

8.4 Universal Design



Universal design (U.D.) is designing products, environments, programs and services to be used by all people without the need for any adaptations. Much more than barrier-free design, U.D. is based on accommodating the diversity of all human characteristics.

Flexibility is a Major Principle of Universal Design

How work is performed (e.g. allowing cashiers to sit or stand).

When work is performed (e.g. flexible scheduling, compressed work week).

Where work is performed (e.g. remote work locations, whether full-time, part-time or occasional).

Design for Everyone

Employers should strive to incorporate U.D. principles as much as possible to make work environments accessible, inclusive and productive. U.D. aims to increase workplace well-being and engagement for everyone.

Universal Design Accessibility Concepts

U.D. is an ongoing process that builds adaptive, resilient, and inclusive workplaces.

Physical accessibility: ramps, ergonomics, work stations

Systemic accessibility: workplace accommodation policies, protocols, flexibility

Leadership/communication competencies: cultural agility, emotional intelligence

Work culture accessibility: inclusiveness, employee well-being, employee resource groups

Examples of Universal Design in the Workplace:

Physical environment

- Zero-step entries
- Automatic door openers
- Wider doorways and hallways

Workstations

- Adjustable desks
- Modular furniture

Tools and technology

- Captioning
- Speech-to-text software

Applying universal design makes workplaces more inclusive! Applying these principles for the benefit of all employees fosters innovation and builds business capacity. Workplaces that promote inclusion generate more benefits than simply including people with disabilities.

Sources:

¹Ron Mace, from website: drc.arizona.edu/workplace/inclusive-workplace-practices. Ron Mace spearheaded the paradigm shift towards U.D.

²The Center for Universal Design, College of Design, North Carolina State University, North Carolina, USA in Toolkit: Key indicators of accessibility - Reporting on the UN CRPD, prepared by the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES), 2015.

³Workplace Diversity Strategies: Utilizing Universal Design to Build an Inclusive Organization, Sean McEwen - Calgary Alternative Employment Services. PowerPoint. www.calgaryemploymentfirst.ca

Disclaimer:

Hire for Talent has made every effort to use the most respectful words possible while writing these materials. We realize, however, that the most appropriate terminology may change over time. We developed these materials with the intent to respect the dignity and inherent rights of all individuals.