THE ROAD TO INCLUSION

INTEGRATING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Youth 4 Jobs | BCG
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Youth 4 Jobs Foundation is a social enterprise set up with the aim of skilling youth with disability to the needs of industry. Its rich experience of working with governments, multilateral agencies and companies has been leveraged for skilling PwDs. Y4J works at three levels:

1. Setting up placement linked skilling centres for youth with disability across the country

2. Offering comprehensive solutions to mainstream hiring of Persons with Disabilities in the corporate workforce

3. Supporting work on policy which includes studies, industry research, country strategy for multilateral agencies

Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD) was created under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), a special scheme launched by Honorable Prime Minister of India to offer Indian youth meaningful, industry relevant, skill based training. SCPwD is jointly promoted by Confederation of Indian Industry and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. It targets skill development of People with Disabilities as per the industry needs which can help them to be gainfully employed and contribute to India's economy.

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FOREWORD

The whitepaper "Road to Inclusion – Integrating PwDs in Organizations" is an extremely relevant and timely report and a must read for the Government, Public and Private sector companies as well as the social sector.

As the title suggests, the whitepaper attempts to point the way forward for the inclusion of Persons With Disability (PwD) into companies, using some simple easy-to-do steps.

I would like to thank The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Youth4Jobs and the Skill Council for Persons With Disability (SCPwD) for their contributions in creating this report.

With best regards,

Patu Keswani

Chairman, SCPwD

Chairman and Managing Director,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is estimated that ~7-8% of population in India has locomotive, vision, hearing or some other types of disabilities. However, persons with disabilities (PwDs) form <1% of workforce. This low level of inclusion is largely driven by myths around efforts and investment needed for effectively employing them and potential loss of productivity. On the contrary, anecdotal evidence suggests that PwDs are as good, if not more motivated and engaged than regular employees. Companies, which have taken this challenge head-on, have successfully absorbed significant number of PwDs across variety of roles. These company champions enjoy reduced staff turnover, higher customer satisfaction, a more sensitized organizational culture and improved brand image for the enterprise. Several companies that started inclusivity programs as a CSR initiative have evolved their PwD recruitment to a mainstream workforce planning activity, basis a proven business case.

Effective engagement of PwDs in workforce requires a concerted effort on part of all stakeholders involved – companies, government, NGOs, individuals, friends and families. Companies can take cues from the experience of first movers and embark upon the journey in a systematic manner. Modifications in recruitment and training processes, some work-place modifications and an overall organizational sensitization are key. Individuals on their part should keep up their confidence, take help of friends, families, NGOs and others to find a suitable calling, make themselves employable and pursue their professional aspirations. Governments should also play their part by investing in capability building, creating suitable mobility infrastructure and providing other aids needed for the disabled population to become more independent.

OVERVIEW OF DISABILITIES IN INDIA

"There is no greater disability than the inability to see the person as more than his disability"

– Robert Hensel

1.1   Disability prevalence across the world

As per WHO, 'disability' is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action, while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability thus drives challenges in interaction between an individual and social/physical environment.

More than 1 billion persons in the world (around 15% of total population) have some form of disability. A smaller portion of these individuals (~2-3% of the population) suffers from vision, hearing and locomotive disabilities that can limit some types of activities and roles. Across the world, people with disability have to face significant challenges in the fields of education, employment and social attitude towards them (Exhibit 1.1).

Exhibit 1.1 : Employment Rates and Ratios for Differently Abled People Across World

Country	Employment rate of people with disabilities (%)	Employment rate overall population (%)
South Africa	12%	41%
Japan	23%	59%
Spain	22%	51%
USA	38%	73%
United Kingdom	39%	69%
Australia	42%	72%
India	38%	63%
Netherlands	40%	62%
Germany	46%	65%
Canada	56%	75%
Zambia	46%	57%
Switzerland	62%	77%

Facts and Files from Across World

China: Companies failing to meet the 1.5% quota pay fee to the Disabled Person's employment security fund

Australia: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations funds workplace modifications providing up to $10,000

United Kingdom: 'Working Tax Credit' paid to range of self-employed PwDs

Canada: Employment and Social Development has launched strong legal framework such as Disability Savings, Duty to Accommodate to support EwD

Switzerland: INSOS is an umbrella organization that represents and co-ordinates 750 other organizations that work in the field of disability

Source: World report on disability by WHO and The World Bank
Note: The Employment rate is the proportion of the working age population (with or without disabilities) in employment. Definitions of working age differ across countries
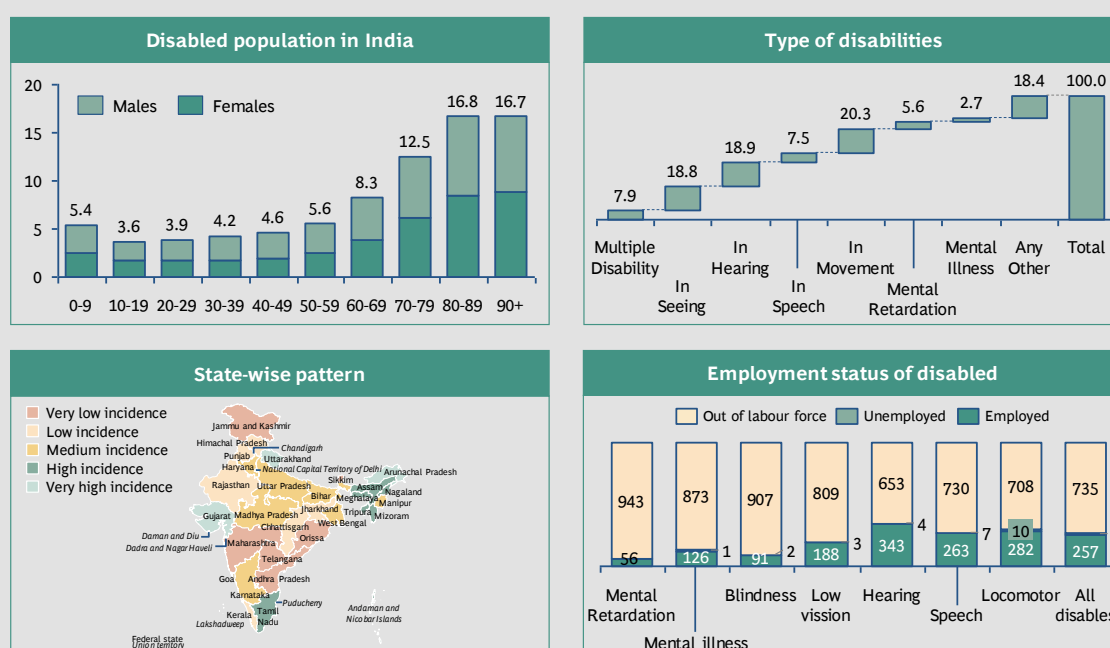
1.2   Disability in India

The 2011 census pegs the disability prevalence at 2-3% in India, which clearly understates the situation. Experts and agencies working in the field in general estimate that 5-6% of the population suffers from significant disabilities (i.e. around 60-80 million people). Disability pattern varies by gender, age, states and types of impairment (Exhibit 1.2). Typically, literacy levels are low across all types of disability, and illiteracy is estimated at 52% as against 35% in the general population. Among the PwDs who are literate, only 50% cross the primary and 20-25% cross secondary education levels. The unemployment rate is also 5-6 times higher in the disabled population compared to general population. In fact, ~65-70% of the PwDs are out of the labour force.

India launched 'The Persons with Disability Act' in 1995, which has brought focus on the issue and resulted in positive changes in the environment. Key provisions of this act include the following:

- 3% of all categories of jobs in the government sector were reserved for disabled persons
- Employment incentives in terms of 'EPF refund' for private sector companies who had >5% of their workforce comprising of people with disability
- New 'Disability Commissioner' were appointment for each state. Prior to the Act, this roles was included with the 'Women and Child Health Commissioner'

Exhibit 1.2 : Prevalence of disability in India

Source: Census of India 2011, Planning Committee reports on disability in India, WHO reports

1.3   Business case on employing people with disabilities

Employing people with disabilities should not be seen as an act of charity or corporate social responsibility by the corporates. Companies who have made the initial moves can see the emerging business case from such initiatives (exhibit 1.2). We interviewed several companies who have started including PwDs into their workforce and each of the company leaders have the opinion that their business profited with these initiatives. Hence, there is need to revise the outlook on employing people with disability and put forward an effort based on business case.

Exhibit 1.3 : Business case for employing differently abled people

Positive impact on revenues/ margins

1. Higher productivity of PwDs in repetitive tasks (8-10% higher productivity established in several roles in manufacturing, hospitality, BPOs)

2. Lower attrition rate (~5% lower than regular employees)

3. Reduced absenteeism

Investments and efforts required

1. Work-place modifications in existing set-ups, (part of design in case of new facilities)

2. Recruitment, training and on-boarding programs

3. Sensitization drive (part of internal communication)

Impact on Business

1. Bottom Line Impact (2-5% driven by increased productivity and reduced attrition)

2. Higher Customer Satisfaction levels

3. Brand image of an inclusive enterprise with positive spin-off for all stakeholders

Source: Interviews with company champions and youth stars conducted over course of study
Note: The statistics above do not include any incentives that may be offered by the government towards subsidies or tax breaks

COMPANY CHAMPIONS

*"**The Only Disability in Life is a Bad Attitude**"*

– Scott Hamilton

2.1   Employing people with disability

The previous chapter lays down the need for increase in the employment opportunities made available to the differently abled people. Contrary to the popular myth, employing PwDs does not require substantial extra investments/efforts. In fact, almost 60% of the people with disability do not even need any special infrastructural support for their day-to-day activities. In addition, most of the travel and communication challenges for the differently abled can be resolved through cost effective practical solutions.

Different industrial sectors have varying degrees of suitability to absorb people with different kinds of disabilities. For ex- Speech and Hearing Impaired people (SHI) show good professional performance in hospitality, retail and manufacturing industries. Typically in manufacturing industries, SHI people are found to get less distracted by the sound of equipment and processes in the unit and report less fatigue at the end of the job. In the hospitality sector, an extra smile and courtesy extended by SHIs has shown to improve customer satisfaction and increased instances of repeated visit. Similarly, visually challenged (partial or complete) people perform well in the beauty and wellness department, where the customer satisfaction is only dependent on feel of the service. People with locomotive challenges perform better and show higher retention rates in the IT/ITES, BPO and travel sectors. Few industries, such as hospitality have also started training for people with intellectual challenges for food and beverage steward roles. Success of this program at hospitality sector, which involves huge amount of customer interaction, would open gates for employability of such people in the other sectors as well. Across industries, companies have found that differently abled employees show lower attrition and higher levels of motivation even in jobs that require repeated tasks.

During this brief study, we covered over 10 business sectors that cover 60-65% of private sector GDP in India. This study attempts to bring out the best practices and themes to support employment of PwDs in each sector. In each of the sectors, we found examples of companies that have mastered the art of employing PwDs and at the same time have also benefited as an organization. Based on skill requirement of different sectors, people with different types of disabilities can be employed effectively.

Exhibit 2.1 : Wide Range of Roles Possible for PwDs Across Multiple Sectors

Industries	Roles	Types of disabilities				
		Blindness/ Low vision	Hearing Impairment	Speech and language disability	Locomotor Disability	Mental Illness, Autism
Hospitality	Food & Beverage Steward		Proven	Proven		Under Trial
	Housekeeping Attendant		Proven	Proven	Under Trial	
	Front Desk Roles				Proven	
IT/ ITES	CRM Non-Voice	Proven	Proven	Proven	Proven	
	Data Entry Operator		Proven	Proven	Proven	
	BPO Roles	Proven			Proven	
Agriculture	Farming Assistant		Proven	Proven	Under Trial	
	Processing & Packing		Proven	Proven	Under Trial	
	Marketing Roles	Under Trial			Under Trial	
Manufacturing	Manufacturing		Under Trial	Under Trial		
	Warehousing (Tagging & Checking)	Under Trial	Proven	Proven		
	Packaging		Proven	Proven		
Retail	Store Sales		Under Trial			
	Inventory Management		Proven	Proven		
Gems & Jewellery	Cutting and Polishing			Proven	Proven	
	Counter Representatives				Proven	
Travel	Holiday planning		Proven	Proven	Proven	
	Customer care executives				Proven	
Apparel	Stitching & Sewing		Proven	Proven		
	Checking & Packaging	Under Trial	Proven	Proven	Under Trial	Under Trial
Telecom	Customer care executives	Proven			Under Trial	
Beauty & Wellness	Service people	Proven				

Source: SCPwD analysis, BCG analysis, Company Interviews & Workshops

In the following pages, we present snippets of initiatives and experiences of various companies in employing the people with disability. In many cases, companies have started the initiative as a part of their CSR program. However, the results have been very encouraging, and hiring PwDs has become an integral part of their HR policy, thus mainstreaming PwDs as a part of overall talent pool.

Exhibit 2.2 : Stages of a company in PwD employment enablement initiative

Graph picturing the effort required by various stakeholders during different phases of the initiative

Intensity of Effort

Legend:
- Top Management Involvement
- Role of team members
- External Agency support

Stages (x-axis): Discovery & Vision | Planning & Development | Announcement & Sensitization | Pilot Programs | Reformulations to Plan | Launch & Review | Scaling Up

Stages
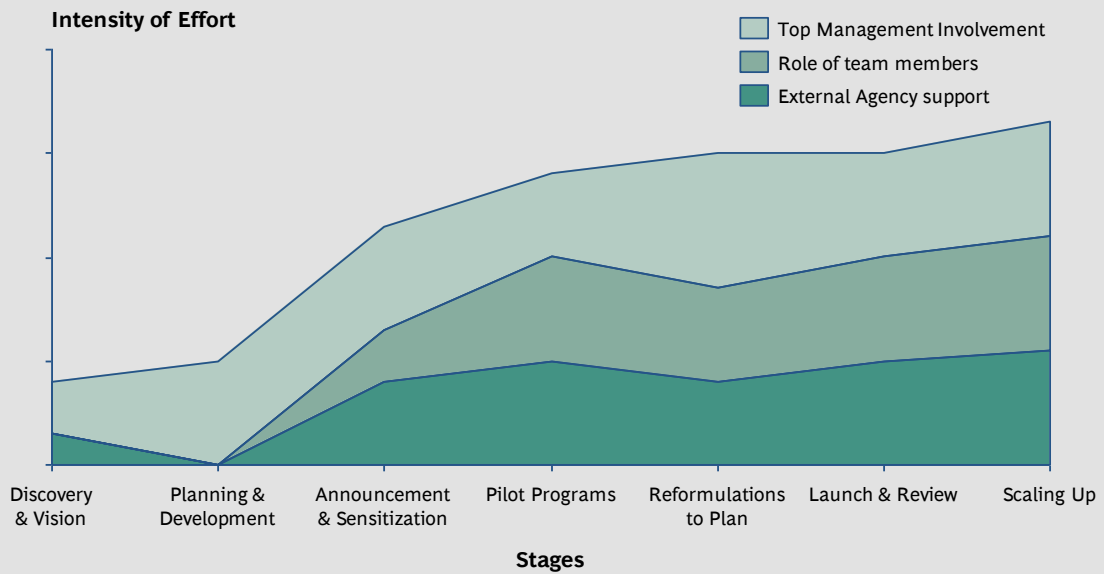
Source: SCPwD analysis, BCG analysis, Interviews & Workshops
Note: Intensity of effort is based on qualitative judgement

Exhibit 2.3 : Lemon Tree | Hospitality

Company: Lemon Tree Hotels

Industry: Business hotel chain (mid-range)

Number of employees: 3,500

PwDs: 12-13% of workforce

Types: Speech and Hearing Impairment (SHI), Orthopedic disabilities, Downs Syndrome (under trial)

Roles: Food and Beverage steward, Housekeeping attendants, Front Desk Reception

Genesis
- Founder and Managing Director Keswani's aspiration
- Core principle of mainstreaming 'Opportunity Deprived Indians'

Key Initiatives
- Started with back-office roles for SHIs in 2007, expanded to include other roles over time
- Entry level qualifications adjusted for differently abled
- Service process flows redesigned with small practical solutions such as PwD cards, numbered menu items, emergency whistles with the dual purpose to sensitize the guests and make processes simpler for the employee
- Refresher program called 'Expressions' launched to train supervisors and key top management in ISL. All training material is converted to ISL videos
- Personal one-on-one chats of PwD are facilitated with experts as their first point of contact
- 'My book' – personalized routine picture book launched for Down's Syndrome employees

Results
- Increased customer repeat visits
- Improved responsibility and integrity among all employees

Source: Interview with Lemon Tree executives, shared company literature on inclusivity strategy

Exhibit 2.4 : Yum! Brands | Quick Service Restaurants

Company: Yum! Brands (franchises for KFC, Pizza Hut)

Industry: Quick Service Restaurant

Number of employees: ~25,000

PwDs: ~400 associates

Types: Speech and Hearing Impairment (SHI)

Roles: Service representatives, Backend food preparation, Shift/store managers

Genesis
- President Niren Chaudhary's unwavering support
- Company Motto of 'Growth with a Big Heart' – giving back to the communities
- Ambition to achieve 10% workforce as specially abled

Key Initiatives
- '*Specially Abled Restaurants*' started in 2008; 20 such restaurants (with 60%-70% employees as SHI)
- Yum! executes this initiative with little change in restaurant design. Approximately $2,500 / store invested in making it SHI–friendly (equipment modification, etc)
- 360-degree approach to work from sensitization to hiring to career progression- via training, work environment enablement, assisting their development for growth
- 6 Yum! Academies launched to complement initiative. Academies provide skills to specially abled interested in the retail/ hospitality sector jobs (more than 250+ Specially abled youth trained so far)
- Six SHI Shift Manager have cleared the internal process to rise through the ranks

Results
- '*Specially abled restaurants*' sales performance at par
- Customer satisfaction higher and increased repeat visits

Source: Interview with Yum! HR and PR executives, shared company literature and videos on *'specially abled restaurants'*

Exhibit 2.5 : MphasiS | IT/ITES

Company: MphasiS (owned by Hewlett-Packard)

Industry: IT Services

Number of employees: 24,000

PwDs: 4-5% of workforce

Types: Locomotor impairment, (partial) visual impairment

Roles: BPO roles, Billable IT outsourced roles

Genesis
- Dedicated team & lead for PwD employability
- Company's premise on 'providing equality' to all

Key Initiatives
- Partnered with NGOs (like Enable India) for conducting tests. NGOs utilized as bridges to fill gaps in company and PwD language
- Provided accommodation to candidates during tests and helped them search accommodation close to work office
- Conducted focused recruitment drives for Indore, Bhubaneswar and Baroda BPOs
- All information systems and tools made accessible in other languages to make them 'disabled friendly'
- Orientation and sensitization carried out for all employees focussing on 'equal opportunity' themes

Results
- Productivity and dedication of employees in BPOs higher
- Lower attrition rates in BPOs

Source: Interview with MphasiS inclusivity head and shared company literature

Exhibit 2.6 : Vindhya eInfomedia | IT/ITES

Company: Vindhya eInfomedia

Industry: IT Services

Number of employees: 1,200 (employees placed across 130 customer locations pan India)

PwDs: 60-65% of workforce

Types: Locomotor impairment, (partial/full) visual impairment, Speech & hearing impaired (SHI)

Roles: Data entry, data conversion, data processing, document management

Genesis
- Founded in 2006, MD Pavithra YS aspired to create *'win-win'* amalgamation of customer & community
- Along with employment, self-dependence and practical mentality is inculcated in employees
- Vision of >90% differently abled employees, the organization currently also supports BPL women

Key Initiatives
- 'Refresher training programs' are conducted for fresh hires as well as existing employees
- Supports employees to get professional certifications from external organizations; all team leaders green belt certified
- Career trajectories laid out transparently. Employees encouraged to work from customer locations from time to time
- Subsidized accommodation provided close to office- facilitates employees supporting each other with sustainable living
- Practical solutions to enable and empower- organization encourages employees to find solutions themselves and supports the solution by providing structure & resources
- Official language in office is sign language

Results
- No loss of customer in 10 years
- Company's reporting increasing profits since 10 years

Source: Interview and visit to Vindhya eInfomedia office; published articles and literature on public websites

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Exhibit 2.7 : Cosmo Agro World | Agriculture

Company: Cosmo Agro World

Industry: Agriculture & Farming

Number of employees: 10

PwDs: 30% of workforce

Types: Locomotor impairment, (partial) visual impairment, SHI

Roles: Farm Assistants, Marketing channel partners, Processing unit assistants

Genesis
- Cosmo Agro World started its pilot 'Stevia' cultivation in Jun'2015 with 7 EwDs as part of project DHARAM (Development of Holistic Advanced Rural Agricultural Model) in partnership with Youth4Jobs Foundation and BPA
- >60% PwD are based in rural areas, therefore successful farming examples would enable the biggest PwD section

Key Initiatives
- Partnered with Y4J and BPA for job role mapping for PwDs in line with farming practices and adaptation to disability
- Local accommodation, transport & medical insurance/support provided
- 30PwDs to be included in next phase of farming; 5PwDs to be included at Processing Centre, 600PwD manned stalls in Ahmedabad to be turned into health kiosk, selling products manufactured by PwDs
- Plan to integrate PwDs in all of the agricultural value chain from farming, processing, packaging to marketing
- Casteism determined as one deterrent in way for inclusion of PwDs in agriculture, regular sensitization programs across villages run by company

Results
- 3 of 7 employees retained post pilot; all PwD employees contented with job
- Lower attrition rate in PwD employees; only few left due to the caste factor

Source: Interview with Raj Shah, CEO Cosmo Agro World

Exhibit 2.8 : Valeo Service | Manufacturing

Company: Valeo Service

Industry: Automotive part manufacturer

Number of employees: 3,000

PwDs: 4% of workforce in pilot factories (50% in packaging)

Types: Speech and Hearing Impairment (SHI)

Roles: Packaging, Manufacturing clutches, Warehouse roles (e-tagging and checking)

Genesis
- Valeo's inclusivity initiatives are a part of global agenda
- Global success stories influenced initiative in India

Key Initiatives
- Workshops/ factory visits organized in partnership with the NGOs (like Youth4Jobs) to identify locations/areas where PwD could be employed
- Safety orientation programs in collaboration with the NGOs conducted to propose adjustments to Valeo before employing the PwDs
- Appropriate modifications (with close to no cost implications) were made to the packaging line
- Labour union of the company was sensitized about the mission and their confidence and support was gained
- PwD employees formed grew from 2% to 50% in the packaging department; it was concluded through performance that EwDs were less distracted during work; Good service by EwDs celebrated and rewarded
- Best practices and processes established by the NGO partner – awareness campaigns in the factory, sensitization workshops, workplace solutions, etc

Results
- EwD performance 40% better than regular employees; Overall productivity increased by 35% within 1 year
- Customer complaints esp related to packaging quality and accuracy reduced significantly

Source: Interview with Valeo head of HR initiatives, shared company performance evaluations for past 1 year

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Exhibit 2.9 : Vishal Megamart | Retail

Company: Vishal Megamart

Industry: Retail (grocery & fashion products)

Number of employees: 6,000

PwDs: 2-3% of workforce

Types: Speech and Hearing Impairment (SHI)

Roles: Store sales roles, inventory management roles

Genesis
- Vishal began with the though to include PwDs in the workforce in 2012 across its 175 store locations
- Underlying philosophy of *'tapping best talent'* and *'providing equal opportunity'* to SHIs

Key Initiatives
- Network and store operations strengthened pan India to ensure uniformity and awareness across all stores
- Regional managers conduct the recruitment and training; regional managers are sensitized towards PwD employees. Thoughts to link managers' KPAs to PwD performance and growth to generate required push
- 'Ambassadors' have volunteered across regions to work towards the initiatives beyond work hours
- Dedicated team of 3-4 people to scout for opportunities to employ PwD members
- Continuous tracking of count of EwDs in company
- Unbiased & frequent review for EwDs on their KPAs
- *'Keeping initiative simple'* without added pressures or complicated policy changes is key to success

Results
- Greater dedication & motivation towards longer hours
- Lesser distractions during work hours

Source: Interview with Vishal Megamart HR team executives
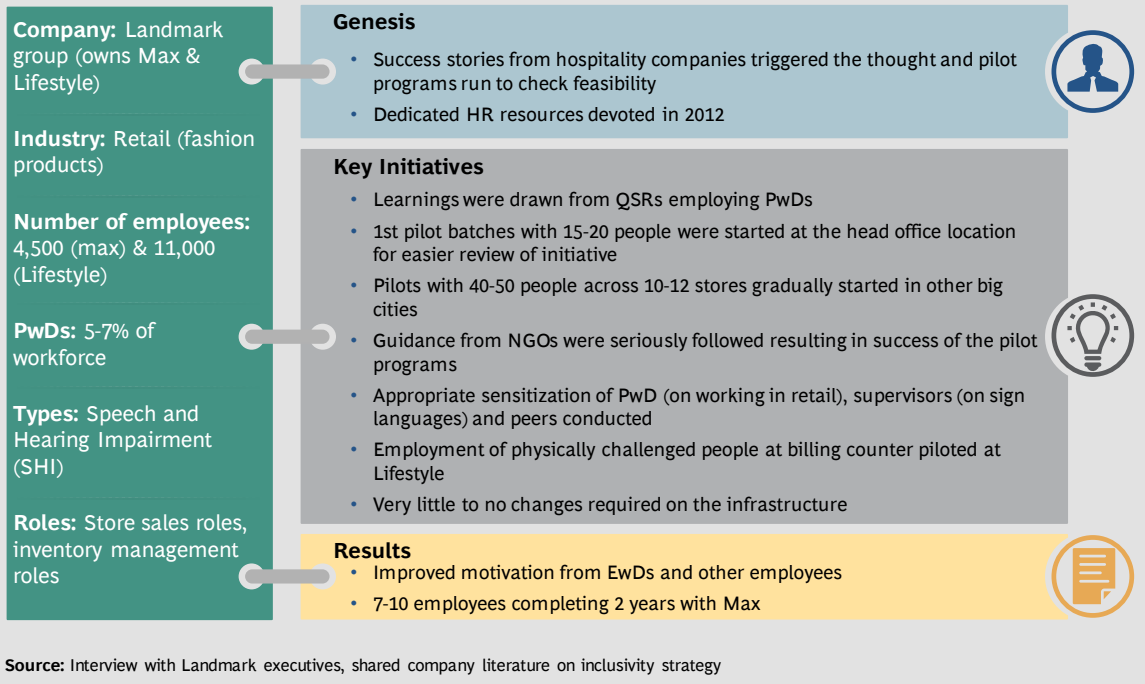
Exhibit 2.10 : Landmark Group | Retail

Company: Landmark group (owns Max & Lifestyle)

Industry: Retail (fashion products)

Number of employees: 4,500 (max) & 11,000 (Lifestyle)

PwDs: 5-7% of workforce

Types: Speech and Hearing Impairment (SHI)

Roles: Store sales roles, inventory management roles

Genesis
- Success stories from hospitality companies triggered the thought and pilot programs run to check feasibility
- Dedicated HR resources devoted in 2012

Key Initiatives
- Learnings were drawn from QSRs employing PwDs
- 1st pilot batches with 15-20 people were started at the head office location for easier review of initiative
- Pilots with 40-50 people across 10-12 stores gradually started in other big cities
- Guidance from NGOs were seriously followed resulting in success of the pilot programs
- Appropriate sensitization of PwD (on working in retail), supervisors (on sign languages) and peers conducted
- Employment of physically challenged people at billing counter piloted at Lifestyle
- Very little to no changes required on the infrastructure

Results
- Improved motivation from EwDs and other employees
- 7-10 employees completing 2 years with Max

Source: Interview with Landmark executives, shared company literature on inclusivity strategy

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Exhibit 2.11 : Radnik Exports | Apparel

Company: Radnik Exports

Industry: Apparel manufacturer supply & exports

Number of employees: 400

PwDs: 8-10% of workforce (also includes contractual workers)

Types: Locomotor impaired, (partial) visual impairment, SHI

Roles: Stitching, Packaging, Checking Garments

Genesis
- Started with a blind person applying for job- which drove company to find opportunities and several NGOs were approached for sourcing trainees
- Initiative was initially supported and driven by Rashmi Paliwal, who runs 3 institutes for training PwDs on retail jobs

Key Initiatives
- Company senior management was always open to giving opportunities to differently abled people
- Apparel industry is still a very manual and labour intensive industry, therefore finding roles suiting every candidate was possible
- All kinds of roles and all types of disabilities were experimented and suitable roles were found out
- Employment started from low intensive jobs and moved to more intensive roles
- Factory in-charge/supervisors were properly sensitized and involved in the planning and implementation

Results
- Company's initiative successfully running for 6-7 years
- Mixed results across employees were observed, with broadly higher level of dedication and consistency

Source: Interview with Radnik exporters executives

Exhibit 2.12 : Vodafone | Telecom

Company: Vodafone

Industry: Telecom

Number of employees: ~16,000

PwDs: 173 (Project Dhrishti)

Types: Visual impairment

Roles: Tele-Call center voice operators /call processing in call-in centers for inbound and outbound calls

EwD genesis
- Vodafone started Project Drishti in 2012 in collaboration with National Association of Blind by hiring visually impaired and low vision youth
- The company has PwD in 7 circles of their operations in Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat etc. Expanding into more circles.

Key Initiatives
- 'NAB helps conduct trainings, with assessments and certifications to help the PwD in their career
- In-house Trainings help in multiple skills necessary for tele-call executives
- Necessary curriculum is converted into braille language
- Supports employees by giving Appreciation letters to deserving staff and also by offering a few Scholarship programs

Results
- Higher productivity, the visually impaired are able to handle 29 calls versus 18 by the non-disabled
- Almost zero attrition, sharp memory and focus, higher tolerance and resilience to problems and crisis, good persuasion skills
- Company's diversity and inclusivity fetching higher growth rates

Source: Interview with Vodafone HR executives

Exhibit 2.13 : Metta Foot Spa | Beauty and Wellness

Company: Metta Foot Reflexology Centre

Industry: Beauty & Wellness

Number of employees: 15 PwD in one spa, 3-4 centers

PwDs: 90%

Types: Visual impairment

Roles: Spa services, Reflexology

EwD genesis
- Founded in 2009, MD Ms Joanita aspired to create a 'win-win' workspace of customer & community
- Along with employment, yoga, self-dependence and practical mentality is inculcated in employees

Key Initiatives
- NAB offers training modules and refreshers for the visually impaired in their training center and Metta Spa customizes the content to their requirements
- Supports employees to get professional graduation degrees and encourage staff to study other courses to avail government reservations and benefits
- On weekends, PwD staff encouraged to participate in other activities of the center
- Efforts put in coaching the PwD in soft skills, grooming, dressing, etiquette. Regular counselling is also done
- Employees stay, commute together to support each other
- Tie-up with NAB for training the visually impaired students in Reflexology course

Results
- No employee attrition in 7 years
- Higher focus, no distractions, very proficient
- Customers satisfaction improved; feel more comfortable with visually impaired masseurs

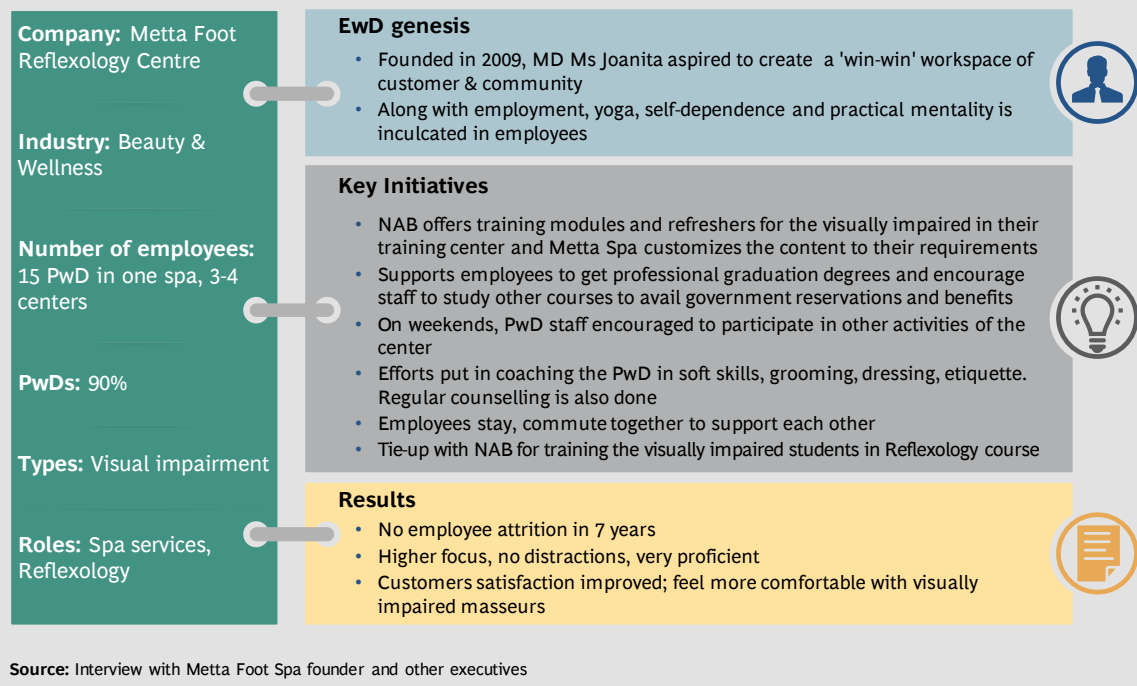**Source:** Interview with Metta Foot Spa founder and other executives

Exhibit 2.14 : Gitanjali Gems | Gems & Jewellery

Company: Gitanjali Gems

Industry: Gems & Jewellery

Number of employees: 2,500

PwDs: 12%

Types: Locomotive impaired, Hearing and speech impaired

Roles: Stone cutting & polishing, counter representatives, supervisors

EwD genesis
- MD Mehul Choksi started the PwD intervention in 09-10
- >15% of the employees are PwDs
- Vision of further increasing the PwD staff strength

Key Initiatives
- Training programs and Refreshers conducted for fresh hires & sensitization of existing employees with the support of NGOs like Youth4Jobs
- Initiated with locomotor disability; scaled up to other disabilities as well as expanding functional roles
- Sensitization of the board members and employees
- Company has adapted the entire physical environment to facilitate free movement of PwDs
- Company provides wheel chairs, bus facilities and customized toilets for the PwDs
- Practical solutions for accessibility to enable and empower- organization promotes employees to find solutions themselves and supports the solution by providing structure & resources

Results
- PwD attrition is 3% lower than the non-disabled staff
- Productivity and customer satisfaction consistently high in past 5 years

Source: Interview with Gitanjali Gems executives

Exhibit 2.15 : 6 Common Themes to Success of Companies in Employing PwDs

Continuous support of the CEO & Board towards each of the following bullets of the initiative is super imperative

Clear ownership for the entire initiative

'What is the initiative', 'What would be expected from employees' 'How would it affect employees and organization' are few important points to cover during organization sensitization

Continuous tracking and recognition of professional achievements of EwD is important. Companies can also support external professional certifications

1. Vision sponsored by CEO/Board
2. Organization responsibility
3. Organization Sensitization
4. Workplace Adaptations
5. Specialized Recruitment & Training
6. Recognition Rewards & Celebration

Existing training materials and/or programs of the company would be translated into accessible/sign languages. Work culture sensitization programs would be created for the EwDs

Almost 70% of infrastructure arrangements can be made as practical low cost solutions. NGO orientation and visits to other workplaces is helpful

2.2   Common Themes for a Successful Initiative across Industries

Through our study across industries and experiences of the company champions, we have distilled out the common themes that cut across all success stories. There are six fundamental factors, which clearly underpin the success in each case (Exhibit 2.15).

(I) Vision sponsored by CEO/Board: The first step towards PwD inclusion is to define mission and purpose behind the same. Top-level sponsorship is critical in underlining the importance of the inclusion at all levels, and provides an unambiguous guidepost to the managers for day-to-day decisions and activities in this regard. This support from senior leadership is required in each step of an inclusion program - planning, announcements, launch, review, reconstructing few agenda and results.

In our study of company champions, we found that successful inclusion programs have often by actively spearheaded by the CEOs, or monitored by them closely. For example – at Lemon Tree hotels, the founder Chairman and Managing Director personally drives the inclusivity strategy. He has accepted to be the Chairman of the Skills Council for PwDs and CII committee on special abilities to help steer the policies towards professional growth of PwDs. Similarly, President – Global Operations of Yum! Brands Inc. has developed and driven the idea of hiring SHI in KFCs. In both cases of Lemon Tree and Yum!, this top-level ownership has helped the initiative to become a part of the organizational DNA with ownership across all levels.

While the senior sponsorship has provided the initial trigger and momentum, the proven business case has helped the program sustain and scale-up in these company champions. In all cases, companies have experienced increased loyalty, reduced attrition and higher productivity.

(II) Organizational responsibility: In addition to the top leadership sponsorship and drive, its important that there is a clear organizational ownership for the program. Most companies have a specific individual – usually a part of the HR team – who takes complete responsibility of recruiting, on-boarding and settling the PwDs in the organization. This individual has to take care of ensuring buy-in from the relevant stakeholders, facilitating sensitization programs and other elements required for making the program successful. Liaison with NGOs and government agencies is also an important part of the role. Some companies such as ITC, have included inclusivity as a part of KPI for senior management, to ensure that there is a wider ownership of the inclusivity agenda.

(III) Organization sensitization: In addition to the top management ownership, its critical to roll out an organization-wide communication and sensitization program. The questions such as 'What does the initiative mean', 'What would change in the company?', 'How would it affect us?' 'What is expected out of us?'

need to be answered with facts and specificity. Sensitization programs include videos and profiles of the differently abled people who would be potential employees. It might also include visits to other workplaces to understand the working habits of the differently abled. Inclusivity must become a part of organizational culture and DNA and there must be buy-in of the initiative at all the levels. NGOs can be roped in to design, implement and strengthen these sensitization programs.

For example - When the Noida Deaf Society (NDS) conducted the sensitization program at Lemon Tree, they brought videos, stories and experiences from hearing impaired people successfully working at other organizations. NDS also taught common daily phrases to the Lemon Tree employees in the Indian Sign Language to substantiate the point that communication with HSI employees won't be challenging, but rather would be fun.

(IV) Workplace adaptations: As mentioned earlier ~60% of PwDs do not need any special infrastructural arrangements for appropriate roles. For rest of the arrangements, cost effective practical solutions can be found. During our study of companies, we found that e-Vindhya (which has ~65% of workforce as people with disability) doesn't allow wheelchairs in the office premises. It rather motivates the people with locomotive disability to use normal chairs with casters for moving around. This makes employees regain the self-confidence by doing work normally just like other employees. The company did not start with lot of infrastructural/comfort arrangements for the PwD employees. Gradually, 3-4 months down the line, they found their employees themselves finding solutions to their problems. As an example, they found one visually challenged girl maintaining task notes in Braille and the company structured her solution. The company sanitized the notes and used the same with other visually challenged people. In other industries such as IT/ITES, there is need for information system to be made accessible for visually impaired to use them. Industries such as hospitality, who are now experimenting employment of people with Down's syndrome have launched the concept of 'My Book' which contains pictures of the person doing the tasks, thus eliminating the need for a 24-hour supervisor to guide and remind them of their roles. In Valeo, Youth4Jobs introduced an electronic light for the newly recruited SHI candidates that helped serve as an emergency alarm.

In addition to physical infrastructure and modifications, it is critical that explicit communication channels are be established so that PwDs can voice their concerns easily, without the fear of any type.

(V) Specialized recruitment and training: Recruiting process for PwDs requires companies to adopt a slightly specialized approach. Hiring managers need to look into potential ability to deliver on specific roles, rather than apply broad brush screening methods. Standard criteria and bar make it difficult to find adequate number of candidates. Pool of trained PwDs can be tapped via a market-linked approach from NGOs, which focus on skilling youth with disability. These NGOs

have tied-up with companies to develop training programs specific to the industry sectors for their candidates. Additionally, companies also need to invest in specific internship programs for their PwD hires. Converting the existing training videos into sign language videos have been effective for both the HSI as well as employees with intellectual challenges. For the people with visual challenges, the material can translated with the help of JAWS [Job Access With Speech, which is a computer screen reader program for Microsoft windows that allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen either with a text-to-speech output].

(**VI**) **Recognition, rewards and celebration**: Finally, it is critical that there is a diligent monitoring of performance of PwDs by the company. This must result in feedback for positive reinforcement and a nudge to address the development areas. Time to time stock taking helps identify and reward performance, celebrate success and build an all-round positivity for the program. It also helps identify areas that require intervention. Most importantly, recognition plays an important part in continuous sensitization and scaling up the initiative.

In summary, the above factors have been found to be foundational in case of each of the company champions. Companies can design and implement these building blocks in collaboration with external agencies such as NSDC, SCPwD, Nasscom and specialized NGOs.

2.3 Frequently Asked Questions from Corporates in Employing People with Disability

Q1. How can our normal employees communicate with our PwD employees?

A1. There are multiple ways to communicate with your PwD employees. Indian Sign Language (ISL - which has been standardized across the nation this year) is a fun way of interaction with the SHI individuals. Systems such as JAWS [Job Access With Speech, which is a computer screen reader program for Microsoft windows that allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen with a text-to-speech output] help in communicating the daily job responsibilities in accessible language for visually impaired. It is also helpful to have Single Point of Contact for the PwDs, who can facilitate more complex communication between normal employees and PwDs.

Q2. What kind of workplace adaptations are required in our work environments? How do we know if we are ready yet for hiring people with disabilities in our set-up?

A2. Infrastructure development and hiring PwD employees is a chicken and egg problem. Contrary to the usual concern, companies should not restrict themselves by thinking that they do not have adequate infrastructure. A better approach is to start with essentials, hire PwDs and work with them to quickly facilitate the implementation of appropriate support systems. Companies can learn from experience of other companies and NGOs who can guide on with minimal infrastructural changes.

Q3. We started with a motivated mind-set and we have achieved around 3-4% representation of disabled people in our organization, but we fail to see the way forward from here. We feel stagnant now. How can we find that stride to do more?

A3. The ultimate goal of PwD inclusivity programs should be to evolve the organizations to a point where it is a win-win proposition for both the parties. Organizations must be able to measure the contribution and impact of PwDs and feel comfortable expanding the program purely on its merit and business case, rather than celebrating the achievement of percentage milestones. Simultaneously, PwDs should see career paths that can help them grow to and realize their full potential. PwD roles can be expanded in terms of breadth of responsibilities, more complex tasks, other business units and geographies. Finally, PwDs and associates can play a change agent and coach role for other organizations trying to embark upon the journey.

Q4. We face challenges in defining the correct career trajectory for the employees with disability. We have never done that, what should be the considerations? As the person grows in the career, multiple skills are required. We feel sceptical that disabilities might start limiting the career growth for PwDs?

A4. Its important to understand that careers of PwDs may or may not be similar to other employees depending on the nature of disability and the roles available within a company. The aim of career planning should be to push the boundaries and help realize the full potential, if needed with the help of skill development, sensitization and appropriate workplace modifications.

Q5. How do we make sure that the PwD employee is not taking benefit of his position in not performing up to the expectations from him?

A5. Just like any other individual, it's important to offer fair, transparent and timely feedback to the PwD employees. Purpose of performance management process should be no different for PwDs than for regular employees i.e. help understand the development areas and strengths, result in kudos for good performance and support the development journey when needed. Most importantly, expectations must calibrate the limitations resulting from disabilities, and not offer any additional relaxation on performance bar over time. A sensitive and balanced approach in this regard, early on has proven helpful.

Q6. How would the training happen for PwD- like SHI, visual impaired? And how do I need to train my supervisors and team leaders?

A6. For the PwD employees, the NGOs can help in providing the basic training and sensitization towards work culture in different industries. Company specific training would need to be provided by the company. External consultants and specialists can be hired for training differently abled employees on provided content. For the team leaders and supervisors, first sensitization and second proper & quick training on sign language (in case of SHI employees) is necessary. No special training would be required for team leaders of locomotor impaired or visually challenged employees.

YOUTH STARS

"Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you're needed by someone."

- Martina Navratilova

While we have seen the initiatives taken by some of the companies who have championed the cause of persons with disabilities, individual determination, confidence and hard work have been the most important drivers behind their success. Understanding their experiences and perspectives is important part of the overall story. In this section, we look at the stories of some of such "youth stars" who have overcome different kind of challenges and are now leading enriched, successful and happy lives.

3.1 A multi-pronged endeavour

It is imperative to note here that successful inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce is not one-step event. It requires multiple elements to fall into place: from initial motivation (intrinsic or extrinsic) of the person, enablement and training available, to employment and career devleopment. As we will see from the individual stories, there are both challenges and catalysts for success in each of these steps.

Exhibit 3.1 : Successful inclusion of people with disabilities requires multiple elements to align

- Opportunities for personal growth and satisfaction
- Role-model for future PWDs

Career Development

Motivation

- Distinct source of inner drive or an external trigger that motivates the individual to break the handicap mold

③ **On the Job**

① **Initial Push**

- Integration of PwDs
- Individual adaptation
- Organizational sensitization and work-place modifications

Employment

Enablement

- Support provided by the family and other stakeholders in overcoming internal and external challenges

② **Getting in**

- Matching of needs of corporate with skill-set of PwD candidates
- Recruitment and on-boarding

Recruitment

Training

- Skill development and capability upgradation to make the individual employable

Initial push – motivation and enablement

In most cases where the individuals came out and decided to shrug-off their limitations, there is a clear trigger or motivation that drove them. For some it was the need to be financially independent or support their families, for others it was a desire to prove the point, and in many other cases it was an aspiration to pursue their dreams without letting their disabilities come in the way. Irrespective, this internal/ external trigger made these stars come out, look for jobs, prepare themselves, undergo trainings and get the employment. The same motivations help them keep the fires going after joining, as they grapple with multiple challenges.

In addition to the internal motivation, external enablers seem to play an important role in supporting and giving confidence to the individual at each stage of employment. Often, people with disabilities face many challenges, which they find difficult to handle on their own once they start looking for jobs – from absence of institutional sponsorship for inclusivity, to individual biases of recruiters and simply widespread myths and perceptions about employment of individuals with disabilities. All these factors challenge the confidence of individuals, and hence external agents that help counter the negative experiences go a long way in keeping the balance. Immediately family, friends, NGOs and government agencies – all play an important role in helping disabled individuals come out and join the mainstream workforce.

Getting in – preparation and recruitment

Motivated individuals aspiring for specific jobs can benefit significantly from relevant counselling and training to prepare effectively. In many cases, due to lack of exposure, there is a gap in understanding of the demands of a specific career, skills-sets needed, and ways to acquire the same and become more 'employable'. Trainings on such aspects emerged an important component of success narratives.

Individuals also benefitted from active support in the actual recruitment – identifying opportunities, preparing applications, getting through the screening process to get short-listed and doing the rounds of interviews. Experienced NGOs and agencies have proven effective in setting expectations and helping both the sides execute the process successfully.

On the job – employment and career development

This dimension relates to on-the- job aspects for the PwD candidates such has adaptation to place of employment, adjustments made by companies to ensure accessibility for such candidates etc. The kind of support they receive from their colleagues and supervisors is an important element in this dimension.

On boarding and integration of PwDs in specific roles is just a beginning of her/ his career. Successful employers also actively plan for the career development of such individuals, and specific considerations that may be needed for their professional

development and satisfaction. The kind of opportunities the person gets for career growth is a significant aspect in determining the success path of the candidate.

3.2   Brief profile of youth stars

Due to different operating dynamics in different types of industries, the type of roles that suit people with disabilities varies significantly across sectors. This is reflected in the employment data of the sample set of 41 candidates considered for this report. For instance, people with visual impairment are heavily represented in the IT/ITES sector, which can be attributed to availability of software like JAWS. Similarly, QSR and hospitality are the preferred sector of employment for people with speech and hearing disabilities. Some of these statistics are influenced by the fact that few company champions, in some chosen sectors, have taken the lead in giving employment to PwD candidates.

In this section, we cover the story of 10 youth stars, which collectively give the breadth of possibilities for the disabled individuals (exhibit 3.2).

Exhibit 3.2 : Sample-set of individual stars span across multiple industry sectors

	IT/ITES	QSR	Hospitality	Retail	Textile	Banking
Locomotive	Trinadh	Venkat		Sandhya		Bingi
Visual	Rajani		Shubham		Ajanta	
Speech and Hearing	Kameswari	Sravanthi				
Down's Syndrome			Puneet			

As evident from the above table, individuals with a given disability can fit into a range of sectors. In fact, the above set of possibilities is not comprehensive by any means, and simply reflects the results of effort made by the individuals and the companies thus far. As inclusion of PwDs becomes more mainstream, the breadth of roles and industries will only increase for people with all types of disabilities.

Exhibit 3.3 : Sandhya | Sales Associate (Retail)

	Brief Profile
"I used to feel guilty seeing other girls from my village provide for their family" *"Now I can ensure better future for my children"*	
Disability	Locomotive (Right hand)
Family	Married with two children
Sector of employment	Retail
Employer	Dmart
Role	Sales Associate

Initial Push	• Yearning to ensure better future for her children made Sandhya look for jobs • Contacted by an NGO (Youth4Jobs) after getting her contact form a government department where she was registered. • Support from her husband and her mother
Getting in	• Underwent trainings for Spoken English, Life skills, Personality Development Computers and retail. • Tremendous increase in self-confidence due to trainings • Applied for retail sector jobs after skill mapping with the NGO • Interviewer was sensitized beforehand
On the job	• All colleagues sensitized to prevent adjustment issues • Very happy with her job and finds her colleagues to be really supportive • Ambitious and wants to become floor manger in future • Employer has ensured she get same opportunities as her colleagues

Exhibit 3.4 : Trinadh | Analyst (IT/ITES)

	Brief Profile
"Working really hard on my skills during training helped me to reach where I am" *"Now I can support myself and my family"*	
Disability	Locomotive (Legs)
Family	Parents
Sector of employment	IT/ITES
Employer	Electronics Arts Ltd.
Role	Analyst

Initial Push	• Though an engineer, with B.Tech in electronics, he struggled to find a job after completing his degree • But he always had confidence in his self-abilities • Being able to support himself and his family financially is a big source of motivation for him • Found out about Youth4Jobs (NGO) through friends and registered there
Getting in	• Underwent trainings for Spoken English, Typing Skills and Computer skills. • Worked really hard on typing and MS Excel skills • Tremendous increase in self-confidence due to trainings • Applied for IT sector jobs after skill mapping with the NGO • Interviewer was sensitized beforehand
On the job	• Very happy with his job and finds his colleagues to be really supportive • Office infrastructure designed to ensure accessibility • Ambitious. knows what skills are required for next promotion, and is working on them after work hours as well

Exhibit 3.5: Venkat | Customer Support Executive(QSR)

	Brief Profile	
"The self-doubt I had in the initial phases was the biggest challenge for me"	**Disability**	Locomotive
	Family	Parents
	Sector of employment	QSR
"I want to prove to others that I am not less than anyone else"	**Employer**	KFC
	Role	Customer support executive

Initial Push
- Always wanted to prove himself
- Faced a lot of rejections (for almost 8 years) in search of employment
- Came across Youth4Jobs (NGO) on internet and social media
- Support from parents acted as a major enabler

Getting in
- Underwent trainings on how to handle different types of customers, spoken English, basics of business etc.
- Tremendous increase in self-confidence due to trainings
- Applied for jobs after skill mapping with the NGO
- Interviewer was sensitized beforehand
- Assessed on how he handles customer requests during the interview

On the job
- Very happy with his job and finds his colleagues to be really supportive
- Issue of transport to and from office is a challenge
- Ambitious and wants to become a team manager going forward.
- Employer working on defining clear policy guidelines on promotions

Exhibit 3.6 : Puneet | F&B (Hospitality)
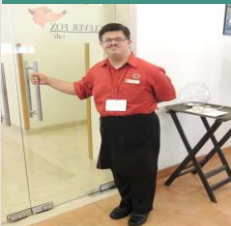
	Brief Profile	
	Disability	Down's Syndrome
	Family	Parents
"I want to become a manager soon"	**Sector of employment**	Hospitality
	Employer	Lemon Tree
	Role	Foods and Beverages

Initial Push
- Initial push has to be external in such cases because of the nature of disability
- Parents approached an NGO (Muskaan)
- Time required to get used to new people and environment, hence rapport building by NGO trainers with candidates is emphasized

Getting in
- Initial training by NGO on basic life skills
- Assessment of fitness to work in a corporate set-up
- 6-month training program with Lemon Tree, with support from Muskaan
- Monthly review meeting during training period with manager to assess the progress
- Involvement of parents in the training curriculum

On the job
- Role includes table set-up, buffet area, in-room dining
- "Me Book", with simple and clear instructions on their work plays a supportive role
- Very methodical in work, perfectionism appreciated by colleagues ands customers
- Continuous training, with frequency thrice a week
- Has high aspirations on career development, but path still unclear given the constraints

Exhibit 3.7 : Rajani | Associate-Finance (IT)/ Head-Finance & Operations (NGO)

	Brief Profile	
"Initially, neither me nor companies knew what I could or could not do" *"Any challenge in life is not a stop/failure, it is only something we have to overcome"*	**Disability**	Visual Impairment
	Family	Parents
	Sector of employment	IT/ NGO
	Employer	Infosys/CBM
	Role	Associate-Finance/Head-Finance and Operations

Initial Push	• Managed to pass B.Com and started looking for jobs • Cleared written tests but companies were reluctant to hire her • Got introduced to Jaws software by a friend who volunteered for an NGO • Contacted NGO (NAB)and registered herself for training • Her belief in overcoming challenges acted as a source of motivation
Getting in	• Mastered Jaws; with the assistance of friends and tutors, converted all study materials to soft copies • Studied for CA using JAWS and these notes • Cleared CA examination with the help of a scribe and became the first female CA with visual impairment. • Sill faced difficulty in finding employment, due to lack of sureness of both parties • Through the ICAI Employment portal, joined Infosys
On the job	• Initial faced challenges in adjustment to the workplace as her supervisor and colleagues were unsure about her potential • But over time colleagues were really supportive • Though career development was discussed, she was not fully satisfied with her career • Left Infosys after 6 years to join CBM, where she believes she is making a better impact on her organization as well as the society

Exhibit 3.8 : Shubham | Corporate Office-Sales (Hospitality)

	Brief Profile	
"Everyone can give sympathy, but if you achieve something, people will respect you" *"Ultimately, happiness is your own choice"*	**Disability**	Visual Impairment
	Family	Married
	Sector of employment	Hospitality
	Employer	Lemon Tree
	Role	Corporate Office -Sales

Initial Push	• Managed to complete education till MBA with the support of school and college • But subsequent job search unsuccessful; companies were unsure of what to expect • Learnt JAWS and Braille with the support of NGO (All India Confederation of the Blind) • Constant support from parents and brother • Desire to achieve something in life has always been a driving force
Getting in	• Placed in a consultancy firm through NGO, but left after 3 weeks as company reneged on salary offered • Period of low confidence despite self-belief • Brother who stayed in Lemon Tree referred him to the company leadership • After interviews, Lemon Tree agreed to a trial period of 6 months initially • Now been with the company for 1.5 years
On the job	• Very happy with his job and finds his colleagues to be really supportive • Has been the given the opportunity to rotate in different roles, currently in Sales • Not a clear path of career development as of now, under discussion by company • Accessibility, both physical and software, still sometimes an issue

Exhibit 3.9 : Sravanthi | Customer Sales Associate (QSR)

"I faced a lot of discrimination and struggle from my own people in my family"

"I wanted to be a role model to all the girls who are facing similar kind of issues"

Brief Profile	
Disability	Speech and Hearing
Family	
Sector of employment	QSR
Employer	KFC
Role	Customer Sales Associate

Initial Push	• Achieving financial independence has been a big motivator for her • Negligible support from family was a challenge • But support form friends was a major enabler • Got to know about NGO (Youth4Jobs) through a friend; contacted NGO and enrolled herself in training program
Getting in	• Trainings for computer skills and other basic jobs aspects like customer relationship etc. • Applied for QSR sector jobs after skill mapping with the NGO • First interview was with KFC which she cleared • Interview process was smooth as KFC had experience in hiring SHI people before
On the job	• Working in KFC since last 5 months • Handling back room operations as of now, will start dealing with customers in a months time • Support from SHI people already working made the adaption to workplace very smooth • "Buddy system" during training was helpful • Career development path has been discussed; wants to become store manager in future

Exhibit 3.10 : Kameswari | Kitchen Section (IT/ITES)

"No one looked at our ability. They only looked at our disability and rejected our job application"

"Now, we can give our children good education and health"

Brief Profile	
Disability	Speech and Hearing
Family	Married
Sector of employment	IT/ITES
Employer	Google
Role	Kitchen Section

Initial Push	• Raised by her aunt as her step-father wanted nothing to do with her • Adoptive family saw to it that she got educated in a special school and encouraged to get a job • Failed at securing employment, along with her husband who was also SHI candidate • Motivated by the desire to be financially independent
Getting in	• Came to NGO (Yoth4Jobs) training centre along with her husband • Training on life skills and computer • Got a job in Google in the kitchens section • Husband also placed in retail industry (Max) as a folding assistant
On the job	• Learnt about kitchen equipments on the job • Very happy with his job and finds his colleagues to be really supportive • Wants to work for her children, so that she can give them a proper education, health, nutrition and a roof over their heads.

Exhibit 3.11 : Ajanta | Packing (Textile)

Brief Profile	
Disability	Visual Impairment
Family	Married with two children
Sector of employment	Textile
Employer	Radnik Exports
Role	Packing

"People doubt our capability to work, but how do they know without giving us a chance"

Initial Push	• Unable to complete school education • Family kept her at home as did not know what to do with her • Sent to NGO (NAB) by a friend • Motivated by the desire to be financially independent
Getting in	• 6 months of trainings in Computer, Mobility, Braille and Home Management • Also trained in Handicrafts • Started to take on job training' at Balloons, an export house • Also studied in 10th through National Open School. • Placed in Radnik exports after training
On the job	• Initial adaptation to workplace and colleagues took time • Happy with her job and finds her colleagues to be supportive • But relatively frequent change in colleagues is a bit of a challenge as adaptation is required • Career development path not clear as of now

Exhibit 3.12 : Bingi | Book Audit (Banking & Finance)

Brief Profile	
Disability	Locomotive
Family	
Sector of employment	Banking & Finance
Employer	HDB Financial Services
Role	Book Audit

"Don't sit idle!"

Initial Push	• Desire of living independently was her source of motivation • Graduate in Bachelors of Arts and has also Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Application • Tried searching for employment on her own and sent out her resume to many places • But was never contacted from them even once • Support from family acted as an enabler
Getting in	• Enrolled in training program in an NGO (Youth4Jobs) • Learned computers and typing at the Hyderabad training center • Gained proficiency in it computer skills which helped her in getting selected.
On the job	• Joined as a data entry operative • Promoted to "Receipt Book Audit" with more than double the pay on account of her performance • Happy with her job and finds her colleagues to be supportive

3.3 Imperatives for individuals for increasing their odds of success

The stories elaborated above are quite motivating and clearly point to the individual imperatives, which can help the PwD candidates in securing employment as well as in excelling in the career.

Initial Push

First, as the success stories show, it is important for the individuals to maintain their belief in themselves, even in the face of rejections and disappointments. Majority of the cases show that the support from family and friends is an important enabler for success of PwD candidates. Thus, it is important for individuals to make sure that their family and friends are aware of their objectives and ambitions, so that they can try to help in any way they can.

Just like in the case of normal individuals, education emerges as important factor in helping the candidates find employment and succeed. Individuals with disabilities must complete their education and invest time and efforts to expand their capabilities. If necessary, they should ask their schools/colleges/ trainers/ teachers to undertake the necessary modifications and adjustments to suit their special needs.

There are various NGOs in all parts of the country, which enable PwD candidates through trainings, acting as placement coordinators etc. Individuals should identify the NGOs that work in the area of interest and are best suited to help them achieve their objectives. Similarly, there are various government schemes running for the benefit of PwD individuals. Individuals should try to find, either by themselves or through their family and friends, which schemes they can avail of and utilize them accordingly.

Getting in

The training programs by NGOs/government bodies are quite helpful in developing the skill-sets, which are required for jobs in corporates. Hence, individuals should use these training programs to the best extent possible. In addition, the success stories of individuals show that the hard work put in the training programs was an important factor in preparing them for the recruitment process as well as the actual job. Hence, the individuals should try to maximize their learning from these trainings.

Matching of skillset of individuals with the requirements of a particular job profile in a sector is very important to ensure the right fit between the employer and the employee. The individuals should be candid about their strengths and limitations while discussing potential roles with their prospective employers. They can also take external help (from NGOs etc.) in this regard to determine which sector/role they should focus on.

The information about availability of jobs in companies can be availed through a variety of sources, including job portals, companies' portals. The individuals must leverage all possibilities provided by these systems to look for suitable jobs. In addition, the individuals should try to make sure, by themselves or through other enablers that the selection procedure is not unfair to them and they can display their potential.

On the Job

The individuals should not shy away from asking workplace modifications that can help them meet their basic needs for mobility, interaction, convenience and safety. Infrastructural accessibility, assistive devices, working hours, remote access etc. can help a long way in productive and stress-free experience for PwDs.

The success stories of individuals show that the employers appreciate hard work and dedication to work and they are given more opportunities. Hence, it is important for individuals to give their 100% to their work. Also, it is important for individuals to discuss with their employers about their career path to ensure professional development

Sometimes, there could be scepticism/apprehension among the fellow employees in the initial phases of employment, especially in an organization, which has not employed PwD candidates before. However, in all such cases, such apprehensions quickly give way to support, so individuals should not be discouraged if such a situation arises.

The successful PwD candidates should help their fellow candidates who are still struggling, by guiding them in the right direction, and acting as a role model who can act as a source of motivation

3.4 Frequently Asked Questions by People with Disabilities looking for employment

Q1. How will I find out which sectors and which companies are open to hiring candidates like me?

A1. Many companies in a variety of sectors, such as those covered in this report, hire candidates with disabilities. You can find about these companies from various public sources of information such as job portals/ industry reports/ newspapers/ company websites etc. You can also get in touch with many NGOs who work in this area, and they can guide you towards the right set of companies.

Q2. How do I come to know the skillset required by companies for employment?

A2. Understanding inclusivity programs, CSR initiatives and work of other agencies in the area can highlight the different roles and skill-sets needed. You can contact the companies who have hired candidates before to get an idea about their requirements. Quite a bit of information is also available online.

Q3. Where can I get the trainings for developing the required skillset?

A3. There are vocational training centres run by government agencies, which serve this purpose. NGOs working in the field also can help get relevant training in collaboration with sponsoring corporates and other agencies.

Q4. Will the interviewees judge me on my skills without a bias?

A4. In most cases, the interviewers would have been sensitized to make sure that there is no bias in the interview process and you are judged on an equal footing as other candidates.

Q5. How will be the behaviour of my colleagues/customers in the workplace?

A5. Experience shows that colleagues are supportive and encouraging in almost all cases. Similarly, reviews of customers indicate that they are in fact happier with interactions with PwD candidates.

Q6. Would the employers make the required infrastructural adjustments to ensure accessibility for me?

A6. Employers will generally try to ensure that you do not face any issues related to infrastructure. However, you can always discuss this with you supervisors if you feel something needs to be changed in this regard.

Q7. Will I get equal opportunities for my career development as my colleagues?

A7. Employers will generally try to ensure that you get equal opportunities for career development. However, you can always discuss this with you supervisors if you feel something needs to be changed in this regard.

IMPERATIVES FOR GOVERNMENT

"The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life . . . the children; those who are in the twilight of life . . . the elderly; and those who are in the shadow of life . . . the sick . . . the needy . . . and the disabled."

- Hubert H. Humphrey

The government plays a pivotal role to drive inclusion of PwD in the work force across the value chain. Its role can range from a passive role of setting the right policy frameworks so that other stakeholders can function properly, to a more active role in sourcing, trainings etc. In addition, central and state governments can play different types of roles in enhancing employment of PwD in the country.

4.1 International practices

Globally, the American with Disabilities Act is a comprehensive framework, which covers a wide variety of challenges faced by PwDs (Exhibit 4.1):

Exhibit 4.1 : American with Disabilities Act

Employment Policies	• Employers with 15 or more employees to provide qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the full range of employment-related opportunities available to others
	• Prohibits discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, social activities, and other privileges of employment.
	• Restricts questions that can be asked about an applicant's disability before a job offer is made,
	• Requires that employers make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities, unless it results in undue hardship. Reasonable accommodations include:
	  – Restructuring of existing facilities
	  – Restructuring of the job
	  – Modification to work schedules,
	  – Modification of equipment, installation of new equipment, provision of qualified readers and interpreters, modification of application and examination procedures and training materials
	  – Flexible personal leave policies

Government services	• State and local governments are required to follow specific architectural standards in the new construction and alteration of their buildings.
	• They must relocate programs or otherwise provide access in inaccessible older buildings
	• Public transportation services, such as city buses and public rail transit must
	  – Comply with requirements for accessibility in newly purchased vehicles
	  – Make good faith efforts to purchase or lease accessible used buses
	  – Remanufacture buses in an accessible manner
	  – Provide paratransit where they operate fixed-route bus or rail systems

Public Buildings and Commercial Facilities	• Public buildings must comply with specific requirements related to architectural standards • Courses and examinations related to professional, educational, or trade-related applications, licensing, certifications, or credentialing must be provided in a place and manner accessible to people with disabilities • Commercial facilities, such as factories and warehouses, must comply with the ADA's architectural standards for new construction and alterations. • Telephone companies should establish telecommunications relay services (TRS), which enables people with disabilities to make calls, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

4.2   Imperatives for government

The broad dimensions on which the government can take steps to support employment of PwD candidates are as following:

Exhibit 4.2 : Government support for employment of PwD candidates

Incentives for employment	Skill Development	Infrastructure & Accessibility
Providing external encouragement to employment of candidates through incentives	Facilitating skill building of candidates which can prepare them for requirements of job	Ensuring the background conditions which are required for candidates to be gainfully employed

Few of the imperatives, which the governments can undertake along these dimensions for supporting the employment of people with disabilities, are as following:

4.3   Skill Development

Government should ensure the existing 17 Vocational Rehabilitation Centres (VRCs) should run skilling programs for PwDs, which are market linked. They should be established as model VRCs for PwD skilling and employment. Likewise, the employment exchanges are the natural point of contact for most PwDs, especially from the villages. These need to be modernised and linked to the labour management information system (LMIS).

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has National Centres for different disabilities like locomotor disability, vision, speech and hearing impaired. These centres should have a model training centre for that specific type of disabled.

Special funding schemes should be structured for NGOs and others. The schemes need to address the distinct needs of disability sector, as different from skilling incentives for the normal population. For example, company sensitisation for first

time employers should be recognized as an integral part of the program. Also, target placement percentages and slabs should be calibrated for different types of disabilities for the purpose of incentive calculations.

The government should formulate policies to increase access to education for PwD candidates, such as incentivizing schools/colleges. Simultaneously, it can also provide financial assistance/scholarships to students to encourage higher education

The newly set up SCPwD and CII committee on special abilities should ensure that the entire skilling program of the government adopts a market-driven approach.

4.4 Infrastructure and Accessibility

The government should look at formulating policies specifying provisions for accessibility, in workplace, residential spaces and public spaces. Some of such provisions could be as following:

- Ramps at entrances/exits of buildings
- Lifts in multi-storey-building, with provision of tactile readable buttons
- Tactile paving for visually disabled people in public places
- Convenient parking slots

On similar lines, the government can provide provisions for accessibility in public transportations such as

- Low floor entry/ ramps/allocated space for wheelchairs in buses and trains
- Facilities of assistants for help if users are not able to access on their own
- Tactile readability of maps, tickets, tokens etc.

Another way the government can help is by assisting individuals in procurement of assistive devices such as hearing aids, callipers, wheelchairs, tricycles and Braille slates. Youth opting for higher education/placement should get priority in linking to assistive devices scheme of the government. The assistive devices should also be of high quality to support the youth in his workplace.

4.5 Incentives and recognition

Foremost need is for employment policies to create adequate opportunities for PwD candidates in the private sector.

The present system of company incentives for hiring of PwDs needs be restructured to meet the needs of the companies. Based on our interviews with company champions following areas emerged as suitable for directing incentives:

- Assistive devices
- Workplace adaptations
- Sensitization programs

In addition, the government can step-in to provide cost-effective hostel accommodations for PwDs in major metros. A more focused study can help to comprehensively identify the needs of corporates employing PwDs and design appropriate incentives to support the same.

Finally, the government should institutionalize recognitions and awards for companies and NGOs. Similarly, we must provide recognitions and awards to PwD candidates who excel in their respective fields, which will act as a source of motivation for others.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Persons with disabilities are an untapped resource in our country and offer a huge potential. As many examples in this report demonstrate, employing PwDs, in jobs corresponding to their skillset, makes a lot of business sense from the companies' point of view. Access to a wider pool of talent, higher productivity and lower attrition observed in company champions clearly suggest that including PwDs should not be seen as a part of CSR programs, but an element of mainstream manpower planning process. At an aggregate level, successful integration of PwDs into workforce can add to the GDP of the country, create financial independence for a section of society and reduce the need for government support. In addition, this inclusion has a significantly positive impact on the happiness, outlook and quality of life for the respective individuals, and drive towards more positive social environment towards PwDs.

Despite what seems to be win-win scenario, employment of PwD in organizations is far from its desired levels. The factors behind them are multi-dimensional, such as lack of understanding among organizations, lack of guidance for individuals, insufficient policy/regulatory support. Addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts from three key stakeholders directly involved – the individual PwDs, companies and the government (Exhibits 5.1-5.3). NGOs and their experiences can offer support to all these stakeholders as we collectively work towards making inclusivity a mainstream part of corporate employment.

Exhibit 5.1 : Imperatives for companies

Top-level sponsorship	• Vision for PwD inclusion sponsored by CEO/Board • Leadership support at each step - planning, announcements, launch, review, and results
Organizational responsibility	• Assign clear responsibility for driving the inclusivity agenda • Include support for program in KRAs of HR and other managers
Organization sensitization	• Organization-wide communication program to wire inclusivity as part of DNA • Work with appropriate NGO to design and implement holistic sensitization programs
Workplace adaptations	• Required changes in infrastructure to ensure accessibility • Provision of assistive devices as required
Specialized recruitment and training	• Customized application and interview processes, training the interviewers • Invest in specific internship programs
Recognition and rewards	• Monitoring of performance of PwDs and sharing of results appropriately • Feedback for positive reinforcement and a nudge to address the development areas

Exhibit 5.2 : Imperatives for individuals

Initial Push	• Maintain self-confidence, believe that rejections result from ignorance • Involve family and friends in your endeavors • Strive to complete education; get schools/colleges to undertake necessary adjustments • Identify best suited NGOs for your needs and leverage them • Make yourself aware of various government initiatives and utilize
Getting in	• Leverage all possibilities provided by various systems, such as job portals, companies' portals, NGOs to look for suitable jobs. • Use external help, including NGOs and other agencies to train/prepare • Be assertive about overall candidature, rather than defensive about the handicaps
On the Job	• Talk with supervisors to ensure changes in the office environment required for accessibility • Do not expect concessions w.r.t. job responsibilities and expectations of colleagues • Discuss with employers about career path to ensure professional development • Mentor and guide fellow PwDs looking for employment

Exhibit 5.3 : Imperatives for the Government/ state

Skill Development	• Establish vocational training centers, with specialized curriculum and trainers • Incentivize schools/colleges to increase access to education for PwDs • Support training programs run by other entities through financial or infrastructural support • Create and maintain a national database of PwDs and provide to employers/ NGOs/ others • Conduct campaigns/ partner with NGOs to increase awareness and industry level sensitization
Infrastructure and Accessibility	• Formulate policies specifying provisions for accessibility such as lifts, ramps, parking slots, tactile paving, in workplace, residential and public spaces,, • Ensure accessibility in public transport (Low floor entry/ ramps, tactile readability, assistants etc.) • Provision assistive devices such as hearing aids, callipers, wheelchairs, tricycles and Braille slates
Incentives for employment	• Formulate policies to ensure companies provide equal opportunity for PwD candidates in employment • Financial incentives to employers for hiring PwD candidates such as tax breaks, subsidies etc. • Encourage current employers of PwD candidates through recognitions/ awards/ certifications etc. • Recognitions and awards to PwD candidates who excel in their respective fields • Encourage starting of small businesses through low-interest loans/easy access to credit

Scaling up the inclusion of PwDs in the workforce is a win-win-win proposition for all the stakeholders involved. A concerted and comprehensive effort from those involved can result in multiple advantages for individuals, companies and society.

NOTE TO THE READER

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