

CREATING PWD-FRIENDLY WORKSPACES

A Disability Inclusion Handbook for Indian Workplaces



Curious Catalyst 
Joy of Learning

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INTRODUCTION

In every office, there are unspoken stories.

Stories of resilience, quiet strength, and unseen brilliance — waiting to be acknowledged.

Inclusion isn't about “helping” someone with a disability. It's about recognising that talent has no template.

- Some see through screens.
- Some listen with their hands.
- Some think in patterns that others might never imagine.

All of them belong — not as exceptions, but as equals. And yet, in boardrooms and interviews across India, potential is often filtered through bias, fear, or simple unfamiliarity.

This handbook isn't about policy. It's about people — and the courage to make space for everyone's voice.

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BEYOND THE WHEELCHAIR: UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

Disability isn't just what we see.

It's not limited to wheelchairs, white canes, or hearing aids.
It can be invisible, neurodiverse, sensory, or emotional.

It includes:

- People with visual or hearing impairments
- People with learning disabilities like dyslexia
- People with mental health conditions
- People who are neurodivergent – autistic, ADHD, or otherwise wired differently

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD) recognises 21 disabilities – and reminds us that inclusion is not charity, it's justice.



WHY DISABILITY INCLUSION MATTERS IN INDIA

India is home to over 2.68 crore persons with disabilities — that's roughly the population of Australia.

But in corporate offices, conference calls, and leadership pipelines, their presence remains invisible.

According to the World Bank, less than 35% of employable persons with disabilities are working.

For women with disabilities, the number is even smaller.

And yet, studies show that companies with inclusive hiring outperform peers by 25–30% in innovation and engagement.

**So the question isn't why should we include —
It's why haven't we, already?**





Model inclusion —
say the right things,
and do them too



Build trust by asking,
not assuming:
“How can we make
this easier for you?”



Amplify stories
of success —
representation
changes perception



Hold teams
accountable for
behaviour, not
intention

Role of leaders

Leaders don't have to know
everything —
they just need to begin somewhere.



For HR:

- Audit your hiring and onboarding systems — are they accessible?
- Use inclusive language in job posts (“open to persons with disabilities”).
- Create a clear, confidential process for reasonable accommodation.
- Conduct sensitisation workshops regularly — empathy is a skill.

Role of HR

THE REAL BARRIERS AREN'T PHYSICAL

It's not always the missing ramp or inaccessible washroom.

It's the polite hesitation when someone says, "Would they be able to handle it?"

It's the whispered doubt: "We want to help — but what if we don't know how?"

The biggest barrier is not in infrastructure. It's in intention.

And it takes just one person — one ally, one leader, one HR partner — to change that narrative.



THE BUSINESS OF BELONGING

When people feel seen, they don't just show up — they shine.

Companies that actively hire persons with disabilities report:

- 28% higher revenue and 2x net income (Accenture, 2019)
- Better problem-solving and innovation
- Stronger brand reputation and employee morale

But most importantly — inclusion creates a culture where nobody feels invisible.



KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

1. Entrances and Exits
2. Clear Pathways
3. Elevators and Ramps
4. Inclusive Restrooms
5. Proper Signage
6. Accessible Technology
7. Lighting and Acoustics



The Quiet Innovator

Kunal, a neurodivergent designer, prefers working in silence.

He avoids eye contact but creates visual magic that others only dream of.

Earlier, his managers thought he wasn't a "team player."

After a short neurodiversity workshop, they stopped pushing him to "fit in" — and started giving him space to thrive.

He went on to lead the company's biggest branding campaign that year



The Voice That Broke the Silence

Ritika was born with a hearing impairment.

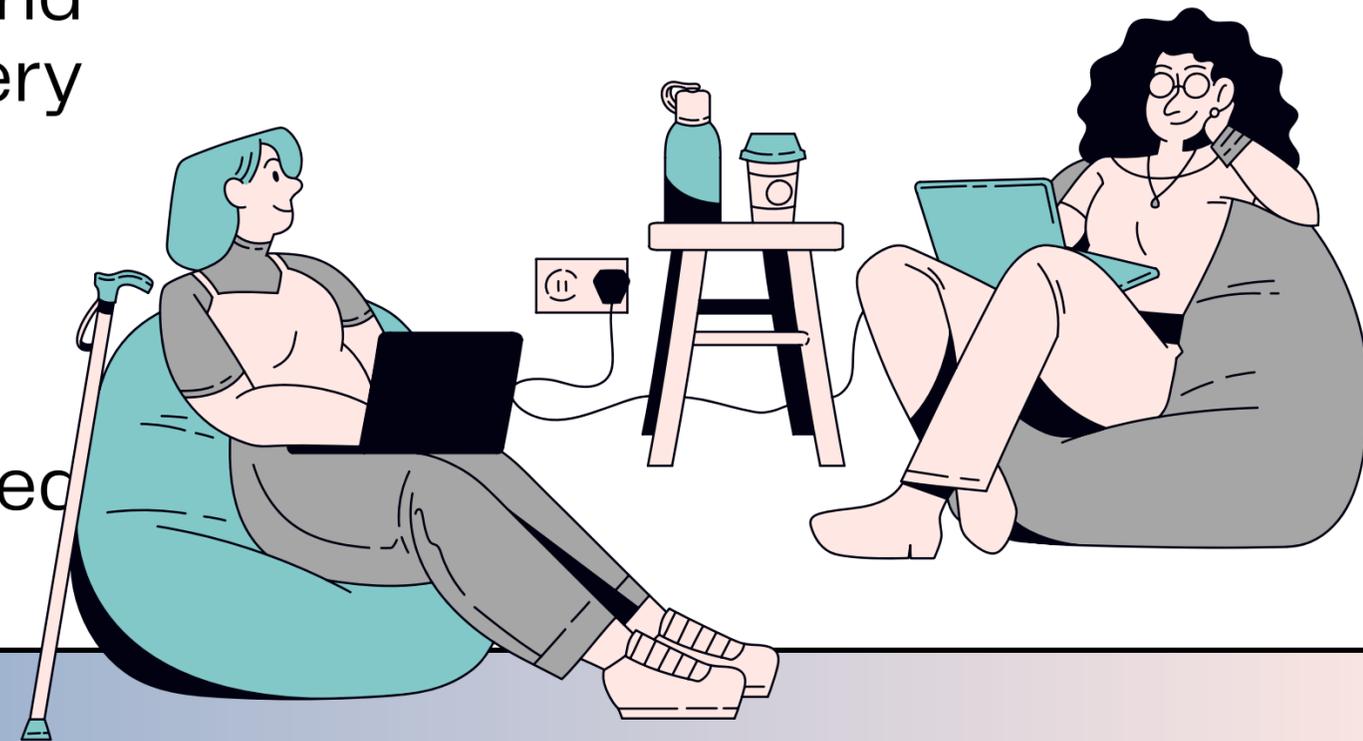
At her first job, meetings were chaos – no captions, no notes, no patience.

She thought of quitting.

Until a manager learned basic sign language and made sure someone transcribed minutes every week.

Today, Ritika manages a 12-member team.

Accessibility didn't just empower her – it inspired everyone around her.



DIGITAL INCLUSION

Make Digital Inclusion a Priority

With hybrid work and online onboarding, digital accessibility matters more than ever.

Follow WCAG standards to ensure that your:

- Websites are readable by screen readers
- Documents and PDFs have alt text and proper tagging
- Videos have subtitles or transcripts
- HR and e-learning platforms are navigable for all employees

This not only helps PwDs – it improves usability for everyone.





Our Flagship Programmes

PoSH Pro

End-to-end PoSH Act, 2013 compliance support
– from policy drafting to IC training and audits
– ensuring safety, dignity, and accountability in every workplace,

Diversity Pro

An immersive DEI capability-building journey
– addressing unconscious bias, microaggressions, inclusive recruitment, and intersectional leadership

Aarohi – Women Leadership Programm

Empowering women to rise beyond glass ceilings, gender roles, and self-doubt through experiential learning, mentoring, and storytelling

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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