**Increase Disability Inclusion**

Like the song “50 Ways to Leave Your Lover” by the Paul Simon, there are many ways your company can increase disability inclusion - here are 12...

This may look like a LOT, but it’s actually fairly simple, just click on each to see more. Links to other resources are in the back.

## Overview

There are so many ways a company can increase their inclusion of people with disabilities. This document was created to accompany a webinar (replays are available at <https://www.debrussellinc.com/2021-disability-inclusion-webinar-s>). Each method can be combined with others, and the power of using more than one approach to inclusion provides exponential results.

## Corporate Social Responsibility:

* Community Relations
* Supplier Diversity
* Supported Employment Vendor Programs

## Workplace Culture:

* Employee Resource Groups (AKA Business Resource Groups, Affinity Groups)
* Mentorship Programs
* Self-Identification/Disclosure Campaigns

## Workforce Development:

* Pipeline Partnerships
* Recruiting Slate Targets
* Dedicated Internships
* Pre-Hire Training
* Job Fairs
* Alternative Hiring Initiatives

There is no right way or wrong way to try to improve your company’s disability inclusion. Each of these will move the needle toward more inclusion, but the real power is combining them and aligning them with your company’s strategies and goals in relation to Customers, Employees and Shareholders/Owner/Investors.

## Corporate Social Responsibility

As stand-alone tactics, these will not create much effect on the disability inclusiveness of your pipeline for talent. However, they are very powerful in adding validity to your communications, intentions and actions that overtly say “this company wants to hire more people with disabilities. These tactics help you build your brand’s relationship with the disability community and offers investor and customer benefits, in addition to workforce.

### Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generatedCommunity Relations

Community Relations tactics allow your company to target charitable activities to benefit people with disabilities. Examples include donations, employee volunteerism, membership in disability organizations and sponsorship of events,

Community Relations allows a company to connect the brand with a specific disability type or the larger disability community. One key to this tactic is to align the community relations activity with your company’s overall strategy and priorities. At Walgreens, we aligned most monetary donations with the cross section of disability and promoting health and wellness, since this closely aligned with the mission. If your company’s mission is related to food, perhaps your community relations will connect donations or employee volunteerism with school age nutrition programs. Or you can partner to create a PSA highlighting the issue of childhood hunger.

### Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generatedSupplier Diversity

Supplier Diversity allows your company to designate a percentage of spend toward disability owned businesses or disabled veteran owned businesses. There are programs that offer certification of disability owned and disabled veteran owned businesses. However, you can also simply include a question about ownership and control in your vendor selectin process without requiring a small business to go to the expense of acquiring the certification. If you are a larger company, ensure that your supplier diversity program includes disability owned and/or disabled veteran owned businesses. Consider attending those organizations’ national conferences to help convey your company’s interest in ensuring these types of businesses are considered as vendors. In addition, you can designate a specific percentage of your tier 1 and tier 2 spend to disability owned and/or disabled veteran owned

Businesses

### Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generatedSupported Employment Vendor Programs

Supported Employment Vendor Programs allows your company to support vendors that employ people with disabilities who require supports to get or remain employed. This concept was spearheaded by Microsoft who wanted their corporate campus to be inclusive of people with significant disabilities but did not have any open positions that did not require a college degree. Those types of positions were managed by various contractual vendors. So, Microsoft established a vendor program that taught vendors how to include people with significant disabilities and needed supports to be successful in their jobs. Microsoft invested in developing a very robust program that continues today assisting their vendors in hiring, employing and managing people who have job coaches, require additional training and other supports to be successful in jobs on their corporate campus. This includes, mail service, food service, facility maintenance, etc. Microsoft has made their handbooks and all materials related to this open source.

## Workplace Culture:

### Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generatedEmployee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERG) have several different names but ultimately follow a structure of designated programming (sponsored by the company) that allows employees to connect in relation to s specific characteristic or interest. Many companies start disability ERGs for employees with disabilities, employees who have family members with disabilities and/or allies to the disability community.

### Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generatedMentorship Programs

Mentorship programs allow opportunities for employees with disabilities to be mentored by executives and others who can assist in their career development. But the added bonus is what some companies have experienced called “Reverse Mentoring” where the mentor also benefits by learning about the person with a disability and their experience as a person with a disability.

*Many companies engage in mentoring programs to give back to the community and these programs help elevate a company’s status in the disability community overall. However, the most powerful version of a mentoring program is one that I first saw at Procter & Gamble where they realized that the magic was in the “reverse mentoring” as their executives learned to understand disability through the experiences of an employee.*

### Graphical user interface, application Description automatically generatedSelf-Identification/Disclosure Campaigns

Self-Identification and Disclosure Campaigns are an opportunity for a company to explain to its employees how THEY benefit from sharing that information with their employer. Done well, these communication campaigns help to demystify disability and remove the stigma of having a disability.

*Depending on your company’s status as a US Federal Contractor, you may or may not be familiar with what is now called Self-Identification, or Self-ID. This requirement started in 2013 and forces employers to ask potential and current employees if they want to disclose that they are a person with a disability. And for those of you who are federal contractors, there is little you can do to make the required process more disability-friendly, however you can add communications around the requirements to understand how your employees benefit if they give you this information. Consider creating a way to communicate, with your current employees, your desire to have an open dialogue around their disability status and ensuring they get what they need to be successful. We started something similar in 2006 at Walgreens. We called it an “invitation to disclose” disability status and we were very clear about our desire to employ more people with disabilities and ability to report on the success of our efforts. This approach combined with a good orientation session that explained our reasons and efforts to be an inclusive organization. This approach gave us insight into the composition of our workforce than we could ever have by simply asking the question and, in turn, a more engaged and open workforce.*

## Workforce Development:

### Graphical user interface, application, Word Description automatically generatedPipeline Partnerships

Pipeline Partnerships are a formal (but not legal) agreement between a company and an organization that provides services to people with disabilities. The employer agrees to invest time in the organization’s staff touring the worksite and learning about the jobs, culture, requirements and management and to ensure opportunity to be considered for open jobs for candidates with disabilities that have been pre-screened by the agency staff.

### Graphical user interface, application, PowerPoint Description automatically generatedRecruiting Slate Targets

Recruiting Slate Targets are generally used by organizations that rely on outsourced recruiting. Built into the contractual relationship is a target for diversity in the slates offered to fill open positions. These programs can also be established for in-house recruiters or a department can establish a “diversity recruiter” position to targets relationships with diverse sources. There are also a few organizations that specialize in recruiting candidates with disabilities and operate like specialized contingent staffing firms.

### Graphical user interface, application, PowerPoint Description automatically generatedDedicated Internships

Dedicated Internships is the practice of reserving a specific percentage of internships to be filled by candidates with disabilities only. These programs are a great way to start building a disability inclusive pipeline of talent for permanent positions but should run as part of a larger internship program, not as a separate or “one-off” internship (or the intern can miss out on the structure and benefits of the entire program).

### Graphical user interface, application, PowerPoint Description automatically generatedPre-Hire Training

Pre-Hire Training is the practice of designing a training program inside your organization that offers a chance for people with disabilities to gain the skills and experience to be considered qualified for open positions. These training programs are generally a partnership between a training entity like a community college, vocational training program or a VocTech school and the employer. However, it ensures that at least one of the partners has the experience and expertise to recommend any needed modifications to ensure a higher probability of success in the training (and therefore the employment). Walgreens was the first to leverage this model and since then has been used by dozens of companies, most recently, Sephora.

### Graphical user interface, application, PowerPoint Description automatically generatedJob Fairs

Job Fairs that are coordinated by disability services agencies, the offices of services for students with disabilities in colleges or larger disability advocacy organizations. These job fairs operate just like other job fairs except that every candidate is a person with a disability and the format may be altered to go beyond basic accessibility to ensure the experience is carried out following universal design principles.

A large portion of the country leverages disability specific job Fairs. At the community level, these are easy to find. At a national and regional level, it can be harder. These days, of course, they are all virtual, but I think they will become hybrid when we are past the pandemic. I think of colleges as the largest example of recruitment fairs, they are interviewing candidates for internships as well as jobs.

### Graphical user interface, application, PowerPoint Description automatically generatedAlternative Hiring Initiatives

Alternative Hiring Initiatives are designed to remove unintended barriers in the application and/or interviewing system to ensure that candidates with disabilities can prove their ability to meet the standards of the positions while eliminating parts of the traditional candidate selection process. This program has similar design as a temporary to permanent employment arrangement. Walgreens also used this model. Our interview protocols were not designed for people with disabilities. So, we preferred to allow candidates with disabilities to leverage disability employment services providers to assist them in learning the job while on the job and use an additional period of time to demonstrate the ability to achieve our standards. This also allowed them additional acclimated to the culture, routine and personnel of the specific workplace. In many cases we combined pre-hire training with alternative hiring initiatives. However, this was not offered if a partnership with a disability employment services provider was not in place. A few tech companies started to use a version of this by offering specific job interviewing protocols for individuals on the Autism Spectrum interested in specific positions. This model, “Autism at Work” is also being used by several banks, and professional services companies to recruit and onboard candidates on the Autism Spectrum into technical and support roles.

# Resources:

## Corporate Social Responsibility

## Disability Owned and Disabled Veterans Owned Businesses

<https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/service-disabled-veteran-owned-small-businesses-program>

<https://disabilityin.org/what-we-do/supplier-diversity/>

## Microsoft Supported Employment Vendor Program

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/procurement/diversity-sep.aspx?activetab=pivot%3aprimaryr5>

## Workforce Development

## Project Search

<https://www.projectsearch.us>

## Walgreens Alternative Hiring Initiative

<https://www.walgreens.com/images/adaptive/pdf/TWGprogramguide_apr16.pdf>

<https://www.walgreens.com/images/adaptive/pdf/REDIprogramguide_april.pdf>

<https://www.walgreens.com/topic/sr/sr_disability-inclusion.jsp>

## Sephora Alternative Hiring Initiative

<https://www.sephorastands.com/accessibility/>

## Autism at Work (Autism@work)

<https://www.autismatwork.org>

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me!

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