

## **8.3 How to Create an Inclusive Workplace?**



### **Four Steps to Creating an Inclusive Workplace:**

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

### **Step One: Understanding Key Definitions**

#### **Diversity**

Diversity is about the variety of people and ideas within a business. Diversity allows us to access a wider range of ideas, perspectives and experience. This improves innovation, resilience and problem-solving / decision-making in a workplace. Diversity refers to the full spectrum of human demographic differences such as race, gender, age, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity brings value as long as it is valued. This is where inclusion comes in.

#### **Inclusion**

Inclusion is about a sense of belonging and feeling valued, heard and respected. Inclusion is a basic need for all humans; it's about a sense of social relatedness that is experienced through behavior and the way that others treat us. When people feel included at work, they feel safe, welcome, and engaged. Inclusion is a performance enhancer – while its opposite, exclusion, can be debilitating. Inclusion allows individuals to use their ideas and perspectives in their work with colleagues and customers.

#### **Inclusive Workplaces**

This concept refers to fostering the variety of people and ideas within a business by creating an environment in which people have a sense of belonging and can be their “authentic” selves within the team.

## Measures of Accessibility

This concept extends to every phase of employment, from recruitment to retention. Protocols and systems often entail conditions that may create issues with accessibility.

### Remember! Diversity is Multidimensional.

- Visible diversity may involve culture, ethnicity/culture, nationality, gender, age and mental/physical status.
- Invisible diversity may involve thoughts, perspectives, and life experiences, including education, values/beliefs, and socioeconomic status.
- Other diversity dimensions that may or may not be visible may include sexual orientation, religion and language.

## Step Two: Assess Your Workplace's Accessibility and Policies

Identifying barriers that may have been inadvertently created and perpetuated within a company's HR policies and protocols (perhaps by "doing things the same way as we always have") will help people without disabilities to see how policies and protocols could be modified.

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

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

Ask yourself: What would my workplace look like if people with disabilities could participate without any disadvantages?

Ask yourself: If I had a disability, how would this work for me? What would need to change so I could fully participate equally with others?

Creating an inclusive workplace is all about changing perspectives!

## Step Three: Exploring the Concepts of Human-Centered Design, Growth Mindset and Universal Design

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

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

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

Please note: None of these concepts require professional expertise to create an inclusive workplace. Having the right mindset and being willing to embrace it is all that is needed.

## Step Four: Leveraging Existing Skills and Implementing Changes to Create an Accessible and Inclusive Workplace

- Use existing skills and knowledge.
- Review all internal processes and protocols to remove barriers to employment.

### Here are some examples of fostering inclusion during the hiring process:

#### 1. Recruitment

On the application form, ask if candidates would prefer to be contacted by phone, email, VRS (Video Relay Service), etc.

#### 2. Interview

When contacting candidates for interviews:

- Provide a description of the interview location.
- Ensure that the location is fully accessible.
- Define the interview style.
- Ask whether candidates will need any accommodations for the interview.
- Let candidates know that they may bring a support person with them to the interview.

#### 3. Selection

Determine essential skills and job requirements prior to the interview.

Be prepared to acknowledge that making accommodations brings added value when selecting the right person for the job.

#### 4. Hiring and Retention

Develop an accommodation policy to address employment accessibility and that promotes an inclusive workplace.

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Definition adapted from Bersin by Deloitte, *Diversity and Inclusion in Canada: The Current State*, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Human Centered Design: Design Kit*, IDEO.org. Extracted from the website [www.designkit.org/human-centered-design](http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design).

<sup>3</sup> *Growth Mindset: What having a “growth mindset” actually means*. Carol Dweck, from *Harvard Business Review*, 2016. Extracted from the website <https://hbr.org/2016/01/what-having-a-growth-mindset-actually-means>

<sup>4</sup> *Universal Design: Trends in Universal Design*, Publisher: Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, The Delta Centre, Tønsberg, Norway, 2013.

#### 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.*