce classification at Microsign Products

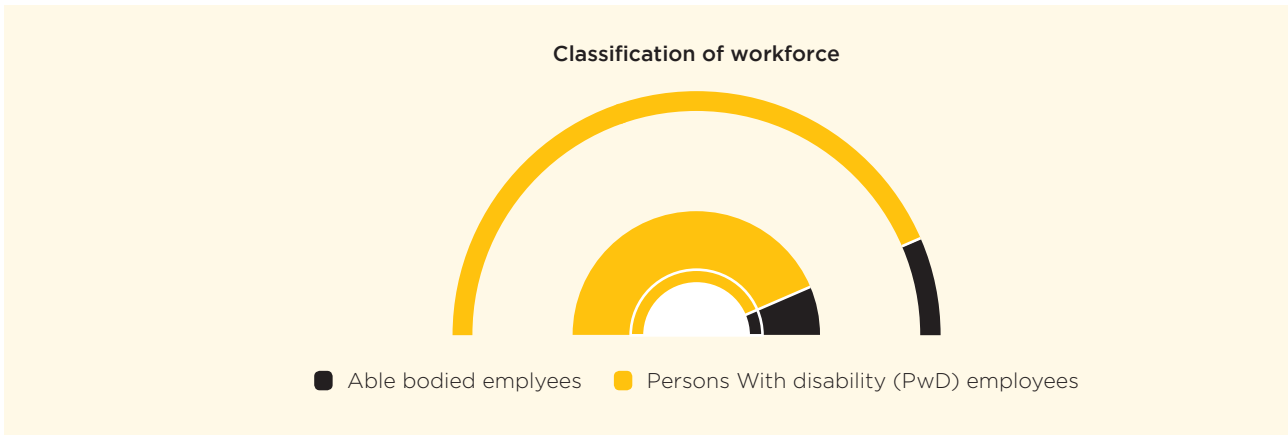
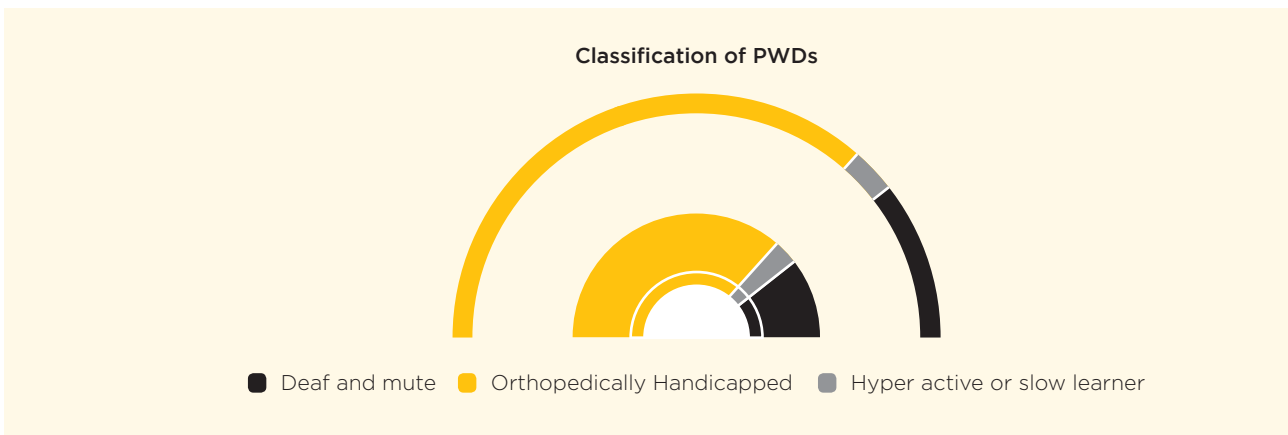


Exhibit-3: Workforce classification at Microsign Products



Towards a Life with Dignity: Sarovar Beckons PwDs Inclusion

Sarovar Hotels

Embracing Inclusivity

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts is a leading hotel management company and one of the fastest-growing hotel chains in India. Headed by a team of industry veterans, the company manages 80 hotels across 50 destinations in India and overseas, under Sarovar Premiere, Sarovar Portico, Homotel brands covering the 3, 4 and 5-star spectrum. Sarovar Hotels also operate the Corporate Hospitality Services division in collaboration with various prestigious business schools.

Sarovar believes that the employees are what set them apart, and that enhancing the wellbeing of their employees does not

only lead to better business, but also enriches guest experience.

Sarovar is always on the look-out for opportunities to enhance their standing as an equal opportunity employer. This is achieved through participation in various job fairs, and as a member of the Confederation of Indian Industry and the India Business and Disability Network. The brand has 80 hotels under its umbrella and employs around 8000 employees of which 30 are PwDs. According to their HR team,



We need to do more and are nowhere close to where we would like to be, but we have made a beginning and with our commitment to the cause, we are sure we will make good progress in this area.



Inclusion at Sarovar Hotels

According to Sarovar's recruitment policy, candidates need to have prior experience in the hospitality sector, and ideally should have completed their education in hospitality/ hotel management. Candidates are shortlisted as per the requirements of the hotel and for final selection an interview process is followed. The company believes that PwDs' should be given an equal opportunity for getting hired. Towards this end, the company has established associations with organizations such as Sarthak Foundation, V-Shesh and Youth4jobs. The firm's experience in hiring PwDs has been positive, and believes that



Many of the PwDs that have been hired have most definitely contributed positively to their respective hotels through their work.



Sarovar focuses on continual skill enhancement for all its employees. Importance is given to employee training needs, which are then imparted through different mechanisms, such as ASE-learning. These trainings are regularly conducted for both old and new employees, as it is a way of promoting their personal growth and contributing towards the firm's development. For the PwD employees the firm provides the necessary handholding and enlists the help of the partner agencies/NGOs for conducting the training sessions.

They follow an open-door policy for better communication. Whenever an input/-feedback is shared with employees, whether about their performance, or for a training requirement, the firm clearly communicates it to relevant person/department. This communication is further emphasized during their annual appraisals.

PwDs and Job Roles

The hiring of PwDs formally began as a CSR initiative undertaken by the corporate office, who believed that many of the jobs could easily be performed by PwDs, once they are given the requisite training.

Sarovar Hotels have undertaken a host of initiatives to increase its PwDs intake. The company attends job fairs to explore the talent pool of PwDs and employs them across different functions in the organization. Even though the firm can hire PwDs for all functions, currently, hiring is concentrated in housekeeping, kitchen,

food and beverage, front office and other operational functions. They are currently working towards hiring and including PwDs in direct customer facing roles.

Hiring process for PwDs remains similar as other employees but company values PwD's interests for placement. Their qualifications are evaluated based on the current requirements, then based on the suitability, an interview is conducted to make a final selection. If there is prior experience in a certain job role, or an interest has been shown for a specific role, it becomes easier for the firm to place the that person.

The general interview process is followed, wherein interviews are conducted by HR, respective functional HODs', and General Manager. Post the candidate's selection, the HR conducts the induction for the candidate through internal HR and training systems.

As a part of the PwDs induction process, the respective HR handholds the new recruits, to ensure they are well accustomed with the new setting. The HR works with the NGOs and organizations to train the PwDs for seamless induction of the candidates.

Sarovar Hotels that if PwDs are given the appropriate training they will perform better and rise in their career. From Sarovar's hiring experience, they strongly believe that PwDs are more focused, loyal, and eager to learn.

Retention strategies and practices adopted

As an ongoing process, an annual appraisal system is followed. The appraisals are held in April and October every year. This is supplemented with regular trainings to support PwDs with opportunities for career growth within the firm. Also an effort is made to extend specific help to the PwD employees, as and when required.

Good performance is recognised through performance certificates given to employees at regular intervals. For enhancing employee engagement, company is working towards developing employee friendly practices.

The firm, with the support of the General Managers, engages NGOs to conduct sensitization programs for the employees with whom the PwDs will be working. Such programs help to make PwDs feel welcome and comfortable at the work-place and provides the peers with the knowledge and tools required to work with their new colleagues.

Apart from the regular staff engagement events like movies, picnics and sports, there are special events to increase PwD engagement, like celebrating birthdays of PwD employees and informal meetings with the general managers.

To identify the exact reason as to why employees are leaving, attrition mapping is done through exit interviews conducted for every employee leaving the firm. A special note is made of the reasons for any PwD leaving the firm.

PwD Speak

The case writer met with Aakash, a Sarovar employee who is a PwD, to hear his experience at the hotel. Aakash is hearing and speech impaired and came to the meeting with Nazmeen, a sign language translator. Nazmeen works with Sarthak, the NGO through which Aakash joined Sarovar. He is currently a steward in the food and beverage department. His work involves table and buffet setup.

Aakash has been with Sarovar Hotel's Vaishali property for the past one and a half years. He is a 12th standard graduate. Prior to joining Vaishali, he underwent 2 months training by Sarthak, post which he underwent an additional 3 months training at Taurus Sarovar Portico in Mahipalpur. Aakash says that after his placement at Vaishali, he initially found things to be a bit difficult, but with time he "learnt by seeing". He also found his colleagues to be supportive in his learning and did not face any discriminatory behaviour from anyone. His colleagues have also been taught some sign language so that they can communicate with ease.

Aakash, now 28 years old, is married. His wife is also hearing and speech impaired. They are proud parents of two lovely children, aged one and a half years and six months respectively. His children are not speech or hearing impaired, and Aakash would like his children to choose their own future. They teach their children sign language so that they can communicate with them without any problems.

Aakash is quite satisfied with his employment at Sarovar. Since he is the only earning member in his family, he looks forward to a promotion and a salary increase.

The Accolades

Although Sarovar's formal inclusion of PwDs started in 2017, their property in Bhavnagar, Gujrat, voluntarily began the initiative before that. The Bhavnagar property has received recognition in local newspapers for their contribution to the cause.





Impact of Inclusion

Sarovar endeavours to create an environment to enable mainstream integration of PwDs. The PwD employees working at their hotels have created recognition amongst customers, which has enhanced their brand image. The inclusive work environment has increased the firm's customer base. Sarovar Hotels is part of the Valuable 500 companies across the globe who have committed to bring the disability-inclusion agenda to their boardroom.

While Sarovar's journey of hiring PwDs began only recently, the organization remains excited and charged about the potential of creating a more inclusive growth story, and about their ability and opportunity to offer PwDs a life of dignity and hope. In doing so, they can be an embodiment of corporate shared responsibility and will truly have contributed to creating a better, more inclusive society.

Building an Inclusive Workplace Culture

Spark Minda – An Ashok Minda Group Company

Spark Minda, Ashok Minda Group is one of the leading manufacturers of automotive components for the OEMs. The firm is headquartered in Gurgaon, India. The Group was founded in 1958, by the Late Shri. S.L. Minda, and today has over 60 years of rich legacy as an automotive component manufacturing company. The group is worth USD 539 Mn (approximately Rs 3500 crores) and employs approximately 16,000 people. Spark Minda is rated as one of the leading manufacturers of automotive components under three Categories – Safety, Security & Restraint System; Driver Information & Telematics; and

Plastic Interiors. The Group caters to the needs of all major Passenger Vehicle, Commercial Vehicle, Motorcycle & Scooter, Off-road Vehicle & Tier 1 Manufacturers in India and services an overseas market that includes Europe, US, China, CIS & ASEAN countries through 36 state-of-the-art manufacturing plants. The company also serves the aftermarket segment in India through a strong distributorship of about 500 dealers. The Group also has several JVs with leading companies from USA, Japan, Italy, China and Uzbekistan.

Industry & Sectoral Context

The Spark Minda has a legacy of Community Development spanning decades. The Community Development projects were undertaken by various units in and around their periphery. Later, it was understood that a common entity needs to be incorporated. Accordingly, Spark Minda Foundation (SMF) was incorporated under Section 8 of Companies Act, as the CSR wing for the Group Companies to undertake CSR activities. The main aim of SMF is to work for community development by catering to education, women empowerment, facilitation of healthcare, upliftment of people with disability, and to sustain the environment. SMF is 100% subsidiary of the mother company, Minda Corporation Limited, which is listed at BSE and NSE.

Disability Inclusion at Spark Minda

According to the 2011 Census, there are 26 million persons with disabilities in India, a number equivalent to 2.2% of the population. Among the total number of PwDs, 15 million are men, and 11 million are women. Amongst this, people with movement disabilities emerge as the top category, with roughly 20% of the disabled population, followed by vision impairment, at 19%.⁷ Through the introduction of Rights of Person with Disability Act 2016 (RPwD), the types of disabilities have been increased from 7 to 21. Therefore, the number of PwDs as recognized by the law is expected to increase. Considering the significance of these numbers, it is no wonder that the concept of equal opportunity and inclusivity of PwDs has been in the forefront of Spark Minda's vision for the future.

Saksham: Empowerment of Persons with Disability (2015-20)

To ensure sustainable livelihoods of Persons with Disability (PwD), Spark Minda Group has developed a Project called "SAKSHAM". This program functions as a supplement to the Accessible India Campaign, launched by the Government of India.

SAKSHAM is a program that works for the empowerment of persons with disability. Within this program, the PwDs are not only benefited through assistive devices, but are also helped with livelihood. The program focuses on their holistic development, and not just a narrow part of their empowerment. Saksham was launched as a program in the year 2015, and since then it has played an important role in the empowerment of the PwDs. Over the last 4 years since the program has been launched, it has distributed 7,928 assistive devices, and has employed about 300+ PwDs in its plants at a National Level.

⁷ http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Disabled_persons_in_India_2016.pdf

SDGs and Saksham

Saksham seeks to directly contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals of the decade and has been a trailblazer in this regard. Some of the goals that Saksham has contributed towards:

- SDG 4 'Quality Education': SMF focuses on creating accessible and inclusive learning environment through different means.
- SDG 8 'Decent Work and Economic Growth': Saksham works on promoting employment of PwDs by establishing skilling linkages and on-job trainings. SMF has also employed more than 300 persons with disability in their plants at various locations.
- SDG 10 'Reduced Inequalities': Saksham has worked on providing prosthesis and orthosis (artificial limbs and callipers respectively), along with assistive aids for persons with physical disability. All this is provided free of cost.
- SDG 17 'Partnerships for the Goal': Saksham has established tie-ups with several government bodies, NGOs, and CSR fraternity with similar goals.

DISABILITY - INCLUSIVE



2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Disability is included in the following GOALS:



Guaranteeing equal and accessible education by building inclusive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for persons with disabilities



Promoting inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment allowing persons with disabilities to fully access the job market



Emphasizing the social, economic and political inclusion of persons with disabilities



Creating accessible cities and water resources, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, providing universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces



Underlining the importance of data collection and monitoring of the SDGs, emphasis on disability disaggregated data



ALL GOALS ARE UNIVERSAL

A. Building an inclusive workplace culture at Spark Minda:

The following are the basic framework for the programme Saksham

A.1 Accessibility, Reasonable Accommodation and Other benefits

1. Provide Accessible and Assistive Technologies: Provision of accessibility aids and assistive technology for those with mobility disability has been identified as a key area of focus. The Group has organized 7 Artificial Limb fitment camp for the PwDs in Indonesia, Noida, Vietnam, J&K & Maharashtra where 7477 assistive aids were provided.
2. Impart Skill through on Job Training: On job trainings are provided to persons with different types of disabilities, across 19 factories in India, and 6 factories overseas.

A.2 Sensitization

3. Create Inclusive Workplace and Ergonomics: Infrastructural changes are incorporated as per the type of disabilities in the workplace. An ecosystem conducive to PwDs has been created.
4. Employ persons with different disabilities: A mapping exercise is conducted to identify the disabilities that would be best suited for a role. Subsequently post the on job training, they are employed in the specific functions.

A.3 Other Facilities

5. Train them for 5S, Life Skills and Evacuation: Adequate training of life skills, 5S, Evacuation etc. is imparted, so that everybody is prepared in the case of emergencies.

B. Empowering communities with disability

B.1 CSR & Volunteering Initiatives

ALFC CAMP, Indonesia -2015

We Know No Boundaries

In the year 2015, Spark Minda Foundation held a fitment camp in Indonesia. This camp was held in collaboration with the company's Indonesia branch, BMVSS, and the Indian embassy in Indonesia. The camp was held on the campus of PT Minda Automotive.

The need for the fitment camp was identified by the people themselves. There were a lot of people affected by disasters, war and accidents. In coordination with BMVSS and Yaysan Peduli Tuna Daksa (a local NGO), SMF benefitted 515 PwDs through 529 fitments conducted over the span of one month (4th May - 7th June). The camp was inaugurated in the presence of both the Ambassadors of the Nations and other government dignitaries and officials.

ALFC CAMP, Noida -2016:

The In-House Accomplishment

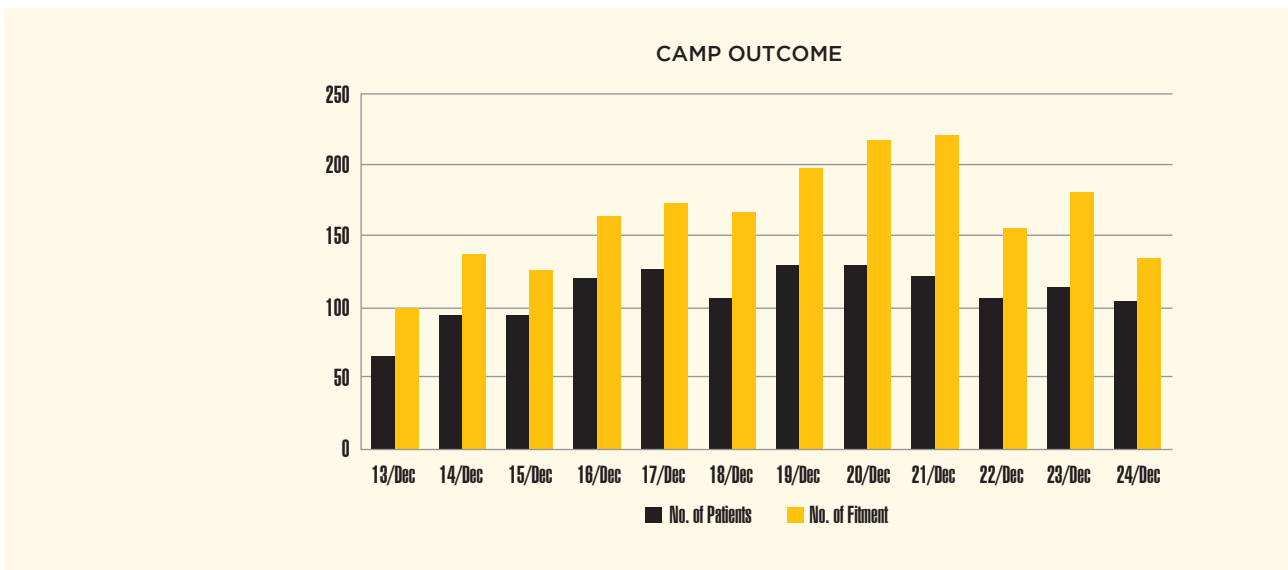
Another fitment camp was conducted in Uttar Pradesh, in 2016. The camp was in partnership with MCL Noida. The camp had extended support from the government, especially the Principle Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, and the District Administration. The need for a camp in the area was established, and 12 need assessment camps were organized to identify the beneficiaries in 13 different locations in Uttar Pradesh.

A lot of like-minded CSR firms joined hands and aided in carrying out mobilization in an area that spanned the periphery of 300km from Noida was covered. The camp lasted for 12 days - from 1st - 12th September 2016. Dignitaries from the government and the Company inaugurated the camp. Through this, 1,154 fitments were accomplished benefitting 812 PwDs.

ARTIFICIAL LIMB FITMENT CAMP 2017, Noida

The main objective of this 12-day camp (held between 13th -24th December) was to provide accessible and assistive technology to persons with disability, and to ensure sustainability of their employment throughout their lives. This camp was conducted in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The needs assessment was conducted through 21 screening camps in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahar, and Ghaziabad. Partnerships were established with several organizations, like Sisters of Destitute, Akshay Prathisthan, BDS, ASSOCHAM, Jaipur Foot, Ambuja Cement foundation, Amar Jyoti Sansthan, Family of Disabled, GlobalHunt Foundation, Jatan Sansthan, Sehgal Foundation, and Wockhardt Foundation.

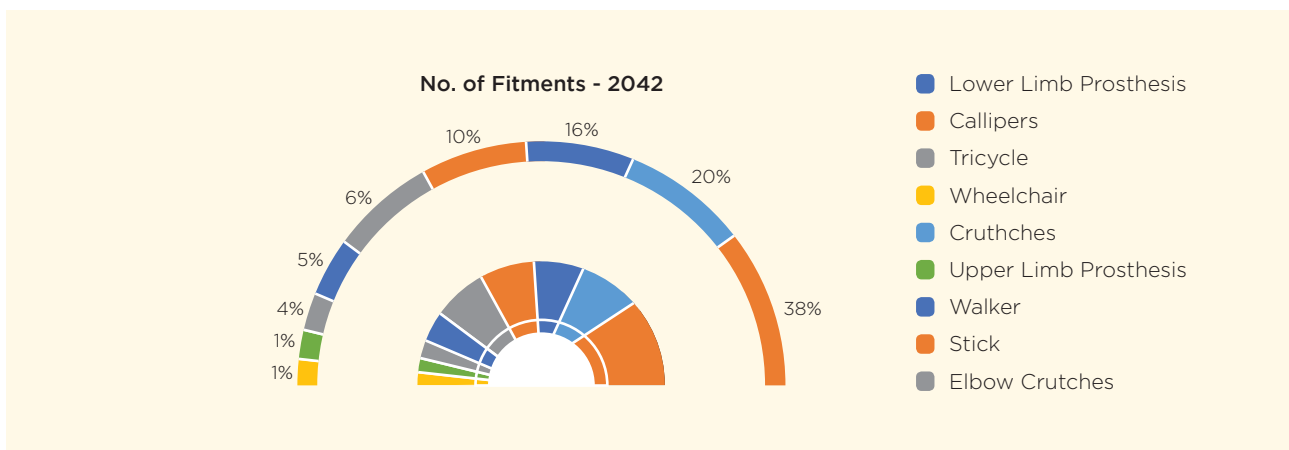
Project Outcome



Over the course of these 12 days, Project Saksham, benefitted 1,310 PwDs with 1,978 fitments. Further, 64 assistive aids were given to the PwDs even after the course of the camp, raising the total to 1,374 PwDs being aided with 2,042 fitments in the month of December, 2018.

An effort of peace installation in the valley

A widespread social media campaign was conducted before the starting of the camp by partner NGOs, students of Delhi University, Spark Minda Group Employees, and other program partners. Indian Army came across the camp through this campaign, and they approached the Spark Minda Foundation to extend the service to the persons affected by landmines in the valley. An Army personnel brought 7 PwDs all the way from the valley, and the Foundation facilitated their fitment during the Camp in Noida. After obtaining the accessibility aids, the PwDs from Jammu and Kashmir thanked the Indian Army.



Vietnam Camp 2018

The foundation conducted a camp in Vinh Phuc and Phuc Tho provinces in Vietnam. The camp was active for 44 days, from 17th July - 28th August, 2018. The camp was in coordination with the Government of India, Government of Vietnam, Indian embassy in Vietnam, and technical partner, Jaipur Foot. Her Excellency Nguyen Thi Hien, the first lady of Vietnam inaugurated the camp with His Excellency P Harish, Ambassador of India in Vietnam. The technical and implementing partner of the camp, Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahatya Samiti (BMVSS) provided the equipment and personnel to facilitate this camp in an effective and organised manner. Through this camp 533 PwDs were benefitted with the required fitments and provision of assistive devices/aids.

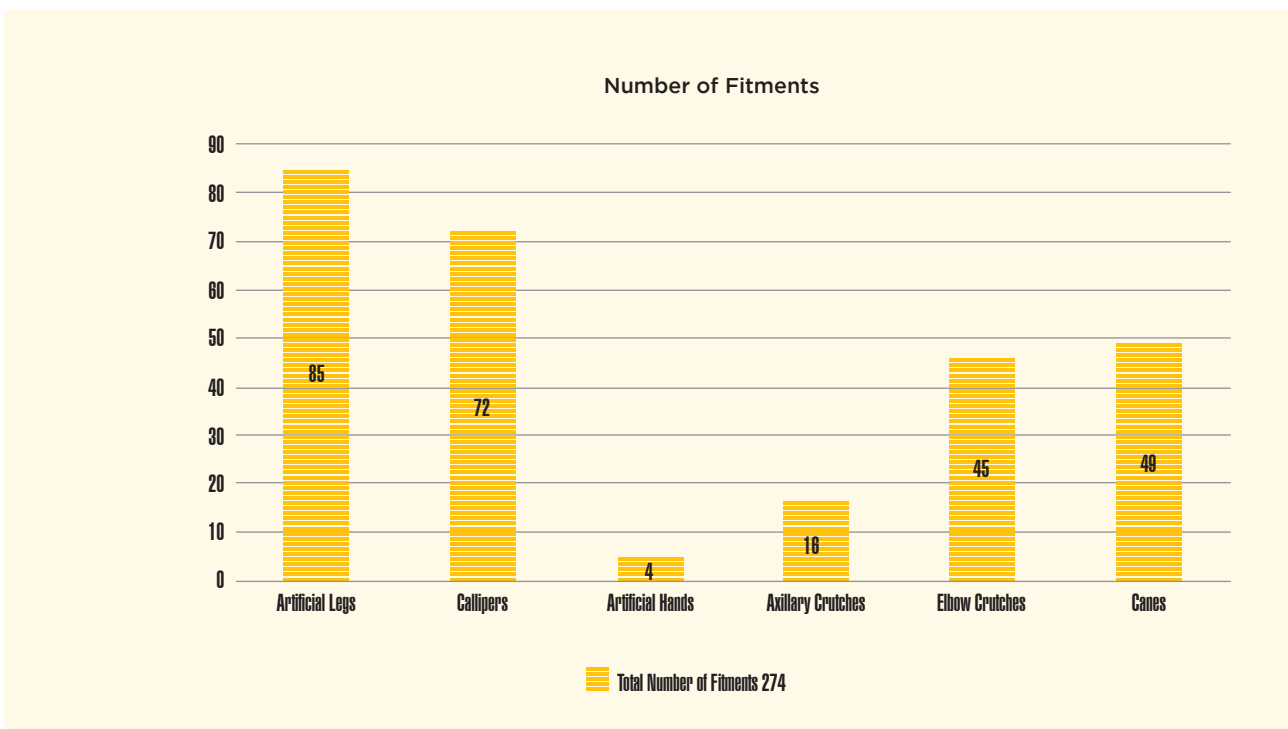
Camp with the Indian Army, Uri 2018

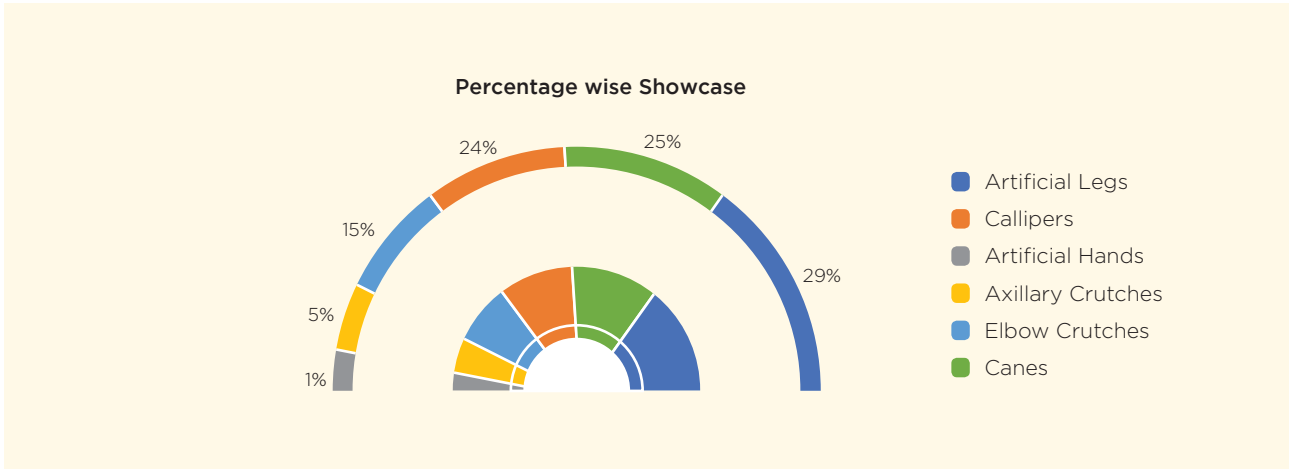
Extending the partnership with the Indian Army, SMF conducted an Artificial limb Fitment Camp, in Uri, Jammu and Kashmir. This camp was in coordination and accordance with the Indian Army and was conducted in September 2018. The main objective of the camp was to provide prosthetic and orthotic aid to persons with disability, with a view of enabling their future livelihoods and right of life.

This camp was organized by Pir Panjal Brigade under their Sadbhavna program and was executed with the help of Bhagwan Mahavir Viklang Sahayata Samiti as technical partner. The organization and conduction of the Camp by the Indian Army and Spark Minda Foundation was aimed towards social upliftment; a common work philosophy for both the fraternities.

As Uri is a sensitive place, need assessment was facilitated by the Indian Army itself. PwDs were brought in from 17 different locations. The fitment was conducted for 8 days (16th - 23rd September). 274 fitments were completed, reaching out to nearly 300 PwDs.

Apart from the overwhelming response and the courteous facilitation by the Indian Army, the project resulted with 299 fitments.





Increasing the Reach, Pune 2018

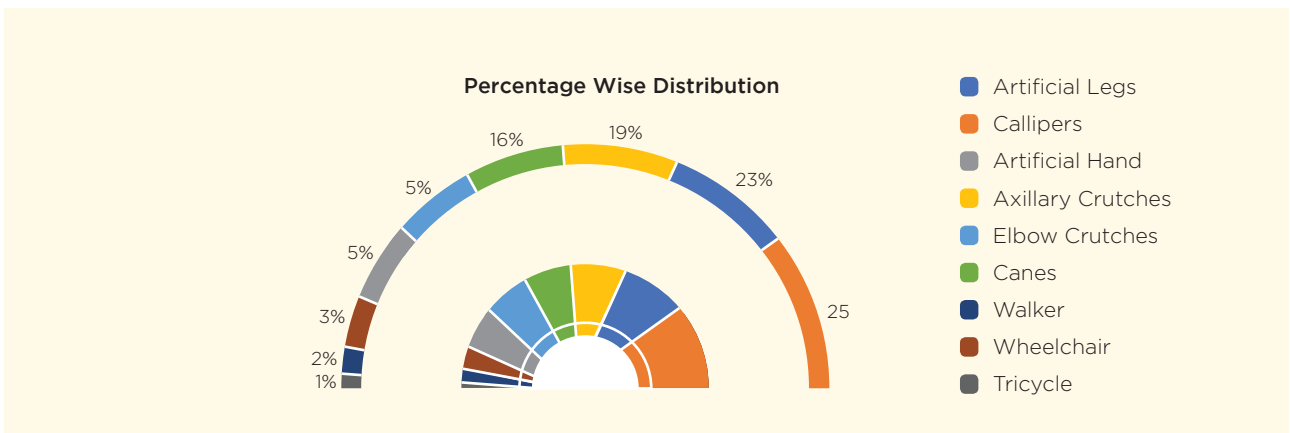
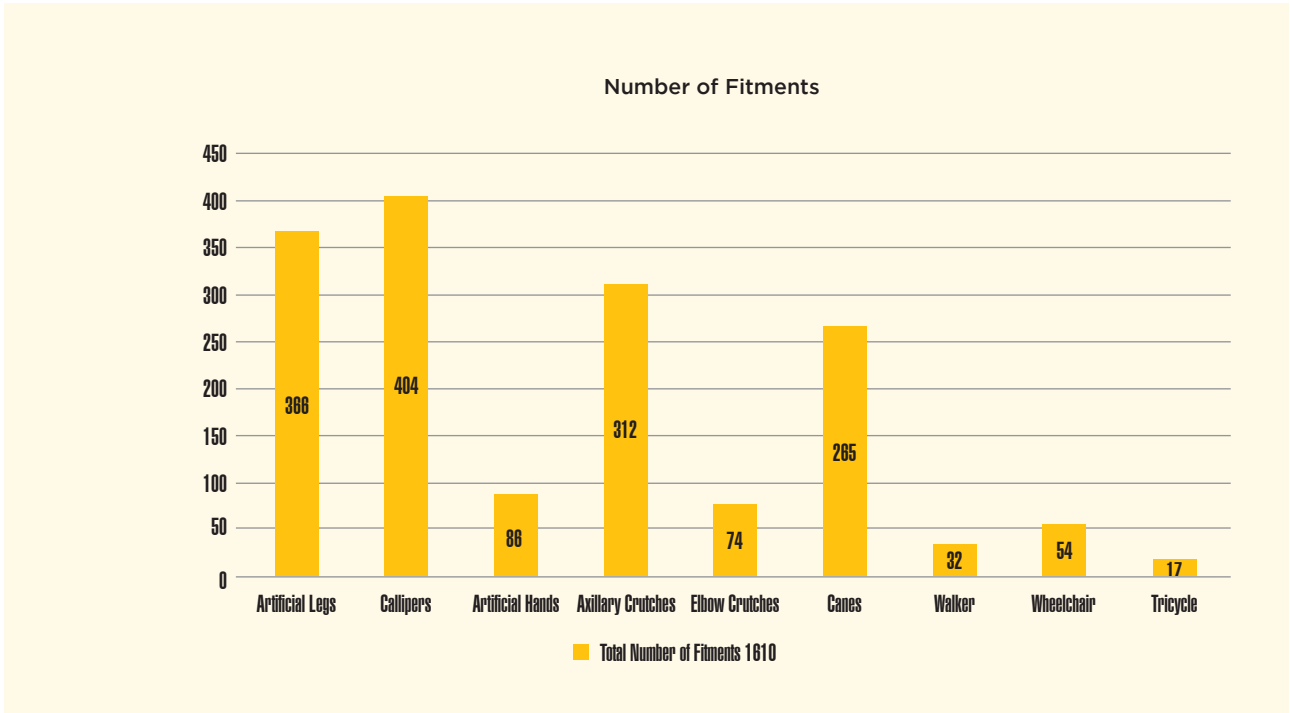
This camp was held between January - February 2019, at the Divyang Empowerment Centre, Pune. The aim of the camp, other than providing aid and assistance to the PwDs, was also to increase the reach for the centre: to make people aware of the existence of such an empowerment centre in their locality, where the PwDs can be provided with aid and assistance without any charges.

Needs assessment was done through 20 screening camps in different talukas in Pune. All the camps were facilitated by government, NGOs, individuals working for the same cause and by fellow PwDs. These screening camps resulted in many PwDs turning up for the Fitment Camp.

The camp was conducted in collaboration with several partners, including Prahar, Sarthak Educational Trust, Mahatma Phule Apang Vidyalay, Manav Vikas Sanstha, Youth for Job, Sandhi Niketan Shikshan Sanstha.

Government of Maharashtra also played an important role by enabling screening camps in all its talukas. Organization and mobilization at places far away such as Beed, Parbhani, Ahmednagar, and many of the Pune Talukas were facilitated by these organizations, which were also in coordination with the Government.

Through this 12-day camp, held between January 27th - February 7th 2019, 1,500 PwDs were benefited, with 1,610 fitments. This camp not only directly benefited all the PwDs attending, but also gave them the information on the Centre which has been functional since March 2018.



Empowerment of Divyang Camp, Pune 2019

A 7-day camp from 20th to 26th December 2019, was organized at Chimbali Phata, Pune. The idea behind this camp was to put up a one stop facility for the persons with disability where they can avail benefits of free of cost assistive aids, job fair, and Unique Disability ID registration. The programme was organized in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD), Vishwa Yuva Kendra, Jaipur Foot and India Business & Disability Network (IBDN). Aegis Global, Godrej-Agrovet, Sodexo, Sarovar Hotels, Accor Group, Accenture, and Cummins participated in the job fair.

Other non- government organizations such as Prahar, Kranti Pratisthan, Manav Vikas Sangha, Samarthanam Trust for Disable, Sarthak Educational Trust, Aadhar, Rastriya Apang Vikas Mahasangha, Jagrut Apang Sabghatana, Zunja Divyang Sanshta, Shri Sai Arpan Foundation, Apala Manus Apala Sangha, Equitas, Janamitra Pratishtan, Youth 4 Jobs, Sandhi Niketan Shikshan Santha, Balkalyan Sanstha, Zilha Parishad - Pune, Niwashi Mukabadhvir Vidhyalay, Snehalaya, Apang Kalyankari Sanstha, Mahatma Phule Apang Shikshan Kendra, Janseva Shikshan Mandal, Janashakti Pratishtan, helped the foundation mobilize persons from about 20 blocks around Pune.

During the camp, 1335 assistive aids were given, and employment was facilitated to 120 persons with disability and 30 of them have been absorbed into the Spark Minda Group. 162 Unique Disability ID (UDID) registrations were facilitated during the camp.

3.2 Facilities

CAMP INFORMATION

Camp
 Programme Name : Sakham
 Camp Name : Empowerment of Person with Disability
 Start : 20/12/2019
 End Date : 26/12/2019
 Time : 08.00 am to 05.00 pm
 Address :
 Dyanraj Mangal Karyalaya,
 Chimbali Phata, Pune-Nashik Highway,
 Khed, Pune, Maharashtra.

Layout

Facilities

- Prosthetic Limb
- Calliper
- Auxillary & Elbow Crutch
- Wheelchair
- Handsticks
- Tricycle
- Walker
- Employment Support
- Skilling Support
- UDID
- Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner
- Blanket
- Pickup & Drop

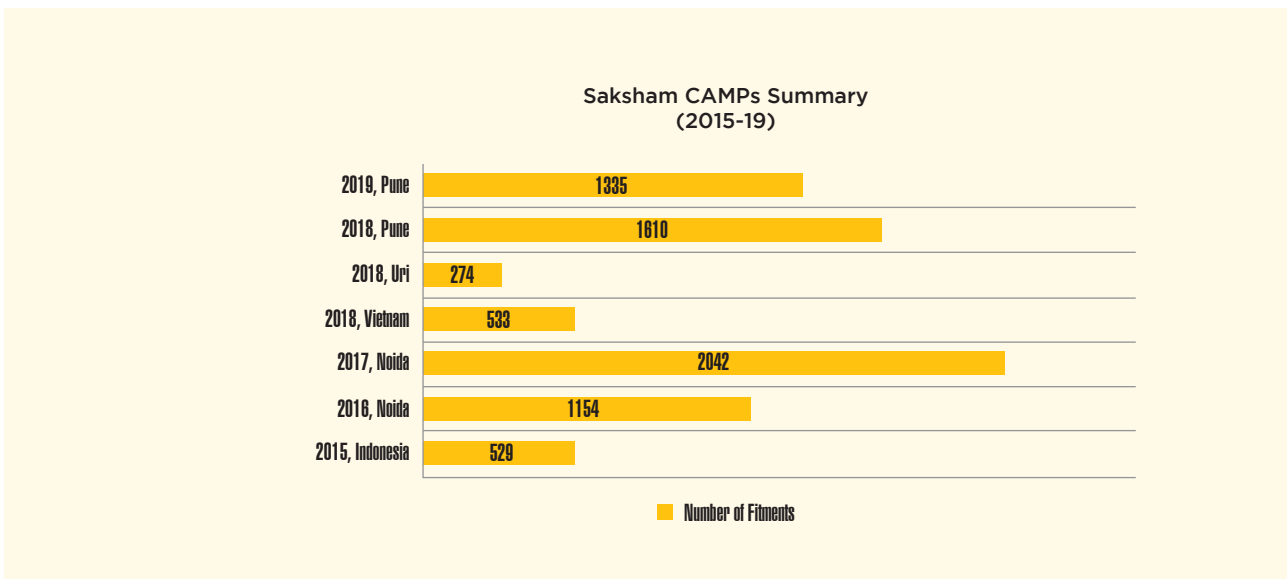
Camp Incharge : P. K. Karn
 Telephone : 7447420191 / 7447420192
 saksham@minda.co.in

A CSR Initiative of Spark Minda Group.....

The Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities camp was organized with the aim of providing a comfortable one-stop solution to the attendees. The attendants ranged from 3-year-old children to senior citizens. To remove the hinderance of transportation and ensure utmost comfort of the participants the following facilities were arranged for:

1. Assistive aids: Prosthetic limbs, callipers, axillary and elbow crutch, wheelchairs, handsticks, tricycles, walkers were given to the beneficiaries, as per the prescription of the doctors present in the Camp.
2. Employment support and skilling support: To facilitate employment of persons with disabilities, a kiosk was set up in collaboration with Sector Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities, wherein counselling sessions of the PwDs regarding the skilling support available from the government were provided.

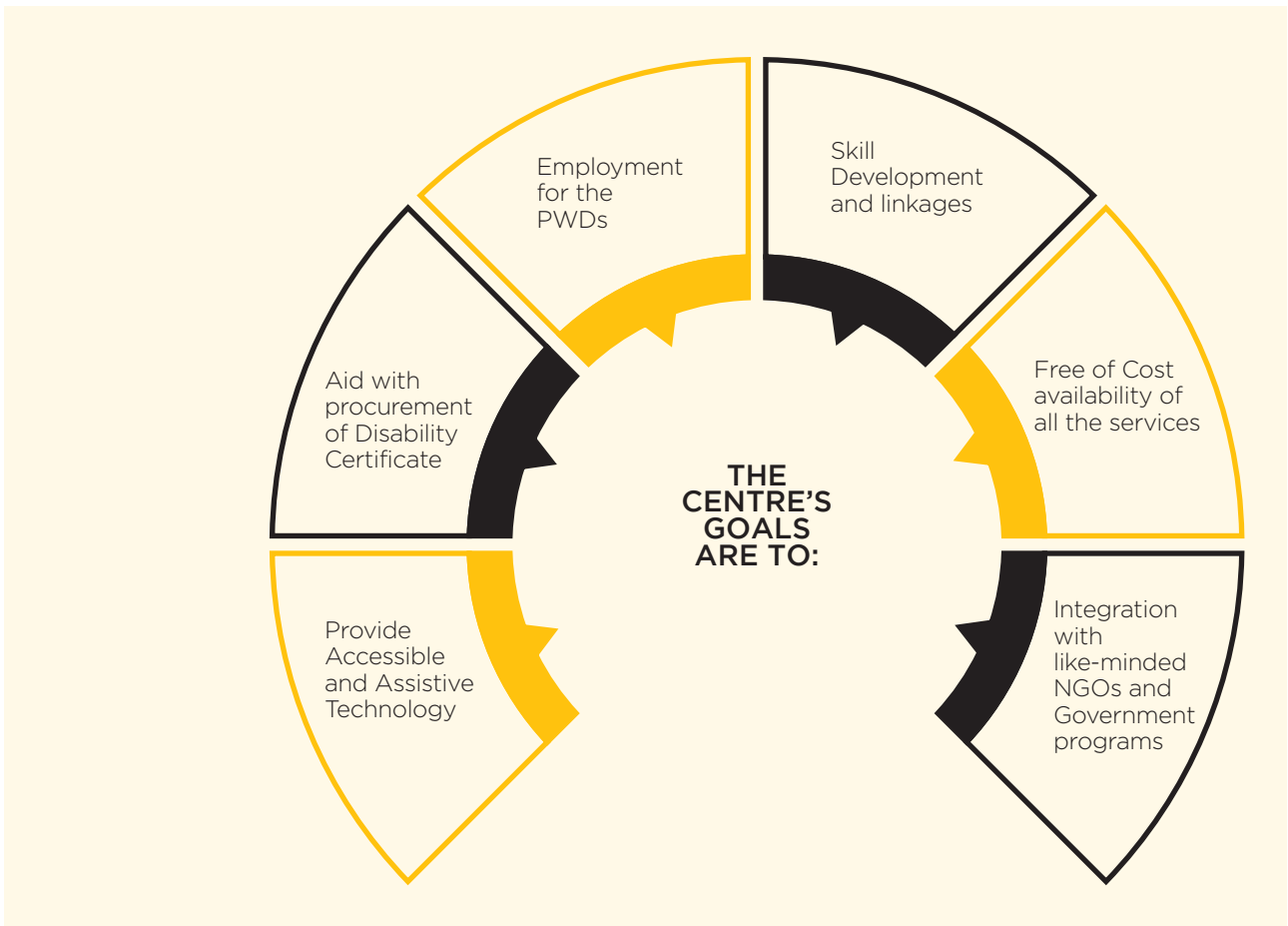
3. UDID: A temporary centre for registering the UDID of persons with disabilities was set up. This set up helped at least 150 persons with disability get themselves registered for obtaining their UDID.
4. Blankets: Along with the aids, more than 1000 blankets were distributed.
5. Meals: Since most of the Persons with Disabilities were mobilized from distant places (100kms or more), it was found necessary to provide for the meals that they would consume. Breakfast and lunch were arranged every day, whereas arrangements for snacks and dinner were made on spot. The meals were free of cost.
6. Children's corner: A children's corner or a playroom was set up in the camp to ensure that the curious and energetic minds were engaged. Several toys, books, balls and balloons were brought together for them.
7. Maternal care centre: A room was dedicated for mothers for tending to their infants - sterilized nipples, and warm milk was always made available.
8. Pick up and Drop: Arrangements were made for pick up and drop of PwDs coming into the camp from remote and distant areas.



B.2 Empowering people with disabilities in the community

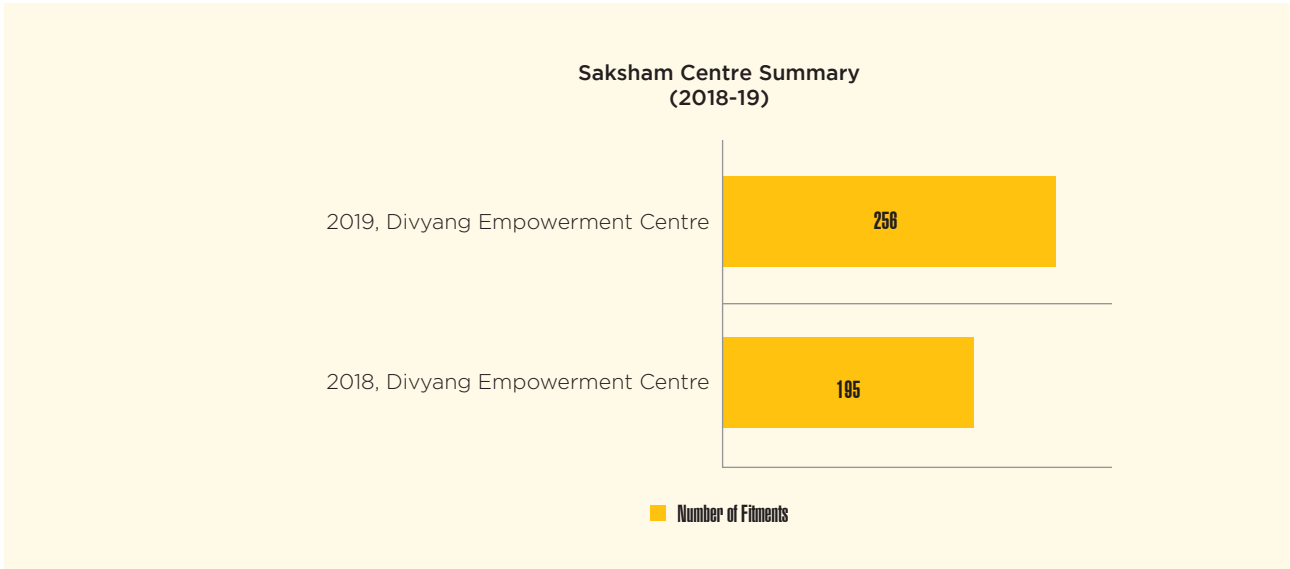
Empowerment centre for Divyangs

The centre for Divyangs (PwDs), located in Pune, was inaugurated on the 29th of March 2018 by Mrs. Sarika Minda, Chairperson, SMF along with Mr. Pajan, Advisor, SMF. Dignitaries from Spark Minda Industries, Village Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat members, and people of the village were present for the inauguration ceremony.



The centre aims at providing prosthetic and orthotic assistance to over 250 PwDs annually, focusing on the employment of 150 PwDs, imparting them with skill through On Job Trainings or skilling, and also procuring a disability certificate by organizing a camp. Placements by organizing a Job Fair are to be planned as well. Apart from these, linkages with government, hospitals, local NGOs, the gram panchayat bodies, local stakeholders are being planned and executed.

The centre completed 195 fitments during 2018-19 and facilitated employment for 31 PwDs within the group itself. For this year, the centre has provided 256 fitments and has aided employment of about 300 PwDs.



Inclusive Hiring

The policy is the same as any other staff/associate or employee.

Annexure 1 – Recruitment Policy

A mapping exercise is conducted to identify the best person and the disability that would be suited for the job. Subsequently, post their on job training, they are employed in the functions. Currently 131 PwDs are working in the factories. Thereafter, Infrastructural changes are incorporated, as per different types of disabilities in the workplace. An ecosystem conducive to PwDs is being created through human behaviour.

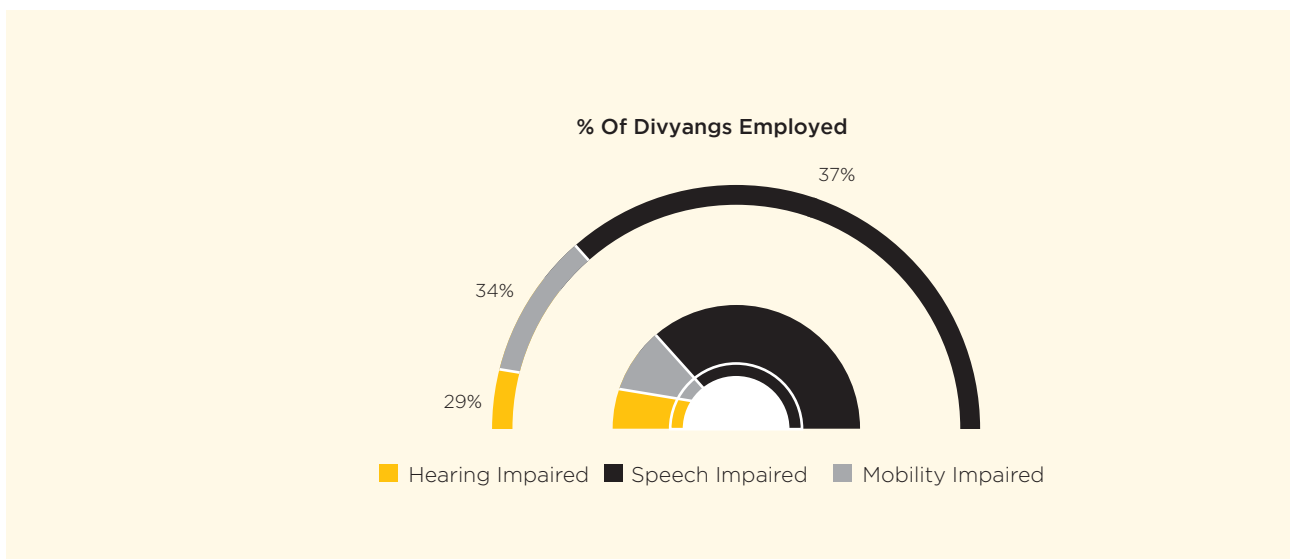
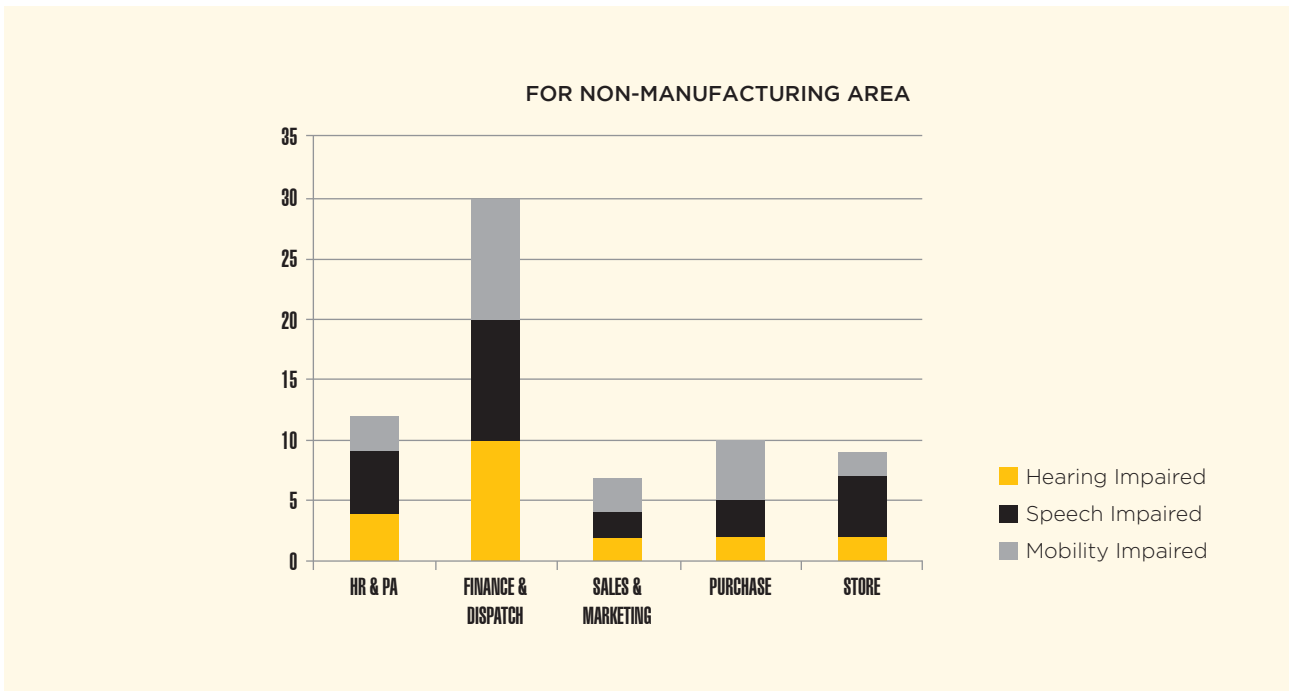
Saksham not only provides the PwDs with assistive aid and devices but also caters to their need of livelihood. This is done by acting as a conduit for placements of the PwDs. Often, the interested PwDs are absorbed by the groups itself at their various locations.

For implementing this, collaborations with NGOs working for the employment of PwDs are established. As needed, the manpower can be sourced from these organizations, or from the database maintained. This database is collected during camps and at the Divyang Empowerment Centre. Organizations such as Sarthak Educational Trust, National Association for Blind and Youth for Job have helped the PwDs get placed according to their interest and accessibility.

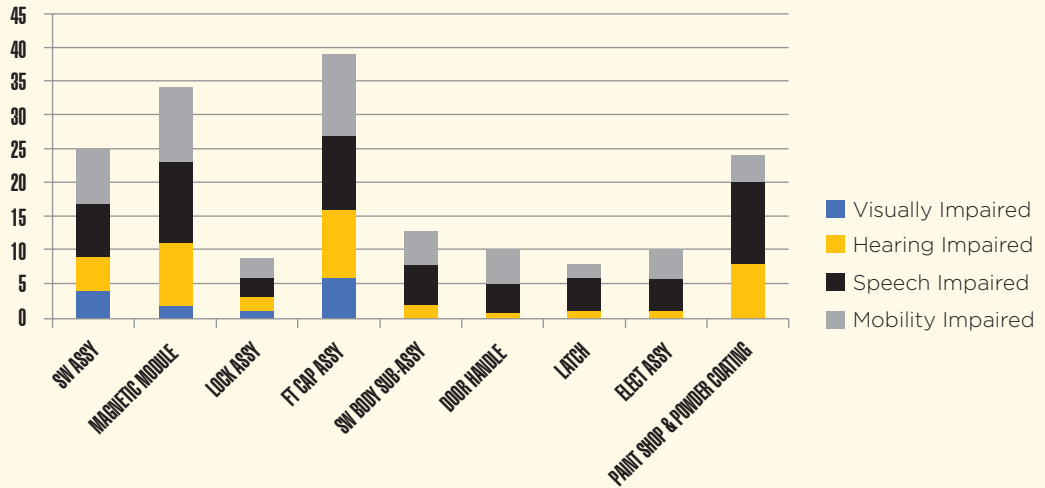
The PwDs absorbed by the plants undergo On Job Training in order to accomplish the designated task. This imparts skill and knowledge for their growth.

Annexure 2 - Deployment Matrix of PWDs

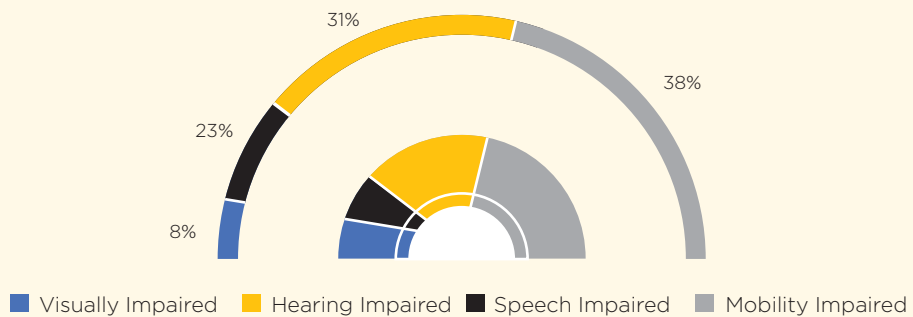
In order to allocate jobs that do not hamper the efficient working of the PwDs, a deployment matrix has been developed wherein operations that are suitable and unsuitable are listed for persons with visual, speech & hearing and mobility impairment. This aids in employing the right person for the right role, thereby ensuring sustainability of the placement.



FOR MANUFACTURING AREA



% Of Divyangs Employed



Induction process, if different from conventional

The induction process is based on the disability. For instance, a proper induction manual has been developed in braille, and in audio, for persons with visual impairment.

Performance evaluation

Same as other employees.

Compensation and benefits -

- As per compliance
 - Transportation support
 - Training of HR person on sign language
 - Retention is the KRA of concerned HR
-

Reward & recognition policies

As per company policy

Career development initiatives (including career paths designed) taken for PwDs

- Customized On Job Trainings
 - Life skill modules
 - 5S and Kaizen training
 - Promotion as per performance
-

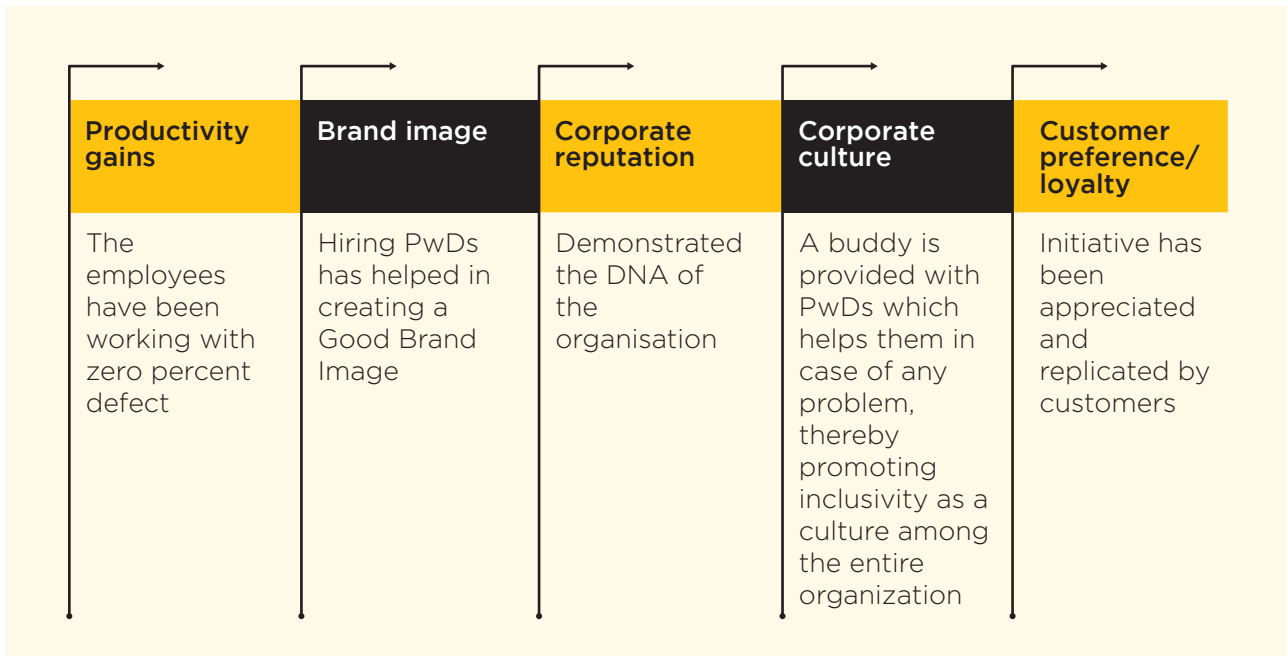
Attrition mapping of disabled and able-bodied employees

- Independent survey conducted with PwDs by School of Inspired PwDs
- Annual attrition mapping
- Analysis of Exit interview
- Assigning target for new recruitment adding the backlog

Training and Upskilling for the Current & Future Roles

To enable future growth, proper timely On Job trainings, workshops etc. are provided on the basis of manufacturing or non-manufacturing functions

Impact of PwD Employees



Compliance

- Minimum Wages
- Employees Provident Fund Scheme
- Employee Deposit Link Insurance (EDLI)
- Employees State Insurance Scheme
- Payment of Gratuity Act

Learnings

- **Community connect:** It is essential to establish a connection with the community to be able to gain their support and cooperation for organizing a program of a large scale. To ensure this, camps are organized in proximity to the areas where the Foundation's CSR Programs and team is active.
- **Rapport building:** It is important to gain confidence of the community and ensure voluntary participation of several stakeholders such as the local administration and peacekeepers, CSR volunteers and council members working in the group units. Rapport building thus improves the efficiency with which the program can be conducted.

- **Team:** A team is required to reach out to persons with disabilities through calls and through screening camps. With the help of our local collaborators screening camps are organized to mobilize persons with disabilities for the final camp. Each block is given a specific date for visiting the camp. While the team onsite is responsible for establishing community connect and building rapport, an offsite team is equally important for supporting the onsite team for the execution of the program.
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** It is also important to identify and collaborate with the right organizational partners that help widen the reach of the envisioned program. Partners also facilitate the increase in the depth of work being done. Each identified partner must be working for the cause of persons with disabilities, be it in employment, skilling, UDID registration or in providing assistive aid.
- **Standard Operating Procedure:** A document mentioning the detailed standard operating procedure is being produced to ensure easy replicability of this model.
- **Sustainability:** The continued benefits of a project can only be availed and absorbed by the society if the perpetuity of the project is ensured. Community connect, rapport building, partnership, collaboration, and creation of a standard operating procedure will ensure the sustainability of this program.

Success Criteria

Impact/expected output:

Short Term

- a) Accessibility to Assistive and Accessible Technology to PwDs
- b) Employment for aspirants
- c) Artificial Limb Fitment for Mobility
- d) Skilling
- e) Easy accessibility for disability certificate
- f) Networking with the Government

Long Term

- a) Sustainability of life
- b) Employability through skill training of PwDs in Automotive Trade
- c) Living with dignity
- d) Economic and Social status change
- e) Rapport Building with the PwD community

Plans Going Forward

Spark Minda, Ashok Minda Group's Vision 2020 is to benefit 7,000 PwDs through providing assistive aid and employing 1,100 PwDs

Awards & Recognition

1. Aces Award for Saksham program in 2016 by MORS
2. Best Community Project by Govt. of Haryana 2017
3. 4th CSR Impact Award at India CSR Summit 2017 for Saksham by India CSR
4. Best NGO Award by School of Inspired Leadership
5. India CSR Award for community Initiative for recognizing Good CSR practices for Saksham 2017 in
6. Best CSR Collective Action Project of India CSR 2018
7. National CSR Award, 2019

Capitalizing on a results-driven culture built around the mantra, 'Experience is everything'

Startek

Embracing Inclusivity

In an ever-changing competitive global economy, talented employees are crucial for organizational performance. People from varied cultures and ethnicities bring a wide range of characteristics and experiences, thus organizationally embracing diversity in employees paves the way for success in business. Today, most organizations are moving towards diversity in their workforce, for building and sustaining an inclusive culture. This diversity can range from gender, ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and sexual orientation, to name a few. For example, The Team Lease Gender Diversity report 2016 has stated that India could add 16 - 60% to its national income, if women represented a proportionate measure of the labour force (Kunal Sen, June 2016), thereby presenting a business case for advocating for more diversity in the workplace.

Disability is a form of diversity (Mukta Kulkarni, 2016), and people with disability form a core part of a diverse workforce today. There are nearly 50 million people with physical disability in India, of which

only 1% are employed (Sannita C Saha, May 2014). Realizing the abundant untapped potential, organizations employing more PwD's in their workforce. Research findings from Accenture and NGO Pankh (Sannita C Saha, May 2014) conveys that the productivity of PwD employees is 7% more than others and the average attrition rate of PwD's was 3.3% compared to the industry average of 6.8%.

While building an inclusive culture embracing PwDs, organizations need to consider their specific needs, preferences and motivational factors. Organizations need to understand those factors and design suitable HR practices to attract them. Moreover, once they are attracted, assessed, and employed, the employees hired would exit if their needs are not met consistently.

In an era where single minded pursuit of the "Shareholder Value Maximization Mantra" more often than not pushes to

the background the fact that corporations must focus more on the larger stakeholder value creation, which includes society at large as a key stakeholder, it is heartening to see organizations like Startek embrace corporate social responsibility as a critical value.

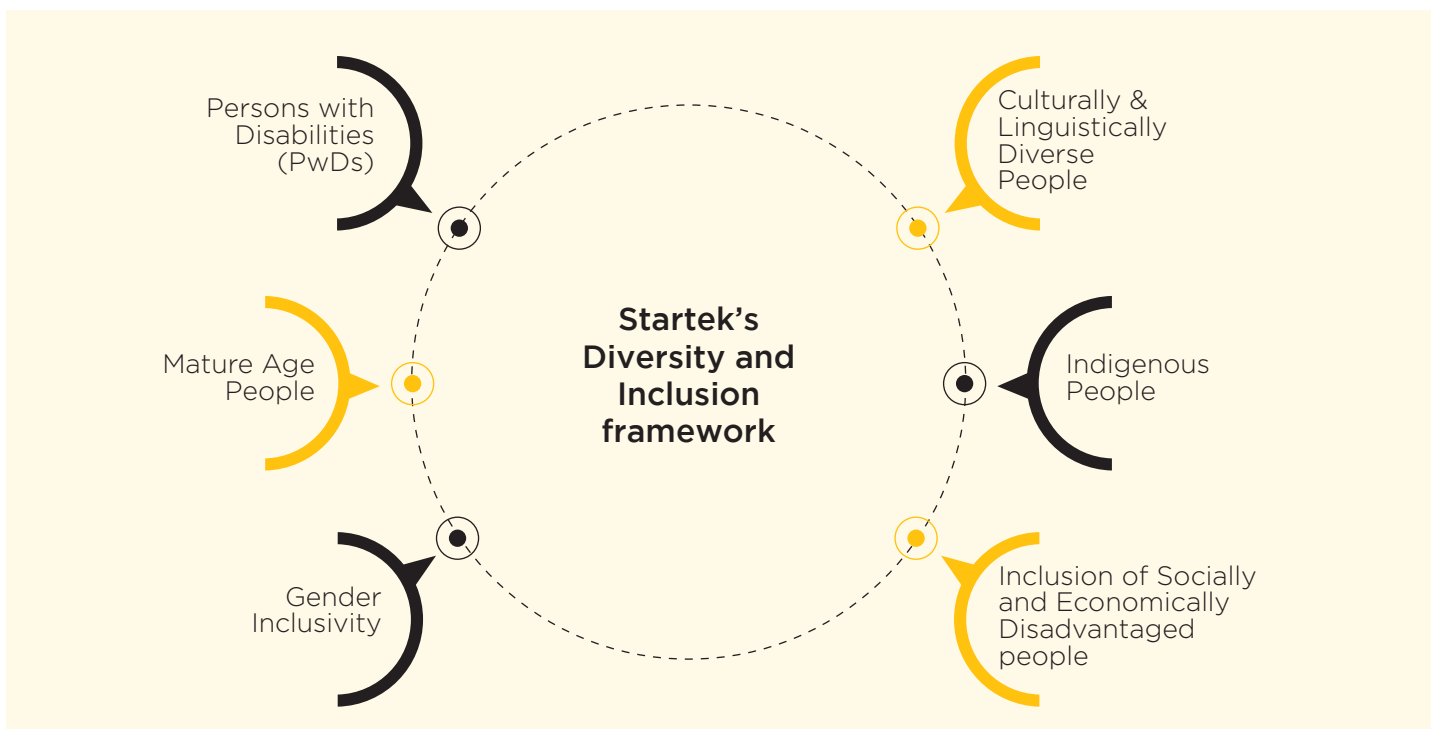
The company takes pride in providing equal employment opportunities and recognizing the contribution of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) by providing them with employment opportunities and guiding

them towards realizing their career goals. The organization has partnered with multiple institutions including Employment Exchanges, Vocational Rehabilitation Centres (VRC), Welfare Foundations, and Women Empowerment Institutes in India. The company complements its Diversity and Inclusion initiative through conducting numerous Training and Sensitization programs, along with a strong focus towards employee engagement initiatives.



Over 2 % of the company's workforce is comprised of people with disabilities, which is commendable. They are also a role model for employing a diverse range of disabled people.

Javed Abidi, Honorary Director, NCPEDP



The company was specifically recognized for the creation and use of a multidimensional model of diversity and outcome-based measurement system to ensure individual and organizational characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences and behaviours support a diverse and inclusive workplace. As a recipient of multiple 'Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Awards', the organization is recognized with other best-in-class companies across the globe that have adopted and implemented policies and practices that build and promote diversity and inclusion.

The company's culture is as diverse as its people; but the unifier is their shared passion in creating experiences that match expectations and set in the entrepreneurial spirit, be it for themselves or their clients. The right experiences paradigm makes working fun, as it celebrates the different views and values that people bring to the table and combines them to deliver real-world results. This is a fact that reflects in the global audience they cater to, the empowerment that their employees experience, and the dynamic results they deliver.

Leadership Speak

Unstinted support from the Top Leadership is an essential ingredient to ensure the success of any such initiative. This is evident from what the leadership has to say on this initiative:

Aparup Sengupta

Executive Chairman and Global CEO

"At Startek, we believe in coexistence, celebrating differences and creating a harmonious whole in the truest sense of Diversity. Our DNA is wired with the spirit of inclusivity. With today's ever-changing workplace landscape, championing the cause of diversity and inclusion indeed unveils the key for succeeding, staying ahead and delivering value to our clients and the marketplace in a globalized world."

SM Gupta

Global Chief People Officer, Startek

"Our progressive HR policies truly demonstrate the commitment to aggressively create employment opportunities and economically empower all sections of the society."

Employee Speak

An HR professional at the company's Lucknow Center, where more than 1500 people work (of which 30 are People with Disabilities) says, the infrastructure at the Center is PwD friendly, with the necessary ramps, separate washrooms and lifts. The company has even ensured that the workstations of the PwD employees are located such as to ensure minimum movement for them once they alight from the lift. He is proud of the fact that the company ensures a familial environment where every employee is treated equally, and the PwD employees do not face any discriminatory treatment.

33 year old Kiran Kumari from Gorakhpur has been with the company for the past 3 years. Kiran is afflicted with polio, which has impacted her left leg and hip. She has just been promoted as a Team Leader with a 32-member team and is justifiably over the moon. She has successfully studied till 12th standard and is an illustration of the meritocracy that exists in the company. She is proud of her achievement and thankful to the company for the opportunities given to her. She has been working the 7AM - 4PM shift from the very beginning and the company has been flexible in allowing her to choose the shift of her choice. She has never felt discriminated against, nor have her colleagues ever drawn attention to her disability, which speaks volumes of the inclusive culture that the organization fosters.

Company background

Startek is a leading global provider of technology-enabled business process outsourcing solutions. The company provides omni-channel customer experience management, back office and technology services to corporations around the world across a range of industries. The company has more than 45,000 outsourcing experts across 54 delivery campuses worldwide that are committed to delivering seamless and transformative customer experience for clients. Services include omni-channel customer care, customer acquisition, order processing, technical support, receivables management and analytics through automation, voice, chat, email, social media and IVR, presenting superior business results for its clients. Startek believes in transformative experiences and relies on its engagement specialists to support and take those capabilities to their clients and customers. Their goal is 'experience excellence' and they endeavor to deliver this through each moment of truth orchestrated by their specialists.

Industry/ Sectoral context

The company has grown multi-fold to become a significant player in the industry. Through a judicious mix of organic growth and strategic acquisitions, it has expanded its global footprint across India, South Africa, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Peru, Malaysia, United States of America, Philippines, Jamaica, Canada, Honduras and Sri Lanka. This journey has provided the company with new geographies, financial muscle, diversified and competent teams, new services and verticals and synergies in cost optimization with best practices and right shoring capabilities.

Recruitment

Apart from sourcing through conventional methods of advertisements, referrals, job-fairs and walk-ins, they go one step forward by exploring some experimental methods including:

- Partnering with NGOs and State Employment Exchanges: The organization has tied up with NGOs worldwide and in India. Startek has tied up with Employment Exchanges, Vocational Rehabilitation Centers (VRC) and NGOs like Sarthak, Enable India etc. which helps them to consolidate their hiring on PwDs in newer locations.
- Hiring from University/ College Campuses and Rehabilitation Institutes and Hospitals.
- Contacting freelance social workers who provide support candidate database and reference.
- Contacting hospitals for their database of PwDs
- Advertisement by way of pamphlet distribution in slums.

Sensitization programs are conducted to help the management team and recruiters understand the law, as well as the company's commitment to undertake appropriate outreach and recruitment efforts to include persons with disabilities.

Why the firm thought about PwD hiring

Over the last few years, through a judicious mix of organic growth and strategic acquisitions, the company has expanded its global footprint which has resulted in increased globalization, enhanced demographic growth, and emerging heterogeneity of the workforce. Consequently, diversity management became very important to address the rapidly changing demographic differences and the need to remain competitive in the international markets. It was also crucial for the organization to address the diverse clientele which in turn would lead to improved organizational performance and enhanced competitive advantage. With this in mind, the company embarked on the journey of Diversity and Inclusion in 2009. The objectives were to include different streams of community into the organization mainstream, drive innovation, and long term sustainability of the organization, while catering to a diverse client base. This is believed to in turn lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty, stimulate social, economic, intellectual and emotional growth of all stakeholders, increase employee motivation and morale, adapt to new market changes and increase organizational flexibility thus leading to enhanced competitive advantage and position the organization as an 'Employer of Choice'.

Hiring methodologies for PwDs



Persons with Disabilities are employed across all levels of Management and in various roles and functions. The nature of work remains the same for all employees at the organization. Persons with Disability manage business and customer experiences through end-to-end Customer Lifecycle Management (CLM) solutions. The company believes in equal opportunity and all job roles are open for PwD employees. Even the selection process is common for all employees. However, the organization offers pre-hire training and skill enhancement training to PwD employees if need be so that their job-oriented skills are developed and they can fairly compete with other employees.

Induction Process



All newly inducted employees are taken through the Induction module, which also includes diversity, right on their 1st day. Through a focused session on diversity and inclusion, new employees are sensitized on the organizational expectations from them for making contribution in creating an inclusive workplace. They have conducted workshops on sensitizing all line managers and team leads on 'Managing the Diverse', which educates and trains them in dealing with PwDs with utmost sensitivity. Globally, the company has covered all supervisory level people in the last year under this program. Sessions by prominent personalities (NGO /Government Officials) working in the field of disability well-being are also conducted.

Training and upskilling for the current & future roles

The company has identified and implemented the following personal touch points to ensure development of PwDs:

- VRC: Partnered with Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (VRC) which offers Community based Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Program to differently-abled people with a network in 20 cities across India.
- Sarthak Educational Trust: Partnered with Sarthak, an NGO working towards the training & employment of Persons with Disability. Sarthak aims at creating an inclusive environment by training, advocacy, sensitization and employment.
- An elaborate Career Path Framework clearly articulating Learning and Growth opportunities at each level

Performance Evaluation

The company has institutionalized a systematic and robust Performance Management System across the globe that serves as the foundation for building a high performing organization. This system helps in meeting the business requirements by aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals while fulfilling the objective of creating a high-performance culture, where excellence and achievement is encouraged, recognized, and rewarded.

How does the productivity of Employees with disability compare with that of non- disabled employees?

The productivity of Persons with Disability is very high in terms of working attitude, output, quality, and client appreciation.

Working Attitude:

Employees with disability display a very positive attitude and show willingness and ability to actively participate in the work they execute. They bring additional diversity to the workplace, which enhances creativity and innovation. They also allow us to harness new perspectives and ideas, and bring increased innovation of products and services to the table.

Output:

The employees with disability have had a tremendously high output since they are more disciplined, have lesser attrition, and, with adequate training, are able to outperform many non- disabled employees in the work environment. They have very clear performance expectations, and in case they face any problem they are willing to discuss and work it out with the manager. They also offer more creativity, since more diverse ideas are garnered, and insightful alternatives are offered. The potential benefits include greater success in the market, and a better distribution of economic opportunity.

Quality:

The creativity, flexibility and innovativeness of PwDs have them achieve output with quality and accuracy in the workplace.

Client Appreciation:

With a widespread customer base, they are able to best serve different customer groups in different markets with the help of a more diverse workforce. This helps in gaining support and loyalty from the clients and facilitates enhancement of reputation in the community.

Retention strategies and practices adopted

- Full-time/ Part-time/ Flexi-time/ Split-time Employment: They encourage PwDs to work with them by providing them alternative staffing models as per their convenience.
- Choice of shifts: PwDs are given the option of choosing shifts of their preference to suit their comfort and convenience. The organization also follows the shift guidelines under Shops & Establishments Act.
- Choice of seating arrangements: PwDs are given choice of seating arrangements as per their convenience near the entrance/ exit, reasonable distance to the rest room and larger workstations to be comfortably seated.
- Leave: Like other employees, PwDs are entitled to leaves as specified under the Shops & Establishment Act in the states where they operate.
- Hospitalization Expense Reimbursement Scheme: This scheme helps to reimburse hospitalization expenses incurred by PwDs and their families.
- Group Personal Accident Insurance Policy: In order to provide compensation to employees (including PwDs), and their families, in case of Accidental Death /Accidental Dismemberment /Permanent Partial Disablement /Permanent Total Disablement, the company has taken a group accident insurance policy which covers all employees for 24 hours while on duty or otherwise, anywhere in the world.
- Equal Pay: Differently abled employees earn at par with all others carrying out similar jobs. Equal pay for equal work is not just an adage in the company but a commitment to all employees, including Persons with Disabilities, who contribute in the same manner.
- Leadership Commitment: Leaders are instrumental in setting the culture and working ethos that are followed by all people who are integral part of the organization. The company believes in affirming top management support in creating and implementing policies for equality, driving change and investing in workplace programs that helps in promoting diversity and inclusion. Their leaders believe in 'leading by example'; showcasing commitment to equality and inclusion and influencing clients, business partners, supply chain and industry peers to respect the company's commitment.
- Organization Structure Enabling Diversity: The organization structure empowers diversity, wherein the Global CEO is the Executive Sponsor, and the Global Chief People Officer/ Global HR Head is the Organization Change Leader towards the diversity movement. The Diversity Managers have been appointed at the corporate level, as well as at the business/ country level. Their role is of an organizational change agent to lead in diversity related interventions and coordinate for the related initiatives. The Diversity Manager champions the cause of diversity both at the global and site level.

- Rewards & Recognition process for PwDs: This is conducted for their significant contribution and work commitment towards the company. As a part of the process, they felicitate PwDs with mementos, cash rewards, gift vouchers, publishing winner name on “Wall of Fame” and intranet, shields and certificates of appreciation.
- Accessibility in the workplace: A few initiatives implemented for a barrier-free workplace are as follows:
 - Wheelchair ramps strategically located in front of the main entry/exit points of the building.
 - Elevators feature grab handles and voice notification.
 - Hallways, as well as the distances between workstations, are wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through.
 - Entryways are composed of glass doors that are wide enough for people using wheelchairs.
 - Buildings are equipped with restrooms suitable for PwDs, with wide doors and grab bars for better support.
 - On-going effort is being made, on acquisition or modification of equipment or devices.

Career Development Initiatives taken for PwDs

PwDs are provided internal growth opportunities in line with their Internal Job Posting (IJP) policy and Global Talent Exchange Program (GTEX) program which provides opportunities across global territories, thereby, enhancing global exposure and career advancement for PwDs.

Opportunities for PwDs in tier 3 & 4 cities/ towns: Startek ventured into Tier 3 and 4 towns, and this model offers tangible and intangible benefits to support the thriving domestic market, which requires mainstream BPOs to be more cost-effective, and provide diversity of locations, skills and capabilities. The operations in smaller towns have gone a long way in ensuring significant indirect economic impact on the lives of PwDs in particular, and communities and societies in general.

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy: Startek has implemented this policy covering all areas of employment, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, training, retention and promotion of qualified individuals with disabilities. All service conditions applicable for differently abled employees are same as those applicable for others. However, certain flexibilities are provided based on their specific needs.

Impact of PwD Employees

Employment of PwDs has led to a positive impact on the organization as enumerated herewith:

46,000 employees, 13 countries, 54 global locations serving a diverse client base.

Numerous awards from esteemed organizations like IAOP, Gartner, Frost & Sullivan, National Award from Govt. of India, NASSCOM, Dataquest, Aon, SHRM, Great Place to Work, CII & People Matters, People First, including numerous awards on Diversity & Inclusion, thereby positioning the company as an 'Equal Employment Opportunity Provider' & an 'Employer of Choice'.

Overall Global Employee Engagement score stands at 78%.

Career opportunities for diverse groups through internal recruitment program.

Enhanced capability of serving a wide range of clientele.

Indigenous workforce helped serve better to local customers.

Creating job opportunities for people in areas having very high unemployment rates & low literacy levels.

Enhancement of economic status of people from BPL category.

Women empowerment

Release of in-house books: The company has released the following book on PwDs, which celebrates the spirit of inclusivity and co-existence in its truest form, thus accepting that each individual is different, unique, and irreplaceable:

'Aashayein...The Hope':

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) form an integral part of our journey, where Startek endeavours to provide livelihood, thereby making them empowered and self-sufficient to not only earn their livelihood, but also get mainstreamed, and gain increased levels of acceptance in the society. All of this leads to the creation of an environment of involvement, inclusive work culture, respect and connection where the richness of ideas, uniqueness of beliefs, backgrounds, talents, capabilities and perspectives are leveraged and harnessed to create business value. This book is an attempt to celebrate and understand how all of this has made a difference in the lives of PwDs through the eyes of all stakeholders-the employees, their peers, supervisors, and family members.

Attrition Mapping

The company has a very strong measurement and accountability mechanism and some of the features are as mentioned below:

- **Diversity Goals:** The organization has a very well-defined result oriented commitment and measurement system against each facet of diversity.
- **Employee Engagement Initiatives:** Two-way communication methods like formal and informal feedback systems help to capture the effectiveness of the framework.
- **Diversity DNA Scan:** Diversity Scan survey is rolled-out from time to time, with an intent to identify the existing diversity mix and understand people's perception regarding Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.

Additional Benefits of Hiring PwDs

Other peripheral benefits as a result of this intervention are:

- Improved Corporate Culture.
- Helped in yielding a competitive advantage in labour markets.
- Helped to gain insights into consumer markets, by knowing workable leadership behaviours. In other terms, it enhanced the ability of the organization to perceive the uniqueness of the market.
- Helped in creating a workplace which is self-managing.
- Multiple voices lead to new ideas, new services, and new products, and encourages out of the box thinking.
- Assisted in reducing the cost of supervision and minimizing employee relationship issues.
- Helped in gaining support and loyalty from the community of clients leading to enhanced business.
- Facilitated in preventing social disharmony through non-judgmental acceptance of local practices & customs.
- Helped in developing senior managers with an international mindset, which also led to usage of local resources & talent for global operations.

Challenges Faced and Measures used to Overcome

Eliminating unconscious bias, eliminating reluctance, fostering teamwork and attitude changes, improving accessibility in the workplace, accessibility to the differently-abled candidates, sensitizing employees: all of these are the challenges which the organization is continuously trying to mitigate to further strengthen the model. These challenges are diligently addressed by leadership commitment, organizational policy framework, rigorous hiring learning and development initiatives. Apart from these, extensive employee communication, driving focused engagement initiatives for each facet of diversity, tracking and measuring the success of each initiative are other initiatives taken up to address these challenges.

Compliance Related Processes

Philosophy and Commitments to Diversity

The company's commitment is demonstrated by defining the following base level indicators against each facet of diversity:

Diversity Facet	Philosophy	Commitment
Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)	The company is committed to provide equal opportunity in all areas of employment, including, but not limited to recruitment, hiring, training and promotion of individuals with disabilities.	Employ PwDs equal to 1.5 % of global workforce (Target for current year)
Gender Inclusivity	In the company, gender inclusivity is a long- term commitment to develop initiatives that lay a strong foundation for employment & career success at all levels.	Gender mix to be in accordance with the available employable population
Socially & Economically Disadvantaged People	The company is committed to provide gainful employment to socially & economically disadvantaged people in all geographies and businesses.	Mix of socially & economically disadvantaged people to be in accordance with the available employable population
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse People	To understand, embrace and operate in a multi- cultural world both in the market place and in the workplace.	Mix of culturally & linguistically diverse people in accordance with the available employable population
Mature Age People	To develop a workplace that provides the tools and support to develop people of mature age and to transition them successfully leaving a legacy of tribal knowledge within the organization.	To employ mature age people, equal to 1.5% of global workforce
Inclusion of Indigenous People	The company advocates employing 'People of the Soil' across all geographies of its operations, while keeping in mind the Equal Employment Opportunity.	80-100% of total workforce in respective country should be indigenous

Learnings

In the words of company officials, the whole process outlined in this document acts as a learning for the organization.

Plans Going Forward

Sustainability and Scalability

- Leadership commitment to Diversity and Inclusion; a 'Strategic Agenda'.
- Formal policy/ framework and an Integrated approach to Diversity and Inclusion.
- Organization Structure enabling Diversity – Dedicated Diversity Champions at corporate, business and country level, to lead the Diversity and Inclusion initiative.
- Enhanced employee communication and awareness.
- Managing activities and outcomes.
- Budget allocation for increasing workplace accessibility and accommodation.
- Periodic assessment and refinement on initiatives to improve coverage and effectiveness.

Action plan for future

- Adopt outreach programs to manage diversity.
- Design and implement innovative practices to attract, hire, train, promote and retain the diverse workforce.
- Budget allocation to further promote accessibility to the workplace.

Conclusion

The multiple awards and recognitions that have come the company's way, on account of their pioneering efforts towards creating an inclusive workplace is proof of the fact that society and industry at large acknowledges the contribution and impact that they are making as an organization. However, the icing on the cake is that this has not come at the cost of performance, as evidenced by their continued stellar financial results.

Doing good deeds is not a barrier to but an enabler of superior outcomes!

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Diversity is the Spice of Life

Titan Company Limited

“We are not doing them a favour when we hire PwD’s. On the contrary we are doing ourselves a favour” says Rajnarayan, Sr. VP & CHRO of Titan Ltd. On quizzing him about why he feels so, Raj says that the presence of PwD employees helps inculcate sensitivity and increases inclusivity, leading to a better workplace. He believes it also helps people respect differences. He has also seen people learn new skills due to the presence of differently abled colleagues in their teams.

For example, the presence of a speech and hearing-impaired colleague in their Design Team encouraged the other members of the team to pick up sign language. Raj shared another interesting vignette – their Hosur Factory Union has 2 visually challenged people in its Executive Committee!

Company Background and Sectoral Context

Titan Company Limited, a joint venture between the TATA Group and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) commenced operations in 1984 under the name Titan Watches Limited. Titan is the fifth largest integrated own brand watch manufacturer in the world⁸. Over the last three decades, Titan has expanded into underpenetrated markets and created lifestyle brands across different product categories. Titan is widely known for transforming the watch and jewellery industry in India, and for shaping India's retail market by pioneering experiential retail.

Titan Company Limited's people-first approach to everything is driven by its aim to provide elevating experiences to the people they reach. The success story began in 1984 with the presentation of Titan quartz watches that sported an international look. Since then, Titan has transformed the Indian watch market. After Sonata, a value brand of functionally styled watches at affordable prices, Titan reached out to the youth segment with Fastrack, its third brand, that pushes trendy and chic lifestyle products. The company has sold 150 million watches across the globe and manufactures over 15 million watches every year. With a license for premium fashion watches of global brands, Titan Company repeated its pioneering act, and brought international brands into the Indian market. Tommy Hilfiger, FCUK, Timberland & Police as well as the Swiss made watch - Xyllys owe their presence in the Indian market to Titan Company.

Leveraging precision engineering and core competencies from watch making, Titan initiated TEAL (erstwhile PED) in 2005, catering to global majors across industry verticals like aerospace, automotive, oil & gas, engineering, hydraulics, solar and medical instruments.

Entering the largely fragmented Indian jewellery market, one that had no known brands, in 1995, Titan Company launched Tanishq, India's most trusted and fastest growing jewellery brand. Tanishq has been synonymous with superior craftsmanship, exclusive designs and guaranteed product quality. Completing the jewellery portfolio is Zoya, the latest retail chain in the luxury segment, and most recently, Caratlane.

Titan Eyeplus, the third major line of business from Titan Company Ltd, offers a variety of distinguished products to the customers ranging from frames and lenses to contact lenses and sunglasses. Benchmarked against the best in the world, Titan Eyeplus heralds standardization in the eyewear industry.

With Titan's recent expanse into the fragrance market in 2013, SKINN by Titan was launched, for the urban, Indian men and women who are always on the move. Designed by award winner Master perfumers, the fine French fragrances from SKINN are manufactured and packaged in France. Titan further expanded its portfolio with Taneira, the latest range of handloom sarees.

With a retail footprint of over 1400 stores, and a total retail area of over 1.8 m sq ft, Titan Company has India's largest specialty retail network spanning over 240

⁸ <https://www.business-standard.com/company/titan-company-1016/information/company-history>

towns. Today, Titan Company Limited is TATA's largest consumer company, and India's leading producer and retailer of watches, jewellery, eyewear, and accessories.

Blazing a trail

Titan's inclusivity initiatives are aimed at reversing the existing job-market bias against people with disabilities. India has an estimated 26 million people with disabilities (PwDs) in the employable age group, with a majority having limited access to education, job skills and employment. Access to employment is a challenge, and less than 1% of PwDs are employed. Unemployment denies them their right to livelihood, leads to greater economic disadvantages, and limits their opportunity to play an equal part in the community. Titan Company has taken several steps to level the playing field for PwDs.

Aligning vision with action

Jamsetji N Tata, Founder of the Tata group, famously said, "In a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business, but is in fact, the very purpose of its existence."

Recognising the crucial role that the private sector can play in empowering vulnerable population groups; Titan's Community Development Policy aims to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

To address the special needs of its employees with disabilities, Titan has instituted non-discrimination policies and ergonomic working areas that help create a conducive work environment. Slope surfaces and ramps have been established at 'World of Titan' showrooms to facilitate employees and customers with disabilities.



A hearing and speech impaired employee carrying out machine setting and troubleshooting of Automatic Conveyor Line

Titan uses the outreach programme to identify people with disabilities from lower socio-economic strata in communities close to its operations in Tamil Nadu, provides them with employment opportunities. Typically, jobs that involve tasks with low levels of body risk, minimum physical movement or verbal communication. Physically impaired persons are trained to polish watchcases and assemble components, the hearing-impaired help strap watch heads, and the visually challenged find a place in the company's packaging and dispatch division.

Titan is also committed to providing employment opportunities for people with disability at the retail end. Watches, Jewellery and Eyewear divisions have started recruiting PwDs in customer service roles and as cashiers in retail outlets. Business associates and franchisees spread over 200 towns across the country are also coming forward to employ PwDs in their retail stores.

To support skilling, education and employability, Titan has partnered with several NGOs, including Enable India, V-Shesh and SERP (Wadhvani foundation). Technical training and computer literacy is one of the programmes under this initiative.

Track record

Year	Award / Recognition	Awarded by
2004	National Award for employing people with disability	President of India
2006	Golden Peacock Environment Management Award	Institute of Directors, New Delhi
2010	CSR Award - Best Commercial and Industrial Institution	Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
2014	National Award for employing people with disability	President of India

Creating impact

Currently, Titan employs 170 employees (representing 2% of the total employee population) with auditory, physical and visual impairments. The company has hugely benefited from these inclusion efforts and policies. Employees with disabilities have been found to be focused on their jobs, and offer high productivity and quality.

Titan's inclusivity policy has been a part of the company's culture for several years now. The accolades Titan has won for creating a more inclusive environment is testament to its ongoing journey. Moreover, the company is now further strengthening its efforts towards inclusion through increased hiring and training of PwDs, accessible infrastructure, and accommodation policies.

Titan also offers support for the personal development of employees with disabilities and their children in some areas:



Education: Employees' children are offered merit-based financial assistance to pursue higher education in India.



Culture and sports: Employees are encouraged to participate in national and state-level sports and athletic activities; sports kits, leaves of absence, travel, miscellaneous expenses, etc., are taken care of by the company. Employees are also presented with the platform to showcase their talent during the organisation's cultural programmes.



Grievance handling and counselling: Counselling sessions help employees manage workplace and/or personal issues and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Titan's initiatives and efforts to include PwDs acknowledge that they are an integral part of our society and have the right to equal opportunities. More importantly, such initiatives go a long way in changing social mindsets in India.

Why Hire Persons with Disabilities?

Titan's philosophy focusses on the upliftment of everybody in the areas that they operate in. The Hosur factories illustrate how Titan has positively impacted the lives of people in the Krishnagiri district. The company is now expanding its approach to its new factories in Uttarakhand.

Hiring methodologies for PwDs

- The company puts in conscious efforts to hire PwDs through its various partners
- The process of hiring remains the same for PwDs and is purely merit based.

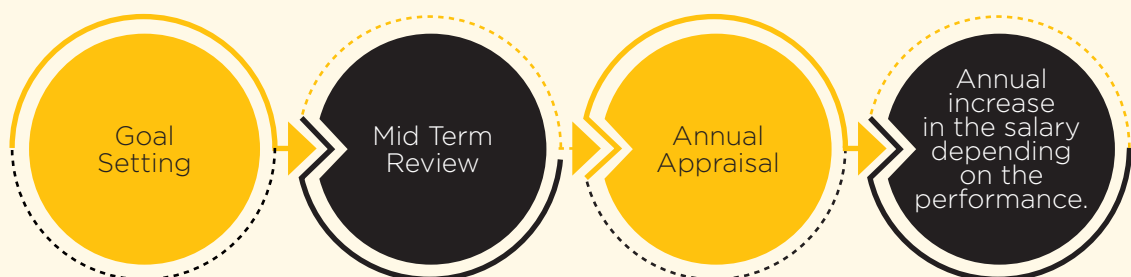
- The company's hiring partners help identify the appropriate talent pool in different locations.
- It then maps the competencies of the profiles received from various channels to the job roles available
- Suitable job roles for the PwDs are then identified in consultation with the hiring team. For instance, Person with Locomotor Disability can be hired for a role like MIS where they are needed to be good at MS Excel and analysis.
- Titan ensures that the essential job functions are detailed out for every position along with reasonable accommodation so that persons with disabilities can understand the nature and requirements of the job, and apply for it as per their skills, interests, and abilities.

Training and upskilling for the current & future roles

Besides Titan Company's unique strategy to recruit persons with disability, the company is also engaged in activities to address the special needs of these employees. Titan is offering training to enhance their technical competence and computer literacy. It has established non-discrimination policies and seeks to create a conducive work environment by creating an ergonomic working area. The company is also offering grievance handling and counselling to tackle problems such as exploitation, marital problems and emotional problems.

Performance evaluation

An employee is appraised based on the Functional and Behavioral competencies. Functional competencies are the defined Key Responsibility Areas (KRAs) and Behavioural competencies are the Critical Success Factors (CSF). The process is as below-



Retention strategies and practices adopted - Compensation and Benefits

In Titan, people with disabilities are accepted as equal members of the workforce. Employing disabled persons is not philanthropy, but a realization that they are a part of our society and need understanding, support and opportunities, not charity or misplaced compassion.

Compensation and Benefits remain the same for all the employees. Titan is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on any grounds. Compensation depends solely on the level at which the candidate is hired and the role basket.

Career Development Initiatives

Titan prides itself on being a “people-first” company, and knows that its employees are what make Titan tick. The company also encourages its employees to mobilise internally through a programme called ‘Evolve’.

Young Leaders Programme, and Emerging Leaders Programme are two other key initiatives that help the company track and develop performers with high potential.



Young Leaders Programme

Through the Young Leaders Programme, young high-performing and high-potential Titanians are identified and groomed into future leaders.



Emerging Leaders Programme

The Emerging Leaders Program aims to identify top talent who are taken through an 18-month-long curated development journey.

Impact of PwD Employees

Simply put, Titan has impacted lives in many ways. Employees with disabilities are focused on the job and perform well, and thus, productivity and quality has never been an issue. It has been observed that employees with disabilities are committed and passionate about what they do. This has a very positive effect on the entire ecosystem.

An illustration of this would be a cashier at Titan with locomotor disability. He was recently awarded by an external agency in the retail world for his dedication, commitment and excellence in his work.



Srinivas has been a cashier in a Titan Eye Plus store in Bangalore for over eight years. Having won the Impression regional award thrice, he credits Titan Company and his colleagues and seniors for his success.

Shankar Ganesh is another PwD employee with motor disability on his right leg, who is working as a cashier in the Tanishq Showroom at Koramangala, Bangalore. Shankar is a Computer Science Engineer with an MBA, and has been with Titan for the past 7 years. He is proud of the fact that he is working for a caring Indian company, and can picture himself retiring from here.

Says Rajnarayan, “As a TATA group company and as TITAN, we do enjoy a reputation as a brand company for our ethical and fair practices in all spheres. As far as Brand image & reputation of our company goes, our endeavours in the area of working with PwDs, we have not embarked on ventures with these aspects as the main objectives. Our efforts have been to provide all our people with the best employee experience possible, in a fair and equitable manner. We are happy that the work we have done has received its fair share of recognition both internally and in the outside world”.

He goes on to say, “As a company, one of our main cultural tenets has been to manifest unconditional positive regard towards everyone that we interact with. In our culture study too, our people spoke about the respect and regard that we treat everyone as a cultural trait which is abiding and in fact, a way of life with us. Needless-to-say, this is something that leads to an inclusive organization, where diversity is welcomed and nurtured.

As for Customer preference/loyalty, we have not researched on analysed customer feedback data keeping this angle in mind’.

Sensitizing Program

Sensitizing programs are the most important precursor for hiring candidates with disability. The company facilitates the inclusion of PwDs in mainstream employment by working towards a change in the mind-set and the preconceived notions of colleagues and co-workers towards disability.

Titan also sensitizes hiring managers not to compromise on skills and hire on compassionate grounds, because it believes that this is highly counter-productive to the candidates themselves.

Challenges Faced & Future Plans

The challenges that the company faces with relation to PwDs are not everyday issues. Defining career paths for employees is not an easy thing for any company. It is an ever-evolving phenomenon, and it is a constant endeavour for folks at TITAN to provide cogent career paths for all their people. The Young Leaders Program and Emerging Leaders Program cater to all high potential employees at both early and mid to senior managerial levels.

Going forward, this is perhaps one area where the company will dedicate efforts, to ensure a well-defined career & growth path for the PwD employees, taking into consideration their aspirations and needs.

Keeping a future focus, the second aspect would be to create workplace solutions in such a way that TITAN becomes an attractive destination, 'the place -to -be -in' as an employer brand, which PwDs would aspire to be a part of.

Enabling the Differently Abled

Titan, is a company which has based its people practices on the principles of respecting diversity and inclusion (D&I). Even in its early years, and without a specific D&I policy in place, the Titan management identified and recruited youngsters from the most backward areas in Tamil Nadu's Krishnagiri district (known as Dharmapuri at the time). The tone for Titan's inclusive agenda was set in the formative years of the company during the visit of then Chairman JRD Tata. After meeting the differently abled youth working there, he asked the Management to ensure that they were treated the same as the rest of the staff.

Since then, the company has engaged closely with organisations who work with persons with disability to help them make the most of livelihood opportunities. Titan has embedded the philosophy of inclusion of varied kinds as a part of the way it works. It has been focusing on D&I as an important aspect of its people practices, both within and outside the company for many years.



PwD Employees at the Dehradun Factory

Differently-abled employees enjoy the same benefits and career growth opportunities as others in the company. Over the years, many of them have grown in the company and earned laurels for their work. A few years ago, the company management renewed its focus on inclusion through differently-abled employees. They were recruited and specifically trained for positions such as watch technicians or cashiers in retail stores. Titan has also worked with vendors who only hire differently-abled youth for its watch strapping operations.

As a part of its larger D&I focus, Titan has undertaken several initiatives to support the differently abled. It works with the Spastics Society to provide support for rural vocational trades for spastic children. Apart from this, it supports skill development and employability training by reputed NGOs. Titan has also been actively involved in the creation of the Accessibility Index for the differently abled, which was launched by the Government of India.



JRD Tata, Former Chairman, Tata Sons, seen with differently-abled employees of Titan Company. To his left: AL Mudaliar, Former Chairman, Titan Company, and JJ Bhabha, Former Director, Tata Sons. To his right: XS Desai, Former Managing Director, Titan Company

With such focused efforts since its inception, it is no surprise that Titan has received the President's Award four times for its work with the differently abled. Titan's D&I journey shows true merit and success.

References

1. Diversity Matters, July 2018 Issue
2. Tata Group Web Sites



Confederation of Indian Industry

125 Years: 1895-2020

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government, and civil society through working closely with Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry.

Founded in 1895 and celebrating 125 years in 2020, India's premier business association has more than 9100 members, from the private as well as public sectors, and an indirect membership of over 300,000 enterprises from around 291 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.

With 68 offices, including 9 Centres of Excellence in India, and 11 overseas offices in Australia, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa, UAE, UK, and USA, as well as institutional partnerships with 394 counterpart organizations in 133 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

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The India Business and Disability Network (IBDN) is a CII initiative to facilitate inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and workplace diversity in India.

The primary purpose of IBDN would be facilitating inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and workplace diversity in India.

The IBDN is going to be a one-stop solution to promote employment of PwDs while responding to the needs of the private sector. The IBDN will give a platform for companies' mutual learning and experiences as well as context-based solutions and engagement with other stakeholders.

Goal of IBDN: Promote and enable inclusion and equal opportunities for Persons with Disability at workplace through knowledge sharing, collaborative action, and improving technical skills of member organizations as well as to facilitate and assist companies in adopting products and services to create inclusive and accessible workplace.

Join the exclusive network for inclusion & mainstreaming of PwDs #CII4PwDs

For further information on IBDN, please contact

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