Companies, aim for the inclusion of people with disabilities in your teams!

Do you want to recruit more people with disabilities and better integrate them into your teams? Humanity & Inclusion (HI) offers you a series of "good practices for inclusive employers" based on the successful experiences of companies around the world. They are classified according to the five dimensions of an inclusive company, listed opposite.

Policies & Leadership

HR & Management

Internal Culture
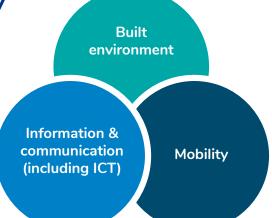
Physical & Digital Accessibility

Tailored Partnerships

Accessibility in the workplace: where do we start?

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What is meant by accessibility in the workplace?

It is nothing more than making all resources and common spaces accessible to all employees, on an equal basis and whatever each person's abilities. Accessibility is a fundamental right. It is therefore essential to ensure freedom of movement and expression, equal rights and inclusion for all. Accessibility is important in all areas, but it is particularly important in ensuring equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Built environment

Information & communication (including ICT)

Mobility

Workplaces are often located in inaccessible premises, which people with disabilities cannot physically enter or work in, especially people with reduced mobility. But not only that: people with other challenges (sensory, sensitivity, emotional, psychological, etc.) are also concerned. It should be noted that the tools and equipment essential for work are not accessible either.

The organisation of work is also frequently incompatible with the needs of people with hearing, visual or intellectual disabilities. Why is this? It is because websites and digital documents are not created in compliance with accessibility rules, because meetings and presentations are not organised in an inclusive way and because communication techniques do not take the needs of people with disabilities into account.

How can you achieve accessibility in your company?

1 Conduct a thorough participatory assessment of the current situation via interviews and focus groups with employees with and without disabilities, a participatory assessment of the company's facilities and/or its communication strategies, and an analysis of current practices, published documents and official web services.

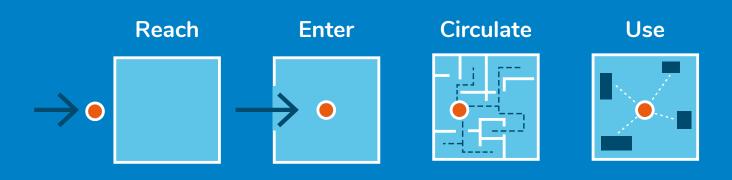**2** Improve accessibility for existing elements.

3 Always consider accessibility from the design phase of new interventions (constructions, web services, public events, documents and publications, etc.).

4 Apply universal design principles and follow appropriate accessibility standards (national or international, according to the context). In some instances, the international ISO standards for accessibility should be used as a reference (where there are no national standards or regulations). If, on the other hand, national accessibility standards are available, they must be complied with and, occasionally, integrated with the ISO or other appropriate standards (ADA, British Standards, etc.).

Where should accessibility be ensured?

You should ensure accessibility along the staff's whole chain of movements, ensuring that they can easily, effortlessly and with no need of help:

- Enter the facility;
- Find their way and move freely around each floor;

- Use every space according to its purpose – activate electrical fittings, use a toilet, heat up a lunch box, send an email, open a window, participate in a meeting, file a complaint, etc.

Reach **Enter** **Circulate** **Use**

Why ensure accessibility?

Because it is a right, obviously, but also because accessibility increases access to employment opportunities. Employed people with disabilities are therefore less dependent on others, more self-confident and more fulfilled as human beings. Accessibility thus contributes to independence and dignity.

Within the company, accessibility also builds self-esteem and helps to empower people. Employees with disabilities can work to the best of their abilities, without being hindered by accessibility challenges that would require them to ask for help.

In addition to the benefits for the person with disabilities themselves, accessibility promotes better community development. Indeed, the work of people with disabilities increases productivity, generates welfare, reduces social costs, increases tax revenues and promotes diversity of views and innovation, etc.

In some contexts, improving the accessibility of a workplace is a legal obligation and can lead to sanctions for the company if it is not respected.

How?

Improving inclusion and accessibility is not a quick process – it takes time because it requires a profound change in people's perception, understanding and behaviour. There are some quick wins, however, that can be achieved in a short time with limited or no expenses, such as:

- Training employees to produce files and documents that are more accessible or to organise meetings in a more inclusive way;

- Providing screen readers (which are free or cost very little);

- Implementing reasonable accommodation for employees who need it, such as providing adapted furniture or IT equipment (mice or keyboards);

- Etc.

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To go further

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From 2022, HI can advise you on your inclusion journey through its "Inclusive Employer" technical assistance. Contact us now to find out more!

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