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INCLUSION POLICY
GUIDELINES FOR
PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
IN THE RETAIL
SECTOR
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FOREWORD

The retail industry has begun its journey towards inclusion. Each year, there is progress towards making organizations more diverse and accessible to people from all walks of life. With the recent passing of the ‘Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ (PWD) Bill, the country is ready to witness positive changes with respect to the lives of persons with disabilities.

Making an organization truly ‘inclusive’ needs to be an evolving process. It is essential for the ‘inclusion and diversity’ philosophy to be ingrained into the fabric of the organization in order to tap into a wide pool of talent and diverse groups of people together to improve business performance and practices. Customer mindsets are also changing with more awareness. Interactions with hearing, speech and orthopedically impaired employees in different job roles from service associates to cashiers have led to both sensitization and appreciation.

We decided to look towards the IT industry that has been working on inclusivity through sustainable practices for a number of years. This handbook documents these best practices that can serve as guidelines the retail industry in formulating policies to achieve their inclusivity goals. In addition to providing guidance to make inclusivity work, the handbook also highlights the different aspects that need to be covered in a retail organization’s ‘active’ disability policy. Supportive HR policies in retail organizations will benefit firms and the society on the whole, giving rise to a bigger movement of cultural change.

Making inclusion a priority in the retail industry is imperative not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it is critical to the growth of our economy. Our goal is to help employers hire on merit – rather than focus on their weaknesses – because all people have something to contribute. Going forward, we’re confident that the joint efforts of AIF and Pankh will result in increased opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in various formats of the retail sector.

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Youth 4 Jobs Foundation

Trust for Retailers & Retail Associates of India
INTRODUCTION

With the retail industry being the second largest employer in the country, it is becoming increasingly important to widen the pool of recruits in the sector. As per the Census of 2011, more than 26 million people suffer from disability. With employability within this population being less than 1%, there still remains a pressing need to overcome challenges and perceptions with respect to employing Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

The way individuals think about disability can affect the way they act towards people with disabilities. Developing the right employment practices and sensitivity training can go a long way in breaking the barriers when it comes to employing PwDs. This will not only sensitize supervisors and managers but customers too, giving employers the chance to facilitate long-term change.

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THIS HANDBOOK AIMS AT HIGHLIGHTING BEST PRACTICES AND PROVIDING GUIDELINES THAT WILL SERVE AS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIRING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE RETAIL SECTOR
INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN THE RETAIL SECTOR

The retail sector has emerged as one of the largest sectors in the economy, growing at an impressive rate. While this trend has various benefits, there are several challenges that the industry faces including lack of manpower, high attrition rates and employee disengagement.

Today there is a need, more pressing than ever, to develop effective Human Resource systems that tackle inclusion and diversity in the workplace.

“AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE ENABLES AN ORGANIZATION TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY, BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVES OF A LARGE SPECTRUM OF PEOPLE AND LEVERAGE THEIR DIVERSE TALENTS AND IDEAS TO ARRIVE AT WINNING BUSINESS SOLUTIONS.”

The employment of persons with disabilities adds to this diversity and leads to a strong brand image with a positive impact on society and businesses. Moreover, an inclusive workplace fuels competitiveness and productivity.

For an organization to be truly ‘inclusive,’ it needs to develop robust practices for sourcing, training and retaining employees, including those with disabilities, so that they enjoy equal opportunities.

The Indian Retail sector is at a nascent stage when it comes to practicing inclusion and diversity in organizations. While some progress has been made with respect to hiring PwDs, there still remains a lot to learn, imbibe and execute.
## BENEFITS OF HIRING PwDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL BENEFITS</th>
<th>BUSINESS BENEFITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiring from diverse backgrounds paves the way for creativity and innovation on the whole</td>
<td>Studies show that PwDs have a lower attrition rate which leads to savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PwDs gain personal and financial independence with the chance to support their families</td>
<td>Our retailer survey revealed that PwDs had higher levels of productivity &amp; engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfillment of corporate social responsibility activities</td>
<td>Government incentives and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of PwDs is instrumental in changing attitudes and sensitizing customers</td>
<td>Builds a stronger brand image and helps with positive customer perception of the organization</td>
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</table>

While there are several benefits of hiring PwDs, there are some challenges that restrict their employability. These include lack of knowledge, incomplete systems and processes and lack of basic infrastructure to encourage the presence of a diverse and inclusive workforce.

While some retail organizations excel in the inclusion of PwDs, there are other industries that have paved the way for effective sourcing, training and retention of persons with disabilities.
PAVING THE WAY:
LESSONS FROM THE IT SECTOR

A focus on inclusion and diversity in the workplace has been on the agenda for IT and BPO industry for a number of years. Companies like IBM started their PwD hiring initiatives as early as 1914.

IBM believes that diversity and inclusion is not only beneficial for the society as a whole but also makes good business sense to provide clients with the best solutions. They aim to create a workplace where each person, irrespective of their cultural or physical differences, has the opportunity to fully participate in creating successful business.
THE 3AS: IBM’S POLICY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

ATTITUDE: Playing an active role in the recruitment of PwDs, IBM promotes an attitude of non-discrimination and offers equal opportunities to deserving individuals.

ACCESSIBILITY: IBM focuses on providing accessible assistive technology to PwDs including voice recognition software and homepage reader through their special ‘Accessibility Centers’ that focus on designing and deploying appropriate products and solutions for PwDs.

ACCOMMODATION: In India, all new IBM locations are equipped with infrastructure to suit the needs of Persons with Disabilities. Wide doors, lowered water fountains and Braille signage in elevators enables all employees to function more independently.
OUR STUDY ACROSS THE IT INDUSTRY REVEALS THE FOLLOWING BEST PRACTICES FOR THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

01 MAKING IT A STRUCTURAL CORE VALUE
Every structural policy designed by a company is viewed with a disability lens. Inclusion of PwDs is a CEO led effort, making it a core value of the company. A support system in the form of an individual or a team is in place to support the inclusion of PwDs.

02 PRESENCE OF AN ‘INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY CHARTER’
This charter outlines policies with respect to the inclusion of PwDs in the workforce. This leads to the formalization of principles in the employment of PwDs including policy relaxations like allotting a higher per diem for an employee travelling on work with a wheelchair.

03 ENCOURAGING VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY
This practice recognizes that a disability can arise at any given time. Capgemini gives employees an option to disclose their disability or medical condition through a Disability Self Identification Form in order to seek reasonable adjustments that will help them perform better at the workplace. These adjustments may include assistance like providing interpreters or modifying work sites.

04 ACCESSIBILITY AUDITS
Buildings are audited after certain periods of time to ensure that they are accessible to PwDs. Infrastructural changes are planned to create an environment that is barrier-free, conducive to growth and encourages higher productivity. These changes may include adjusting the height of workstations, providing transport and procuring the necessary assistive technology to suit the requirements of PwDs.

CAPGEMINI LAUNCHED THEIR GLOBAL CHARTER FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN 2011 TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING:
- Recruiting talented individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Treating all individuals fairly and showing them respect.
- Encouraging growth & development among all team members.
- A work environment free of bullying and harassment.
- Working relationships free of unlawful discrimination.

Mindtree, the IT Company headquartered in Bengaluru, supports accessible infrastructure at all their facilities, providing accessible assistive technology and information systems. The company undertakes accessibility audits for its buildings to validate conformance to international standards and bases further infrastructural changes in other facilities on the audit results.
05 **INDUCTION CAPSULE FOR NEW RECRUITS**
Highlighting the ‘Inclusion and Diversity Charter’ and how it is driven within the organization through a short video that is part of an orientation for all new recruits. This promotes sensitization and gives direction on some behavioural do’s and don’ts.

06 **APPROPRIATE RECRUITMENT NORMS**
The recruitment process to hire PwDs is tailored in a way to make it more accessible to them. The focus is on an inclusive policy rather than a silent one. Some norms regarding academic qualifications and standards are relaxed in order to accommodate PwDs. Appropriate infrastructure and assistance is provided throughout the recruitment process right from the interview stage to the induction of the new recruit. This includes provisions like sign language interpreters and scribes. Team members including supervisors are sensitized on suitable terminology and code of conduct.

07 **FOCUS ON CAREER PROGRESSION**
Companies align policies to ensure progress and productivity for PwDs in their careers. Equal opportunity is provided to them for participation in career development programs. If an employee has remained at the same level for over two years, a training need assessment is carried out to understand the hindrances to progress and steps are taken to encourage improvement.

‘TCS Maitree,’ an initiative by Tata Consultancy Services set up a special Advanced Computer Training Centre in 2009 to train the visually impaired for employment. A special course designed with the help of JAWS, a screen reader software that converts text to audio, focused on IT infrastructure, business process outsourcing and soft skills to enhance employability. By 2010, 30 out of 50 associates were employed in TCS across different job roles.

The IBM event ‘Fast Forward For PwD Employees’ is especially designed to help employees in their career growth and development. The event brings senior management together with PwDs in order for them to understand different career opportunities and receive guidance on achieving their career goals.
08 INTERNAL TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT
The culture of inclusion is ingrained into the fabric of the company through engagement initiatives like workshops and celebrations. Workshops encourage participation from all levels of hierarchy where all employees can get rid of subconscious biases and promote the exchange of information and knowledge.

Accenture celebrates the UN commemorated ‘International Day of Persons with Disabilities’ with locally planned events in 22 countries and a global webcast open to all employees, recruits, alumni, clients and colleagues across the globe each year.

09 EXTERNAL OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM
This effort focuses on promoting inclusion in the society and the industry through partnering with other organizations, showcasing success stories and celebrating the inclusion and diversity journey through honors and awards.

Mphasis, the Bengaluru based IT solutions company works towards sensitizing communities by creating an inclusive and barrier free environment through various partnerships. They instituted the NCPEDP (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People) Awards to recognize those who do exemplary work towards the cause of accessibility to ensure equality and dignity for people with disabilities. Mphasis has also launched ‘Kickstart Cabs’ in association with IIT-B where specially designed cabs equipped with wheelchair ramps and remote-operated seats ease commuting issues for those with limited mobility.
These practices have paved the way for progressive policies that take a holistic view of inclusion and diversity in the workplace.

BRINGING BUSINESS AND PHILANTHROPY TOGETHER: VINDHYA E-INFOMEDIA

Started in the year 2006, Vindhya’s mission is “to be pioneers in quality driven back end data processes, by training & employing differently abled youngsters and adopting innovative business practices, while delivering value addition to clientele & maximum value for the stakeholders.” Over 90% of the Vindhya workforce consists of PwDs. By designing their entire business model around hiring persons with disabilities right from the philosophy to recruitment, training and retention, the company proves that a predominantly disabled workforce can successfully sustain a business.
INCLUSION POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE RETAIL SECTOR

When you hire and encourage the hiring of Persons with Disabilities, the odds are that it will result in a beneficial outcome. As demonstrated by the IT industry, PwDs work successfully in a number of employment roles. It is important for organizations to undertake a holistic approach with formalized policies that cover the entire employment cycle right from recruitment to retention and career progression.

An organization must outline and identify roles and responsibilities that match the skills of the person despite a disability. This analysis serves as an unbiased base while hiring Persons with Disabilities. The table below is indicative of job roles for PwDs in the retail sector. However, with the right training, infrastructure and work environment, every role can be performed effectively by those with a disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELEVANT ROLE</th>
<th>RETAIL FORMAT</th>
<th>PWD SEGMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>All Retail Formats</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Associate</td>
<td>Hypermarkets</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department stores, Apparel, Accessories &amp; Jewellery stores</td>
<td>Low Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Associate - Loaders, Packers, Backend Receiving, Stock Replenishment, Apparel Folding &amp; Shelving, Customer Service, Customer Service Desk Food &amp; Non-Food Service</td>
<td>All Retail Formats</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member &amp; Brew Master</td>
<td>Quick Service Restaurants</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory Manager &amp; Warehouse Associate</td>
<td>All Retail Formats</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired, Low Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Entry</td>
<td>All Retail Formats</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired, Low Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Roles</td>
<td>All Retail Formats</td>
<td>Orthopedically Impaired, Low Vision, Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**AWARENESS**

**01** Socialization of literature on PwD inclusion: One of the most crucial factors in the integration of PwDs in an organization is the attitude of coworkers and supervisors. The circulation of important documents with respect to guidelines and sensitization should be easily accessible to all members of the organization.

**02** Awareness drives: It is important to sensitize all new recruits and refresh internal communication within the organization about inclusion. This can be done through induction videos or literature and workplace programs in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. At a later stage, it is also important to participate in external forums to share success stories and learning outcomes in order to spread awareness.

**03** Sensitization of senior management: This is crucial for the smooth absorption of PwD employees in the workplace. Consider disability equality training for senior management to ensure cooperation and sensitivity in order to achieve a harmonious interaction.

At Hypercity Retail, steps are taken to sensitize all staff members. Co-workers are accommodating and supportive towards PwDs. NGOs work with Hypercity to conduct follow-up and counselling sessions for employees who give feedback about their experience. If an employee reports a problem, the NGO provides feedback to the organization.
Role disability analysis: Organizations should focus on a ‘non-discriminatory’ recruitment policy with constant analysis of the job description. Looking to other organizations in the retail sector who have successfully absorbed PwDs in different roles should serve as the base for analysis and employment of persons with different disabilities in various roles.

Devyani International, which operates various outlets for ‘KFC’ hires speech and hearing-impaired youths as service associates with some outlets being run by majority PwDs. The organization has tied up with several government organizations and NGOs for the hiring process.

Hyercity Retail’s Hyderabad outlet was one of the first organizations in the country to put a job mapping process in place in 2011. Job responsibilities were matched to the skills of PwDs who were employed across different roles including cashiering, stock controlling and customer service.

Piloting the initiative: Companies can use a single location or a few locations as a piloting initiative to fully understand the systems and processes of PwD inclusion. Once successful, the same model can be used across different locations with necessary adjustments and improvements.

Avenue Supermarts (DMart) began the practice of hiring PwDs in 2015. They undertook a role mapping exercise and decided to initiate pilot hiring. 75 PwD youth were familiarized with the organization and then hired across 13 locations during this period. The employees were observed over a quarter. Soon the store and central teams saw the merits in hiring PwDs and a formal policy was put into place. Exceptions were made for preferential shift allocation and the minimum education qualification was also waived off in cases where competency and skills matched the requirement. Today, there is a dedicated team of HR managers to oversee the hiring of PwDs and deal with any challenges. The organization has decided to hire a minimum number of PwDs at each of their stores.
03 Ensuring accessible infrastructure: Reasonable adjustments will need to be made right from the interview process to the employment of PwDs. The interview process needs to be objective and non-biased. Reasonable adjustments would include briefing the interviewers beforehand and making suitable arrangements as per the requests of the interviewee – for example, arranging a sign language interpreter for a hearing impaired candidate or providing parking space closest to the office for the physically disabled. Workplace adjustments would include providing suitable equipment like screen readers or voice recognition software and personal assistance where required in addition to premise based adjustments like appropriate washrooms, signage and staircases.

04 Need based training: In order to augment the skills of PwD employees, appropriate and timely training is critical. Employers can assist with developing in house training modules in collaboration with disability employment specialists, creating e-learning modules and sensitizing NGOs to include retail based training programs for PwDs.

Devyani International has developed an internal sign language module that serves as a ready reference for employees. An orientation and product based program using audio visual aid and technology has also been developed to ensure that PwD training in the organization is at par with other employees.

05 Develop success stories: Work towards building success stories through the process of performance reviews and growth opportunities. Celebrate and communicate these through different platforms within and outside the organization. Even a single story goes a long way in promoting the philosophy of PwD inclusion in organizations.

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At Devyani International, HR takes interviews with the help of a special trainer who is trained in sign language. After a basic interview, the company holds an introductory session for the shortlisted candidates and their families to discuss job profiles, salaries, shifts and other necessary topics. Selected candidates are part of a special joining and induction drive held by the HR department.

At Hypercity, cashiers with locomotor disabilities are provided with height adjustable chairs to perform their jobs as cashiers smoothly. This highly effective, low cost solution has led to better performance and greater retention amongst PwDs.

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RECOGNIZING SILENT SUCCESS
AMJAD ALI’S UPWARD JOURNEY

In 2009, Amjad Ali began his career at the reputed food chain, KFC. What he lacked in terms of hearing and speech, he made up with enthusiasm and confidence. He coped well with the initial training requirements of the company and worked in the kitchen and at the cashier desk. The KFC management recognized Amjad’s efforts and he soon became a role model of sorts for the new incumbents. In two years, he was nominated for a managerial role and subsequently promoted to become the first specially abled Shift Manager, paving the way for future success.
Instituting Equal Opportunity Policy: Companies should ensure that all candidates get equal opportunity based on their merits and qualifications. The setting up of a formal policy drives inclusion and should cover all aspects of employment including recruitment (vacancy advertisements and assessment), compensation, promotion and termination. All employees and stakeholders should be made aware of this policy.

For example, your policy could include guidelines about vacancy advertisements to ensure that a ‘disability friendly’ statement is included to showcase the company’s commitment towards equal opportunity.

Accessibility Audits: These audits are necessary to understand how the organization can improve accessibility of the built environment. These help with identifying issues in the physical environment, communication and services like transportation. Audits should be made a recurring process, in order to keep up with the changing infrastructure and needs of PwDs.

Some elements that could be covered in an accessibility audit include those related to entry into the premises (signage, car park), structure of the premises to get around (corridors, stairs, lighting), services inside the premises (washrooms, seating, eating area, telephone), emergency exit (doors, warning systems, lighting) and communication (training material, websites, manuals).

Instituting Awards: Awards and recognition have a positive impact on employee morale. It is important to acknowledge HR departments and operations that have successfully included PwDs in the organization. This will not only promote the inclusion and diversity philosophy of the organization within the specific department but also externally to all relevant stakeholders.

Long Term Targets: Establish benchmarks that quantify the recruitment of PwDs by setting long-term targets. For example, decide on a certain percentage of the workforce being PwDs within a certain time period. Monitor and report all progress in this area and make necessary changes as per the findings.
AT A GLANCE: HR POLICY GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSION

A carefully crafted policy helps clarify what ‘PwD inclusion’ means to your company. For the successful inclusion of PwDs in any organization, it is crucial for the top management to be actively involved in promoting inclusive HR practices. These practices should be organized and structured as ‘active’ policies that cover all aspects of employment in order to ensure the organization’s commitment towards inclusivity.

Here are the broad areas that could be covered by an organization’s disability policy to promote equal job opportunities:

- Safety Procedures
  - Fire exits
  - Emergency exits
  - Warning systems

- Infrastructural policies need to cover not only workplace adjustments but also overall infrastructural sensitivity

- Infrastructure
  - Store Layout
  - Warehouse Layout
  - Wash Rooms
  - Corridors
  - Stairs
  - Eating Areas
  - Transport
  - Assistive Devices
  - Furniture

- Communication
  - Induction Material
  - Forms
  - Training Material
  - Website
  - Standard Operating Process
  - Signage

- Enabling Environment
  - Acknowledge and promote an enabling environment rather than focusing on the limitations of the disability
  - Equipment including screen reader, voice recognition software, assistive listening devices and computer aids
  - Timings and hours to accommodate requirements
  - Leave policy that takes into account time needed for treatment or rehabilitation
# RECRUITMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIRING</th>
<th>INDUCTION</th>
<th>TRAINING</th>
<th>COMPENSATION &amp; CAREER PROGRESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All procedures relating to hiring practices should be included so that non-discrimination becomes a normative process</td>
<td>The policy should cover reasonable adjustments to be made during this period in consultation with the employee</td>
<td>Training related information for general skills and specialized skills required to perform the job</td>
<td>Guidelines for equal compensation and career development should be included to prevent any kind of bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Job descriptions
- Advertisements
- Application forms
- Referrals
- Special recruitment agencies who work with PwDs
- Interviews
- Reasonable adjustments during the hiring process

- Mentorship
- Sensitization workshops
- Guidance
- Support groups & initiatives

- On the job training
- Classroom training
- Communication skills
- Training delivery
- Material
- Environment

- Equal pay
- Performance reviews
- Promotional opportunities
- Support system
- Training for management roles
## SPECIAL MANDATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENSITIZATION</th>
<th>SPECIAL MEASURES</th>
<th>FEEDBACK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covering sensitization of all employees and external stakeholders so there is no perception of threat or favouritism</td>
<td>Implementing standard well-defined procedures for disability management within the workplace</td>
<td>Quality and effectiveness of PwD integration can be improved with feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Disability equality training
- Provision of support
- Staff orientation
- Equal treatment of PwDs at work

- Reasonable adjustments – implementation and evaluation (as per the employee)
- Preferential shifts
- Ways of working
- Work hours
- Incorporating a ‘Buddy System’ where another employee is assigned to address specific problems faced by PwDs

- PwD network or forum
- Roundtables that provide an open dialogue
- Feedback forms

No matter what stage of the inclusion process an organization is at, a formal policy and structure will enable an organization to take positive measures to not only prevent overt acts of discrimination but also those that may have a discriminatory effect.
AN OVERVIEW: DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PWD INCLUSION

**DO ✅**

01 Ensure that a ‘disability friendly’ statement is included in all company communication.

02 Consider employing specialists who will help you recruit and provide relevant training.

03 Provide reasonable workplace adjustments in stores and offices to make them barrier-free for PwDs.

04 Develop procedures to maintain and protect confidential medical records and feedback.

05 Treat persons with disabilities with dignity and respect like you would any other employee.

06 Understand that access includes everything right from forms to alarms and signals for people with different disabilities.

07 Make arrangements to sensitize customers beforehand by sending newsletters or emailers including a note on the company’s practice on PwDs.

**DON'T ❌**

01 Assume beforehand that certain jobs are suited or not suited to PwDs.

02 Assume that reasonable adjustments in the workplace will necessarily be expensive.

03 Shout or talk in loud tones unless you’re asked to do so by a person with a hearing impairment.

04 Display sympathy or assume that all persons with disabilities need help.

05 Leave PwDs out of group activities or assume that they don’t want to or can’t participate.

06 Overlook someone with a disability for a promotion or a management/supervisor position.
Q & A

01 Are there any specific tasks that are not suited for persons with disabilities?

PwDs can be trained to do a variety of jobs of different skill levels involving high risks and responsibilities. With the right training and workplace solutions, there’s no job that can be labeled ‘unsuitable’ for people with disabilities.

02 Will costs be involved in hiring PwDs?

There’s no additional cost for hiring PwDs in terms of compensation or insurance. However, in order to make a workplace accessible, the organization may incur costs for things like signage and equipment.

03 Will hired PwDs take more leaves or days off?

There are no cases to support this. If anything, research shows that persons with disabilities sometimes show a higher attendance rate.

04 Should I expect lesser productivity when I hire persons with disabilities?

No. If the workplace is accessible, employees with disabilities are likely to be as productive as any of their co-workers.

05 Where can I source candidates with disability and expert trainers?

There are several NGOs and organizations that work with PwDs to make them job-ready by offering structured training programs for jobs in the retail sector.

06 Is it advisable to discuss workplace solutions with the disabled employee?

The employee would be the best person to tell you about their specific needs and requirements. Alternatively, you could have an expert come in to make the workplace accessible before the employee comes on board.

07 How can I be sure that the employee ‘fits in’?

Support during the induction phase and disability awareness training for coworkers will ensure that concerns are addressed.

08 What should the company do if it doesn’t work out?

Research has shown that PwDs have a high retention rate. If for any reason things don’t work out, regular procedures to deal with performance problems apply.
IN CONCLUSION

Even if the process of hiring persons with disabilities begins as a CSR initiative, the overwhelming benefits are likely to make it a regular HR process in organizations. With the right sensitization practices, training programs and barrier free environments, recruiting PwDs can and must become a mainstream activity for retail organizations. A commitment to inclusion and diversity lets talent from everywhere progress in an economy and when this happens, everyone emerges a winner. With the will to make a change and the practices to support it, retail organizations can provide sustainable livelihoods to scores of people who can be true assets for companies and contribute to the economy.

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*All Case Studies Related Material Has Been Provided Through One-on-one Interviews With Employees Of The Organizations
ABOUT PANKH

An initiative by Trust for Retailers & Retail Associates of India (TRRAIN) and Youth 4 Jobs Foundation (Y4J), Pankh aims to train people with disabilities (PwD). By providing them employment opportunities in the retail industry, the initiative aims to create sustainable livelihoods for PwDs and promote inclusive growth in the retail sector.

Trust for Retailers & Retail Associates of India, TRRAIN is a charitable trust founded in 2011 by B. S. Nagesh, with the vision of Empowering People in Retail and works to achieve immediate and lasting change in the lives of retail associates both at work and at home. TRRAIN has undertaken various initiatives to enable retail associates to upgrade their skills through the TRRAIN Education Program and build pride and dignity through TRRAIN Retail Awards and Retail Employees Day.

Youth 4 Jobs Foundation, founded by Ms Meera Shenoy, helps companies build an inclusive workforce. Youth4Jobs focuses on Persons with Disability, girls, scheduled caste youth and youth from underprivileged families. The team is pioneer in short term market linked trainings which link youth to their first organized sector job. Youth4Jobs has over a decade experience of bringing governments, companies, and rural communities onto one platform for high impact. The work ranges from consultancy to strategy for companies and governments, and policy support.

ABOUT AMERICAN INDIA FOUNDATION (AIF)

The American India Foundation is committed to disrupting poverty, catalyzing social and economic change in India, and building a lasting bridge between the United States and India through high-impact interventions in education, livelihoods, public health, and leadership development, with a particular emphasis on empowering girls and women to achieve gender equity. Working closely with local communities, AIF partners with NGOs to develop and test innovative solutions and with governments to create and scale sustainable impact. Founded in 2001 at the initiative of President Bill Clinton following a suggestion from Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, AIF has impacted the lives of 31 million of India’s poor and aims to reach 5 million by 2018-2019. Learn more at www.AIF.org.

AIF is revolutionizing the industry paradigm by providing equal opportunity and access to employment for persons with disabilities, based on a simple belief—it is one’s ability, not disability that defines any individual. The Ability Based Livelihood Empowerment (ABLE) program trains persons with disabilities in fundamental and specialized skill-sets, and facilitates their entry into the job market through a robust advocacy platform for disability inclusion, promoting inclusive growth in India.