

THE INCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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THE INCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: ENGINEERING CULTURE CHANGE FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To my parents, my sons and my husband for empowering me to pursue my curiosity and engage in my own mind-change journeys. – Cami

To my husband, Dave. With you, everything is possible! – Dr. B.

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There have been many people with disAbilities in our lives, but we prefer to think of each of them as our friends, and our colleagues. You have each taught us to be stronger and more creative individuals and empowered us to realize the value of being involved in and challenged by our work-relationship.

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Preface

In 1990, the American with Disabilities (ADA), a groundbreaking civil rights law, was signed into federal law. It was a milestone in that it prohibited discrimination against persons with disAbility in the United States and became a pathways model adapted in various forms by other countries. Since its inception, the ADA has served as an equal opportunity law for people with an identified physical, developmental, or mental health related disAbility, as defined or recognized by the statute. The ADA is now a common term in our vernacular and every executive and human resource professional is familiar with what it represents and how it is to be applied in an organization. There are training classes for managing the ADA candidates, books on what it means, and constant discussions on its advantages and required accommodations.

Even a law with the best of intentions, however, will have unintended consequences. The purpose of this book is to address one of the major shortcomings in the implementation of the ADA after passage: the absence of substantive examination or discussion of what the hiring of an ADA qualified individual does to or for the culture of a company and how managers could address the unintended ramifications of the hire. This focus on *the what* and not *the how* presents a very real gap in understanding and in practice concerning how leaders need to prepare their organizations for a diverse employee population.

This omission has provided us with the opportunity to explore and identify what is needed to bring about a cultural change where all employees are recognized, respected, and valued for their contribution to the organization. The ADA is an important first step in overcoming biases that act as barriers to persons with disAbilities' employment and in accommodating them to secure and manage a job. In the real world, however, there is also a lot of hard, complex work that needs to be done to truly find the right individual, ensure that they can fulfill the job requirements, and to subsequently prepare the existing workforce for the introduction of a person with a disAbility (PwD) into the group or workplace community.

We will address, through examples, a variety of solutions meant to support your employees' engagement in interacting and developing healthy work-relationships with their colleagues with disAbilities. Managing these relationships becomes a powerful mechanism to create an organizational culture that welcomes all your employees, particularly through the early stages of their employment. We will not focus at length on the many provisions of the ADA, but we will include some history and information on its significance; we assume that you have at least some knowledge about this important law and how it applies to your company.

As this discussion proceeds, we recognize that we are presenting a new norm for our culture, one where the essential principle of meritocracy – that talent and effort lead to success and advancement in our social system – is no longer working as the paramount value influencing decision-making in the workplace. Rather, we will describe a system in which merging both meritocracy and diversity in all its forms allows us to develop a more creative and resilient workforce. In simple terms, this means that if we succeed in including PwDs, we succeed in transforming our organizations' culture and, therefore, increase the capacity to take advantage of their highly diverse perspectives. It becomes imperative that methods are identified and available to enable all employees to demonstrate their talent, hard work, and ability to succeed regardless of the need to accommodate some differences in this process.

With this new norm in mind, we seek to create organizational systems in which employees are treated equitably instead of equally, systems in which individual strengths, needs to grow as well as differences that need to be accommodated are fully recognized. We clearly define the difference between what is equitable and what is equal and as human resource professionals and scholars, we remind managers and employees that some things, while they might not always seem fair, are in fact, legal. The law, including the ADA, is about a set of rules where everyone is treated the same or equally. This means that each person should have the same opportunities for employment and when needed, accommodations must be made. We don't argue that we all need the same things to be successful – this is not the case. Instead, the focus needs to be on what is fair and just, which was the intent of the ADA from its outset, achieving justice in the workplace and creating an equitable system for all employees. It is a challenge that we ask you to accept by joining with us in becoming a part of cultural change where innovation and diversity lead to the success of all employees, and therefore, make for a successful organization.

As authors, we want to provide you with an enhanced understanding of the factors that create the challenges we face in addressing stigma in our organizations. We are also going to offer evidence-based suggestions on what you can do to transform the culture of your organization and make it more equitable, welcoming, and inclusive for all employees. As academics, we want to provide you with the facts and studies that support our recommendations, and as professionals, we will share our ideas based on own experiences of working with PwDs. Whether you are a business leader, a manager, or an employee – with or without a disAbility – we hope you find this journey engaging and supportive of your ability to influence your organizational structures and culture and make life better for everyone, so we can all enjoy working together while contributing to thriving enterprises.

We are grateful for your interest in this subject matter.

Dr Fawzy and Dr Shore

Introduction

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein

This is a book about developing an inclusive work environment where employees have an opportunity to grow, be recognized, and become valued contributors to their organization. While there are other books on this subject, the focus herein is on what it takes to develop an organizational culture where people with a disAbility (PwD) are included; particularly, when meritocratic and social justice values are predominant in the general societal culture. The book introduces the concept of an Inclusive Management Strategy™ and aims to assist leaders, employees, and human resource professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to identify changes needed in an existing organizational culture and design a strategy to create a more inclusive social environment that embraces all employees, including those with disAbilities.

Throughout this book, you will find conversations designed as learning tools meant to help you recognize what is important and what is being communicated on the subject. Based on your own experiences, many of these conversations may be familiar to you. This is a learning book we hope you can use as a guide to work with other professionals in designing and implementing your own organizational culture change.

The book is broken into five sections and the flow addresses the process of changing stereotypical biases that lead to prejudiced belief through different stages of a PwD hiring and employment, from when he or she applies for a position, through the interview process, accepting the job, and the early stages of their employment. It is developed based on the understanding that PwD face stigma around the world and many countries followed the US example in enacting Americans with Disabilities (ADA)-like laws to force their integration in generally unwelcoming societies. We strongly urge you to go back and review the entire book, as it is important to reflect on previous decisions so as to identify your change needs, design, and implement a change strategy, which will empower you to enhance your organizational capacity to address future challenges and benefit from a highly diverse workforce that includes employees with disAbilities.

This is a book about organizational culture and what you can do to influence your management, your colleagues, and your subordinates to develop an ethos of inclusion, where PwDs are embraced; where all employees are valued for their

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2 *The Inclusive Management Strategy*

contributions and have a sense of belonging. The goal is to advance fair, equitable organizational processes, and create safe social environments that support a culture welcoming and valuing all differences.

Disclaimer: Discussions included in this book are mostly about real-life situations encountered by the authors. The people and scenarios, however, represent a composite of individuals who we know and circumstances we observed through our personal and professional experiences. Any similarity between a person, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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