



CORPORATE STRATEGY

TOOL 2: IDENTIFYING THE RATIONALE
FOR CHANGE

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TOOL 2: IDENTIFYING THE RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Who is this for

High priority

- Executives and senior management
- Cross-departmental managers

What guidance does it provide?

- Understanding the business and ethical rationale for disability confidence

Take-home points

- When investing in disability confidence, a company positions itself as a preeminent leader at the intersection of business, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.
 - The strategic business benefits: Adopting disability confidence enables access to an untapped pool of talented workers who will help drive innovation, economic growth, and business success.
 - Supporting the disability community: Disability confident leaders understand that the cross-disability movement includes and impacts all of us. Employers have the platform to instigate positive change, and that starts with learning with and from people with disabilities.
 - Fair and ethical treatment: Treating people fairly is the right thing to do. By adopting the best corporate practice of disability confidence, a company can enhance its reputation as a fair, equitable, and ethical employer.
- Amplify the impact of your organization's disability confidence by joining a business disability network and kickstarts business-to-business (B2B) conversation to collaborate with link-minded companies and share best practices for accessibility and inclusivity.

STAY ON TOP OF THE STATISTICS

Stay on Top of the Statistics

Disability: A Growing Portion of the Workforce

Today, over one billion people – that’s approximately 15% of the total population in the world – live with some type of disability. This number is increasing – and here’s why:

The prevalence of disability increases with age

- Nearly 40% of Canadians over 65 years old have a disability [1]
- Older individuals are more susceptible to disease, injury, and chronic illness [2]

Proportions of older workers have increased in Canada

- Between 1996 - 2018, the proportion of workers aged 55 and older was doubled (e.g., from 10% to 21%) and proportions of older workers have increased across all major occupations over this period [3]

The observable increase in chronic health conditions in Canada

- Chronic health conditions such as diabetes, [4] cardiovascular disease, [5] musculoskeletal conditions, [6] cancer, [7] depression, [8] and more are on the rise

Businesses in Canada are in the midst of a labour shortage – one that will likely not let up for at least the next 10 years. Building your disability confidence will not only unlock the doors to an overlooked pool of skilled candidates to fill the gap, but also enable employers to retain and support current or future workers with disabilities in the workplace. In any large corporation, it is estimated that 10-12% of employees have lived experiences of disability. Investing in disability confidence is the only way to help all employees realize their full potential.

Emerging Trends and Disability Facts in Canada

In Canada, statistics on jobseekers and workers with disabilities can be used to paint a valuable picture of the current landscape of employment.

Labour Market Participation Among People with Disabilities in Canada [1]

- 22% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and over have one or more disabilities
- Only 59% of working age adults with disabilities are employed, compared to 80% of adults without disabilities
- 645,000 persons with disabilities in Canada have the potential to work but are not currently employed
- 28% of people with severe disabilities and 14% of people with mild disabilities live below the poverty line, in comparison to 10% of people without disabilities

To download a full statistics package to understand emerging trends and disability facts in Canada, please visit [Stats Package](#)

THE RATIONALE FOR DISABILITY CONFIDENCE

The Rationale for Disability Confidence

Why should I commit to disability confidence?

When investing in disability confidence, a company positions itself as a preeminent leader at the intersection of business, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.



- **The strategic business benefits:** Adopting disability confidence enables access to an untapped pool of talented workers who will help drive innovation, economic growth, and business success.
- **Supporting the disability community:** Disability confident leaders understand that the cross-disability movement includes and impacts all of us. Employers have the platform to instigate positive change, and that starts with learning with and from people with disabilities.
- **Fair and ethical treatment:** Treating people fairly is the right thing to do. By adopting the best corporate practice of disability confidence, a company can enhance its reputation as a fair, equitable, and ethical employer.

According to economists at TD Canada, even moderate progress -- halving the labour market gap, or employment for approx. 440,000 additional persons with a disability -- could increase Canada's GDP approximately \$50 billion (growth of over 2%). [9]

THE STRATEGIC BUSINESS BENEFITS OF DISABILITY CONFIDENCE

Attract the best talent

Not only do people with disabilities in Canada already comprise a substantial portion of the working age population, but their numbers will continue to increase as our general population ages. [3]

- Labour market opportunities for workers with disabilities have not matched this level of growth – in fact, they have lagged considerably
- Closing this significant gap represents a prime opportunity for employers to get an edge on competitors and gain access to an exceptional group of candidates who are ready to work

Businesses who have adapted their approach to attracting and recruiting people with disabilities are successfully meeting their labour needs.

Retain engaged and productive workers

A disability confident business strives to understand, continually learn about, and take action to remove and prevent barriers to full participation at work from an intersectional perspective.

- Inclusive organizations are more likely to foster cultures that generate higher productivity, retention, engagement, and morale [10]
- Across sectors, industries, and nations, businesses are more successful at retaining the valuable employees who they worked so hard to recruit, and eliminate the costs of finding another candidate to fill the role [11]

When barriers to participation are removed, people with disabilities can achieve their full potential in the workplace.

Innovate and problem solve

By hiring people with disabilities, businesses are doubling down on their creativity and developing new approaches to innovation, problem solving, and identifying market opportunities.

- Workers with disabilities positively impact colleagues and current staff members – they can challenge their attitudes, encourage them to be more open and inclusive, and prompt them to re-think their perspectives
- Individuals with disabilities face barriers to participation daily and navigating these types of challenges hones a unique skill set

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY CONFIDENCE

Innovate and problem solve

Now more than ever, jobseekers and workers with disabilities, as well as consumers, are changing their expectations about what constitutes fair, equitable, and ethical treatment.

- Businesses who can successfully anticipate and proactively address these changes are more agile and responsive to the evolving landscape of employment
- They are better positioned to:
 - Anticipate and adapt to the needs of their clients
 - Incorporate accessibility as early as possible in product design
 - Deliver inclusive services that are better suited for all clients

Disability confident businesses recognize all employees' potential to contribute to business success.

“We recently reimaged our people manager program. In large part because, in an increasingly hybrid world, managers have to be thoughtful about how they engage, encourage and coach their teams and bring their teams together to collaborate and create value. Our new program is “Choose-Your-Own-Adventure” style, where managers can personalize their learning built around their core responsibilities such as how to lead through ambiguity, embrace empathy and remain resilient. It has been well-received by colleagues, who recognize the working world is changing rapidly, and are looking for ways to build and sharpen those critical leadership skills.” - Alan Richardson, RBC Senior Executive

Supporting Diverse Disability Communities

There are more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide and the number is growing as populations age and with advances in medical science. [12]

Disability impacts all of us. The cross-disability rights movement has made momentous strides – the fight for autonomy, the rise of representation, new legislative rights, disability pride, and more. Widespread support for people with disabilities’ right to participate in society, has led to the introduction of unprecedented legislation focused on accessibility. For more information, please click [Legal Briefing](#)

Disability confident leaders recognize their role in transforming business to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. The stand to benefit through the diversification of creativity and problem-solving, accessing talent in light of a national labour shortage, and retaining engaged, skilled workers. At the same time, they act as allies of the disability movement, and drive system change to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities for economic and social participation.

“Business is perfectly placed to leverage its expertise, innovation, and influence to mutual benefit - simply by focusing on where the needs of business and the aspirations of persons with disabilities coincide.” – The Disability Confident Employer’s Toolkit, Inclusive Futures [13]

Contributing to Sustainable Business Practices

Committing to the best practice of disability confidence helps you extend the lifespan of your business. It grants you access to a number of solutions that are socially and financially sustainable. Here are some of the best practices that disability confident businesses are investing in: [13]

- **Find ways to encourage the education, learning, and skills sector:** Fund scholarships or programs for students with disabilities that simultaneously give them the opportunity to work at your organization for an agreed upon period of time after they graduate.
- **Enter into an exchange with schools or organizations offering training for jobseekers with disabilities:** Develop a program which offers guaranteed training, internships, or placements for students who meet agreed upon standards of performance during their education. Offer consultations around curriculum, provide information about industry skill shortages, and showcase yourself as an accessible and inclusive employer, while honing the skills of an incoming talent pool. >

SUPPORTING DIVERSE DISABILITY COMMUNITIES

- **Advocate for barrier-free and inclusive strategies for recruitment:** Ensure that qualified candidates with disabilities do not inadvertently get screened out (e.g., ensure university career fairs are fully accessible to ensure that talented students and graduates with disabilities are not excluded).

Growing Partnerships to Advance Human Rights

Collaborating with disability organizations can be a fruitful means to advance the human rights of people with disabilities. Accessible employers are taking the following steps, and you can to: [13]

- **Meet with disability organizations:** Engage in dialogue with local organizations about how you can collaborate. Get to know one another and identify opportunities where you can mutually benefit. Provide your expertise, business development support, or mentorship. In exchange, the disability organizations can be commissioned as expert consultants who provide advice and recommendations on accessibility.
- **Develop programs that focus on ‘bridge’ or ‘transition’ experiences:** Offer opportunities such as job shadowing, internships, or training to enhance essential work-related skills of candidates and prepare them for the reality of business.

Amplifying the Impact of Disability Confidence

A rising tide lifts all boats – when undertaken jointly with other businesses, disability confident initiatives can deliver a far greater impact. Here’s how you can get involved: [13]

- **Join a business disability learning network:** Collaborate with like-minded companies and share best practices for accessibility and inclusivity. On top of getting the opportunity to network with leaders in your field, joining a business disability learning network is an excellent place to learn more about ongoing initiatives to support jobseekers and workers with disabilities, such as funding programs or implementation tools for accessible workplaces.
- **Kickstart business-to-business (B2B) conversation:** Get in contact with your immediate peers and focus on coming up with more equitable and efficient solutions to labour market crises, such as the current shortage of employees. B2B conversations are a cost-effective means to identify how your industry can improve and meet the needs of 6.2 million people with disabilities in Canada.

FIGHTING FOR FAIR AND ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ALL

Fighting for Fair and Ethical Treatment of All

The Global Standards are Changing

Within the past few decades, there has been an observable shift across the globe in what fair and ethical treatment of people with disabilities looks like, and how it can be achieved. Over 160 countries have signed, and 184 countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with governments following suit and passing accessibility-focused legislation, such as the Accessible Canada Act (2019).

People in Canada are recognizing disability as a critical group in the fight for human rights.

Intelligent, disability confident businesses are translating this knowledge into their practice, to meet and exceed the changing expectations among potential employees, job seekers, and customers, as well as regulators and policymakers. They are implementing measures to create inclusive and equitable opportunities for people with disabilities, to actively address their history of marginalization and discrimination within and beyond employment.

Reinforcing Your Brand Value and Reputation

Within the last few decades, environmental, social, and governance investing trends have gained huge momentum. From combating climate change, to eliminating social inequities, companies that are recognized as socially conscious often have improved company image and even increased stock value: [14]

- **Reinforce your brand:** When investing in disability confidence, businesses can benefit by reinforcing their brand as an inclusive and fair employer, and becoming an employer of choice for people with disabilities
- **Gain access to a wider customer base:** Likewise, your company may be more favourable among customers, stakeholders, and the overall market, affording the ability to offer higher priced products and services
- **Better identify and manage risks and growth opportunities:** Being disability confident allows a company to manage operational and legal risks in a proactive mode, instead of managing incidents and crises after the fact



FIGHTING FOR FAIR AND ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ALL

Assumptions Are Not Made on the Basis of A Label

Disability confident employers make decisions on the basis of skills and potential – not on assumptions about what a person can and cannot do, based on their disability or any other intersecting identity.

While employers may mean well, best practices in hiring and retaining workers with disabilities are often muddled by misconceptions of disability in the workplace. Failure to recognize and address these myths and negative stereotypes results in discrimination and the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the workplace, despite their willingness and ability to actively participate in the labour force. Get the facts, inform your staff, and ensure that you are not making assumptions based upon a label!

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