

MYTH VS REALITY

Persons with disabilities in the workforce



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Foreword

INSIGHT FACILITATES BETTER DECISIONS

Inclusion is everyone's business. Whether it is being able to reach a bank counter and conduct a transaction, or to be interviewed for a job and be productively employed, creating the avenues for inclusion for persons with disabilities starts with the desire to make a difference and needs structured processes to ensure smooth functioning of such initiatives.

At Emirates NBD, we believe in working towards a world where there are no barriers for persons with disabilities to achieve the same dreams and potential as everyone.

The bank's Social Investment Strategy Framework is driven by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the UAE Vision 2021 and the Emirates NBD Vision, Mission and Values. The framework includes two key focus areas: #TogetherLimitless, an advocacy platform for persons with disabilities (people of determination), and #moneywise, which encourages and promotes financial literacy. Support areas include health and wellness, women's empowerment, community development and the environment.

Since its inception in 2015, #TogetherLimitless has undertaken several initiatives towards disability mainstreaming, including quarterly town-hall sessions to build community awareness; transforming the bank's branches with disability-friendly facilities; launching Careers Network for workplace inclusion; promoting financial inclusion by offering Sanad* card holders the Emirates NBD 'Beyond from Personal Banking' package, exempt of minimum salary requirements; as well as publishing a research report on the banking and financial habits and attitudes of people of determination in the UAE.

In the two years since its launch, the Careers Network programme has been successful in helping persons with disabilities play their rightful productive role in society, with 50 candidates having gained employment among 19 UAE companies.

As well as providing equal access to employment and advancement, the Careers Network initiative recognises the importance of having a diverse and skilled workforce, connects work-ready individuals with disabilities to employers interested in bringing diversity into their workforces and provides the right tools and skills to succeed.

To encourage more employers to work towards creating a diverse workforce, Emirates NBD took the initiative to conduct a two-phase research project, beginning in 2017 with a survey by Ipsos to better understand the perceptions of UAE employers regarding employing persons with disabilities. The findings revealed that barriers in employing persons with disabilities exist in the form of misconceptions on the part of employers.

Phase 2 of the process is this document, which uses surveys and interviews of employers to dispel misconceptions and myths related to hiring persons with disabilities, while also presenting successful strategies, practical examples and best-practice approaches used by employers of such persons.



Husam Al Sayed
Group Chief Human Resource Officer
Emirates NBD

Objectives

To enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the UAE's workforce, Emirates NBD took the initiative to run a research programme to better understand the perceptions of employers based in the UAE, and to tackle any unfounded fears regarding this segment as potential employees.

The objectives are to:

- > Explore and illustrate the perception of employers about persons with disabilities
- > Gauge current employment programmes in the UAE and survey how many companies in UAE have such a programme in place
- > Understand perceived triggers and barriers in employment of persons with disabilities
- > Dispel the misconceptions and address any challenges in employing persons with disabilities by presenting real-life experiences of employers who are implementing workplace inclusivity
- > Investigate the existing national and international best practice policy and support frameworks available to employers for hiring persons with disabilities in the UAE.

The desired outcome is to foster and encourage workplace inclusion.

Methodology

Phase 1

Emirates NBD commissioned a survey, 'Determining the Impact of Enterprise Mobility in the UAE Workplace'. As part of this phase, Ipsos conducted qualitative and quantitative research during April-June 2017.

Quantitative research:

A total of 70 interviews were conducted in April-May 2017 among employers in the UAE, through face-to-face meetings and online questionnaires.

Qualitative research:

A total of seven in-depth face-to-face interviews were moderated in April and June 2017 among employers in the UAE.

Target:

C-level executives and HR managers from companies with 75+ employees in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

The research underlined the challenges and barriers in implementing programmes for employing persons with disabilities.

Phase 2

Emirates NBD commissioned White Paper Media (WPM) to study the outcomes of Phase 1, compile the misconceptions and myths arising from the survey, and dispel these through a fresh round of qualitative interviews of employers of persons with disabilities.

Qualitative research:

A total of 15 persons from UAE-based private sector companies affiliated to Careers Network, as well as organisations like Manzil and the Community Development Authority were interviewed during March-June 2018.

Targets:

1. C-level executives, HR managers and line managers at companies that already have policies in place related to employing persons with disabilities as well as those that are in the process of creating such policies.

2. Senior executives at government policy-making bodies and community-based support organisations.

Secondary research for this white paper includes a synthesis of results from existing research by international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, and studies by employers around the world. It also includes policy and recommendations issued by the UAE and Dubai authorities on the employment of persons with disabilities by both public and private sector employers.

*Access card developed by Community Development Authority (CDA), Dubai for persons with disabilities.

Executive Summary

Preconceived notions act as barriers to employing persons with disabilities in the UAE. When organisations embark upon the journey towards inclusivity, there is much to learn. Equally, there is much to unlearn. Organisations that have addressed these notions and myths have experienced happier, more inclusive workplaces that embrace all segments of the community.

Some employers have a fully-fledged policy for employment diversity and have had persons with disabilities in their workforce for a year or more. In other companies, diversity has been the result of fulfilling the founder's vision, or compliance with the inclusivity initiatives of the UAE government. Companies that have employed persons with disabilities may be large or small – with a staff of

more than 9,000 or just seven. They include regional conglomerates, hospitality start-ups and multi-national organisations across sectors as diverse as banking, luxury retail, waste management, hospitality, back-office operations and consumer products.

To demonstrate that barriers are pre-constructs of the mind based on notions that have little or no basis in real-life situations, this white paper exposes each myth to the reality on the ground. To achieve this, it documents the experiences of organisations where persons with disabilities work hand-in-hand with the rest of the population.

Right from the most basic of myths, the notion that a disability is visible and the image associated with it is

the wheelchair, exposing the reality is the crucial first step in workplace inclusivity. This notion is fundamentally untrue as disabilities can be both visible and not so obvious. In the UAE, employees include persons with learning disability, developmental delays and hearing impairment.

Similarly, another barrier to hiring persons with disabilities is the misconception that it entails expensive changes. Experience shows there is often zero cost associated with accommodating the needs of such employees. In one example, hiring a person with disability merely involved providing her with a footstool so that her legs would not dangle. In another, it required using a larger screen resolution.

Persons with disabilities also have the capability to perform diverse functions. Our research revealed that they are employed across companies as administrative clerks, junior designers, marketing assistants, analysts, data processors, CSR coordinators, sales associates and service crew.

The discussions encapsulated here have brought home the reality that employing persons with disabilities is a process that is rewarding for all stakeholders and the benefits go far beyond the tangible.





You can tell if a person has a disability, because it is visible.

More than half the employers interviewed in a 2017 survey* conducted in the UAE thought of the wheelchair as the image associated with disability.

Myth 01



*Determining the Impact of Enterprise Mobility in the UAE Workplace | Ipsos survey commissioned by Emirates NBD, 2017

Disabilities may be visible. They may also be less obvious.

“Disabilities include those that are both visible (for example, a person who uses a wheelchair) as well as non-visible (for example, a person with autism),” according to the Disability Terminology Handbook issued by the Government of Dubai.

Reality





The reality is that awareness of disabilities such as developmental delay, autism, Down's syndrome, learning disabilities, speech/language impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment and mobility impairment – in this order – goes from low to high among UAE employers surveyed in 2017.

"A vast majority of persons with disabilities are not wheelchair users. They may be persons with developmental disabilities, persons with hearing impairment, or visual impairment, among others. But the association of disabilities with the wheelchair is very strong," says Dr. Ayesha Saeed Husaini, Director of Manzil, a non-profit organisation that works with persons with disabilities in the UAE.

"At the start, when we approached companies to explore employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, often the first thing we would hear would be how their premises are not accessible and may require structural changes before they can even think of hiring persons with disabilities. A majority of candidates we work with are persons with developmental disabilities. Some are persons with hearing and visual impairment," says Dr. Ayesha.

Manzil is a partner with Emirates NBD in the #TogetherLimitless programme of Careers Network, along with the Community Development Authority, a Dubai Government entity. Launched in 2015, the

programme enhances the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace.

The Careers Network enlists work-ready individuals from pre-existing work-training programs and schools and helps them acquire stable employment with corporate partners in the public and private sectors. The process includes building a database of potential candidates, interviewing and assessing their readiness, assisting them in the placement process, and coaching them in the first months of their employment to ensure effective workplace integration and onboarding.

The World Health Organisation says that more than a billion people in the world today experience disability. It defines disability as: "an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

"These people generally have poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty. This is largely due to the barriers they face in their everyday

lives, rather than their disability," WHO says. While global organisations share trends, hard data on employment of persons with disabilities is hard to find. "There is no accurate information available to date. One of the gaps that the Inclusive Employment policy highlighted was the lack of accurate and up-to-date statistics.

"Employment rate estimates within people with disabilities and comparison with people with no disabilities will be available after introducing some disability-related questions to the Labour Force Survey (conducted by Dubai Statistics Centre)," says Samia Dhaoui, Expert-Research and Policy, at Dubai's Community Development Authority's Studies and Research Department.

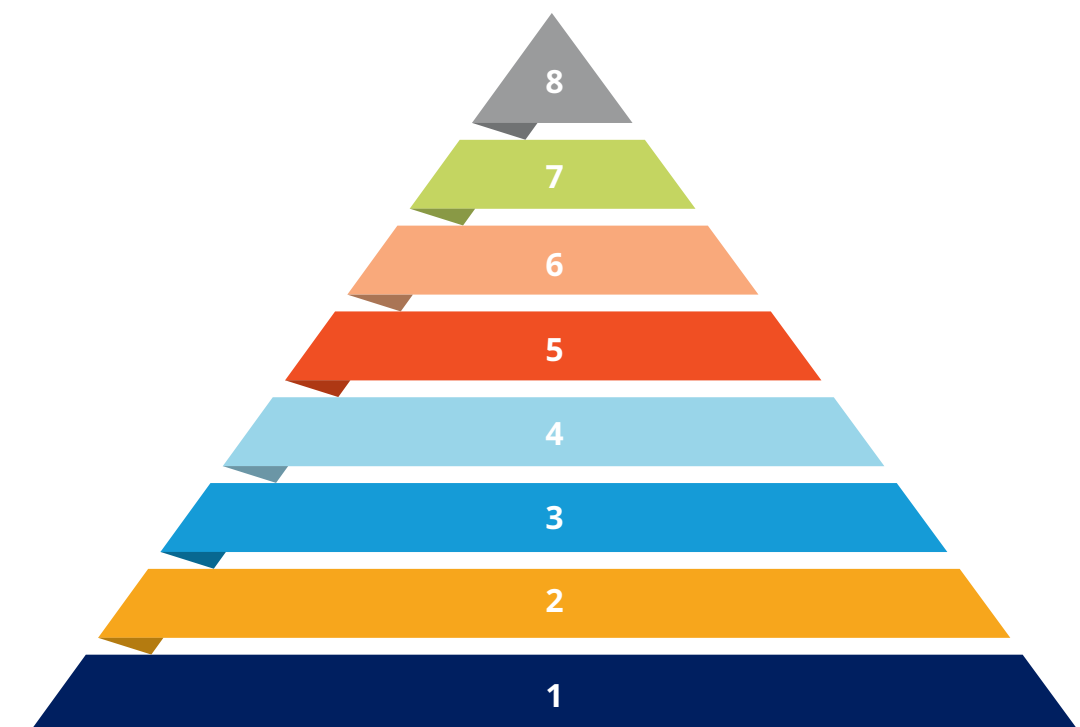
Unemployment among persons with disabilities is as high as 80 per cent in some countries. Often employers assume that persons with disabilities are unable to work.

- UN fact sheet on persons with disabilities
www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/pwdfs.pdf

Only 44% of adults with intellectual disabilities aged 21-64 are in the labour force, compared to 83% of working-age adults without disabilities.

- 2013 Gallup poll commissioned by Special Olympics

> THE AWARENESS PYRAMID



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Mobility and movement impairment | 2. Hearing impairment |
| 3. Visual impairment | 4. Speech / language impairment |
| 5. Learning disabilities | 6. Down's syndrome |
| 7. Autism | 8. Developmental delay |



There is always a gap between the ideal candidate and a person with disabilities.

Employers tend to think that persons with disabilities would be unable to do a job as well as other staff because of what they perceive as limitations.

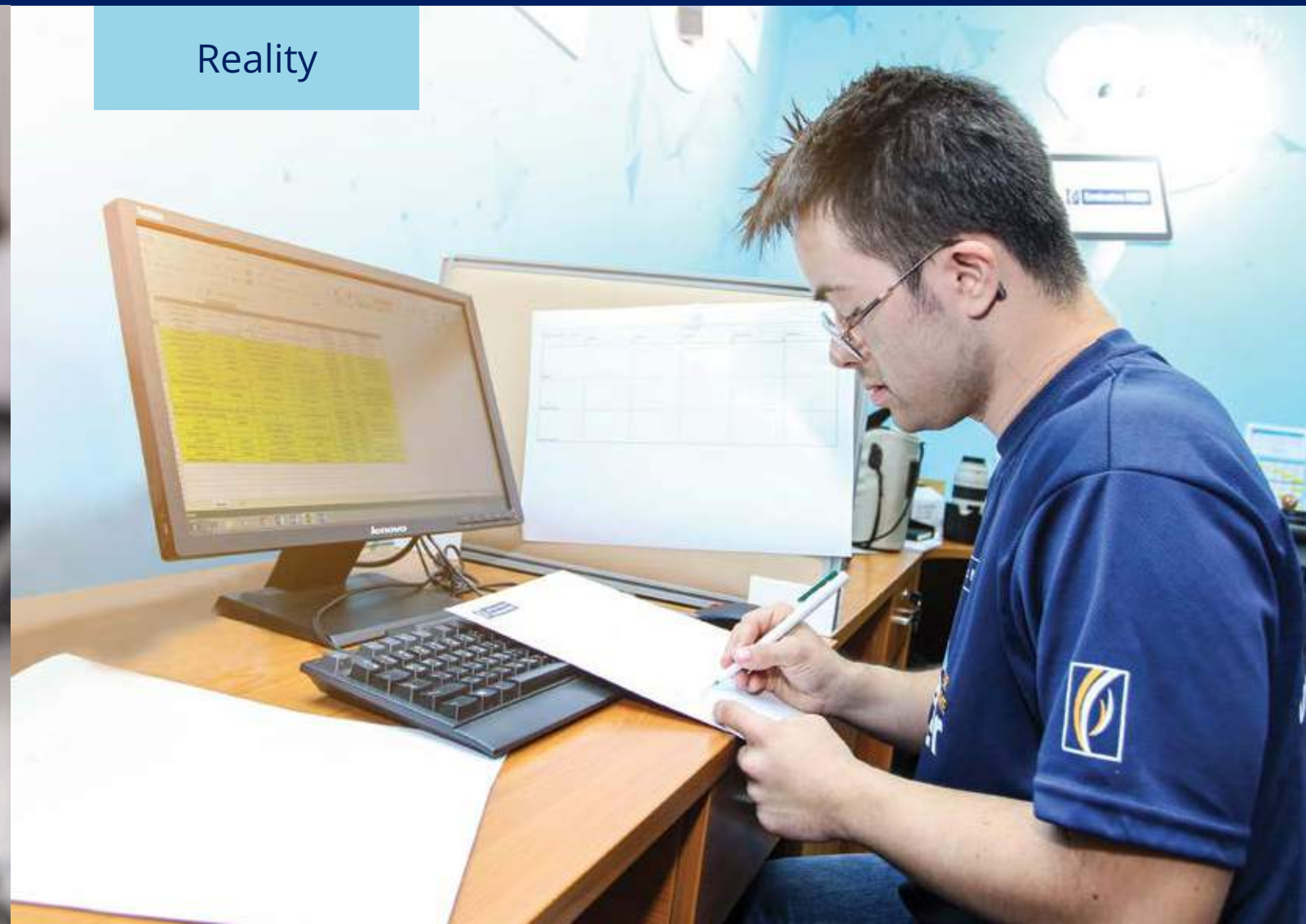
With the right job description, persons with disabilities are as capable of doing a job as anyone else.

HR managers who have hired and worked with persons with disabilities have said in surveys that it is only personal bias to think that a person can or cannot do a certain job based on their disability.

Myth 02



Reality



In reality, persons with disabilities are no different from the general population and experience the same joys and frustrations at work like everyone else. For employers, stability and being proactive at the workplace are the qualities most sought after in employees. The attitude of the candidate, their willingness to learn, and bringing value to the job assigned are also important.

"We wanted to be in line with the government strategy on People with Determination. At the start of 2016, we cautiously started hiring people with cognitive and physical disabilities. We see a lot of benefits from having persons with disabilities among our staff. We have had hardly any attrition. And the positivity they spread creates a different kind of energy and vibe," says Fatima Abdulrahman, Chief Human Resources Officer, Tanfeeth, a shared services company and a fully owned subsidiary of Emirates NBD, which employs 22 such persons.

Those with positive experiences say creating the right job description is the single most important factor in having productive employees. This is a task handled jointly by the human resources team and the line manager.

Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group, who recently included a person with disability as a marketing assistant on her team, says the interview process brought out the best candidates.

"We needed a marketing assistant with creativity, an interest in different things, and a multifaceted personality. We manage a portfolio of different brands. We have events and we handle many types of products. The person needed to be flexible, curious and able to communicate with other people on the team. Aarti has these qualities," Diane says of the person hired for the job.

Employers agree that persons with disabilities they have worked with are highly motivated, put a lot of effort into their work, and are content in their jobs.

"We have carved out roles that allow such employees to be as productive as the next person," says Chanake Wikramanayake, Head of Banking Operations at Tanfeeth, who has direct supervision of a few persons with disabilities.

He cites the example of a highly motivated employee who was put on an incentive-based performance assessment. "We realised that she was focused on increasing income and wanted to do more. We considered an incentive scheme based on performance, which is implemented across the floor for many others.

Her productivity and quality are measured based on the number of errors." Six months into the job, the employee earned enough from the incentive scheme to be able to buy a new automated wheelchair.

"We see a lot of benefits from having persons with disabilities among our staff. The positivity they spread creates a different kind of energy and vibe,"

-Fatima Abdulrahman, Chief Human Resources Officer, Tanfeeth.

"Studies show that employees who have a disability work 97 per cent safer, have attendance records 86 per cent greater, stay on the job up to five times longer, and increase morale so that non-disabled staff stay longer."

- Mark Wafer, Tim Hortons franchise owner, Canada

"You don't realise that there are so many good candidates with different qualifications. Their skills, salary and aspirations are like everyone else's. I meet candidates who want to live independently and support their families."

- Amrita Ahluwalia, Manager, Talent Sourcing and Selection, Emaar Hospitality Group, attending the Careers Network meet up in June 2018



of managers who have hired persons with disabilities report satisfaction with their performance

- Survey: Determining the Impact of Enterprise Mobility in the UAE Workplace, 2017



> ORGANISATIONS WITH AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE ARE:

2
times

as likely to meet or exceed financial targets

3
times

more likely to be high-performing

6
times

more likely to be innovative and agile

8
times

more likely to achieve better business outcomes

Source: Juliet Bourke, Australian Institute of Company Directors 2016 (Deloitte Insights)

Ahmed



Ahmed works in the room service department of a five-star hotel in the UAE, in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah. As soon as a trolley makes its way back to his department from a trip delivering food to a room, he knows exactly what to do. He clears it, replaces the essentials with fresh things from the shelves, and gets the trolley ready for its next trip. Proud of his work, he keeps himself busy through the day. Selected from a pool of three candidates, Ahmed has been in the job for more than a year and is considered by his manager as an asset to his department.



No one is hiring persons with disabilities in the UAE, why should we?

A majority of UAE employers interviewed in a 2017 survey* said they did not have a person with disability as an employee, nor did they have specific corporate guidelines on hiring such individuals.

Myth 03

Reality

The Careers Network is working with 18 private sector and eight public sector organisations in the UAE, which have one or more employees who are persons with disabilities.





Several major organisations in the UAE hire persons with disabilities and have inclusive policies designed for them. These include large hospitality groups, luxury retail and lifestyle conglomerates, entrepreneurial ventures, cafés and financial services companies. No matter how large or small, businesses can always promote diversity.

The Careers Network was launched by Emirates NBD in partnership with Manzil and the Community Development Authority to help hire and onboard persons with disabilities as a free service. The Careers Network has 26 partners in the UAE and has placed 44 people in its two-and-a-half years of operations. It has been in touch with approximately 200 others and has held workshops at 30 companies.

Many of its corporate partners have hired persons with disabilities; some are in the process of deciding when to do so.

The Chalhoub Group, at one end of the spectrum, employs about 10,000 people across 90 companies and has recently started hiring persons with disabilities. At the other end is a small neighbourhood dessert shop, Ella's Creamery, in Dubai Parks & Resorts, where Bilal has been a part of the team since April 2017.

"Inclusion can even take place in a 100 square-metre customer-facing store with seven employees and no supervision from Finance or HR. This is what inclusion is about – even a mom-and-pop entrepreneurial business can hire a person with disability," says Donald Bremner, owner of Ella's Creamery where Bilal, who has Down's syndrome, interacts with ice-cream enthusiasts, handling customer requests on busy weekends.

"We're part of the community. It's built into how we work, interact and communicate. It's a small neighbourhood family store, created in Dubai. We have not brought in foreign brands or culture," says Donald.

Creating a diverse workforce is part of corporate best practice globally. Both private and public sector entities are mandated or encouraged to hire persons with disabilities.

"There is a definite increase in awareness and a willingness from the public and private sectors [about initiatives for hiring persons with disabilities]," says Samia Dhaoui, Expert-Research and Policy, at the CDA's Studies and Research Department.

"The public sector is required by law to employ such persons and offers the provisions and accommodations needed for them. The private sector is mandated not to discriminate against persons with disabilities and to make reasonable accommodations. However, more dedication is required from the private sector to support Emiratis and non-Emiratis with disabilities," she says.

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry engages with stakeholders from the private sector, including the Desert Group, Jumeirah Group, Majid Al Futtaim Properties and Hilton Dubai.

"All hotels in our group have candidates from Manzil being trained to get them ready for work. They train in tasks such as linen folding, operating machinery and making reports. We have recently hired two candidates in the staff canteen and in the laundry at our hotels," says Benny Darsana, Director of Human Resources, The Ritz Carlton, DIFC, speaking about the initiative by the Marriott International Group in Dubai.

In early 2006, the Desert Group, which owns Dubai Garden Centre among other businesses, signed an agreement with the CDA to undertake a pilot employment programme for persons with disabilities. The organisation, which has more than 2,500 employees, now operates a multi-level programme to hire persons with disabilities.

"We're working with both public and private sector organisations. Our candidates are working in data entry and sales support. They are administrators and clerks, junior designers, marketing assistants, CSR coordinators, sales support and data analysts," says Dr. Ayesha Husaini, Director, Manzil.

"Inclusion can even take place in a 100 square-metre customer-facing neighbourhood family store, with seven employees, in a mom-and-pop enterprise created in Dubai."

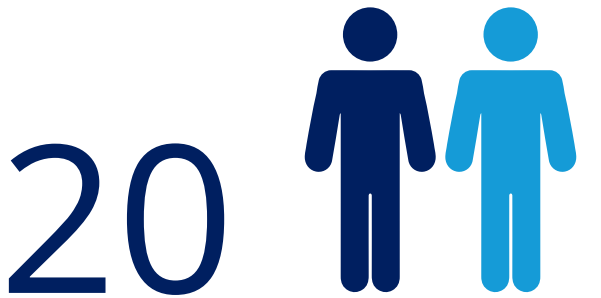
- Donald Bremner, Ella's Creamery, Dubai Parks & Resorts

"Right from an Italian restaurant with a staff of 10 people to large organisations with thousands of employees, our candidates are working in hospitality, data processing, luxury retail, engineering, advertising, coffee shops, building materials and cosmetics sectors."

- Dr. Ayesha Saeed Husaini, Director, Manzil



62 candidates attended the Careers Network in April 2018



20 Dubai companies met candidates to assess their suitability for various open positions



Hiring persons with disabilities is expensive and requires disruptive changes at the workplace.

A key barrier to hiring persons with disabilities is the perception that it needs disruptive or expensive changes in workplace infrastructure, insurance premiums, or other ways to accommodate their needs.

Most employers report minimal costs in making accommodations for employees who are persons with disabilities.

Since types of disabilities vary from those posing physical limitations to invisible, cognitive disabilities, the requirements of inclusive workplaces also vary.

Myth 04



Reality





Medical insurance, for one, is mandatory for all Dubai residents and persons with disabilities are covered under that. Employers say they have not come across special insurance requirements for employees in that category.

“Our entire policy remains the same. The medical benefits would be the same,” says Steve Thompson, Chief Operating Officer, Tanfeeth.

Employers who hire persons with disabilities report various types of adjustments or accommodations – both minimal and structural – to ensure a productive environment.

Diane Azzi, Department Manager – Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group says there were no special investments needed to hire Aarti. “All we had to change or adjust is the display setting on her screen to large [icons and text]. We also print on A3 sized sheets since she doesn’t see small things as well as we do. She has a desktop with a big screen, since a laptop would be difficult for her to handle.”

At Tanfeeth, accessibility is part of the mandate that the company is following and the organisation has hired several persons with disabilities. “We invested in our elevators, so our employees with visual disability could hear floor announcements,” says Steve.

As a city, Dubai promotes accessibility. The Dubai Universal Design Code requires all new buildings and transportation systems to be designed, constructed and managed to ensure persons with disabilities can independently use all facilities. By 2020, thousands of schools, hospitals and hotels would have been retrofitted to make them accessible for persons with disabilities. This is part of a drive to create mobility, employment and opportunity for people with physical and mental disability.

Samia Dhaoui, Expert – Research and Policy, CDA’s Studies and Research Department, says: “The work environment is an important pillar that has to be assessed by employers to ensure good inclusive employment practices. The accommodations needed, including the human, physical and technical infrastructure, should be assessed with regards to the

needs of each individual with disability, depending on the type and severity of the disability, and the type of work required.”

Many organisations are conducting accessibility audits in order to be more inclusive. Badriya Mohammed Hassan Al Ali, Senior Consultant-Policies and Programs, Rights of People with Disabilities (People of Determination), Strategy Management and Governance Sector, the General Secretariat of the Executive Council of Dubai, says: “We are beginning to transform the city, and I would like to thank all institutions that are working to change their facilities to be disability-friendly, especially Emirates NBD, which has transformed a number of its branches to provide a better banking experience for people with disabilities (people of determination), allowing them to complete their transactions independently.”

Being committed to creating an accessible workplace is the first step to being inclusive. A one-off investment can make the organisation better equipped to integrate such persons in the long term.

“Our entire policy remains the same. The medical benefits, which are given to everyone, remain the same.”

- Steve Thompson, Chief Operating Officer, Tanfeeth

“Bilal is on a full-time contract – same pay, benefits and uniform as the others.”

- Donald Bremner, Ella’s Creamery, Dubai Parks & Resorts



Harsha

Harsha, who has Down’s syndrome, works in data processing. The company provided her a foot rest, so her legs don’t dangle when she is sitting at her desk. That was the only accommodation needed for her to function productively.

88%

is the staff retention rate among employees at Desert Group who are persons with disabilities. Only 5 of 41 such employees have resigned since the start of the programme.

62%

of adults with intellectual disabilities employed in a competitive setting have been at their current job for three years or more.

- 2013 Gallup poll for Special Olympics

73%

of employers report that their employees did not require special facilities at all.

- UN fact sheet on Persons with Disabilities

59%

of employers said the accommodations needed by employees cost absolutely nothing.

- UN fact sheet on Persons with Disabilities

\$500

is the typical one-time cost experienced by employers hiring persons with disabilities on special facilities for them.

- Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact, 2017, US



Absenteeism will increase if persons with disabilities join the workforce

A reason why employers shy away from including persons with disabilities in their workforce is the perception that the person's disability will force them to take more absent days, forcing other staff to pick up the slack.

Employers say persons with disabilities are hard-working, enthusiastic and regular at work.

Employers of persons with disabilities report that such persons experience the same successes, challenges and life events as everyone else. These are to do with work, parenting, education, sports and community involvement.

Myth 05



Reality





At Tanfeeth, which has numerous employees who are persons with disabilities, absenteeism is not an issue. "All employees take leave. One of the persons with disabilities took some time off for his studies since he is sitting for exams. Another one took some time off for personal reasons, when his father was diagnosed with cancer. These are life events that anyone can face," says Chanake Wikramanayake, Head of Banking Operations at Tanfeeth.

On the contrary, their delight at being able to contribute positively motivates persons with disabilities to bring a lot of enthusiasm with them to work.

"She is always here even before I am. She is always punctual," says Diane Azzi, Department Manager – Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group, about Aarti, who takes her responsibilities as a marketing assistant very seriously.

Working six hours every day between 9am and 2pm, Aarti "is a support to the team and she is helping us do the job more efficiently, saving us a lot of time. She is good at visuals and a great support for the visual merchandising report. She is very good at data entry. She is good at organising things. We have to organise and photograph samples in our showrooms. She makes entries into the list, places the photos and organises that very well," says Diane.

Donald of Ella's Creamery says they had initially anticipated fewer hours and less busy days for Bilal; but they have found him to be punctual and hard-working and now he does five- to six-hour shifts, even on busy days.

"We started with two, three, four hours on Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Wednesday only, knowing that Friday and Saturday are extremely busy days. Now he is here on weekends as well. He does the busiest hours. His mom and brother help him get to work," says Donald.

People with Down's syndrome, their advocates and supporters gathered at UN Headquarters in the US to rally employers and make sure they saw the benefits of enabling people with Down's syndrome and disabilities to make meaningful contributions in the workplace, UN News reported.

The event, marking the 2018 edition of World Down's Syndrome Day under the theme 'What I bring to the Workplace,' was a chance to show everyone people with Down's syndrome can and should contribute and live valued working lives, and to be fully included in their communities.

Speakers said that inclusion within the normative and valued pathways of family and community life is one of the primary means to a life of meaning, belonging and possibilities.

One speaker, Debra Ruh, CEO of US-based Ruh Global Communications, said that she refused to listen when experts said that her daughter Sara, born with Down's syndrome, 'would be lucky just to be able to push shopping carts at the local grocery store.'

She left the banking industry and created TecAccess, a company with the core mission of making information and communication technologies (ICT) more accessible, notably to those with disabilities, where about 80 per cent of employees consisted of technologists with disabilities.

"Employees with disabilities in most sectors stay on the job longer, resulting in up to a 6 per cent turnover rate improvement," she said, adding: "Persons with disabilities who are employed have less overall absenteeism and the number of compensation claims are no different."

"Aarti is always here even before I am. She is always punctual."

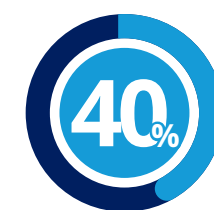
- Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear, at Chalhoub Group

"A 30-year analysis by US conglomerate DuPont de Nemours shows that persons with disabilities have equal or higher performance ratings, better retention rates and less absenteeism."

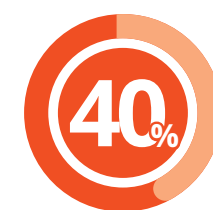
- UN fact sheet on Persons with Disabilities

"Some of our candidates wouldn't take a day off even if they are really sick. One said: 'If I am not in the office, who will do my work?'"

- Supervisor, Careers Network



> workforce comprised of people with a disability



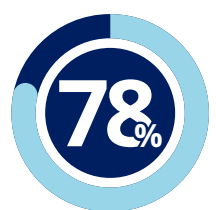
> lower safety incident rate



> lower medical treatment costs



> lower employee time away from work due to accidents



> lower overall costs associated with accidents

Source: 2017 case study of a distribution centre of Walgreens, a pharmacy chain, by the Ontario Disability Employment Network



Abdul Kader

Abdul Kader can drive, loves to play football and made great friends with his teammates at Tanfeeth. He is a regular in the company's employee excellence programme thanks to his stellar job performance.



Hiring persons with disabilities will negatively affect my business. What will my clients say?

Employers worry about the effect on the other staff if they hire persons with disabilities. They also feel that such employees may send the wrong signals to clients and customers.

Companies that hire persons with disabilities report positive feedback from co-workers, customers and the community at large. It's better for everyone.

Myth 06



Reality





All stakeholders of an organisation, whether they are employees, customers, vendors or shareholders, recognise that persons with disabilities are part of their universe. Most people over 10 years of age are likely to know or encounter someone with disability. Any company that follows inclusive policies can hope to have their work positively reinforced.

Persons with disabilities make up as much as one-tenth of the global population and can contribute in a significant way to the GDP of a country if their right to productive work is protected.

For many companies, particularly those which interact with customers constantly, persons with disabilities may represent an overlooked market segment. Such individuals, their families and friends are valuable customers. Having accessible and disability-inclusive businesses can be directly related to gaining multiple new clients.

At Dubai Airport, as at other outlets around the city, café chain Tim Horton's has customer-facing staff with hearing impairment working the counter.

At Ella's Creamery, Bilal is the official host since April 2017. Owner Donald Bremner says he is great at his job and popular with customers. "He says hello and

asks what they would like off the menu. He takes orders, ensures that the tables are clean, and takes the ice-cream to the customer. If he doesn't know what a customer is asking for, he takes a pad and gets the customer to write it down. He handles the customers during the busiest hours."

Likewise, the Chalhoub Group reports positive feedback to their new policy. Aarti was part of the team when a new store was opening at the Dubai Mall. Says Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group: "There were workers and noise and goods everywhere. That didn't bother her. She helped us get shoes out of their boxes, place them according to shape with support inserted, group them in families and merchandise them on the walls. It's time-consuming and physical. We had to document how we displayed each brand and she worked with the team, the workers and everyone to make it happen."

In fact, having an inclusion policy affects staff morale positively and increases emotional engagement at the workplace. "Inclusion is what you want to install to build mental connections. It keeps all staff engaged and motivated. Even though our business is far from easy, they have stayed. I don't have staff turnover," says Donald, who started Ella's Creamery in 2016.

> ACCESSIBLE SPACES

If a business is for everyone, it needs to be accessible to everyone. Several organisations undertake accessibility audits to establish how their premises perform in terms of access and ease of use by a wide range of potential users, including persons with disabilities.

Emirates NBD's network of disability-friendly branches are an example. They form an important component of #TogetherLimitless, the bank's flagship advocacy platform for financial, educational and workplace inclusion of persons with disabilities (people of determination).

In the first phase of modification, employees are trained on disability etiquette and the privileges offered to the UAE's Sanad Card holders. With the aim of enhancing mobility access, the branch has been equipped with accessible low-height ATMs, teller desks and cheque writing counters. Tactile floor indicators and signage have been installed for ease of direction. The branch also offers priority queuing and a dedicated waiting area that offers an easier and more elevated branch experience to persons with disabilities.

This enables the bank to provide persons with disabilities an enhanced and inclusive customer experience in addition to products and services that support their integration and independence financially. It's also a step towards Dubai's goal of being a disability-friendly city by 2020.

"Inclusion is what you want to instill to build mental connections. It keeps all staff engaged and motivated."

- Donald Bremner, Ella's Creamery, Dubai Parks & Resorts

"They were proud to be part of a team that is supporting the development of someone who would have difficulties otherwise. There is a sense of belonging, which is very positive."

- Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear, Chalhoub Group

"Employees with disabilities relate better to customers with disabilities."

- UN fact sheet on Persons with Disabilities





Hiring persons with disabilities is just someone's personal cause. We don't have or need a structured diversity policy.

Although half of the companies interviewed in a 2017 survey* in the UAE have a form of diversity employment policy, most others believe that the drive to hire persons with disabilities is more of a personal motivation of the owner or manager than corporate policy.

The desire to be inclusive is the first step, followed by the creation of a process, to ensure hiring and induction are smooth.

A desire to be inclusive is usually the first step in hiring persons with disabilities. However, a structured hiring and induction programme can ensure that employees stay productive and the business continues as usual.

Myth 07



Reality





“Persons with disabilities don’t need pity,” according to the ‘My Community... A City for Everyone’ initiative’s Disability Terminology Handbook. Like everyone else in society, “Persons with disabilities need the removal of barriers that limit their ability to fully function in their community and access opportunities.”

Inclusivity is not only about having a customised hiring process that takes into account candidate strengths and limitations, along with job descriptions. It needs to be implemented with commitment and patience.

While it may take individual motivation, a clearly laid-out policy goes a long way to ensuring long-term productivity. “We have five gears of strategy. The fifth gear is to do with people. So hiring persons with disabilities is core to our fifth guiding principle,” says Steve Thompson, CEO of Tanfeeth.

Using a structured approach, the human resources department at Tanfeeth manages each requirement, identifying and carving out roles for persons with disabilities. “You don’t just give the candidate any role to perform. It’s about understanding the needs of the individuals. We work closely with the Careers Network and understand the do’s and don’ts. We carve out the role and we are aware of their needs,” says Chanake

Wikramanayake, Head of Banking Operations at Tanfeeth.

There are several ways in which the company manages such employees. “When we hire people with cognitive difficulties, we begin with assigning activities that would not have a severe impact if something goes wrong. For example, we won’t start with financial transactions, but assign tasks such as updating databases, updating records and others where it is possible to mitigate risk,” says Chanake.

Unique individual attributes need to be taken into account. For example, a person with autism may not be able to work in an open area around a large number of people. “We found that he may be ideally suited to sorting cheques in a room with a smaller team of about three or four individuals. He now does a great job.”

At Chalhoub Group, where the policy was introduced in 2018, the first step was a group-wide initiative to hire persons with disabilities. “I was informed by the group about the initiative. I reached out to HR and informed them I was keen on hiring someone for my team,” says Diane Azzi, Department Manager–Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group.

The next step was to identify open positions and clearly map out skills required. “We had open vacancies. I wanted to fill one of them with a person with disability. For a logistics co-ordinator role, we needed someone who is good with numbers and can work with Microsoft Excel. We did not find anyone with that profile. We found people on the creative side that would suit the open role of a marketing assistant. We met six people, shortlisted two and followed exactly the same process for hiring as we would otherwise. The only difference was that the persons with disabilities were accompanied by their family or a member of the organisation that is handling the programme,” she says.

Clarity in requirements is essential. At Ella’s Creamery, since the person would be in a customer-facing role in a high-footfall area, visibility of disability was important to set in place customer expectation right from the start. “You have to pick [the] right [skills] for your company. We needed to find someone with charisma, who wasn’t shy and could thrive in such an environment around kids,” says Donald Bremner, the owner.

“Persons with disabilities don’t need pity. They need the removal of barriers that limit their ability to fully function in their community and access opportunities.”

- My Community... A City for Everyone: Disability Terminology Handbook

“You have to pick [the] right [skills] for your company. We needed to find someone with charisma, who wasn’t shy and could thrive in an environment around kids.”

- Donald Bremner, Ella’s Creamery

> A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR HIRING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND CREATING A HEALTHY WORK ATMOSPHERE



Source: Community Development Authority, Dubai

We want to hire persons with disabilities but there is no support.



Even the companies and organisations that have a positive attitude towards hiring persons with disabilities sometimes do not know which organisation to turn to for guidance and assistance.

There are organisations that support employer initiatives for hiring persons with disabilities.

Employers who have successfully integrated persons with disabilities into their workforce have in common the support they have received from organisations such as the Careers Network and the Community Development Authority, Dubai.

Myth 08



Reality





"It was an eye-opening experience to meet so many talented people at one place. I met a candidate with a Master's degree and another one who is a wizard with remembering dates. We were not aware of this talent pool. They are definitely ready to join the workforce."

- Gurdeep Nancy, Human Resources Officer, Blue, Al Serkal Group at the Careers Network meet up in June 2018 held in Dubai.

"It is comparatively easy to hire persons with disabilities in Dubai. Careers Network really helps. When we hired Aarti, a trainer accompanied her for some time. They provide training to the candidate as well as to our team."

- Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group

There is common ground between organisations that train persons with disabilities and employers that want to hire them.

With support, you can build a process to successfully tap into a database of persons with disabilities. NGOs can share profiles and resumés and help create effective job descriptions, match expectation with reality, and provide job coaching and support.

Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group, says: "It is comparatively easy to hire persons with disabilities in Dubai. Careers Network really helps. When we hired Aarti, a trainer accompanied her for some time. They provide training to the candidate as well as to our team. Because of the NGO support in the UAE, it is more straightforward. We have been trying to do this in other countries in the region, where it is more of a struggle to reach out to the pool of persons with disabilities for employment."

Still, there is some way to go. Samia Dhaoui, Expert-Research and Policy, at the CDA's Studies and Research Department, says: "Presently, persons with disabilities are found in schools, universities and disability centres. Many also are found at home because there have been no adult-based activities or

programmes, or a clear place to go, to look for training or work."

The Careers Network helps the organisation and the candidate adjust to each other through the initial period of employment. Diane says: "Aarti's coach came with her twice a week. Rinku was here to make sure that Aarti learned properly. She would write down instructions for her and make sure that the process was smooth. When we would have a task, she would listen and teach Aarti how to do it. For the first two weeks, she came twice a week; then for the next two months it was once a week. Over the course of four months, it has been a good support, until we have reached a point where we don't need this support as much."

> AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT PROCESS ACROSS COMPANIES THAT HIRED PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Workplace inclusion workshop
2. Partnering with an NGO
3. Setting expectations
4. Matching job descriptions with skill sets
5. Interviewing candidates
6. Final selection
7. Induction workshop at the employer for the team
8. Job coaching
9. Integration with peers



Source: Careers Network



AB

AB who has hearing impairment, was selected to work at a Dubai-based hotel. His employer is organising a one-time sign language workshop so that the team is familiar with the basics. An external agency will impart the training.



My colleague is a person with disability and I have no clue how to behave with them.

Fear of offending or saying the wrong thing or not knowing how to interact with persons with disabilities can negatively affect interpersonal relationships at work.

Treat others the way you would want to be treated.

Healthy interaction with peers and co-workers is important for our emotional wellbeing at work. Having a diverse and engaged workforce is also important. Peers who interact with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, abilities and roles report high job satisfaction.

Myth 09



Reality





Organisations that have diverse teams, including persons with disabilities, report that asking questions is the first step. When such a candidate is placed in a team, the induction process is not restricted to getting the candidate on board; it includes orientation sessions with the entire team.

Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear at Chalhoub Group, says: "I reached out to the team and explained that we were having the induction so we could understand how to interact with Aarti. She reports to me directly and we are a team of six. We asked all the people who would interact with her to attend the induction. I reached out to the HR team as well. In the end, 15 of us attended the induction."

Some of the pointers that she came back with were simple. "The one big learning was maintaining the same approach with Aarti over time. This means not being overly friendly one day and not so much the next day. This minimises variation in our interaction with her. On some days, we are busy; on others, we're emotional, or calm. It is important to know that the way you interact needs to be stable. It won't do for her to get too used to an overly friendly manner and then wonder where it went. This has helped me too, to stay emotionally level."

At the induction, people asked questions about what would make their new colleague uncomfortable, and what not to do. "We addressed questions that would make them feel confident and put their minds at ease," says Diane.

Chanake Wikramanayake, Head of Banking Operations at Tanfeeth, reports similar trepidation. "Everyone was walking on eggshells. It took us very little time to realise that there is nothing different about working with her in the team. There is no need to walk on eggshells. She is perfectly capable of handling herself. Very soon, it just became routine. There is no more worry, or barriers that were there in the first week."

Tanfeeth conducts unit-based training. "We did have a programme where all managers went through a class on how to manage persons with disabilities," says Chanake.

Some teething issues leave you more informed. "There was a case of some friction when an employee with a cognitive disability would keep saying 'good morning' to a co-worker without understanding that he was on the phone with a customer. Initially, we were sympathetic. But that's something we learnt not to do. The more

straightforward you are, the easier it is to manage someone with Down's syndrome. You don't want to raise your voice, but we learnt that we need to be direct," he says.

Usually, the Careers Network team would provide a detailed briefing about the person. "The basics are simple – to behave normally, with courtesy," says Chanake.

"At first, everyone was walking on eggshells. It took us very little time to realise that there is nothing different about working with her in the team. She is perfectly capable of handling herself. Very quickly, it just became routine. There is no more worry, or barriers that were there in the first week."

- Chanake Wikramanayake, Head of Banking Operations, Tanfeeth

"The one big learning was maintaining the same approach. This means not being overly friendly one day and not so much the next. It is important that the way you interact is stable."

- Diane Azzi, Department Manager-Luxury Footwear, Chalhoub Group

"We've recruited one person as part of an ongoing inclusion effort. We're also conducting periodic awareness sessions with our team to ensure that everyone integrates well."

- Aya, Senior Recruitment Lead, L'Oréal Middle East

> GENERAL ETIQUETTE



- > Shake hands when introduced. Even people with limited hand use or artificial limbs do shake hands.
- > Speak directly, not through their companions.
- > Don't be embarrassed using phrases like "See you soon", "Walk this way", or "Got to run". These are common expressions, and are unlikely to offend.
- > If you offer to help, wait until the offer is accepted.
- > Consider the needs of persons with disabilities when planning events.
- > Conduct interviews in a manner that emphasises abilities, achievements and individual qualities.
- > Don't emphasise differences by putting persons with disabilities on a pedestal.

Source: "My Community... A City for Everyone" Disability Terminology Handbook



Rafee

Rafee works with an insurance company. His manager set rules at the start. He was clearly informed of the expectations at work: break times and schedules. Once he had a set of rules that employees needed to follow, he settled easily into the job.



It's the government's job to take care of persons with disabilities.

The most common reason for companies to shy away from hiring persons with disabilities is to place them in a category that shifts responsibility, usually to the government.

Inclusion is everyone's business.

UAE laws have laid the foundation for inclusion, which includes accessibility. The UAE Disability Act (Federal Law No. 29/2006) stipulates that UAE nationals with disabilities have the same rights to work and occupy public positions. The UAE ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 19, 2010.

Myth 10



Reality





“All communities around the world are comprised of groups with a wide range of diversifying factors. Persons with or without disabilities are simply part of the diversity at large of any community.”

“We have not hired anyone over and above what we would be hiring otherwise. It is not a burden. These are all budgeted roles. But it is giving us a reward that is beyond tangible.”

- Steve Thompson, Chief Operating Officer, Tanfeeth

- My Community... A City for Everyone" Disability Terminology Handbook

> REMOVE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING OPPORTUNITIES

Here, it is assumed that everyone benefits from the same treatment.

If individuals are given different types of support to make it possible for them to have equal access.

But, what if we remove the barrier? That removes the cause of systemic inequality and promotes accessibility.

In March 2014, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, in his capacity as the Ruler of Dubai, issued Law No. (2) of 2014 to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the emirate of Dubai.

The law supports Federal Law No. (29) for 2006 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, which aims to provide quality medical care and social services, increase public awareness, contribute to integrating people with disabilities into society, and reaffirm their participation in social development.

Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Dubai Executive Council, has launched the 'My Community... A City for Everyone' initiative to make Dubai a disabled-friendly city by 2020. In 2012, the Community Development Authority of Dubai developed a policy to ensure the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

In 2015, the Dubai Disability Strategy 2020 was launched to guide government entities into adopting the right policies and programmes in five complementary areas: health and rehabilitation, inclusive education, inclusive employment, social protection, and universal design.

According to the Employer Information Pack by UAE-based legal firm, Clyde and Company, “In relation to employment, the country is working on developing community based centres for disabled individuals above the age of 18 to build their skills and prompt community engagement. These vocational programmes are to be introduced in conjunction with both private sector and government organisations. These programmes will involve establishing a database setting out information regarding disabled and special needs individuals who are actively seeking employment or vocational training opportunities and also drafting policies to assist in recruiting individuals with special needs in both the public and private sector.”

Samia Dhaoui, Expert-Research and Policy, at the CDA's Studies and Research Department, says: “There is a definite increase in awareness and willingness from the public and private sectors. However, more dedication is required from the private sector to support Emiratis and non-Emiratis with disabilities. What is not recommended is to see Emirati persons with disabilities being employed just in the public sector, and non-Emiratis not having many options.”

The government is doing its best to create the framework for a diverse city. Ultimately, inclusion is everyone's business.



Conclusion

Inclusive workplaces begin with the intention to have an inclusive and diverse workforce. The next step is to use the available resources from the government, specialised organisations and the community to create internal policies and processes to move from intention to actualisation.

The UAE government policy is reflective of a commitment towards an inclusive society, with recommendations and guidelines on employing persons with disabilities being widely available. Physically accessible buildings are required by law in the UAE.

Structured employment policies and processes that enable the hiring of persons from various segments allow vacancies to be filled with a diverse set of employees. The company can thus create a workplace that is diverse and representative of all sections of the population.

The advantages are numerous: Teammates and colleagues feel more motivated and thrive as teams. The candidate achieves gainful employment, an increased sense of belonging, personal development, and a sense of empowerment and dignity. Employees with disabilities relate better to customers with disabilities, allowing a business to include a key population segment.

More and more employers in the country are following the roadmap to creating an inclusive workplace.

Companies are taking advantage of the various Careers Network support tools, trainings and events conducted by the Careers Network team and its associated organisations. For instance, at quarterly meet ups, first-time employers and those who are interested, have the opportunity to meet job-ready candidates with disabilities. HR teams and line managers have expressed their satisfaction with such initiatives, as well as with programmes that ease the integration of persons with disabilities into a team, making it truly representative of a diverse community.

In addition, government and non-governmental organisations alike offer continuous guidance and support to both employers and candidates through the various steps towards creating an inclusive workplace. This could be through detailed briefing notes that accompany each candidate, or via workshops addressing doubts and misconceptions so that the candidate becomes integrated into the organisation.

The inclusivity policies of the UAE lay out a clear role for the government, public and private sectors. For an increasing number of UAE employers, the starting point is no longer about whether or not an organisation needs to be inclusive, but about how to begin the journey.



Emirates NBD

Emirates NBD is a leading banking group in the region. As at 30th June 2018, total assets were AED 477.5 billion, (equivalent to approx. USD 130 billion). The Group has a significant retail banking franchise in the UAE and is a key participant in the global digital banking industry, with over 90 per cent of all financial transactions and requests conducted outside of its branches. The bank was declared the Most Innovative Financial Services Organisation of the Year at the 2017 BAI Global Innovation Awards.

The bank currently has 228 branches and 1,057 ATMs and SDMs in the UAE and overseas and a large social media following, being the only bank in the Middle East ranked among the top 20 in the 'Power 100 Social Media Rankings', compiled by The Financial Brand. It is a major player in the UAE corporate and retail banking arena and has strong Islamic Banking, Global Markets & Treasury, Investment Banking, Private Banking, Asset Management and Brokerage operations.

The Group has operations in the UAE, Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, India, Singapore, the United Kingdom and representative offices in China and Indonesia. Emirates NBD Group is an Official Premier Partner of Expo 2020 Dubai.

Emirates NBD Group is an active participant and supporter of the UAE's main development and community initiatives, in close alignment with the UAE government's strategies, including financial literacy and advocacy for inclusion of persons with disabilities under its #TogetherLimitless platform.

#TogetherLimitless

#TogetherLimitless, an advocacy platform for persons with disabilities (people of determination), is one of the key focus areas of Emirates NBD's Social Investment Strategy Framework, driven by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the UAE Vision 2021. Since its inception in 2015, #TogetherLimitless has undertaken several initiatives for disability mainstreaming, including quarterly town-hall sessions to build community awareness; launching the Careers Network for workplace inclusion; transforming the bank's branches with disability-friendly facilities, promoting financial inclusion by offering Sanad* card holders the Emirates NBD 'Beyond from Personal Banking' package, exempt of minimum salary requirements, as well as publishing a research report on the banking and financial habits and attitudes of people of determination in the UAE.

Careers Network

The Careers Network, part of Emirates NBD's #TogetherLimitless advocacy platform, connects work-ready individuals with disabilities to employers interested in bringing diversity into their workforces.

In collaboration with its strategic partners, the Community Development Authority, Manzil, Al Noor and Sustainable Square, the Careers Network has enlisted individuals with disabilities from pre-existing work-training programmes, and aided them in taking on long-term employment positions with its corporate partners in the public and private sector.

The programme assists partners in the private sector with the selection, hiring and training of potential employees, in addition to shadowing candidates in the first months of their employment to ensure complete workplace integration and on-boarding. The Careers Network screened 125 persons of determination in 2017, placing 21 of them in jobs.

Community Development Authority, Dubai

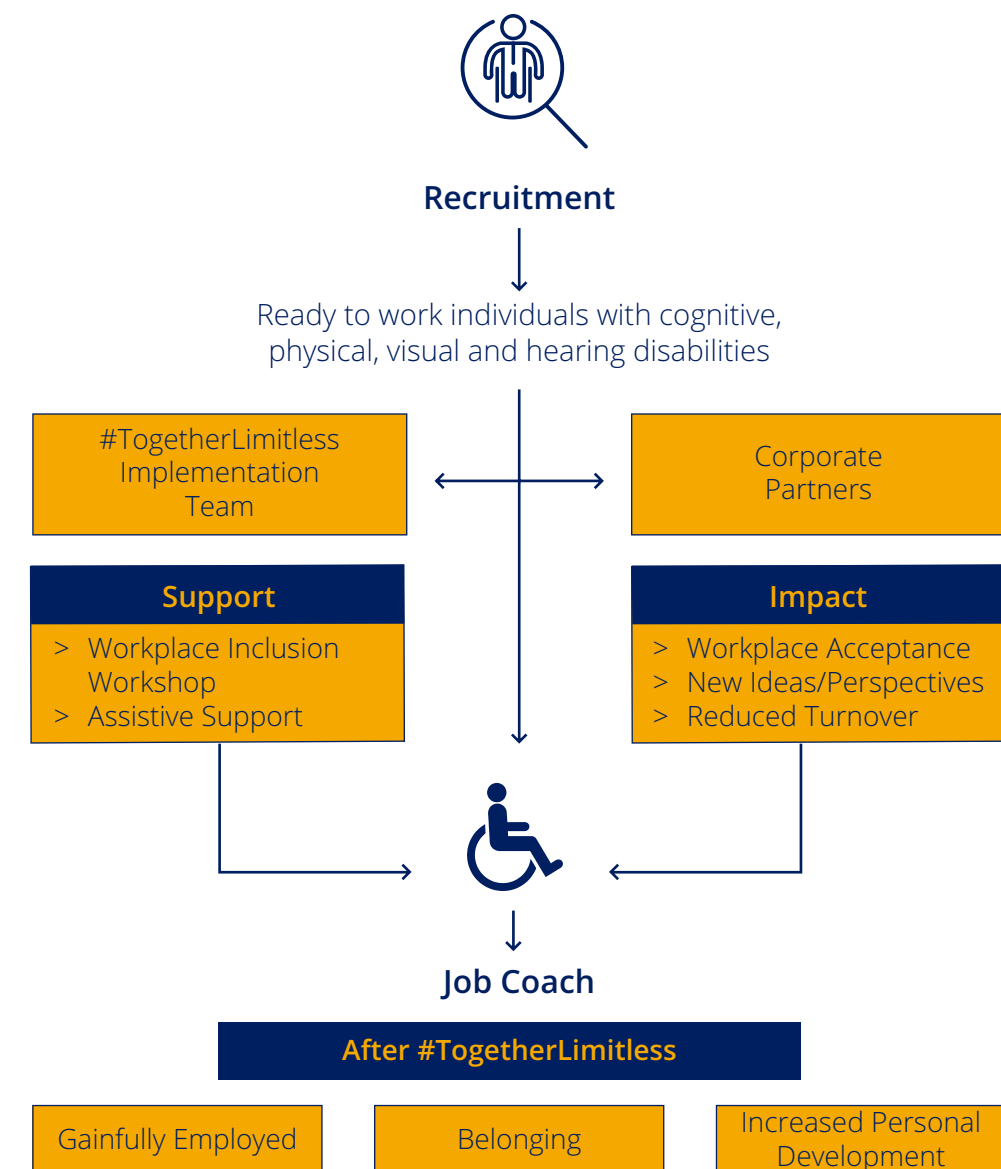
Community Development Authority (CDA) is responsible for setting up and developing frameworks for social development in Dubai. It was founded by a decree of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, in July 2008. In 2012, CDA developed a policy to ensure the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, covering three areas: legislation, governance and strategic programmes. Law No. (2) of 2014 has been adopted to reinforce the rights included in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to facilitate/ enforce the provision of these rights.

In 2015, the Dubai Disability Strategy 2020 was launched to guide government entities to adopt the rights policies and programmes in five complementary areas: health and rehabilitation, inclusive education, inclusive employment, social protection and universal design.

Federal Equal Opportunity Initiatives

The UAE provides for equal and fair employment opportunities to Emiratis of determination. Two laws protect employment rights of citizens of determination. They are Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 Concerning the Rights of People with Special Needs, and Dubai Government Law No. 2 of 2014. The Ministry of Community Development facilitates job opportunities for people of determination via its e-service, which enables government entities and employers from the private sector list availability of jobs. The Ministry of Interior's Centres for Rehabilitation and Employment of people with special needs empower individuals through training, rehabilitation and facilitating job opportunities.

#TogetherLimitless Careers Network Process





Are you an inclusive employer?

Would you like to diversify your workplace by hiring persons with disabilities?

Careers Network can help you take the small steps that can lead to a more inclusive organisation.

Talk to us at info@CareersNetwork.ae



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#TogetherLimitless