DCIF – Culture Tool 1: Unpacking Workplace Culture at Disability Confident Organizations

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Tags

Who is this tool for?

High Level Priority:

- Executives and Senior Management

Practical Information:

- DEI and HR Professionals
- Direct Line Managers

Useful to know:

- All Staff

What guidance does this tool provide?

- Understanding what workplace culture means
- Understanding an intersectional approach to developing an inclusive workplace
- How to build a disability confident and inclusive workplace culture

Take home messages:

- Companies who succeed in developing inclusive workplace cultures strive to understand, continually learn about, and take action to remove and prevent barriers to full participation at work from an intersectional perspective.
- When workers with disabilities feel **accepted, valued, respected, safe, and supported,** the shift towards an inclusive workplace culture is immaculate

Defining Workplace Culture

There are various definitions of workplace culture. The one we choose to use is:

Workplace culture is the shared values and beliefs within a workplace. Culture impacts people's attitudes, behaviours, and ways of thinking.[1]

You can think about workplace culture as an organization's values in action. Cultural norms signal what is encouraged vs. discouraged and accepted vs. rejected within a work environment.

"When properly aligned with personal values, drives, and needs, culture can unleash tremendous amounts of energy toward a shared purpose and foster an organization's capacity to thrive."[2]

Pop Up: Employers highlight that employees with disabilities enhance workplace culture and contribute to improved workplace morale.[3]

What is an Inclusive Workplace?

An inclusive workplace is a working environment where every employee feels safe and comfortable being themselves at work.

We are all unique – with different backgrounds and life experiences. Based on the identities a worker holds, different systems of oppression and discrimination can overlap to negatively impact them the workplace.

Pop Up: This is intersectionality in action. To help broaden your understanding of the various identities, social positions, variables, and dimensions at play that may shape a person's experience of discrimination, visit our intersectionality foreword **[Intersectionality Foreword]** You may also find this infographic from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research useful.[4]

Companies who succeed in developing inclusive workplace cultures strive to understand, continually learn about, and take action to remove and prevent barriers to full participation at work from an intersectional perspective.

Pop Up: While the guidance in this toolkit focuses on the identity of disability, always keep in mind that with people have multiple, intersecting identities. Because of this, various systems of oppression and discrimination can negatively impact them in the workplace. There are steps you can take to create a workplace where everyone, including people with disabilities, feel welcomed.

Intersectionality Avatars

Salima: The culture of a workplace is crucial to making employees feel at home, staying in the same company, and investing in its future. I know this, because where I work now, I feel accepted and welcomed as a hijab-wearing single-mother of a young child, who also needs a guide-dog at work, prays during break times and requires accessible software applications on my computer.

The Workplace Culture of a Disability Confident Organization

How do workers with disabilities feel in an inclusive workplace culture?	What steps do disability confident organizations take to achieve this?
● **Accepted:** a sense of belonging within a team, with coworkers, and across the wider organization, and nobody gets left behind.	● All staff are accepting and welcoming towards colleagues with disabilities ● The workplace is fully accessible, and accommodations are readily available to support full participation of all employees ● People of all backgrounds are invited to participate equally at work ● In team environments, nobody feels excluded, ostracized, or discriminated against ● Managers are trained on how to facilitate effective conflict resolution ● Mentorship opportunities exist for all workers, including persons with disabilities ● Leaders personally welcome new employees when they first begin on the job
● **Valued**: validation, where voices are heard and contributions are recognized as important, no matter an employee's differences.	● When workers with disabilities communicate, they are heard ● Assumptions are not made about what a person with a disability can and cannot do ● Managers provide recognition and reward for quality work among employees ● Differences in background, approach, thought, and perspective among workers are celebrated and seen as assets to prompt innovation ● Equitable opportunities for career advancement, growth, and leadership are extended to all workers ● When soliciting feedback, an intersectional approach is taken to ensure that all voices are represented
● **Respected:** workers are treated with equity, fairness, and dignity	● The organization has an inclusive language guide that all workers must follow ● All staff receive education and training on the various forms of oppression that can negatively impact workers (e.g., ableism, ageism, sexism, etc.) to mitigate instances of discrimination ● Confidentiality and privacy are practiced regarding workplace accommodations

	- Assistive devices, including service animals, are respected in the workplace - Workplace policies are routinely reviewed to ensure they are equitable and fair
Safe: able to express their opinion or concerns in a workplace that is free of discrimination, harassment, or intolerance.	- All workers are invited to participate in employee resource groups focused on intersectionality; disability; and diversity, equity, and inclusion - Safe, confidential, and private spaces are created where workers can voice their ideas, concerns, and opinions - Should harassment or discrimination occur in the workplace, grievance processes are in place, consequences of complaints are taken seriously, and supports are readily available for persons who are affected - Health, wellness, and safety is a priority in the workplace and is seen as an important means to prevent disability and injury
Supported: workers are equipped with the supports they need to thrive in the workplace.	- All workers are aware of the workplace accommodation policy and understand the process to request an accommodation - A de-medicalized approach is used when determining accommodations - Workplace accommodations are implemented as quickly as possible - Flexible arrangements, such as flexible work hours, are a welcomed accommodation for all workers - Personal days and sick days are available to help employees with work life balance ==Employee assistance programs== and other emotional health and wellbeing supports are readily available for all

"BMO teams are unified around our Purpose to Boldly Grow the Good in business and in life. We are determined to remain bold on diversity and inclusion programs that grow the representation and advancement of diverse talent at BMO. We have set an equally bold agenda on customer products and community investments that drive the economic empowerment of diverse communities. We are thrilled that Forbes and Statista have again recognized our efforts." - Tracie Morris, U.S. Chief Human Resources & Inclusion Officer, BMO Financial Group.

References

[1] Society for Human Research Management. (2017). *Managing Organizational Communication*. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/understandinganddevelopingorganizationalculture.aspx

[2] Cheng, J.-Y, Groysberg, B., Lee, J., & Price, J. (2018, February). *The Leader's Guide to Corporate Culture*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-leaders-guide-to-corporate-culture

[3] Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., Albarico, M., Mortaji, N., & Karon, L. (2018). A systematic review of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. *Journal of occupational rehabilitation*, 1-22.

[4] Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (2021, February). *Meet the Methods series: Quantitative intersectional study design and primary data collection.* https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52352.html