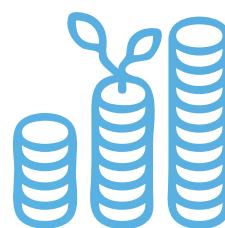
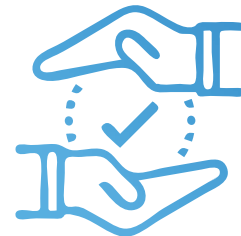
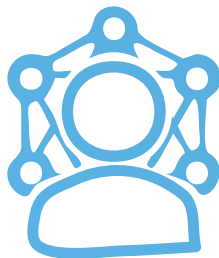


Learning directly from disabled people:

A toolkit for global business

By Kate Nash, OBE



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Learning directly from disabled people:
A toolkit for global business

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Foreword

There are more than one billion disabled people in the world – and the number is growing as the world ages and with advances in medical science. No one would argue that they should not all should enjoy a basic right to respect, dignity and choice. Yet at least 15% of the world's population remains disadvantaged by deep-rooted, antiquated stereotypes which reinforce their needless economic and social exclusion – stereotypes which can only be transformed by learning directly from, and building new relationships with, disabled people - "directly".

Fortunately, the world is changing. More than 160 countries have signed the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, committing themselves to protecting the rights and dignity of disabled people. And many thousands of employers across the globe are now 'listening' to and learning from their disabled colleagues via employee networks and resource groups.

As the Founder and Chief Executive of **business disability international (bdi)** and, before that, the UK-based Business Disability Forum, I have thirty years' experience working with business on disability – and I am in no doubt whatsoever that the only

sensible, cost effective way for any company to improve its disability performance is to learn directly from disabled employees and customers, and then drive the business improvement which in turn enables the life chances of so many.

Hardly rocket science you say? It took you thirty years to figure out we should be talking to each other you say...?

You would be surprised how rarely it actually happens. Organisers of 'disability' conferences around the world still often see no need to invite disabled people themselves; retailers still forget to ask disabled and older customers if the new kit actually works for them; managers still ask doctors or HR – not the person – what adjustment this disabled employee needs to enable them to be productive.

As a global, business-led consortium, working to the benefit of business and of disabled people, **bdi's** job is to energise a new conversation between business leaders and disabled people as customers, colleagues, potential colleagues, shareholders and valued stakeholders, and to inspire us all to do things differently.

This publication – **bdi's** first – gets to the heart of the matter, illustrating from very practical case studies how business benefits directly when it learns directly.

I am particularly delighted that we have been able to benefit from Kate Nash OBE's extraordinary experience in catalysing new conversations around the world with and about people with disabilities. This guide is intended to further amplify not only her impressive impact, but that of every business leader committed to helping their company become disability confident.

Susan Scott Parker OBE
business disability international

Learning directly from disabled people: A toolkit for global business

This publication is designed to enable a global business to improve its 'disability confident' performance by learning directly from people with disabilities.

The toolkit – which includes case studies from **bdi's** founding members, GSK, Barclays and Infosys – explains how a global business can benefit when it learns directly from disabled people, whether they are customers, colleagues and potential colleagues, shareholders, opinion formers or valued stakeholders.

The publication aims to:

- help senior global business leaders understand why it is important to learn directly from disabled people – and how to make this happen as a matter of routine
- help managers create a framework within which they can learn directly from people with disabilities
- inspire colleagues with case studies from organisations that have benefited from the knowledge and experiences of disabled people

The toolkit can also be used to stimulate country-level conversations with individual disability champions about how a business, wherever it operates, can learn directly from people with disabilities.

"When we established our Global Disability Council we made sure there was a place for our disability resource group leader so we could hear directly from our own employees with a disability. Every global employer should be listening to people with disabilities in order to improve the design of policies and products. You need to tackle inclusion at every level."



Roger Connor, President Global Manufacturing & Supply, GSK
Chair – GSK Global Disability Council

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is divided into three sections.

Section One

In this section, we explain why it is important for global headquarters to learn directly from disabled employees and customers. It includes:

- 'Creating a fresh conversation', which discusses why learning directly from disabled people is essential
- a reminder of the ten fundamentals of disability confidence contained in the **bdi** Charter

Section Two

In this section, we examine how an organisation can learn directly from people with disabilities. It includes:

- an overview
- advice on where to start
- ideas on how to learn directly from employees and customers
- a section on how to monitor progress against the ten fundamentals of the **bdi** Charter and the evidence that should be observed

Section Three

In this section we offer:

- a range of case studies from our three founding members, demonstrating how they have learned from disabled people, how it has benefited their organisations, and illustrating the fundamentals of disability confidence
- examples from other organisations

Section One

Creating a fresh conversation: why learning directly from disabled people is essential

The only way to challenge deep-rooted stereotypes is by bringing people together. The only way to overcome the personal embarrassment, anxiety, even fear that many work colleagues experience at the prospect of working or socialising with people labelled as 'disabled', is for disabled people and their non-disabled colleagues to meet.

Only people with disabilities can say what it actually 'feels like' to work in a business and what they need to be themselves at work and maximise their contribution.

They face many attitudinal, physical and procedural obstacles that needlessly limit productivity and engagement but, by utilising the knowledge and experiences of disabled people, these barriers can be overcome.

Similarly, businesses need to listen to disabled customers. The impact of mystery shopping by disabled people will always be infinitely greater than a report written by an expensive non-disabled consultant – especially when the mystery shopping results are presented personally to senior managers.

The truth is that businesses are much more likely to take action when the message comes directly from real customers, real job seekers or real colleagues.

Finally, the only way to challenge widely held views that see the reasons for low employment rates and inadequate services as the fault of businesses only, is for business leaders to consult and learn directly from people with disabilities, both within the business and in the wider community.

"Listening to and learning from our customers and colleagues is fundamental to our business approach to accessibility. Thinking about how to meet specific needs often enables you to find solutions that help the widest range of people. In our experience, when we get things right for people with disabilities, we improve life for everybody. Our focus on disability is core to our business and the business decisions we take."



Ashok Vaswani, CEO, Barclays UK
Global Executive Sponsor – Barclays Disability Agenda

The ten fundamentals of disability confidence – the **bdi Charter**

Ten fundamentals were created by **bdi** to promote consistent best practice worldwide. They make up the **bdi Charter**, which our founding members have signed to help them map and measure their progress. The essential point of the Charter, which underpins **all** the other points, is the importance of learning directly from disabled people.

The aim of **bdi** members is to be ‘disability confident’ as they continuously improve how they enable their colleagues, potential colleagues, customers and

stakeholders to contribute to business success, to economic growth and to the sustainability of the communities in which they operate.

By committing to the ten fundamentals that underpin the Charter, **bdi** members challenge themselves to improve their performance for the more than 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide, including those who experience disability as part of the ageing process.

Each of the ten fundamentals is underpinned by the principle of learning directly from people with disabilities:



Leadership



learning directly from disabled people



creating a truly accessible built environment worldwide



building universal design and accessibility into new product development



becoming an exemplary employer



communicating our rationale for becoming ‘disability confident’



moving beyond the expectations of disabled and older customers



liberating the potential of technology



encouraging our key suppliers to become disability confident



enabling citizenship, respect and economic inclusion

Section Two

What is disability?

Disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life and, as we age, most of us will experience increasing difficulties.

Disability is also complex. Definitions vary greatly and the actions to mitigate the impacts associated with disability are multiple and systemic. They also need to be grounded in the reality of the lived experience of people with disabilities.

Almost all disabled people will acquire their impairment at some stage during their 'working years' – the years between 'childhood' and 'retirement'. And while these parameters will vary depending on which country or continent an organisation operates in, it is a universal truth that

the experience can be life-changing. It often requires new skills and periods of adjustment on the part of the individual and for those in work, or seeking work, it requires some considerable determination to learn how to manage the soft bigotry of low expectation.

A global company needs to consider how it can learn directly from disabled people, especially in countries where they are rarely valued. This is all part of being a responsible business. While all organisations need to take account of the cultural contexts within which they operate, they also have the opportunity to set out their vision about how they can enable all employees, including people with disabilities, to contribute to their business success and to the communities in which they operate.

It's okay to sell products and earn profits from disabled people

Apple co-founders Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak wanted to "put a computer in the hands of everyday people". The impact of Apple products – making it easier for everyone to access information technology – has changed our world.

This passion for the needs of 'everyday people' has benefited people with disabilities hugely – while making billions for Apple.



Creating pace and changing direction

Global organisations have a hugely powerful role to play in the development of new markets and products, and in stimulating service innovation. They can quicken the pace or direction of change, meeting the needs and expectations of disabled customers. Multinationals may even be better placed to drive change than national governments.

Barclays was one of the first banks to introduce accessible ATMs for significant numbers of disabled people, including blind and visually impaired customers.

“Three quarters of disabled people have left a shop or business because of poor disability awareness. However, we know that businesses often want to do more to serve disabled people – nearly two thirds of businesses we surveyed said that more information about the needs of this consumer group would be useful. Businesses that make adjustments are well placed to tap into disabled people’s spending power, the so-called ‘purple pound’, estimated to be worth over £200 billion a year.

Most changes are small, and often include how you engage with disabled consumers. We hope that this new service from Barclays will enable more companies to access the ‘purple pound’, in the way that they have embraced opportunities to serve the ‘pink’ and ‘grey’ consumer markets.”

Robin Hindle-Fisher Chair of the Extra Costs Commission, UK

Global corporations can change the ways in which people engage with their worlds and how they interact with the environment. They can make it easier to anticipate, accommodate and celebrate human difference. And, in so doing, they have the opportunity to transform the life chances and the economic contribution of hundreds of millions of disabled people worldwide.

It is likely to be global corporations that will have the biggest impact on the liberation of the disabled pound, dollar, yuan or rupee, by first mapping the scale of, and then responding to, the needs of disabled and ageing customers. And by promoting universal accessible design, they will also boost their business.



1 billion disabled people in the world

15% of the world's population remain disadvantaged by antiquated stereotypes and assumptions and face attitudinal, physical and procedural obstacles that limit inclusion in employment and in society

We must move beyond assumptions

We have all heard the assumptions and misconceptions made:

- “We don’t have any disabled employees”
- “All our products and services are fit for purpose”
- “Most disabled people are wheelchair users – we have never had an application from a wheelchair user”
- “This subject doesn’t really have much to do with us”
- “We aren’t broken: no need to take action”

Business leaders need to be in touch with reality – it would be a real challenge for any large business **not** to employ **any** people with disabilities.

But the problem extends beyond business leaders. Colleagues may be making assumptions based on stereotypes and lack of personal contact. Most impairments are also non-visible.

Moreover, many people with disabilities do not think of themselves as disabled.

Facts are needed if businesses are to understand disability and how the company’s disability performance affects employees and customers. The only way to find out is to ask disabled people directly by starting a conversation...

The soft bigotry of low expectations

The true test for how well a global business is doing in learning from its disabled employees and customers is how far it has been able to transcend the low expectations that limit the life chances of so many. The challenge is to move from making assumptions about a person, to focusing on how to liberate human potential.

Unlike most other aspects of human identity, disability is often an experience that occurs during the course of our life, rather than at birth. Most people with a disability become disabled after the age of 45.

Yet, developing personal strategies for making sense of disability and ill-health, and feeling able to share such information with colleagues or line managers, takes many people a long time. The time it takes will also differ from country to country depending on cultural and sometimes religious norms.

The **bdi** founding members have made a commitment to transcend this 'soft bigotry of low expectations' by learning directly from people with disabilities.

*"Working with **bdi** to build the disability confidence of our business is the right thing for everyone. Disability confidence leads to greater inclusivity, enabling us to attract and retain the best talent and be recognised as a provider of choice to our customers. We can only do that if we deliberately choose to listen, learn and act on the information of persons with disability wherever we operate."*



Pravin Rao, Chief Operating Officer, Member of the Board, Infosys Limited
Chief Sponsor – Infosys Diversity and Inclusion Agenda



Don't be fooled by the numbers

Don't forget that a company's internal data is likely to be flawed – both regarding the number of disabled people employed as well as the customers served.

It is hard for people to identify with the experience of disability and we see, again and again, that companies all over the world, and wherever they operate, find it hard to get accurate information about how many disabled employees they have.

To learn, a business needs to be creative, forensic and take risks.



If it is a business issue, it is also a disability issue

bdi created its Charter to enable global businesses to systematically define and deliver best practice, and to measure that progress over time.

To achieve this, businesses must learn directly from disabled employees and customers.

Make a splash

Publicise good news stories and share good practice across the organisation. Companies could also offer recognition to those employees who have learnt from the experience of people with disabilities and applied the principle to improve a policy, a procedure or a product.



Be systematic and consistent

Positive change can come about by accident or when a committed individual makes a stand. However, global businesses need to be more thorough and consistent in their approach, building processes that ensure the experiences of disabled employees and customers are always sought. This way, nothing slips through the net.

Where to start?

Learning directly from disabled people requires more than a 'retro-fit' of existing cultures, policies, practices and procedures. Instead, it demands top-level global commitment to inclusive working; not just where it is easy and convenient, be that at country or department level.

A commitment to learning directly from people with disabilities requires visionary leadership; leadership that requires all parts of a business where there are barriers for disabled people who want to do their best, to learn directly from these same people.

Understanding the lived experiences of disabled people as employees and customers comes only through real conversation. It cannot come from knowing someone who lives down the road, or reading books, or watching the television. And it doesn't come from guesswork.

Understanding a human experience, especially disability and how it is to live with health conditions, comes from a deep commitment to learn from those

who do. In the absence of direct experience, it is one of the most important things we can do. Policies and practices must be constantly informed and shaped by the experiences of people with disabilities. What is needed is a systematic process. But you need to start somewhere.

So, if a business in Singapore is purchasing a new telephone system or new employment regulations emerge in Germany, global HQ needs to satisfy itself that people with disabilities are being asked, "How will this impact on our disabled employees and customers?"

The following five top tips come from the founding members of **bdi**. They strongly advise that there is never a 'perfect moment' to get started: if you wait until the structure and budgets are in place, nothing will happen. The best place to start, they say, is right in the middle – the important thing is to jump right in and then develop systematic processes over time.

Set direction and inspire

Barclays' web portal www.barclayscorporate.com/accessibility launched in April 2016, offers insights and practical tools. The bank learned directly from disabled people at all stages of the portal's development.

"We created this new digital resource to help businesses learn how organisations like ours (and others) have made the leap from a 'tick-the-box' attitude to accessibility, to one which seeks to innovate, inspire and engage.

Importantly, we wanted to share the journey that we have been on to make banking accessible for our personal customers. We hope that the learning we have had will help other businesses understand why being accessible for all makes great business sense as well as being the right thing to do."

Elaine Draper, Director, Accessibility & Inclusion, Barclays UK

Reach into every part of the business

GSK launched its Global Disability Council in 2014 (see the case study on page 30). Representatives come from Belgium, New Zealand, UK, US and Czech Republic. One important aspect of the Council is drawing on the work of the Employee Resource Group.

“Our resource group is called the Disability Confidence Network and it is a voluntary, employee-led community for employees with and without disabilities – that aims to help everyone feel welcomed and supported throughout the organisation.

The group helps to extend our reach of our Council; the Council creating the operating framework to deliver systematic improvements.”

Liz Burton, Director, Global Inclusion and Diversity, GSK

Share stories with and about your own employees

Barclays’ mental-health and wellbeing campaign “This Is Me” (see the case study on page 25) was designed by staff with personal experience of mental health issues, whose stories were told through video, photography, articles and posters.

“At the start of the campaign the nine colleagues who shared their experience were frequently called ‘brave’. As the project grew, more people have come forward to share their story ... Stigma and silence have been replaced by understanding and acceptance.”

Mark McLane, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Barclays

Align your intent to learn directly from disabled employees and customers with your mission and values

“Any business draws its operating values from its own people. And at Infosys, while it is important to ensure we always have a strong business case for taking actions, we also want to be a responsible business and do the right thing.

Becoming founders of **bdi** was driven by a strong business case as well as my need to have something to say when my children ask me what I have done to make the world a better place.”

Mohit Joshi, EVP - Segment Head - Financial Services, Infosys

Investigate employee and customer experiences

In 2014, GSK took part in a ground-breaking research project on the ‘disclosure’ and ‘declaration’ rates of employees with disability. The company joined a group of 55 other participating employers, many of whom were global businesses, and consulted over 2,500 employees with disability.

“One important learning for us is that employees can be reluctant to identify as being ‘disabled’ to their employer and therefore it can be difficult for any company, wherever they operate, to get accurate and reliable data.

It means organisations should not wait until they have ‘the best’ monitoring process when trying to capture data. A business needs to notice how hard it is for its employees to ask for workplace adjustments. Qualitative data and insights from employees with disability can provide potent benefits to a global business like GSK.”

Jo Harry, UK Inclusion and Diversity Manager, GSK

Learning from employees and customers

The three **bdi** founding members are very different in terms of the breadth of countries in which they operate, their products and services, backgrounds, values and histories. However, albeit in various ways, all of them have learned directly from the experiences of both their employees and customers.

What the **bdi** members have in common is a deep desire to dig below the surface and not make assumptions about disability.

How to learn from your employees

Staff pulse surveys

Employee pulse surveys take snapshots of employee opinions. They are cheaper and quicker than full surveys, and can be conducted frequently using the same questions to measure progress over time. They can also be adapted to focus on particular areas such as employee engagement.

Pulse surveys are a particularly effective means of soliciting the views of disabled employees. However, it is important to cast the definition of disability as wide as possible in order to get accurate insights.

In many countries, the legal definitions of disability (in terms of employment and protection rights) are medically based and limited. Adopting such definitions may well distort a company's understanding of the range of individuals that could be disadvantaged by their impairment.

Beware of outsourcing such surveys to third parties that do not have experience in seeking the views of disabled employees. And make sure that electronic surveys have been tested to ensure they meet a high standard of accessibility and usability.

Focus groups

Focus groups can provide a deeper insight into the barriers that disabled employees encounter in the workplace.

They often yield better results when an organisation uses the services of a third party with direct and extensive knowledge about the lived experience of disabled employees. Participants tend to be more confident that their contributions will remain confidential when an external body runs the focus group and therefore their responses tend to be more revealing.

Disabled experts are also far more likely to yield more meaningful results though you need to satisfy yourself that the supplier sufficiently understands the world in which you operate. Co-producing and delivering your own focus groups with the help of contracted external disabled suppliers with extensive experience is often valuable. Be prepared to budget appropriately and do not offend by asking for advice for no cost.



Listening groups

Business leaders who want to hear first-hand from their disabled employees could set up annual listening groups.

These are often run in partnership with an employee network/resource group and can involve a series of small informal gatherings that encourage people to speak openly about their experiences, hopes and concerns.

Targeted consultation

When an organisation wants to gain detailed information about a new policy or process, they should consult directly with their disabled employees – and at the earliest possible opportunity.

Companies, however, do not always have data on the numbers of disabled people they employ. Even when this exists, it may be wise to cast the net wider. To reach disabled employees, organisations can:

- send the survey to the individuals involved in an employee network/resource group
- send it to individuals who have been provided with a workplace adjustment
- send it to people who have used the occupational health services and/or employee assist programmes
- invite anyone with direct experience to test the proposed idea, product or service
- ask people to tell the company what happens when someone asks for an adjustment



“What happens when” survey

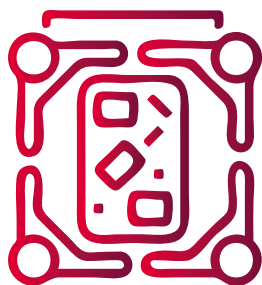
A new senior global disability executive sponsor may wish to create a detailed plan of action, informed by an in-depth study of what is really happening with regard to disabled talent and employees.

What happens when one of our staff members acquires Repetitive Strain Injury in our offices in Bangalore? What happens when someone loses their hearing in our offices in Texas? What happens when we take on new offices in Dubai – how do we check for access and to what standards?

Celebration events

Events to celebrate success can provide an opportunity to listen to the views and experiences of disabled employees.

Business leaders and disabled employees should be present at all events designed to support external disability organisations or charities.



Networks and employee resource groups

There has been a steady growth globally in the creation of disabled employee networks and resource groups.

It is important to build the right type of structure for global, regional and country networks. Country networks, for example, require freedom to operate. Senior business leaders should engage with the network/resource group to ensure the corporate disability strategy reflects a network's views.

Disabled employees can learn from each other and contribute to the corporate conversation when they see the success of well-resourced networks.

PurpleSpace (www.purplespace.org) is the world's first leadership development and networking hub for disabled employee network/resource group leaders. It helps network leaders learn from each other, and ensure their network is properly resourced, well led and well connected. Plans are in place to connect network leaders globally.

Profile one good story a month

Whether using the organisation's global communications machine or by encouraging the network to create its own communication channels, it is good practice to highlight one good story a month that illustrates how the business has performed better as a result of learning directly from disabled employees.

The communications team has to have the means and confidence to source stories from disabled employees and customers. Furthermore, stories must be authentic and reflect the employees' views.



Try reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring – where the mentor is a less senior member of staff – can be a powerful tool for facilitating learning and motivating senior managers to take action.

How to learn from your customers

One-to-one interviews & market research

Most organisations have mature market-testing structures in place, but only rarely do these directly seek the opinions of existing or potential disabled customers.

Product and service development teams need to carry out testing with people with disabilities – and conduct

one-to-one interviews, which may offer more detailed information on, for example, the barriers they face.

It may be necessary to pay individuals who test products and services. Anyone who gives up their time to help a company improve its business has the right to be appropriately remunerated.



Mystery shopping & user testing

Organisations would be well advised to commission outside organisations to undertake mystery-shopping exercises with disabled people. But check that they employ enough disabled mystery-shoppers to make the exercise worthwhile.

They should also ensure that user testing – by people with disabilities – is embedded into new product development planning from day one.

Focus groups

When running focus groups to test new products or services, organisations should consider using the services of disabled facilitators. It is well documented that when conducting research, people are more likely to share difficult or sensitive information when there is a degree of empathy from the researcher, or when the individual identifies with the researcher.

Organisations could also consider hosting 'speed-dating' events or other interactive ways of bringing together those responsible for product and service design with disabled customers or potential customers. Awards could be made to colleagues who come up with the best ideas for improving products and services. And when the product is launched on the market, publicise the contribution of disabled people.



Telephone and e-surveys

Commission outside organisations to undertake telephone and/or e-surveys, targeting groups of disabled people with the same, or different, impairments.

Do not assume that providers have done the necessary work to ensure their lists of ready-made market testers have sufficient numbers of disabled testers that can spot potential problems during product design.

Networks & employee resource groups

As we noted earlier in this toolkit, disabled employee networks and resource groups are a growing presence. And they can also play a part, taking on the role of disabled customers, in testing products and services.

That said, some networks/resource groups will deliberately choose not to involve themselves in product-testing and to focus instead on ensuring that their internal disabled talent is fully realised in employment terms only.

A background graphic featuring several light grey question marks scattered across the page. On the right side, there is a large, dark red speech bubble containing a bold question mark.

**Why do we
need to learn
from disabled
people**

Monitoring progress against the ten fundamentals of the **bdi charter**

If an organisation is learning from disabled people, the following evidence

– and lack of evidence – may be observed

Leadership: setting direction & inspiring

If it is happening

The global strategy prioritises those things that disabled people have suggested the business needs to improve on – and a performance plan is linked to the feedback

If it is not happening

The strategic plan is not grounded in the 'lived experience' of disabled people. Leaders act only when there is a problem such as litigation or where resources are wasted or where rising levels of complaints put the brand at risk

Communicating the rationale & impact of disability confidence

If it is happening

The organisation has rolled out a global definition of best practice. This 'disability confidence' has taken into account the views of disabled people and is used by the network/resource group

If it is not happening

Individuals make up their own minds as to what 'disability confidence' means to them. Disabled employees feel disenchanted/disengaged as change fails to happen – and the change that does happen is not grounded in an understanding of their reality

Moving beyond expectations of disabled and older customers

If it is happening

The organisation has a clear plan and set targets to improve its performance. The plan has been tested with disabled people and adjusted accordingly

There is a clear strategy for seeking disabled customers' views, in order to understand their requirements, adapt products and services, and measure performance

Disabled customers feel valued and consider the organisation a supplier of choice

If it is not happening

There is no plan to set targets. No effort has been made to seek the views of disabled customers

There is no strategy for seeking disabled customers' views. There are repeated complaints, with no mechanism in place to change matters

Threats of litigation may or may not reach the CEO. Cases are settled out of court. Data is not captured centrally and lessons not learnt

Creating a truly accessible built environment

If it is happening

New and existing facilities and plans have been reviewed and tested by people with disabilities. A measurable standard of accessibility performance has input from disabled users' experience

It is clear that every refurbishment should enhance accessibility and an access management plan enables investment in significant improvements over time

If it is not happening

New facilities or refurbishments need to be retro-fitted to ensure accessibility, which may or may not happen

There is no agreed standard of accessibility performance for the built environment

Disabled colleagues and visitors need to request even basic adjustments to enable accessibility

Liberating the potential of technology

If it is happening

New and existing technologies have been reviewed and tested by disabled people. A measurable standard of accessibility performance uses input from disabled users' experience

User testing is routine

If it is not happening

New technologies need to be retro-fitted to ensure accessibility, which may or may not happen

There is no agreed standard of accessibility performance for technology

Disabled colleagues need to request even basic adjustments to achieve accessibility

Building universal design and accessibility

If it is happening

Design of products and services has been reviewed and tested by disabled people. A measurable standard of universal design – and the process – has routine input from disabled users' experience

If it is not happening

Products and services need to be retro-fitted to meet disabled customers' needs or are simply left inaccessible to disabled customers

There is no measurable standard of what constitutes universal design

Encouraging key suppliers to become disability confident

If it is happening

A set of expectations and performance standards are required from new suppliers and those bidding or contracting for work

The procurement team is seen as a key stakeholder in developing best practice across the business and routinely consults people with disabilities as users of the suppliers in question

If it is not happening

Suppliers do not need to demonstrate their track record in delivering accessible goods or services, or their disability-related expertise

Suppliers are not measured or monitored with regard to their ability to help the business deliver best practice and are not expected to themselves learn directly

Becoming an exemplary employer

If it is happening

Disabled colleagues are actively involved in creating and improving the workplace adjustments process

They feel valued and treated fairly, and see the company as an employer of choice

If it is not happening

No direct involvement is sought from disabled colleagues in the design and effectiveness of a structured workplace adjustment process

Disabled colleagues feel disenfranchised from, and devalued by, the organisation

Enabling citizenship, respect and economic inclusion

If it is happening

The voice of disabled colleagues and stakeholders is sought in defining the corporate social responsibility (CSR)/responsible business strategy and execution

CSR/responsible business teams ask to see evidence that disabled people will benefit when investing in external projects

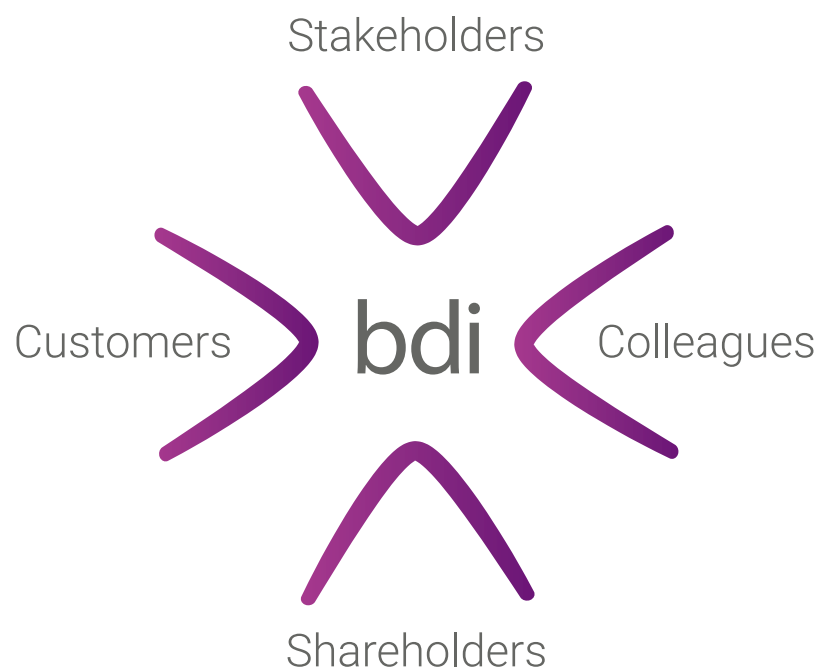
If it is not happening

CSR/responsible business teams invest in the community but do not consult disabled people as stakeholders or ensure that disabled people naturally benefit from the company's mainstream investment

Community investment programmes are seen as a sham by a company's own disabled employees

Section Three

In this section we offer case studies from the founding members of **bdi**, Barclays, GSK and Infosys. They demonstrate how organisations can develop successful disability policies and initiatives by learning directly from people with disabilities.



bdi wants to energise a new conversation between business leaders and disabled people to inspire us all to do things differently

Barclays: bringing mental health out of the shadows

The mental-health and wellbeing campaign **This Is Me**, which is now in its third year, aims to increase awareness of mental health in the workplace; provide access to information and support; and break the cultural silence that surrounds the subject of mental health.

This Is Me was designed by employees with personal experience of mental health issues, whose stories are told through video, photography, articles and posters. The campaign has grown rapidly from nine to more than 160 stories, which have been shared on a dedicated online platform. This portal has received more than 60,000 visits since its launch.

As part of the campaign, Barclays has also run awareness sessions and stress/resilience workshops, as well as reviewing HR policies in, among others, workplace adjustments and recruitment.

Increasing disability confidence is a key aim and this was reflected in the session, "Living in our Colleagues' World", and through line manager training. The latter was designed to increase line manager confidence in managing team

members who experience mental health issues. Other sessions were held with specialist charities in the field such as Mind and Rethink Mental Illness.

Barclays argues that "as well as improving practical access to information and enhancing HR policy and practice, colleagues are now more able to manage their own wellbeing thanks to the different cultural tone now in place".

It adds: "At the start of the campaign the nine colleagues who shared their experience were frequently called 'brave'. As the project grew, more people have come forward to share their story as the campaign has helped to 'normalise' mental-health. Stigma and silence have been replaced by understanding and acceptance."

Following This Is Me's success in the UK, the campaign is now being launched across South Africa and the US, as well as becoming a flagship campaign for the Lord Mayor of London called "This is Me in the City", which is being adopted by organisations within the City.

What Barclays learned from **This Is Me**:

- Storytelling – and therefore learning directly from the experiences of employees with disability – is a powerful way to engage people
- Employee-led storytelling brings inclusion. It may seem daunting at the beginning, but people become more confident talking about their experiences
- Community partners are invaluable
- Support from the top of the organisation is needed
- Change won't happen within the 12-month timeframe of the project – but it will happen over time

Barclays: making mobile banking fully accessible

The re-designed Barclays Mobile Banking application (app) is now fully compatible with the assistive technology available on most devices, allowing disabled customers to use core mobile banking services without difficulty.

Research had shown that disabled and older customers were less likely to use mobile banking than the general banking public but, when they did, customer satisfaction was extremely high. The challenge for the bank, therefore, was to ensure its mobile banking service was fully accessible.

Audits carried out by accessibility experts and feedback from a visual impairment charity in the UK revealed the obstacles that needed to be overcome. Senior executives backed the initiative and provided the resources to fix the problems highlighted.

The app re-design began in summer 2014. AbilityNet, a UK organisation which helps disabled people use computer technology, facilitated disabled user-testing during the early design phase, influencing the user-

interface and flow of screens. Weekly review meetings with internal accessibility experts AbilityNet and the project team ensured the redesign was carried out quickly and thoroughly.

The revised app was launched in February 2015 and received accreditation from AbilityNet following further disabled user-testing. The bank has received praise for its design from all users – disabled and non-disabled alike.

While re-designing the app, however, the Barclays IT accessibility team became aware that design and project managers did not fully understand how disabled users used technology. As a result, the team has expanded the 'personas' which are used as hypothetical customer examples to ensure banking products are accessible.

The personas, developed from disabled user-testing, encompass both physical and mental health conditions. They enable designers to understand, for example, the security, confidence and communication concerns of many disabled users.

What Barclays learned from redesigning its Mobile Banking app:

- Engage experts from the start of the design phase of the project
- Identify opportunities outside the usual accessibility areas; in this case taking advantage of the re-design of the app to make it more accessible
- Involve disabled people throughout the re-design process and act on their feedback – an app may be technically accessible but still not work in real life
- Ask employees to test and fine tune the app before it is launched

Barclays: a beacon that alerts employees to the needs of their customer

Launched as a pilot scheme at the tail end of 2014, the Beacon project uses the latest technology to help Barclays' customers with their accessibility needs. Thanks to a tiny beacon transmitter installed in banks, employees are alerted when the customer enters the branch and know what type of service is required.

To use the service, customers with a disability or impairment enter their requirements into a free-to-download mobile app, along with their name and photo. Barclays consulted with both customers and disability charities during the design of the scheme, which gives customers complete control over the information transmitted. This includes, for example, details of their disability and the help they would like to receive in a branch. All information is securely stored in the app.

Disabled customers were fully involved in testing and then using the service. "It will help remove the initial barrier to communication that some people find difficult. You won't need to ask for help or explain your needs," said one customer who participated in the pilot.

"With beacon technology, branch employees have all their details to hand so it makes the experience much better, not only for the customers but for employees as well, as they feel confident that they know how to support all our customers," said the bank.

The Beacon project is revolutionary, argues Barclays. In particular, it helps customers with non-visible disabilities whose needs are less obvious. It also allows customers to call the shots – if they do not require assistance on a particular day, they can press a button to say so.

In parallel to deploying the beacon technology, employees received extra disability awareness and accessibility training, so that customer requests are managed knowledgeably and confidently.

Barclays expanded the original pilot scheme to a total of 25 sites across the UK; however, problems with the technology have led to the Beacon project being put on hold. The bank is currently ironing out these technical problems and looking to run the project in more locations.

What Barclays learned from the Beacon project

- Working with charity partners is critical in finding local disabled people to test the technology in branches
- Involve disabled people throughout the process and act on their feedback to ensure the technology is truly accessible – their direct experience is vital
- Engage experts from the start of the design phase of the project

Barclays: research into inclusive banking

In 2013, Barclays employed market research agency BDRC Continental to develop a **customer research programme** to give people with disabilities and their carers the opportunity to have their say on banking services, many for the first time.

The accessible online survey developed by Barclays and BDRC was thoroughly tested by both Barclays' employees and customers to ensure the survey was accessible. Customers also had the option to complete the survey over the phone via an assisted interview, by post or face-to-face in their own homes.

Key elements of the survey – which works across mobile, tablet and PC platforms – included fusing BDRC's standard online survey platform, 'Confermit', with JAWS (Job Access With Speech), a computer screen-reader that allows visually impaired users to read using text-to-speech output or by a refreshable Braille display.

The ingenious design of the survey won BDRC the 2015 Market Research Society Award for Best Online Data Collection. "That was one of the best online surveys I've ever done," said one person who completed the survey. "As a visually impaired Mac user, everything was clear – a really nice piece of programming."

A carer of a person with visual impairment added: "I think Barclays have done their best to make a largely automated banking service as accessible as possible to disabled people."

Other programmes have been launched as a result of the survey, including a sign language initiative. The survey had flagged up that people with hearing impairments were consistently less satisfied than other disability groups.

The survey, which was completed by more than 300 users, including both customers and employees, also identified a lack of awareness within the bank of the accessibility services it offered. As a result, Barclays has developed initiatives to close this knowledge gap.

Barclays continue to re-run the survey on an annual basis in partnership with BDRC to collect the views and opinions of customers with disabilities. The insights they collect inform the ongoing accessibility strategy and priorities of the bank and help the bank to understand the impact their efforts are having on customers with disabilities.

What Barclays learned from developing a customer research programme:

- Ensure the research firm understands that accessibility is vital
- Don't make assumptions about the accessibility of the survey – survey platforms are not always as accessible as they appear
- Use employees to test and fine tune the survey before it is launched – learning directly from disabled people is key
- Develop alternative means for people to complete the survey, such as doing it over the telephone, in case a person cannot do it online

Barclays: making online adjustments to ensure all IT is accessible

Barclays is committed to ensuring all its technology – by making **online adjustments** – allows disabled people to both work for the bank and do business with it, effectively and productively.

Sign language service SignVideo was launched as an alternative to telephone banking and is now also offered in branches. The service is available instantly and on demand making it more convenient for customers and also saving the bank money as it no longer has to organise and pay for in-person interpreters, which can take a number of weeks. Disabled customers were fully involved in testing SignVideo and continue to provide the team at Barclays with feedback on how the service can be improved. The Barclays SignVideo service was shortlisted for a Tech4Good Award in 2015 and won a Barclays Supplier Award for Citizenship Initiative of the Year.

The feedback that Barclays has received from customers and colleagues continues to demonstrate why services like this have such an important impact. A Barclays colleague who used the service with a customer said: “This truly had such an impact on the customer as he was able to speak to me in depth about where he grew up and

how he wanted to personalise his card. For the first time I was able to really engage with this customer.”

Barclays has introduced an accessible Twitter service (@BarclaysAccess), which it says is one of the best ways of engaging with disabled customers, many of whom already use this social media platform. The service allows Barclays to directly engage with customers, share news and get input on new projects and work. It also allows them to engage with wider conversations around accessibility through Twitter chats like #AXSChat and #HearingLossHour that allow them to demonstrate leadership in the agenda.

Barclays also uses its disability network, Reach, and senior leader-led listening groups to understand the needs of colleagues with disabilities and to prioritise colleague-focused projects. In recent years it has made significant improvements to its workplace adjustments process that included increased self-service and self-referral options and the introduction of a workplace adjustment passport which enables colleagues to share any adjustments with line managers as their career in the business develops.



What Barclays learned from making online adjustments:

- Go to disabled customers and find out what they want; do not wait for them to come to you – their input is vital
- Involve disabled people throughout and act on their feedback to ensure online adjustments are truly accessible
- Making services accessible offers the customer a better service and can also save the bank time and money

GSK: helping young people with learning difficulties find work

Project SEARCH is an international programme developed in the US city of Cincinnati that provides internships for young people with learning difficulties.

Every year since 2012, global healthcare company GSK (GlaxoSmithKline) has offered internships in the UK to 12 people (aged between 17 and 24) who receive the benefit of both workplace experience and classroom learning. The aim is that when the young people graduate from the company in June, they are ready for the world of work.

GSK provides the classroom and equipment, as well as the work experience. It works with two partners: West Thames College, which provides a full-time teacher based at GSK; and supported-employment charity Action on Disability, which provides a full-time job coach.

In 2015, GSK surveyed student mentors and supervisors about their experience of Project SEARCH. Respondents said that their disability confidence had grown and that awareness of

disability had increased in the company as a whole. They now felt more informed about learning disabilities, and had learned to think and act more flexibly at work as a result. While the survey sample was small, GSK says: "Learning directly from people with disabilities has had a positive impact on the business."

Preparing for Adulthood, a Department for Education-funded programme, spoke to two people who have taken part in Project SEARCH. One young man, Ian, demonstrated good customer service skills and was hired as an employee by GSK. He became an ambassador for Project SEARCH, mentoring new students on reception work.

Charlie worked in security and then reception, becoming an ambassador for learning disability rights. After her internship ended, Charlie gained a Passenger Assistant Training qualification and started working on school buses helping children with disabilities. She is now a classroom assistant on the GSK Project SEARCH team.



What GSK learned from Project SEARCH:

- Learning directly from people with disabilities has had a positive impact on the business
- Non-disabled colleagues and line managers build their know-how and interpersonal skills when they get the opportunity to work directly alongside disabled people
- Learning how to modify your own behaviour is as much as a vital experience as it is to make practical adjustments to accommodate people with disabilities

GSK: establishing disability confidence as a global priority

GSK believes that efforts to serve customers with disabilities and patients better have to begin in the workplace. As an inclusive company it is able to understand and respond to the needs of patients, healthcare workers and customers, as well as attract, retain and motivate a diverse workforce.

In 2014 GSK formed a **Global Disability Council**, which was backed by the company's Corporate Executive Team and chaired by Roger Connor, President Global Manufacturing & Supply. The Council, which has cross-function representation, uses working groups to examine: the culture and the attitudes of people within the company; policies on procurement and recruitment; and IT systems and facilities. Its aim is to enable GSK, a global company, to become a more disability confident employer.

The specific objectives of the Council are to:

- agree priority areas for action
- translate GSK's disability aspirations into tangible objectives
- measure progress

An important part of the success of the Global Disability Council has been the employee resource

group, the **Disability Confidence Network**, which held its first meeting in February 2015. This is a voluntary, employee-led community – for current employees with and without disabilities – that aims to help everyone feel welcomed and supported throughout the organisation. The network works closely with the Council, publicising and promoting initiatives widely throughout the company.

The Council has been busy in many areas, working on the development of inclusive design principles for GSK products such as new inhaler devices and container bottles for medicines to ensure people with disabilities can use them more easily.

A new workplace adaptations web portal has been introduced – initially in the UK, although it will be made available in other countries – for employees needing advice on how to make their working environment more accessible.

Starting with GSK House London in September 2014, the Council also instigated a review of its Wayfinding workplace signage to ensure the font, colour and positioning of all signs is clear and easily legible.

What GSK has learned so far on the road to disability confidence:

- Listen to employees with disabilities when developing solutions
- In large organisations, functions need to work together to create solutions to ensure people with disabilities feel included
- Change does not happen overnight but small steps can make a big difference

GSK: ensuring all IT is accessible

The IT Accessibility Project operates under the umbrella of GSK's Global Disability Council programme and has been developed in collaboration with existing GSK communities such as the employee resource group, the Disability Confidence Network, as well as external partners.

The project, which aims to make GSK IT more accessible to users who require an adjustment, is driven by GSK's commitment to become a more disability confident organisation. It is based on the Business Disability Forum Technology Taskforce's ten-point Accessible Technology Charter and measured using the associated Accessibility Maturity Model.

The IT improvement efforts, which are regularly tested by users and customers, are primarily aimed at people with the following types of impairments: sight and vision, including colour blindness; hearing; cognitive, including dyslexia; and motor and musculoskeletal.

Some of the successes of the IT Accessibility Project include:

- developing an IT Accessibility strategy
- creating an IT Accessibility web portal, which is part of a continuing effort to make GSK more accessible by providing information on accessibility to employees and managers. Critically, its development is informed by user feedback and needs
- completing an IT Accessibility review
- raising awareness and embedding consideration for accessibility in core IT services

In May 2015, accessibility experts reviewed and helped improve GSK's core IT services against a number of industry standards, including WCAG 2.0 for web pages, US section 508 accessibility law and relevant UK ISO standards, as well as its compatibility with common assistive technology tools such as the Jaws screen reader for visually impaired users and Dragon Naturally Speaking for people with dyslexia.



What GSK learned from the IT Accessibility Project:

- Work with key partners across the organisation and draw on their skills and capabilities
- Engage with employees with disabilities to understand their needs
- Involve service and product owners in the review process from the start this raises awareness, ensures good engagement levels and paves the way towards embedding accessibility considerations throughout the organisation

Infosys: using modern media to promote inclusion

Infosys, an Indian multinational company that provides worldwide business consultancy and outsourcing services, is making great strides towards becoming a diverse and inclusive place for people to work – including those with disabilities.

The Diversity and Inclusion Office, which is based at the company's Bangalore headquarters, looks to promote equality and safeguard the rights of disabled people in the workforce. "We believe that increasing awareness and sharing information about disability will help to improve inclusion," says Aruna C Newton, Associate Vice-President Global Diversity & Inclusion.

To this end the company runs three information campaigns, making the most of modern media to get the message of inclusion across to employees:

- **Against All Odds**, a series featuring employees with disability talking about their lives, which is broadcast on the Diversity Channel on the company's online video service, Infosys TV
- **My Abilities Speak Louder**, a series of emails sent out to employees sharing the stories of employees with disability and their achievements
- **Inclusion**, a series of interviews with employees with disability who discuss their lives on the intranet

The employees with disability who get featured in these films share their stories with their peers. They discuss the challenges they have faced, including the lack of awareness about disability in society and how they have overcome discrimination, as well as sharing their experiences – good and bad – of working at Infosys.

To support the campaigns and help employees to understand more about the nature of disability, the company has held training sessions and produced an online booklet on workplace inclusion.

These campaigns have been well received by Infosys employees, receiving large numbers of views and positive comments. An interview with an employee who has cerebral palsy received almost 5,000 views on the first day it was posted, plus lots of positive comments.



What Infosys has learned from these campaigns:

- Innovative information campaigns can demystify disability as a subject in the workplace
- Storytelling is a powerful tool to connect with people
- Learning directly from the experiences of people with disability is invaluable
- Sharing experiences helps to create a more inclusive culture

Infosys: using Launchpad to improving workplace accessibility

Infyability, Infosys's employee resource group for employees with disabilities, works to create an accessible and inclusive work environment for people with disability. It also runs campaigns to raise awareness among employees and contributes to the design of the company's disability inclusion strategy.

Infyability is proving increasingly popular with more people participating in its work – a sign that disability and inclusion now have a far higher profile in the workplace.

Thorough research led Infyability to conclude that accessibility and making workplace adjustments are at the heart of an inclusive workplace ecosystem. In turn, this led to the launch of the online platform, **Launchpad**, two years ago.

On Launchpad, as well as detailing their education and work experience, employees can also share information about any disability they may have, although that is voluntary. Employees can also ask for adjustments to enable them to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities.

All information is treated in confidence and used only for the purpose to which employees provide consent – i.e. to help departments integrate employees with disabilities into the workplace smoothly.

"I am seeing employees with disability opening up and sharing. This is a very sensitive issue and yet people are willing to discuss their experience of disability," says Aruna C Newton, Associate Vice-President Global Diversity & Inclusion.



What Infosys has learned from Launchpad:

- Making a strong commitment towards disability inclusion and demonstrating that every employee matters is important
- Go directly to employees with disability and ask them what they need to perform their job
- People will share their experiences and discuss sensitive subjects

Infosys: supporting the career development of employees with disability

Until recently, Infosys has concentrated on improving workplace accessibility, processes and systems for people with disabilities. Now, however, it is focusing on inclusion in the workplace and, in particular, on how to improve the career development of disabled employees.

Infosys conducted a study of employees with and without disabilities in India. It used a series of interviews, group discussions and an online survey to examine how to boost career opportunities.

One of the key findings from the study was that disabled employees felt that more needed to be done to support their aspirations and career development. This and other findings that emerged from the study informed the company's new disability inclusion, **Practice Guidelines**.

The guidelines were drafted following consultation with, among others, Infosys senior management, business leaders, human resources and the employee resource group, Infyability. They cover the recruitment, retention and advancement of individuals with disabilities within the company.

The guidelines also include a checklist to enable departments and teams to monitor the career progression of employees with disabilities. Infyability, which comprises employees with and without disabilities, takes part in the quarterly review process. Its input is invaluable in enabling the company to learn directly from the experience of disabled people, and to help the guidelines achieve their aim.

What Infosys has learned from drafting the Practice Guidelines:

- Involving all parts of the organisation in developing guidelines is important
- The experiences of employees with disability are critical in drawing up guidelines
- Publishing guidelines and policies, which demonstrated the commitment of the company to building an inclusive workplace, encourages employees with disability to express their views and concerns
- Change is gradual but, already, awareness of disability issues is growing. Departments are now more open and comfortable about discussing inclusion and relating it to their day-to-day practice

Some further examples

Organisations should consider the following ideas:

1

Using a high-level external reference group

One global professional services firm set up an external reference group, including a number of high-profile disabled figures. The group met twice a year and was chaired by a partner.

The firm was able to attract other senior business leaders to the group and it became a well-respected forum for ideas and best-practice exchange.

Using disabled trainers to deliver confidence and personal resilience programmes

One company set up a career and personal development programme for its employees with a disability. Using respected disabled trainers, it has seen many hundreds of disabled colleagues go through the programme over the last ten years. One of the consequences has been that the company's employee network has grown from 400 to 3,800 – a 950% increase.

2

3

Using qualified architects and designers who are disabled

In 2012, the London organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) ensured minority-owned businesses were included as partners. Disabled suppliers were used from the design of the opening ceremony to the kitchens built for the paralympians.

Launching global campaigns to acknowledge diverse workforces

One global oil company launched a campaign that included a series of short two-minute videos titled "Be Yourself" to encourage its disabled employees to bring their authentic selves to work and fulfil their potential. It featured their own disabled employees from 15 different countries and was launched to coincide with the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The YouTube compilation of the campaign has had over 6,000 views.

4

About business disability international



bdi

a unique, global, business-led consortium working to the mutual benefit of business, people with disabilities, and the societies and economies in which businesses operate. It was founded by Barclays, GSK and Infosys, together with Susan Scott-Parker OBE.



bdi enables its member companies to:

diagnose and address the systemic implications of disability on their business as it affects their worldwide customers, colleagues, potential colleagues and wider stakeholders

jointly fund a cost-effective, central resource with unique business-disability experience



bdi does this by asking:

"What does global HQ need to say and do, to enable national leaders to deliver the consistent best practice that, in turn, delivers both business and societal benefit?"



bdi pioneers:

practical business-to-business collaboration, learning and influence, making it easier to deliver worldwide the best practice we brand 'disability confidence'

About the Author

**Kate Nash OBE is the world's leading authority on "Networkology"
– the art and science behind workplace networks/resource groups.**

Best known for her work with disability networks, she set up a hub of best practice in running disabled employee networks, publishing the first UK best practice guide in 2009 with a UK Ministerial launch. She has worked with over 300 UK and global employers who have established disability networks/resource groups with a combined estimated reach of 850,000 disabled employees.

In October 2015 she founded PurpleSpace (www.purplespace.org) – the world's first membership and professional development hub for disabled employee networks, bringing together the leaders from employee networks/resource groups.

PurpleSpace has triggered a new way of cross-network conversations about how individuals can develop and nurture inner confidence and resilience – network leaders work together to create toolkits supporting individuals to lean into their career, ask for the adjustments they need and bring their authentic selves to work.

PurpleSpace delivers best practice and leadership know-how to network leaders as well as resilience and confidence training for disabled employees.

In April 2014 her book, *Secrets & Big News*, was published. Some 2,511 disabled employees from 55 employers took part in its research. It unpacks the truth behind 'disclosure' of disability and what employers can do to help people be themselves at work.

Prior to her work to establish workplace networks she was Chief Executive of Radar (now Disability Rights UK).

In 2007, she was awarded an OBE for services to disabled people.

She lives in London and Mumbles, South Wales.

Learning directly from disabled people: A toolkit for global business

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