

# Towards a Disability-Smart World:

## Developing a Global Disability Inclusion Strategy

A research project by **Business Disability  
Forum** sponsored by **Royal Dutch Shell**



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## **Foreword by Diane Lightfoot**

### **CEO, Business Disability Forum**

**There are approximately 26 million people in the UK and over 1 billion people worldwide with disabilities and long-term conditions.**

That's a huge talent pool and consumer market but, too often, attitudes towards disability, and barriers to employment, education and health care mean that many disabled people are not able to fulfil their full potential. Disability and poverty can be linked; an estimated 80 per cent of people with disabilities live in developing countries and one in five of the world's poorest people have a disability<sup>[1]</sup>. So, it is crucial that we help remove barriers in both business structures and policy that prevent disabled people from thriving and making their contribution to the world.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO (2018, January 16) Disability and Health [Fact Sheet]  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

Writing this in lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, our world has never felt more interconnected. We are experiencing – together – change that is unprecedented in most of our lifetimes. We are living and working in ways that none of us could have imagined just a few short months ago. And whilst there are many challenges and many risks, there are also opportunities, I believe, to make a positive and lasting change to the working lives of people with disabilities.

We are already seeing an increased focus on disability inclusion at a global level. Frameworks such as the United Nations Convention of Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are helping organisations develop strategies in this area. Our own Global Business Disability Framework was developed with our Global Taskforce to support businesses to deliver disability inclusion at a strategic level – wherever they operate - and embed an all-important “whole organisation” approach. Businesses are also starting to engage with global movements such as the Valuable 500, which we are delighted to support as an expert partner. This is particularly important given that senior leadership is so critical in driving the disability inclusion agenda, as this report clearly highlights.

## **Around half of Business Disability Forum’s members operate globally, between them employing an estimated 8 million people worldwide.**

They are increasingly committed to getting it right for candidates, employees and customers with disabilities wherever they are in the world – as demonstrated by the appetite for our first Global Disability Conference in February 2020 which saw 150 business leaders in attendance. In carrying out this research, we sought to build on this commitment and to explore the practical challenges in ensuring a consistent approach to disability inclusion within organisations that have operations in at least two, and often many more, countries and these are explored throughout this report.

Looking beyond the challenges, it’s clear that organisations are making a difference. It is encouraging that a majority of participants in the online survey who had developed a global strategy, reflected positively that their organisation had progressed ‘a long way since starting the strategy’ and were ‘successfully achieving improvements for disabled colleagues and customers on a global scale’. In the context that most of these participants said their organisations had been working on global inclusion strategies for just a few years, we hope this encourages others to take action. Covid 19 presents us with a unique set of circumstances to effect change. We must use them to make sure that change is positive and that we do not go back but keep moving forward for the millions of people living with a disability globally.

We are incredibly grateful to our Partner Royal Dutch Shell for sponsoring this research and for the support they have given to our team in developing this work.

### **5 Business Disability Forum – Developing a Global Disability Inclusion Strategy**



**“Having inclusive ways of working for people with disabilities is vital for the success of our business. That means having the right policies, and caring leaders who can provide the right support, so that everyone working in the company can contribute and thrive.”**

## **Foreword by Lyn Lee**

**Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Royal Dutch Shell**

The topic of disability inclusion and enablement is important to us at Royal Dutch Shell. We know that most of our employees will be touched by disability in some form, either through having an impairment, caring for a relative with an impairment or knowing friends or family with a disability.

Shell aims to go beyond the basic legal requirements so that we can create inclusive workplaces that enable all our employees and contractors to do their jobs and thrive. Equally important to us is the impact we can have when we apply the same lens of inclusion to the way we serve our customers.

In recent months, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis have challenged many parts of business and life. With an unprecedented agility and speed, companies have adjusted work practices and provided tools to allow employees to work from home safely.

At the same time, many businesses have given priority to vulnerable groups, with initiatives such as dedicated shopping times and priority for home delivery. This shows that when companies think more carefully about what customers need, they can remove barriers.

We know that having inclusive ways of working for people with disabilities is vital for the success of our business. That means having the right policies, and caring leaders who can provide the right support, so that everyone working in the company can contribute and thrive.

Shell is proud to partner with the Business Disability Forum to produce this informative report. It shows clear steps to help organisations develop and implement a meaningful and sustainable global disability strategy. I wish you much success.

# Executive Summary

Through this research project, we wanted to explore the levels of commitment and activity in developing disability inclusion amongst large global organisations and the challenges associated with this.

We estimate that we have captured feedback and reflections from over 120 senior professionals via qualitative interviews and an online survey distributed to our membership and via other partner organisations. All participants had some responsibility for disability inclusion in their organisation, the majority at a global or regional level. Their insights have helped develop advice, guiding principles and a “roadmap” for businesses to consider in driving this agenda.

Whilst a minority of global organisations are resourcing a global disability inclusion strategy, a majority estimated it would happen in the next few years.



**23%** of respondents said their organisations were resourcing a global disability strategy at the time of the survey and another **57%** were considering or starting to embed.

In our online survey, 86 per cent of participants said that their organisation had made one or more of the following commitments to disability inclusion at a corporate level:

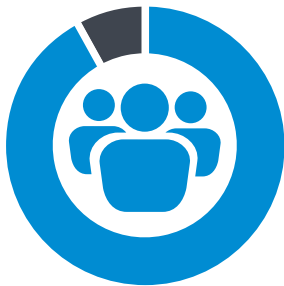
- Having a position or value statement about what disability inclusion means to them (70 per cent)
- Senior leaders making an organisation wide or public commitment on the importance of disability inclusion (56 per cent)
- Having a corporate definition of disability that is widely accepted by the business (50 per cent).



However, the data indicates that the actual existence of global disability inclusion strategies is uncommon:

- 23 per cent of participants said their organisation had a global strategy in existence and resourced
- 35 per cent were in the process of developing or considering how to develop a global strategy
- 22 per cent were in the early stages of considering a strategy
- 13 per cent had not got this far (although most of these expected to do so in the next three years).

**Senior leadership commitment and local collaboration are key to maximising engagement.**



**91%** agreed that identifying a senior global disability champion as early as possible was essential to the success of a global disability inclusion programme.

Early senior level commitment and creating strong alliances were considered vital:

- Participants often raised the point that visible engagement by senior leaders ensured wider engagement, traction and a stronger accountability at a local level. Over nine in ten (91 per cent) agreed that identifying a senior global disability champion, as early as possible, was essential to the success of a global disability inclusion programme
- Establishing an effective community of local 'leads' who are passionate about disability inclusion in each location, or regional hub, was crucial. Some highlighted that local leads should have enough seniority to sign off activities and influence other senior departmental colleagues.

Participants felt it was important to develop strong messages based on motivations to engage all parts of the organisation in why becoming disability smart is a global business priority. Motivations ranged from disability inclusion as being the 'right thing to do' to 'meeting legal obligations (where they exist)' to a range of aspects relating to business objectives and allowing access to, and retention of, a wider range of talent and customers. Some messages might resonate more strongly in some countries, so some flexibility is needed.

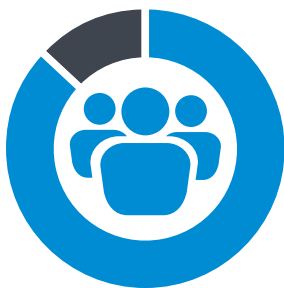
## There is still some way to go to embed commitment across global companies but there are successes to report.

Approximately half of the participants in the online survey who were resourcing or embedding a strategy said that having a commitment to, and a widely accepted definition of disability was evident in 'all or most' countries where they operated (55 per cent and 50 per cent respectively). Almost a third (32 per cent) said that their organisations aimed for a culture of best practice relating to disability in 'all or most' locations and 29 per cent said the same for shared best practice and lessons learned relating to disability.

When exploring business areas where disability inclusion had matured earliest, responses indicated that adjustments (or accommodations) in the workplace and recruitment and on-boarding were more readily being delivered at a global level.

Participants reported a range of activity that had been successful in raising awareness and understanding of disability on a global scale. These included campaigns and resources that engaged colleagues at both an emotional level, for example storytelling, and an informative level, for example, fact sheets, training, webinars. This content was needed to help local leads facilitate conversations about all aspects of disability in the workplace and how it relates to customers.

Throughout this report there are many positive examples of work underway related to the development of communications and campaigns, data collection and insights, accessibility of processes and premises and development of products and services.



**86%** agreed to some extent that their organisation had progressed 'a long way since starting the strategy'.

The challenges in gaining commitment at a global level are numerous, but they are not a barrier.



**81%** agreed that their organisation was 'successfully achieving improvements for disabled colleagues and customers on a global scale.

Almost all participants who were working on, or considering a global disability inclusion strategy, agreed that they had experienced, or anticipated, one or more of the challenges we listed. The most common challenges in relation to encouraging engagement and commitment were:

- Handling the cultural differences in way disability is understood (71 per cent)
- Managing levels of engagement with disability and accessibility in some countries (63 per cent)
- The varying legal requirements between countries (61 per cent)
- Gathering insights globally (49 per cent)
- The difficulty in aligning processes on a global level (43 per cent).

When thinking about co-ordinating local or regional teams operationally, the online survey identified the top three challenges as:

- Having the resource needed to continuously encourage engagement (56 per cent)
- The difficulty in organising systematic data collection and evidence across countries, for example agreeing disability related questions in surveys (56 per cent)
- Gaining commitment from champions or managers at a local level (49 per cent).

Practical challenges of co-ordinating meetings and facilitating connections between locations were the least problematic. Feedback from participants in the research highlighted the wide range of effective communication opportunities, for instance webinar and online meetings or conference calls, they used to connect with local leads on a very regular basis.

The research highlights some fundamental lessons:

- **Do not be overwhelmed:** start off small and, once you have gathered evidence of impacts and successes in your organisation, scale up. Do this by prioritising projects or locations for inclusion activities, or both. Do not let the scale of the task be the reason for doing nothing.
- **Identify a senior global disability champion as early as possible:** having a senior global disability champion is essential for influencing senior managers globally to take action and ensuring all employees understand the importance of inclusion.
- **Disability impacts on every aspect of the organisation:** establish a forum and gain commitment from senior colleagues across a range of functional areas such as recruitment, HR, the built environment and digital technology. Please refer to the Global Business Disability Framework (Business Disability Forum) in Appendix A of this report for ideas.
- **Engage leads at regional and local levels to understand the objectives of a global strategy and work to implement it at a local level:** working collaboratively on this will empower colleagues to interpret global commitments to disability in ways that are culturally and legally appropriate for their country. Disability inclusion may be very new for some locations which means the central role is often a nurturing one. Provide motivation, resources and an environment for local leads to connect to each other.

One strong message from participants in the research is not to under-estimate the complexity of a global disability strategy and how long it might take. Be patient and focus on intentions.

**// Respect the challenges that come with becoming a disability-smart organisation but don't be overawed by them. It's better to just start and learn as you go, rather than trying to line up your perfect strategy. //**

Research participant

# Introduction and approach

## Introduction

There is a huge potential for global organisations to make a positive impact on the lives of the one billion people in the world who experience disability or a long-term condition<sup>[2]</sup>. We are seeing some excellent examples of organisations building disability inclusion strategies and processes on a global scale. However, for those starting out, a global disability strategy can feel like an incredibly complex piece of work. It is multidimensional, governed both by an organisation's individual values and commitment to inclusion, and also affected by cultural diversity and legislative frameworks which can differ hugely from one country to the next.

For the purpose of this project we have defined global disability inclusion as an organisation expanding at least one process or element of disability inclusion to one or more other countries where it operates. It might be a high-level initiative such as awareness or commitment, or it might be related to a business area such as accessible premises, websites or adjustments.

So, how does an organisation that has made positive steps in developing their commitment to disability inclusion in one or more countries, expand this to all the areas that they are located in? How do organisations ensure the experience of a disabled employee, or customer, is consistent in terms of equality of opportunity, accessibility and inclusivity on a worldwide basis?

Business Disability Forum felt that research, reviewing experiences, and sharing lessons learned, would provide support for organisations that are committed to developing a more global approach.

The project incorporated four stages of research amongst disability leads in large global organisations, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. After two rounds of qualitative work (depth interviews), an online survey distributed amongst our membership and partner organisations and a survey results workshop, we estimate that we have captured feedback and reflections from over 120 senior professionals and we thank them for their time and help. We hope that everyone reading this report will find ideas and inspiration for progressing their work in improving the experiences of their employees and customers with disabilities around the world.

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<sup>2</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) defines 'Persons with disabilities (to) include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation'

## Research objectives

A number of research objectives were agreed at the outset of the project (See Appendix C: Technical note for full detail):

- **Produce an initial measure of commitment and activity:** To explore how many global organisations have a strategic commitment to disability inclusion and how advanced their global strategies are.
- **Evaluate future plans for acceleration in the short and medium term:** To examine how a consistent approach across all regions and business areas can become a reality.
- **Gain a deep understanding and explore the challenges of a global disability strategy:** To understand the specific challenges that global organisations are facing to help inform and equip those who are starting out.
- **Identify existing good practice:** To showcase the work being done by organisations that already approach disability as a global business issue.

## About this report

Although when writing for a solely UK audience, we use the term “disabled people” to reflect the social model of disability, in this report we have generally used the term “people with disabilities” as the most globally accepted and recognised definition.

This report highlights the opinions and experiences of disability leads when reflecting on their organisations’ work to create consistency in disability inclusion for their colleagues, and customers worldwide. Feedback is grouped into themes with the aim of providing the reader with ideas for their own organisation.

Throughout the report we identify whether insights are based on feedback from the depth interviews or the online survey. We initially review the current context and key learnings relating to building a global disability inclusion strategy. The latter four sections of the report explore the most commonly perceived challenges of establishing, and developing, a global disability strategy:

- Key challenge 1: Scoping disability inclusion in your organisational context
- Key challenge 2: Consolidating the key messages and how to communicate them
- Key challenge 3: Building successful collaboration at a global level
- Key challenge 4: Moving forward successfully.

At the end of the report we have designed a ‘roadmap’ for the development of a global disability inclusion strategy which organisations can use to help them navigate key milestones. It offers ideas of what tasks to undertake at three main stages of development. This is not meant to be prescriptive but simply serve as a tool for organisations to gain inspiration from.

# Current context and overarching themes

## Introduction

This section first explores data from the online survey relating to the prevalence of global disability inclusion strategies. This is followed by a discussion of the fundamental and recurrent themes emerging from depth interviews with disability leads relating to the overall challenges of doing so.

## Current context: Levels of engagement and activity

In the online survey, a majority of participants noted that their organisations had made one or more of the general commitments to disability inclusion listed in the questionnaire (see Chart 1). Seven in ten agreed that their organisation had a position or value statement about what disability inclusion means to them (70 per cent). Just over half (56 per cent) observed that their senior leaders were making an organisation wide or public commitment and half (50 per cent) said that a corporate definition of disability was in place that was widely accepted by the business.

### Chart 1: Commitments made to disability inclusion at a general level



**86%** of respondents said their organisations had made one or more of the commitments listed in the survey toward disability inclusion.



**70%**

A position or value statement about what disability inclusion means to us



**56%**

Senior leaders making an organisation wide and/or public commitment on the importance of disability inclusion



**50%**

A corporate definition of disability that is widely accepted by the business

Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (115)

The survey also explored how many organisations had started to turn commitments into strategic action. Whilst eight in ten respondents said that their organisations were actively engaged in, or considering how to develop, a global disability inclusion strategy, only a minority were fully engaged and resourcing it:

- **Active, fully engaged and resourced:** almost a quarter of participants (23 per cent) agreed that a global disability inclusion strategy was in existence and resourced.
  - Just over two fifths of these organisations had been working on their strategy for up to three years and almost six in ten for three years plus.
- **Active and starting to embed a strategy:** over a third of participants (35 per cent) observed that their organisations were currently in the process of developing and enhancing a global disability inclusion strategy.
  - Activity at this level had been relatively recent for a majority of these organisations; just over two fifths said that work had been underway for up to a year and another 53 per cent for two or more years.
- **Considering a global strategy:** just over a fifth (22 per cent) said their organisation was considering how to develop a global disability inclusion strategy.
  - Again, this was a relatively recent engagement for a majority with almost six in ten working on this agenda for less than a year and the remaining for one to three years (a quarter of this group did not know the timings).

Finally, just over one in ten (13 per cent) said their organisations were not engaged, or considering, a global strategy at the time of the survey. There were a range of barriers in place for these organisations, mostly related to limited engagement or ownership. A majority of these participants, however, believed their organisation would be considering a global disability inclusion strategy in the next couple of years.



## Key lesson: Organisations often underestimate the amount of time a global disability strategy can take

Even when a global commitment to disability inclusion had been formalised, and in some cases the broad structure of a strategy signed off, organisations reported that it could take many more months for it to be fully written and agreed.

In some organisations this initial groundwork was seen as important. It was felt that a fully 'signed off' strategy could secure commitment at a leadership level and enable and empower colleagues worldwide to work in collaboration. However, with varying business priorities and levels of bureaucracy across countries, and differing legislative and cultural contexts, disability inclusion can be a complex strategy to formulate at a global level.

To keep momentum some organisations had tackled this by agreeing an initial area of focus, for example, deciding on one or two of the following:

- **Broad focus:** employee (recruitment and retention) or customer focused.
- **Business area led:** commitment and awareness raising on one particular area, for example, the built environment or workplace adjustments or accommodations.
- **Geographically led:** working in a few locations initially.

Patience is essential and celebrating any achievement is important. We talk more about experiences of prioritisation and how to plan, pilot and expand projects later in the report.

### HSBC: Global Disability Confidence Programme

Our Global Disability Confidence Programme is sponsored by our Chief Financial Officer and aims to transform disability confidence at HSBC so that everyone can realise their potential and thrive. There are five projects that underpin this programme: Workplace Adjustments, Data & Reporting, Principles & Online Hub, Awareness & Capability and Digital Accessibility. In May 2019, a global working group was established, bringing together Diversity and Inclusion leads and workplace adjustments specialists from across the bank. This group has been collaborating to identify and action opportunities to deliver more equal outcomes for employees and customers with disability.

## Key lesson: Focus on your intentions

**“We don’t have all the answers, that’s OK, as an organisation let’s lean into this.”**

Research participant

A theme developed in our discussions which highlighted the need to recognise the positive impact that a disability inclusion strategy can have, and not letting the size of the task be a reason for not doing it.

Taking into account the country level contexts, the wide range of conditions covered within the umbrella term “disability”, the varying level of commitment at a leadership level and available resources and budget at an operational level, the challenges of ‘going global’ could sometimes seem insurmountable. Participants reported encountering differing views about individual aspects of the strategy and sometimes a need to focus on the longer-term aims of it. Organisations also often worked on the basis of scaling-up; having a focus and then building momentum from individual successes, rather than trying to solve everything from the outset.

### Unilever: Commitment and strategy

Unilever is committed to be the #1 employer of choice for persons with disabilities by 2025. As part of this, Unilever has developed a global disability inclusion programme that aims to engage and equip colleagues working across the 190 countries in which it operates. The strategy covers Recruitment, Workplace, Technology and Communications.

## Key lesson: There are many potential catalysts for change

**“[it felt like] a movement was starting.”**

Research participant

For some participants, the momentum for change on disability inclusion at a global level was dependent on a number of drivers and motivations coming together. Sometimes this was a new CEO or change in leadership team, and it was recognised that having visible senior leadership support in place had the most impact in terms of driving engagement and activity. The action of engaging senior leaders and committing to the growing movement of the Valuable 500 had also been a trigger for some.

Another catalyst had been the growing recognition of the benefits of disability inclusion in the organisation in relation to specific challenges such as accessibility of services of products or recruitment or retention issues. Alternatively, it could have been an increasing awareness about the inaccessibility of products or services and a competitor analysis highlighting missed opportunities. Some respondents also cited a growing need within their organisation to move from working with disability in relation to corporate social responsibility, to something more intentional.

Those that want to develop a global disability inclusion strategy must be alert to the wide range of potential drivers to optimise engagement with their senior leaders across the countries in which they operate. Being observant of change over time, and developing opportunities, is key.

**“It’s when forces start coming together.”**

Research participant

## **Key lesson: Don’t work in isolation**

If broader inclusion is already integrated into the organisation’s mission, it is likely that many of the necessary foundations and values exist. Those driving a global disability inclusion strategy should work with colleagues in other strands of inclusion and learn from them. Almost three quarters of participants in the online survey (73 per cent), who were in organisations engaged in, or considering global disability strategies, agreed that learning from previous work in other areas of diversity had been helpful.

In the depth interviews we heard that lessons learned from activities related to other strands of diversity and inclusion had been useful in action planning, for instance developing communications to raise awareness and understanding and also in setting up Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).

Discussions noted that disability inclusion is not the sole remit of global Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) and a whole organisational approach is necessary. This often led to the involvement of colleagues who have global responsibility for functional areas such as learning and development (L&D), recruitment, retention, digital technology and the built environment (see Business Disability Forum’s Business Disability Framework in Appendix A).

Externally, the importance of sharing experiences with other business organisations, local and global networks and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) was raised. The ‘leanness’ of global diversity and inclusion teams was cited. The main response to this was having the opportunity to share ideas and knowledge.

## Summary of discussions and insights

- ✓ A majority of global organisations taking part in the online survey were considering or evolving and embedding their global disability inclusion strategies. At the time of writing this report, a minority were active, engaged and fully resourcing theirs (23 per cent).
- ✓ Participants shared some lessons they had learned and a number of common themes developed:
  - Developing a global disability inclusion strategy needs a sustained approach: do not underestimate the time it may take and celebrate all the steps you take in between
  - Focus on your intentions and not perfection: the complexity of this task can be overwhelming, so it is important to have realistic expectations and not let the scale of the task mean doing nothing at all
  - There are many potential catalysts for change: participants often noted they needed a number of 'allies' and key drivers in place and often worked hard on developing and aligning inclusion incentives at both local and central levels
  - Seek the support of senior leaders at the earliest opportunity: once there, engagement and collaboration at a global level will gain traction at a faster pace
  - Don't work in isolation: build on successful efforts already underway in other strands of inclusion. Collaborate with colleagues inside, and network with those outside, your organisation. Many are willing to share experiences.



# Key challenge 1: Scoping disability inclusion in your organisational context

## Introduction

Scoping the levels of engagement with disability inclusion, at a country or regional level, was a necessary initial step cited by many participants. This included mapping out their disability inclusion policies and activities, data collected plus any insights of the wider context in the various countries where they operated. This scoping exercise was important in highlighting the likely challenges, planning and prioritising projects and expediting outcomes later down the line.

## The scope of the exercise

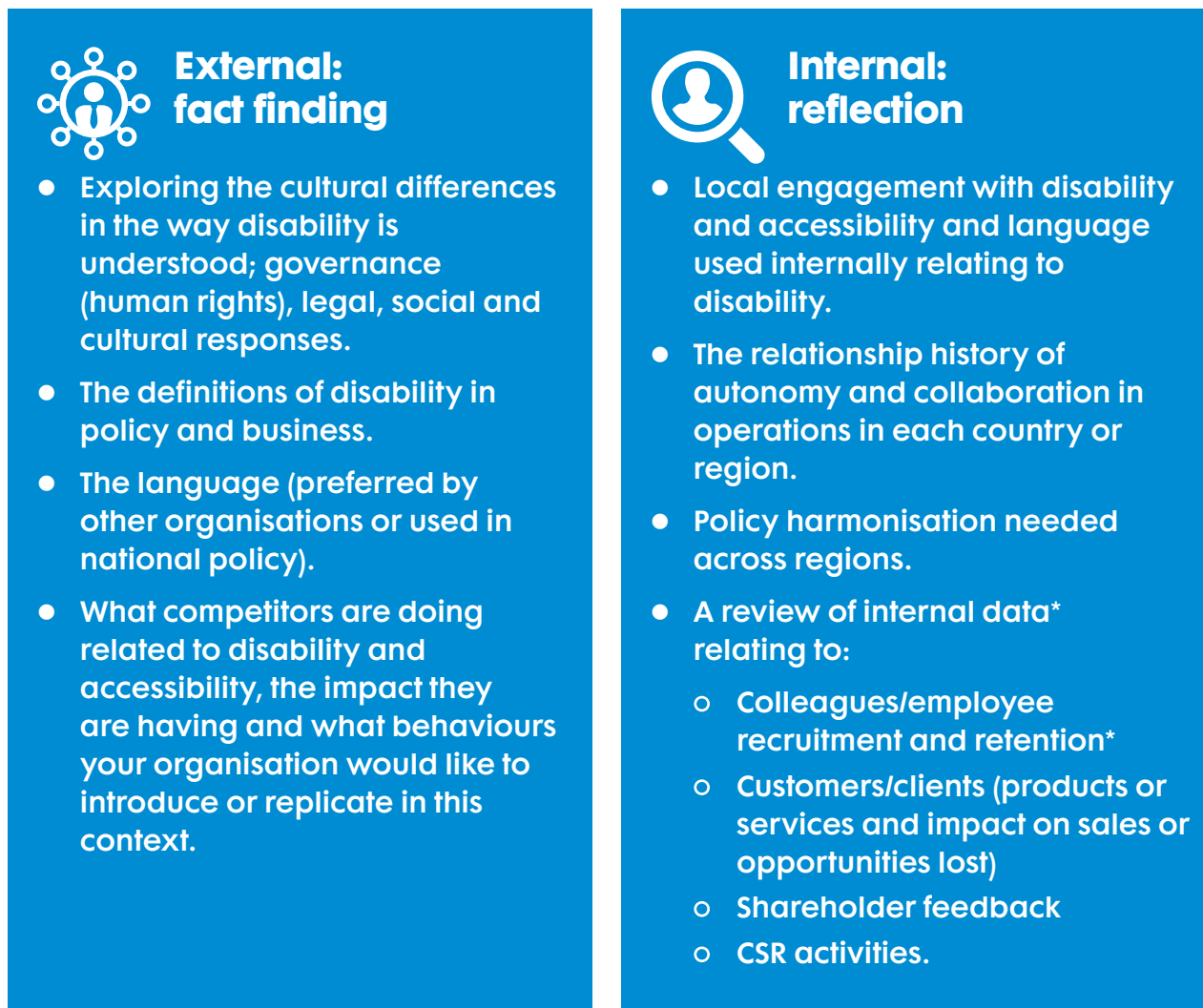
Across the discussions, participants mentioned a range of information that was useful to gather. Some mentioned undertaking an internal review of how disability inclusion was working in the organisation centrally, and in all its locations, and some talked about a more external-facing exercise to develop insights about the wider societal, political and legal context within each country.

Participants also told us that, later down the line, they had sometimes agreed a series of metrics or a scorecard approach to encourage a more regular systematic flow of information about their performance on disability inclusion which could include the numbers of staff supported by adjustments or results from employee engagement surveys (for countries where disability can be asked about and analysed). Some participants advised that organisations should not 'shy' away from this process. Challenging themselves had been a necessary stage of informing and equipping the organisation for engagement with their disability inclusion strategy. The aspects in Chart 2 are not exhaustive but reflect some of the information that participants had found useful to consolidate.

***“As increasing number of organisations work across international borders, there is great utility in having a single standardised approach based on best practice and business rewards.”***

Research participant

## Chart 2: Scoping the landscape relating to disability inclusion at a country or regional level



\*Include insights such as data monitoring and engagement surveys (where available), adjustments/accommodations, costs and budget streams used for D&I and data from ERGs, allies or champions or listening groups

## Accenture: Driving Disability Inclusion

Accenture is committed to disability inclusion from hiring persons with disabilities in all of the countries we operate in to providing a barrier-free workplace through assistive technologies we develop or employ as well as assistive equipment. Our goal is to employ, enable, engage and empower our people with disabilities. To meet our goals, we have established a Global Leadership Disability Inclusion Council which is led by the Executive Sponsor for Persons with Disabilities who works closely with a group of leaders from across Accenture. The Council collaborates with the Global Inclusion & Diversity COE team to define Accenture's strategy, create functional programs and teams that drive forward key disability inclusion initiatives.

The Council structure is mirrored in multiple countries and across business units. These local teams work closely on the ground to drive disability inclusion programmes and practices in concert with leadership, Inclusion & Diversity teams as well as employee networks. This structure and approach builds awareness and drives strategic initiatives while delivering on global priorities that are also tailored to local culture and needs.

## External (fact finding) at a local level

At this level, organisations had often reviewed the following information at a country level:

- Governance (human rights) and social and cultural responses to disability at country level:
  - Legal requirements relating to disability vary country by country and this can sometimes present a challenge for global businesses. The quota system can in some cases confuse the definitions of 'disability' that organisations want to work with. In many countries, the definition used under quota legislation is much narrower than that used internally by global organisations. It was also perceived that disability inclusion could sometimes be in danger of being seen as compliance, as opposed to good practice (having to do something rather than seeing a value in it). The value-add was often what organisations initiated above and beyond what the legislation asked for
  - The employment barriers that exist for disabled people, including hard barriers such as transport
  - Some participants mentioned reaching out to NGOs operating in the same locations and also exploring opportunities for working directly with government or other larger business organisations to advance disability inclusion at a country level

- The language about 'disability' commonly used locally. For example, The UK's Equality Act 2010 protects the rights of 'disabled people' whereas national policy in the United Arab Emirates seeks to empower 'People of determination'
- The priority of disability in government policy, for example, what equal opportunities policies or discrimination acts are in place specifically related to disability
- Business competitor activity in each location specifically related to disability inclusion.

**At the time of writing, the International Labour Organisation reports that just over 100 countries globally are working with employment quotas in place legislatively. Quotas are individual in design, and the definition for each country and the requirements are constantly developing.**

### **Global strategy, local delivery: National Business and Disability Networks**

"National Business and Disability Networks (NBDNs) are an invaluable source of in-country support for global companies. NBDNs are different shapes and sizes with a common characteristic being a forum where companies and other organisations come together to work towards further employment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. There are over 30 NBDNs globally with a presence in every continent and in countries ranging from Australia, China, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, the UK and the US.

The International Labour Organisation's Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) brings together multinational organisations, national business and disability networks, and international not-for-profit and disabled people's organisations to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in workplaces around the world. The GBDN's website includes 'country profiles' containing information about relevant legislation and employment quotas, advisory organisations, NBDNs and local branches of GBDN members (<http://www.businessanddisability.org/country-profiles/>).

Stefan Tromel, Senior Disability Specialist at the International Labour Organization



## Internal (reflection) at a local level

This part of the exercise often involved reviewing disability-related insights at country or regional level and building up a picture of the global task and challenges. Activity could include:

- Local engagement with disability, accessibility, and language used:
  - Reviewing, at a functional level within country, levels of awareness and understanding of disability and accessibility for colleagues and customers or clients
  - The language used internally in communications and whether this is governed by centrally (organisationally) defined language and terminology or what resonates most locally (if different)
- Operational context at country or regional levels:
  - Exploring the funding mechanisms for D&I in each country and relevant sign offs for budgets. It was noted in the research that the departmental funds which D&I activities could draw upon varied at a local level within the same organisation (it can help to know this in advance to help leverage resources needed from those taking ownership)
  - Understanding the influence and responsibility of D&I within the wider structure of the operation at a local level
  - Exploring what challenges there might be in terms of a harmonising HR and D&I policies for a global strategy
- Business operations and resourcing:
  - Reviewing how business objectives and key markets differ at a local level and the importance of disability inclusion within this context in terms of drivers, messaging and engagement
  - The management structures used locally, for example, matrix management, as this might impact on planning for policies and activities

- Consolidating internal data and learning from colleagues with disabilities, including, where possible:
  - Insights: for example, surveys or focus groups amongst colleagues and customers with disabilities and also any stakeholder feedback
  - Management data: for example, self-identification rates (where captured), information on quotas (where applicable), take up of adjustments or accommodations or reviewing other internal data such as customer relationship management systems that include an accessibility angle.

## **Consolidation of internal data and learning directly from disabled colleagues**

Participants reported a wide variety of methods to collect feedback from colleagues and customers with disabilities. By utilising a number of methods, organisations were seeking to get as wide a representation of views as possible.

### **Unilever: Gathering insights from colleagues with disabilities to support activities**

Early on in Unilever’s journey, online meetings with colleagues with disabilities, from around the world, were held to help inform the global strategy. These colleagues presented their views and experiences to the Global Diversity Board, chaired by Unilever’s CEO Alan Jope, who is passionate about disability inclusion. Gathering insights from disabled, people from a range of countries, was an essential part of shaping priorities. Following this early engagement with colleagues with disabilities enable@Unilever was launched, a global support network which aims to create a supportive space for those either with a disability or caring for someone with a disability at Unilever. They receive advice, mentoring and support they need to overcome barriers.

### **Sodexo: Gathering feedback on barriers and opportunities – Sodexo’s study on Quality of Life**

Sodexo, a global services company, will soon be publishing the results of a UK research study. In an open survey, Sodexo explored the lived experiences of people with disabilities, in their roles as employees and consumers. The study, exploring the impact of disability on quality of life, captured feedback from around 800 respondents, after being widely publicised for the duration of the month-long survey window. The findings will shine a light on the often forgotten experiences of people with disabilities, and provide unique and valuable insights to employers and the service sector. Internally, the findings will support the refinement of local and global actions plans and look to inspire the collection of further global insights.

## Qualitative feedback mechanisms

Methods cited by interviewees include focus groups, depth interviews or consultations and, in respect to colleagues with disabilities, gathering feedback from ERGs or other engaged 'communities'. This type of insight delivered a depth of understanding and was thought to be very effective in uncovering and understanding issues or barriers and what responses to consider in aligning activity with global priorities. In some cases participants felt there had been a need to support leads at local or regional levels as they could be nervous about the time and resources needed for this method of data capture. This would sometimes necessitate the need for briefings and materials to use to roll it out.

Encouragingly, ERGs are widespread. In the online survey, just over a third (34 per cent) of participants said their organisations had disability-related employee networks or resource groups in all, or most, countries where they operated. Almost half of our participants said they existed in some locations.

### PurpleSpace: Gathering global insights by engaging with Employee Networks / Resource Groups

PurpleSpace is the world's only networking and professional development hub for disabled employees, network and resource group leaders and allies. Our experience is that the best way to secure better insights is to make it easier for people to bring their authentic selves to work – via the creation of story-telling campaigns created and delivered via Networks / Resource Groups.

During 2019 we ran a survey with our 600+ members to ask their views about the value of Employee Resource Groups / Networks. Together we estimate that they reach 440,000 disabled employees globally. 138 ERG / Network leaders took part and 17 in-depth interviews took place. We heard:

- 47% of respondents ranked the chance to offer feedback on workplace policies as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group
- 69% of respondents ranked the opportunity to "normalise" disability and impairment across the workforce as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group
- Only 20% of respondents ranked the chance to input ideas as to how the organisation better serves its customers or wider stakeholders as one of the greatest benefits of having a disability network / resource group
- 55% of respondents thought the most exciting aspect of an ERG / Network was to break down the isolation of having a disability / impairment and build the confidence to ask for the workplace adjustments they need.

Kate Nash, Creator and CEO, PurpleSpace

## Quantitative feedback mechanisms

The inclusion of a demographic question about disability or long-term conditions into employee satisfaction or engagement surveys was considered instrumental in developing global strategies by many participants. However, major barriers were the cultural and legal response in some countries to asking employees if they considered themselves to have a disability or condition. This impeded the ability to measure progress in terms of the numbers of colleagues employed who have disabilities and any disparity in their own perceptions of their experience of working in the organisation.

Many organisations had begun to ask these questions in countries where they were able to. They felt that showing a demonstrable impact of having the data would be the best way to tackle barriers in locations that were avoiding the use of the questions for cultural, as opposed to legal, reasons. Participants talked about the usefulness of the data, some reporting that it was directly used to identify issues and plan initiatives each year.

Where questions were being used, they had often been developed with some built-in flexibility so that countries could opt into their preferred question wording which was a better fit with their prevailing culture. Questions were often set within a module of other demographic questions that served to provide insights across all strands of diversity.

In exploring the data, participants mentioned that they were looking for any inconsistencies in experiences between colleagues with disabilities and those without, between colleagues across different types of disabilities and also, with the same disability. Once the most effective levels of reporting were in place, some organisations worked with country leads to encourage standardised data collection and analysis.

Some participants reflected on the issue that the level of response to the demographic question about disability was sometimes low and that it varied between countries. It was observed that it was easier to ask the question when it is set amongst questions requesting employees to self-identify in relation to other 'characteristics' such as gender. Over and above a clear reassurance, in the question text, about why the question was being asked, some organisations had been promoting a more general level of awareness of why the question was important to the organisation. This narrative was sometimes linked to how the data can help in connection to broader organisational priorities and support for employees with disabilities and conditions.

Promotional activity about the use of these questions included talking about the usefulness of them at onboarding, engaging with ERGs or other colleague communities to disseminate information and developing organisation wide communication campaigns across locations.

## Summary of discussions and insights

- ✓ Country level comparisons give an invaluable overview of local contexts. It is difficult to start scoping the strategy without this in mind.
- ✓ Global leads should think about internal colleagues who can most effectively help in collating insights at local levels; they might not necessarily be connected to D&I. For example, those with responsibility for key functional areas, especially where these impact on the provision of workplace adjustments or accessibility of products or services, e.g. digital technology or the built premises or environment.
- ✓ If information is difficult to gain from some countries or regions, don't let this be a barrier to completing the exercise in others. Gather whatever insights are available at the time.
- ✓ Addressing disability-related barriers requires a deep understanding of the lived experience of the people with disabilities who are affected by any of an organisation's activities. This insight can only be gained by working with people with disabilities. Some useful strategies for research are set out in Business Disability International's Learning Directly From Disabled People guide. [3]

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3 <http://www.businessdisabilityinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/bdi-publication-Learning-Directly-From-Disabled-People.pdf>



## **Key challenge 2: Consolidating the key messages and how to communicate them**

### **Introduction**

This section explores how organisations are connecting with internal audiences to engage them in a global disability inclusion strategy:

- How have organisations responded to the need for a common language around disability?
- What are the most important motivations for building a disability inclusion strategy and which are recognised to have the furthest 'reach' globally?
- How do organisations most effectively communicate the need for disability inclusion across all the regions they operate in?

### **Exploring a common language around disability**

Participants in the depth interviews discussed that the need to raise awareness and understanding of disability was often the first step they had to take. The use of relatable language, at a global as well as regional level, was crucial when starting to talk about the specifics of disability inclusion. Some mentioned potential translation issues when localising content. One solution was to consult widely with local disability leads across countries and regions, as early as possible in the process, to inform any decisions made.

Some organisations may find it difficult to define disability given where they operate, and the changing political and societal landscapes in these areas add to the complexity. In response, organisations could find it helpful to change the narrative and talk about accessibility or inclusion. It was noted that leading with inclusion incorporates a wider scope of engagement, for example, disabilities that are not immediately visible, long-term conditions and also temporary conditions. Through this 'lens', organisations immediately encouraged more people to self-select into the conversation and appreciate the resonance without having to self-identify as having a disability.

## HSBC: Finding a global language to fit local sensibilities

HSBC developed an internal global campaign in 2020 called 'What We See and Say'. Its purpose was to highlight the importance of language and imagery in building an inclusive culture. As part of this campaign, HSBC created an inclusive language and imagery guide setting out a global definition for disability at the bank, together with globally-relevant disability inclusive terminology as well as language dos and don'ts. The development of the guide was informed by feedback from colleagues with a disability, Diversity and Inclusion leads from various locations, and also external NGOs. HSBC recognises that in some countries there are different definitions for disability that are enshrined in local legislation or policy frameworks, and in these cases local Diversity and Inclusion leads have the option of editing the guides to incorporate country-specific terminology. The guides have been well received by the regions and have been translated into at least five languages.

**“[We] should not underestimate the local context [we should] be respectful of that.”**

Research participant

## Motivations that drive disability inclusion on a global scale

In the depth interviews, participants discussed the motivations of their organisations when developing, or considering, a global disability strategy. The online survey also explored this by offering participants a range of possible inclusion incentives and asking how important they were for driving disability inclusion.

It was evident in both the depth interviews and the online consultation that a number of motivations were important in driving engagement with this agenda. We have discussed them below in four categories:

- Connecting to core values and central business objectives
- Valuing the current and potential workforce
- Customer and client experience
- Responsibilities of organisations.

## Connecting to core values and central business objectives

In the online survey, respondents were asked to consider two motivations for driving disability inclusion, firstly that it could help meet business objectives and secondly, that disability inclusion is the 'right thing to do'.

Insights suggest that, whilst connecting disability inclusion to business objectives was important for engaging internal audiences (84 per cent agreed to some extent that this was the case), the fundamental commitment to inclusion being 'the right thing to do' was perceived to be more influential. Importantly, not only was 'the right thing to do' seen as one of the most important motivations by almost all of the participants in the online survey (96 per cent agreed to some extent), half said that this motivation was important in all, or a majority, of the locations they were working in.

- **Disability inclusion is the right thing to do**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (76% stated it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, 42% in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)

- **Disability inclusion supports achieving our business objectives**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (56% stated it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, 52% in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)



## Valuing the current and potential workforce.

### Recruitment

Issues raised during recruitment processes plus the realisation that organisations might be missing out on talent were important. The impact of missing these opportunities was a key driver, particularly in some countries with hard to fill vacancies or specific skills needs in their sector.

Depth interviews highlighted that successful inclusive recruitment processes in one location have sometimes been adopted in other countries. Some of these activities are listed below:

- Reviewing how the organisation accesses the job market and how they source applicants
- Providing training for the recruiters in the company
- Reviewing the interviewing process itself such as methods of application, recruitment tests and digital interviews.

In the online survey 88 per cent of participants agreed that the link to disability inclusion and wider recruitment opportunities was an important driver for motivation internally but just 28 per cent felt the message was effective in all or most locations that they operated in.

- **Disability inclusion means we can access a wider pool of talent to recruit from**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (54% said it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, 59% in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)

## Retention

Some participants in the depth interviews stated that momentum for building a global strategy had gained traction as a response to improving employee engagement and retention. Issues had been raised via a growing level of awareness of challenges disabled employees were facing in their organisation. For example, via complaints from employees with disabilities, disparity in employee engagement data, a wider acceptance of the benefits and impacts of the provision of adjustments or other policies.

In the online survey 84 per cent of participants agreed that the link to disability inclusion and employee retention was an important driver for motivation internally but just 24 per cent felt the message was embedded in all or most locations that they operated in.

- **Disability inclusion helps drive employee retention**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (53% stated it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, 59% in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)

### Royal Bank of Scotland: RBS's personal development course for colleagues with disabilities in India

RBS has a long-standing commitment to building disability confidence in the UK. At RBS India, we were able to use the experience, knowledge, and success that we have seen in the UK to fast-track our own Disability Confidence programme. The conversation there has moved beyond simply hiring people with disabilities and accessibility to mainstreaming the agenda. Our efforts are focussed on upskilling and developing colleagues with a disability. For example, RBS UK offers disabled colleagues the opportunity to participate in a targeted two-day personal development programme.

At RBS India, we developed our own development initiative. To ensure viability and maximise its impact, we decided to open it up to employees with disabilities from other companies. We now have an industry-wide development programme for people with a disability called Aspire. It's a six-month journey where we cover similar competencies as the UK programme, and we also have senior industry leaders in India who act as mentors for the cohort. These interventions are helping us shift the disability conversation from entry-level hiring to development and career progression for our employees with a disability.

## Customer and client experience

Many participants in the depth interviews revealed how critical the customer, or client, agenda could be in driving activity on global inclusion strategies. Indeed, in some cases conversations about global disability inclusion had started, or gained most traction, with the customer journey and when accessibility of products or services was realised to be an issue or lost opportunity. Whilst organisations will often 'marry' this set of drivers with other motivations, such as those already mentioned, to make a rounded case for driving the agenda, the customer was undoubtedly influential. The message commonly used was that organisations potentially 'ignore 20 per cent of a consumer market' if they are not accessible.

In the online survey 82 per cent of participants agreed that the link to accessibility and increased sales and opportunities was an important driver for motivation internally but just 27 per cent felt the message was embedded in all or most locations that they operated in.

**// With 1.3 billion disabled people worldwide, this is a market the size of China. //**

Research participant

In a B2B environment it was felt that client expectations about their service providers' workforce representation and accessibility were important. A clear strategy on making your portfolio of products and services as accessible as possible was clearly impactful when delivering to clients in competitive environments.

- **Accessibility of products and services has an impact on customer, client, sales and opportunities**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (**55%** stated it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, **53%** in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)

## **Microsoft: Accessibility and inclusion are key to delivering on our mission**

How accessibility lands with customers is a significant focus for Microsoft and is observed internally in terms of feature adoption and contribution to sales. Inclusivity feeds heavily into the design of products and services, as well as communications and marketing drives. One example of accessibility in action is the development lifecycle of the Xbox Adaptive Controller and its accompanying 'We All Win' marketing campaign, which went beyond regional boundaries. Microsoft also won a Business Disability Forum Disability Smart Award for their campaign which explored different ways in which accessible technology can empower people with disabilities, which ran in collaboration with John Lewis and The Guardian newspaper.

## **Shell: Fuel Service**

Fuel Service is a simple, easy, technology enabled refuelling service for disabled drivers. Once the app has been downloaded, customers contact the station before making the journey and then use the app to notify staff that they have arrived. A Shell colleague will fill up the vehicle, collect any snacks or goods from the shop and take payment in the vehicle through cash or card. Fuel Service has a 4.9 star Uber rating, has received rave customer reviews and had a transformational impact on the lives of many customers. Fuel Service is available in all 'self-service stations' – 20,000 sites across Europe, US and Canada – making Shell the first fuel supplier to meet the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## **Enterprise Rent-A-Car: Developing accessible services to all our customers**

Enterprise are committed to providing accessible services. We provide vehicle adjustments and surrogate driver options at no additional cost for customers with disabilities. In the UK, Enterprise has developed a dedicated team in the call centre in order to respond to customers who prefer to communicate with us in different ways and we offer a range of contact methods. We are now reviewing how this can be rolled out globally. Through partnerships with disability organisations and using feedback from customers, we continue to evaluate ways to improve our service for people with disabilities and surrogate renters.

## Responsibilities of organisations

In this section we have included two statements from the survey; one relates to meeting legal obligations and one which offers the rationale that large businesses should be contributing to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals are an interconnected set of 17 goals which aim to address global challenges including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and peace and justice. Disability is referenced in a number of goals including those relating to education, growth and employment, inequality and accessibility of human settlements.

Along with 'doing the right thing', the importance of meeting legal obligations, where they existed, was one of the most important motivations driving global disability inclusion. Almost all (98 per cent) of participants in the online survey said that this was important and 55 per cent said that it was important in all or most locations that they operated in. Legal obligations include anti-discrimination legislation and the use of quotas.

Whilst seven in ten agreed that contributing to UN Sustainable Development Goals was an important motivation in their organisation, this was the lowest level of agreement when compared with the other statements in this section. It is also interesting to note that just 27 per cent felt the message was embedded in all or most locations that they operated in.

- **Meeting our legal obligations (where they exist)**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (**76%** said it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, **35%** in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)

- **As a large global organisation, we should be contributing to the UN Sustainable Development goals**



- agreed this motivation was important in their organisation (**45%** said it was very important).



- agreed this was an important motivator in all or most locations they operated in, **45%** in some locations.

- Base: Online survey all respondents answering the question (108)

## **Communicating the importance of disability inclusion on a global scale**

The depth interviews collected feedback on managing communications and information relating to disability inclusion globally. As previously mentioned, increasing levels of awareness and understanding of disability was often the first step in terms of rolling out strategies. This section looks at what some organisations have been doing, both internally to promote disability inclusion across their locations, and externally to promote their values to communities and potential employees and customers or clients.

### **Challenges and successes of internal campaigns**

Many interviews highlighted the need to engage both managers and colleagues in any internal communication or campaigns. Of course, on a global scale this could be demanding on both resources and logistics, but the following paragraphs highlight some successful experiences.

Training and resources:

- Online training or e-learning modules on an individual topic such as mental health which is informative and instructional
- Audio or video seminars
- Information and resources available on internal databases or intranet hubs.

Manager specific initiatives:

- Workshops run locally, focusing on the experiences of disabled people rather than solely their responsibilities as a manager, for example, details about the impact of adjustments or asking colleagues to explain the challenges and barriers
- Toolkits that give a rounded approach by presenting managers with real examples of issues (scenarios), organisational response and discussions and advice on ownership and accountability.

### Communication campaigns:

- Videos: many felt that videos brought the issues and challenges to life and had widespread impact that played to 'hearts and minds' which worked well globally
- Storytelling: often via video but also written in blogs or posts on the intranet. Stories often included reflections about specific conditions from individuals with disabilities throughout the organisation, including senior leaders
  - Personal stories can produce an emotional connection which can 'cut through' the organisational language and work well globally
  - Stories have the ability to resonate with people on a personal level and ensure that disabilities are seen as part of the human experience and not defining the experience.

Some participants in the depth interviews also talked about potential methods to maximise global traction:

- Work on the areas you can influence easily and perhaps look for ways in which disability can be introduced to other campaigns in existence. Participants in the research had often worked with campaigns related to mental health as it was frequently embedded in most countries worldwide as part of their wellbeing strategies. They could then introduce conversations about awareness and understanding of disabilities and conditions that could be expanded upon
- Leverage 'moments' that can be produced by celebration days which can be used to amplify messages and communication and engage people locally, perhaps in countries which are less mature in terms of disability inclusion. It was noted however that these can only have a real impact in shifting attitudes if they are backed up by consistent, practical messaging and action. Participants noted that:
  - This type of activity raises awareness of the topic by connecting staff in, and across countries, and helps to facilitate conversations about disability
  - It demonstrates an organisational wide commitment and, if senior leader commitment or CEO visibility is there, it is an effective contributor to further engagement.

Participants reported some challenges in operating a global communication campaign and these included:

- Managing the different levels of concerns across locations relating to the fear of doing, and saying, the wrong thing about disability; the benefits of strong and supportive collaboration with disability leads at a country level was an important response to this (see the section Key Challenge 3 Building Successful Collaboration Globally in this report)
- The need to find a global message that resonates locally can be difficult; most organisations allowed local regions to develop and run some of their own campaigns within an agreed understanding of messaging and images
- Global or central communications could take time to cascade; experiences showed that campaigns which went out direct from the leadership teams tended to go further and faster
- Sensitivity to language translation and variation is needed; many organisations said that their global campaigns started in English, as this was their most common business language, and as such, it was important to get it right at this level. Once the messaging and content had been approved, translations to other languages would be undertaken, proofed, and then disseminated
- Language and terminology around processes and policies could be different in various countries or regions; if this is case the local disability leads are needed to 'strengthen the push' and keep communication going.



## **Purple Champions at EY: creating a community to work together on disability inclusion**

EY has created an EMEA wide allies initiative called Purple Champions. Purple Champions sign up to a mission to create a safe and inclusive environment at EY for disabled colleagues. Colleagues in any region can opt in to becoming a Purple Champion via an open data portal on the intranet by clicking to register. In return they are sent a 'thank you' and a brochure about the programme and regular updates on what is happening in this space around the world.

Each individual gives what information they want about themselves and selects the level of contact they would like to have with the other Champions. EY effectively used their global promotional activities for International Day of Persons with Disabilities to mark Purple Light Up and raise awareness and sign ups to the initiative. The scheme is proving popular with over 1000 members as at February 2020.

EY has also signed up to the Valuable 500 campaign leading to EY forming a Global Disability Confidence Working Group with a key focus on education and awareness and accessibility. Late last year they published their global digital accessibility policy and they are working on a daily basis to make sure that web based learning and videos are fully accessible.

## **ING Accessibility Journey: Access for All**

ING introduced the Global Accessibility Office in 2017, the primary aim being to build awareness and support inclusive thinking throughout ING. This includes connecting local projects to other countries and developing awareness training sessions for ING staff. The 'Dutch Unknown Talent program' is one such example, in which we undertook a targeted project-based approach to hiring people with disabilities. Another example is our ING Accessibility Process Assessment and accompanying awareness training which we developed to set and apply accessibility standards in key business processes. In October 2018, the first group of 10 members of the ING Global Process Management undertook the training as part of their role in improving ING processes.

## Summary of discussions and insights

- ✓ Be prepared to seek out the most effective motivations for engaging with disability inclusion as they will vary in resonance across countries and regions. Most participants in the research felt that disability inclusion being the 'right thing to do' was the most important motivation and this was most likely to be consistent across their locations globally.
- ✓ Be aware of the importance of creating global messages that also resonate locally. There needs to be sensitivity regarding language translation and variation. Consult with your local disability leads and senior leadership (centrally and at local levels) to create and strengthen the impact of any campaigns and communications.
- ✓ Create a series of resources that engage colleagues at both an emotional level, for example storytelling, and an informative level, for example, fact sheets, training, webinars. These should prompt colleagues at all levels to question their own perceptions and break down stereotypes. There are some great examples that organisations have developed to challenge and inspire.
- ✓ Use (if appropriate) awareness days to influence colleagues across locations, particularly where there needs to be culture change before behaviour change. Momentum will gather with visible 'moments', tangible activities and creation of a global or regional community.
- ✓ If ERGs or colleague communities exist, get them involved with the disability inclusion strategy and also encourage the different D&I strands to work together, for example at events or within campaigns.



# Key challenge 3: Building successful collaboration globally

## Introduction

This section explores the challenges of working at a global level where collaboration between sponsors and leadership teams at local and regional levels is critical. The insights in this section are collated from both the depth interviews with disability leads and the online survey. Across both strands we explored:

- Key challenges in developing and delivering a global disability inclusion strategy (both at a strategic and an operational level)
- Activities that have helped collaborative working between colleagues working at global, regional and local level.

## Anticipating the key challenges

In the online survey, participants who were either considering or resourcing a global disability inclusion strategy were asked to consider what challenges had, or might, present themselves. These were split over two questions based on the following broad themes: firstly, establishing commitment strategically and, secondly, managing local teams at a more operational level.

## Establishing commitment at a local level

Chart 3 on page 45 illustrates that the challenges related to establishing commitment were varied and widespread. Indeed, almost all participants mentioned at least one challenge at this level. Most commonly, and echoing the discussions with global disability leads, were:

- Cultural differences in the way disability is understood (71 per cent); in further discussions with participants this often related to stigma and the link to disability being seen as limiting or solely in a charitable context
- Engagement with disability and accessibility in some countries we operate (63 per cent); this would usually relate to a lack of engagement in some locations worldwide, particularly where attitudes needed to shift in order to appreciate the benefits of inclusion
- Varying legal requirements between countries (61 per cent); earlier in this report we noted the often-complex relationship with legislative quotas and how these sometimes limit, contradict or undermine the spirit of what the strategy is aiming to do.

Over two fifths of participants in the online survey cited challenges related to:

- Gathering insights about disabled customers and employees in the countries we operate (49 per cent); organisations can struggle achieving global data collection due to the legal position in some countries which prohibit asking questions that identify disability
- How to align motivations for disability inclusion with current business objectives (43 per cent).

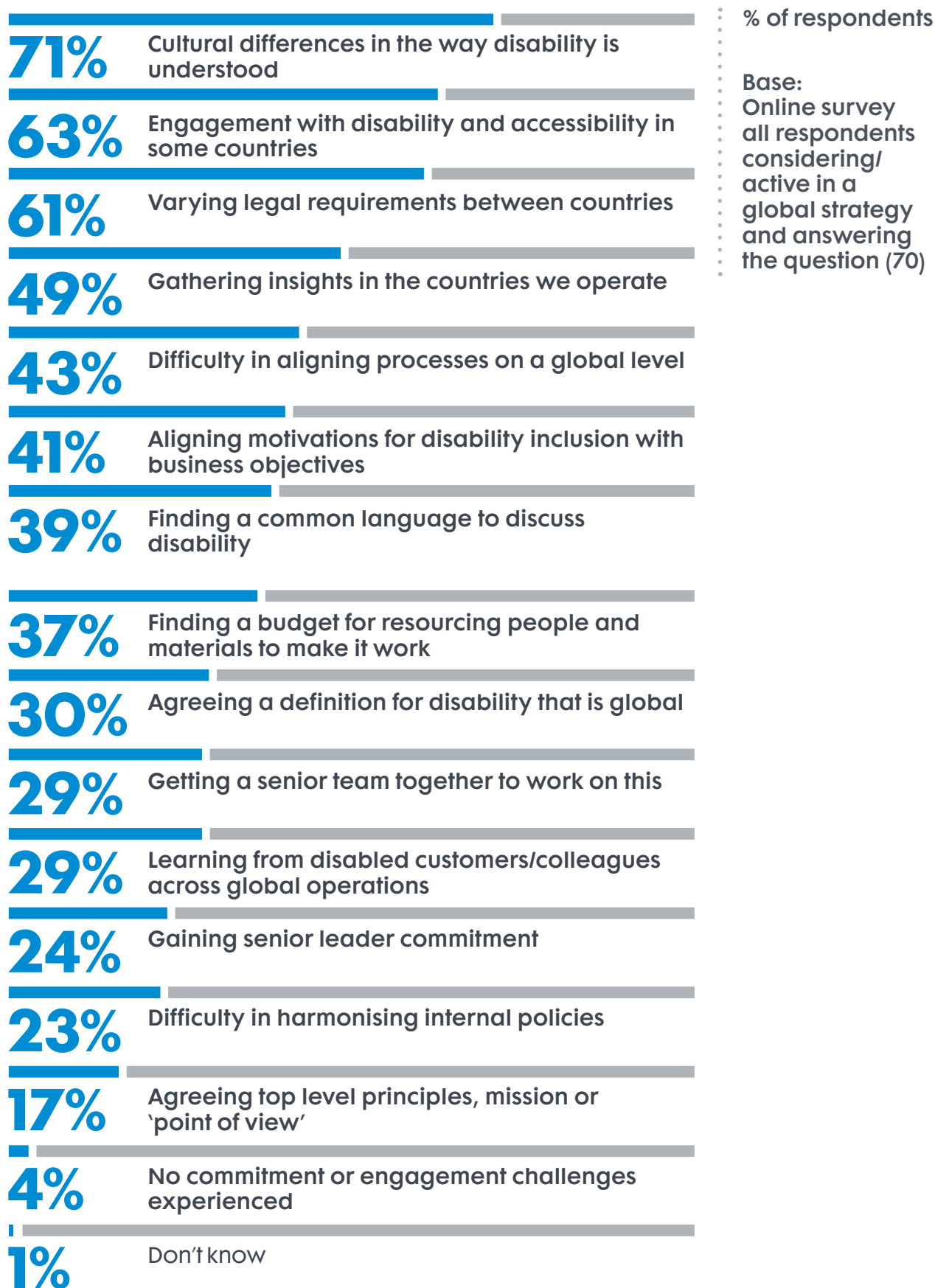
Between three and four in ten revealed the following had been, or could potentially be, issues:

- Finding a budget and materials to make it work
- Finding a common language in which to discuss disability
- Agreeing a global definition for disability.

### **GSK: Working together to prioritise action**

Since 2014 our Global Disability Council – led by Nick Hirons, a member of our Corporate Executive Team – has involved senior leaders from across the business, plus external experts and disability employee network leads, driving our disability confidence, inclusive employment and workplace accessibility progress. Working to a clear charter with strategic aims and senior accountability for workstream actions and co-ordinated by a dedicated Disability Confidence project lead, we are developing our disability confidence ambition and making great progress. GSK has signed up to the Valuable 500 as part of our commitment to building trust with our people as a modern employer by creating an inclusive workplace which enables all our people to thrive.

**Chart 3: Challenges related to establishing commitment at a local level**



## Co-ordinating local or regional teams operationally

Again, in the online survey the vast majority of participants who were actively engaged in, or considering developing a global disability inclusion strategy, agreed that they had experienced, or anticipated, one or more of the challenges we listed in relation to operational processes.

The top two challenges at this level were issues that were also raised in the depth interviews:

- Having the resource needed to continuously encourage engagement (56 per cent)
- The difficulty in organising systematic data collection across locations (54 per cent).

At least two fifths of participants in the online survey cited issues related to:

- Gaining commitment from champions or managers at a local level (49 per cent)
- Managing expectations about what could be achieved (44 per cent)
- Agreeing how to measure progress (44 per cent)
- Provision of resources at a local level (e.g. management training and materials for the hubs or intranet (40 per cent).

Other challenges mentioned to a lesser extent were; establishing targets for performance on disability inclusion (for example access for all colleagues for workplace adjustments) and using frameworks and developing action plans. Co-ordinating meetings and facilitating connections between locations were the least problematic mentioned by just under a quarter of participants.

### Accenture: Targeted and Measured Approach to Disability Inclusion

Disability inclusion includes specific considerations such as country specific laws, culture and biases as well as the wide range of disabilities that need to be taken into account to create a culture of equality, provide accommodations and support for people to thrive in their roles. At Accenture, while we share and cascade our global disability inclusion vision and priorities, in-country teams are empowered to create and manage programmes that are specific to their audience.

Each country has a scorecard that determines the maturity of their programmes and tracks performance against key factors. The scorecard provides a view to additional areas for a country to focus on, the impact of global initiatives and country specific challenges. Best practices that emerge from countries that are further along in their initiatives are shared widely. The net outcome is global and local progress on disability inclusion that brings us to a culture of equality and innovation.

## Chart 4: Challenges related to co-ordinating regional or local teams operationally



In the interviews, participants discussed how contact with regional and local teams was managed. This often took place via regular planned meetings, at varying levels of frequency. Most participants said that they gave some thought to different methods of communication based on their varying objectives:

- One to one communication between the global lead and each local champion or lead; often via regular calls to talk through individual priorities and challenges
- Group communication between the global lead and all local champions or leads; a chance to talk together in a virtual meeting or 'clinic' or 'town halls' to announce new activities and talk about progress or seek advice
- Communication between local champions or leads without the facilitation of the global lead; many global leads encouraged their local champions to talk directly to each other as it created a chance to build their own supportive community.

Across the various types of meeting, agenda items often included:

- Sharing and discussing disability related policies and best practice and how this could or should be localised
- Sharing resources or new collateral - for example, stories, videos, posters, information sheets
- Updating each other on progress and sharing lessons
- A chance to ask for help and to seek support
- Discussion of new themes or developing action plans
- Identification of new resources, training or activities needed.



## Establishing central roles and key alliances

Organisations that were relatively new to this space welcomed ideas on how to most effectively operationalise a strategy. Insights from both the depth interviews and the online survey offered reflections from those more experienced about managing the strategy centrally and managing the degrees of autonomy locally.

### The central lead or co ordinating role

Most commonly, participants had developed strategies and global policy which was driven centrally. These would be communicated with clear objectives and targets, if relevant, but it was often the case that local areas would have their own flexibility as to how they were implemented or operationalised. To what extent this flexibility existed depended on the organisation.

When reflecting on previous experience, or exploring their best route forward, a few ideas were given on how to effectively collaborate and lead:

- Nurturing is key:
  - There is a need to be sensitive to the fact that countries are at different stages in this conversation and in some cases, quite fearful of doing the wrong thing; sensitive messaging that emphasises collaboration can help. One organisation mentioned a 'buddying' system where a more developed country, in terms of disability inclusion, was working alongside an emerging one. Similarly, organisations could create regional clusters or a satellite hub
  - Avoid using language that shows one region is leading and one is behind; try to make all local geographies feel confident in where they are at and what they are about to do
  - Understanding the complexities in all locations is important; if feasible, get out to your locations and make connections face to face or at least use video conferencing (as and when appropriate)
- Sharing materials and collateral; local teams often need these to help them start the conversation with colleagues, to give them something to react to
- Be supportive but allow local responsibility if appropriate; local leads can thrive if they are given trust and accountability, for example, managing budgets or their own events.

## Anglo American: Successful collaboration on a global level

In our experience it is critical to build positive relationships which enable local regions to thrive. Nurturing key contacts in local areas and regions has been key to achieving this. Trust and accountability have been developed over time with local business leads having responsibility for a range of disability inclusion activities and initiatives to drive their long-term sustainability. We have worked on the basis of providing best practice and sharing successful activities from across our business relating to disability inclusion but not controlling or micro-managing. The importance of the local view on disability, and all elements of inclusion, is vital for developing global expertise and understanding the complexities of local areas. Making connections at various levels is important and we do this by diarising a wide range of meetings, in various formats, depending on the objectives. A high level of frequency of contact is important in building these relationships.

## The importance of regional or local teams

Whilst at a central level global leads need to manage, motivate, communicate and co-ordinate, it was recognised that excellent people were needed on the ground in all locations. The global lead will not understand everything related to the 'lived experience' of people with disabilities in local areas and, as such, there is a reliance on country level or regional leads to drive the strategy forward. In the online survey 84 per cent of respondents agreed that countries needed to adapt processes in their own way.

Representation and seniority were seen as important. Whilst participants in the research felt that it was useful to have a single point of contact in each location, ideally, local or regional leads should be working with other colleagues across functions or business areas in that location. This ensured the demands of the role were resourced properly and engagement and contribution throughout the business was secured. Other assets for the role included having enough seniority to sign new activities off and not having to defer to others, having passion for what the strategy will achieve and, ideally, having the influence and ability to pull in the support of employee networks or resource groups (if they exist) and also the leadership teams, for instance country level CEOs or HR directors.

Local leads are also needed to gather data and co-ordinate insights, including exploring the successes of work in other inclusion strands in each local area, for instance gender. At a local level they should learn from any value and behaviour change that has happened already and interpret what this could mean for disability inclusion. In the online survey 73 per cent of participants agreed that learning from previous work in other areas of diversity such as gender had been useful in shaping their global approach to disability inclusion.

One final word of advice was to not underestimate the difficulty of the role if you are operating at a regional rather than country level. In terms of geography, one regional lead could be dealing with six or seven different languages and a wide range of different legal and cultural challenges. This may need some support.

- **It is important to allow countries to adapt processes and standards related to disability inclusion in their own way**



- agreed with this statement (43% agreed strongly).

- **Learning from previous work in other areas of diversity e.g. gender has been useful in shaping our global approach to disability inclusion**



- agreed with this statement (24% agreed strongly).

Base: Online survey all respondents considering/active in a global strategy and answering the question (70)

### Unilever: Engaging with colleagues at local level

During the pilot phase of our global disability inclusion programme, we held a two day face to face conference for disability leads from a range of countries including Nigeria, Sri Lanka, UK, Argentina, Canada and India. Colleagues came together to help shape our global disability strategy and co-create a roadmap for countries to implement Unilever's global disability commitment in a way that is culturally and legally appropriate in their country.

## Summary of discussions and insights

- ✓ Be equipped for potential challenges at a strategic level. Research shows that the most common have been cultural differences in the way disability is understood, generating engagement at a local level and varying legal requirements. Other barriers related to coordination of data collection and evidence, for example agreeing disability related questions in surveys, gaining senior team commitment and aligning motivations for disability inclusion with current business objectives and agreeing a definition for disability that is global. Budget and resourcing should also be explored early on.
- ✓ Take every opportunity to connect with local leads and encourage them to build their own connections using various methods (either virtually or face to face) and meeting types (one to one or regional or global communities). Disability inclusion may be very new for some locations which means the central role of the global disability lead is often a supporting and nurturing one.
- ✓ Ideally, local leads need a passion for disability and inclusion, enough seniority to sign off activities to keep the action plan moving and the ability to influence other senior departmental colleagues and leadership teams.



# Key challenge 4: Moving forward successfully

## Introduction

This section discusses how far organisations have advanced in terms of global disability inclusion and what work is being undertaken at a practical level. It includes data from the online survey and aspects related to progression discussed in the depth interviews. The key questions this section explores are:

- What is the 'reach' of various disability inclusion processes and how have organisations started to mature, at a global level, by business areas?
- In terms of progression and key steps that organisations can reflect on:
  - What are the types of projects organisations are engaged in?
  - What is the importance of the senior leadership?
  - What are the challenges of incorporating insights into planning?
  - How are global organisations expanding activity and building on success?

## Global reach of disability inclusion

All participants in global organisations which were considering, working towards or resourcing a global disability inclusion strategy were asked about the global 'reach' of their inclusion management and processes. The questionnaire listed a number of activities or processes that reflected a commitment to disability inclusion and, for each one, participants reflected on how consistently it applied; whether it was found in most or all countries in which they operated, some or none at all. A theme developed in terms of aspects that were working across all, or most, countries (see Chart 5 on page 55):

- The corporate context: the two aspects most likely to be evident in 'all or most' countries were related to a corporate context and related to having a commitment to, and a widely accepted definition of disability across locations (55 per cent and 50 per cent of participants respectively)
- Best practice and sharing: almost a third (32 per cent) of participants said that their organisations were aiming for a culture of best practice relating to disability in 'all or most' of locations and 29 per cent stated that best practice and lessons learned relating to disability were shared across the organisation in 'all or most' locations.

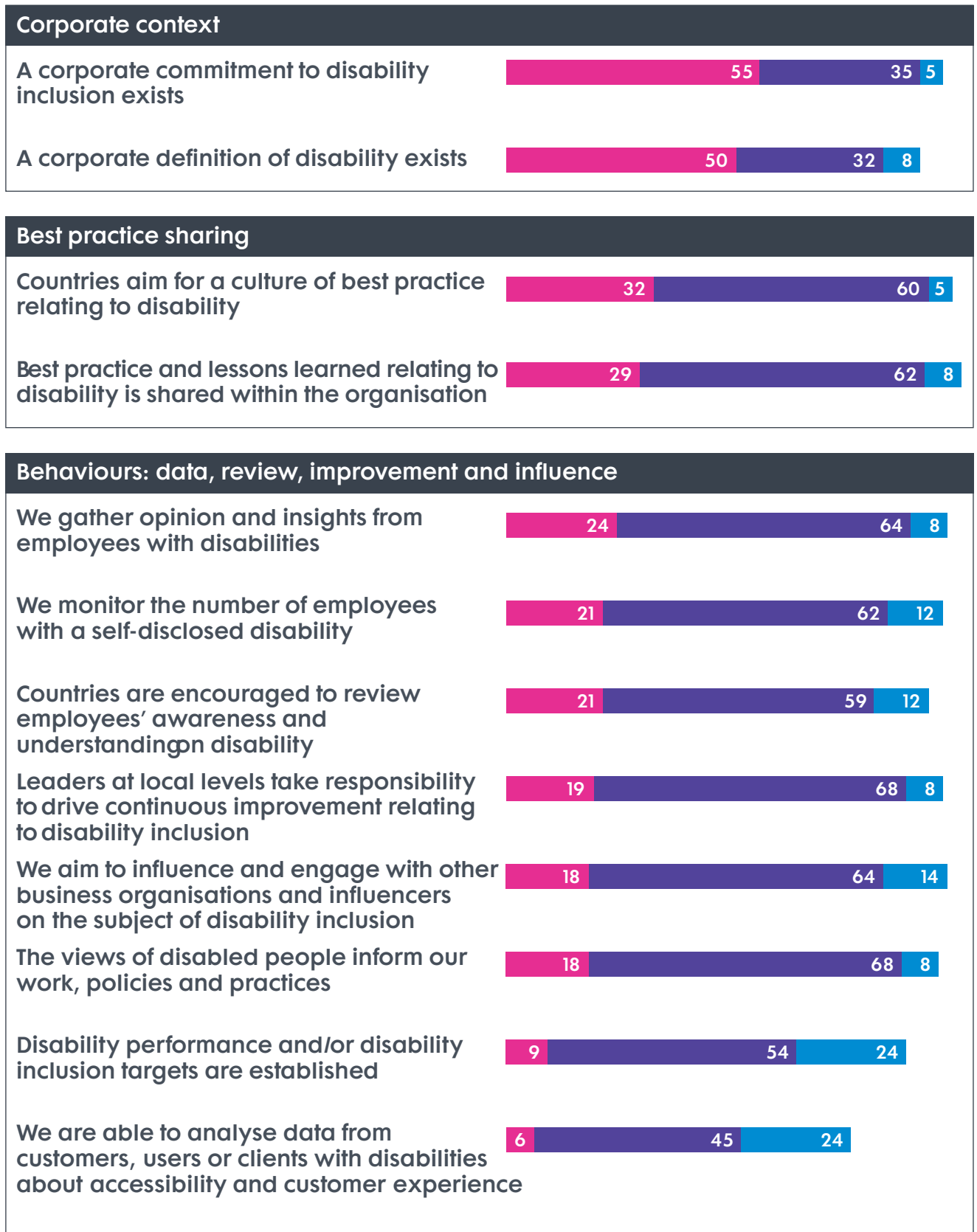
Chart 5 also identifies that just under a fifth to a quarter of participants observed the following activities taking place in 'all or most' countries:

- Insights gathered from employees with disabilities (24 per cent)
- Data monitoring of self-disclosed disability (21 per cent)
- Reviewing awareness and understanding of disability (21 per cent)
- Local leaders driving continuous improvements (19 per cent)
- Engaging other business organisations and influencers (18 per cent)
- Incorporating the views of disabled people to inform policies and practices (18 per cent).

Activities **least likely** to be operating in any consistent way regionally or globally were:

- Analysis of data from customers, users or clients with disabilities about accessibility and customer experience (24 per cent stated that this happened in 'no countries' and 24 per cent stated 'Don't know' or 'Not applicable')
- Establishment of disability performance and/or disability inclusion targets (24 per cent cited 'no countries' and 12 per cent 'Don't know' or 'Not applicable').

## Chart 5: Global reach of inclusion processes and management



Key

% of respondents

■ All or most of countries where we operate

■ Some countries where we operate

■ No countries where we operate

Base: Online survey all respondents considering/active in a global strategy and answering the question (70)

## Maturity of activities across business areas

As mentioned previously, disability inclusion is not the sole remit of D&I. It depends on multi-functional accountability and engagement (see our Global Business Disability Framework in Appendix A). Participants in organisations who were considering, or already engaged in a global strategy, were asked to reflect on the level of maturity of disability inclusion across the following eight areas of their business:

1. Workplace adjustments/accommodations
2. Recruitment and on-boarding policie
3. Retention and development of employees
4. Customer, user or client experience
5. Procurement and supply-chain (including tendering processes or reviewing new and existing contracts)
6. Communication and marketing
7. Built environment / buildings
8. Digital technology.

Levels of maturity in the questionnaire were related to:

- Promotion: Does your organisation promote its reasons for improving disability performance in relation to any of the following global processes or policies?
- Resources: Have resources been developed and shared across countries and regions to improve knowledge and confidence for any of the following processes or policies?
- Common standards: Does your organisation have minimum standards at global level in relation to any of the following processes or policies?
- Use of data: Does your organisation actively monitor data, progress and end-user satisfaction (where applicable) with any of the following processes or policies in most or all locations globally?

Out of the eight business areas listed above, responses indicated that two were more readily being delivered at a global level on all four levels, indicating they were an early priority for many organisations (see Chart 6 on page 59).



## **GSK: Building accessibility into our global organisation**

Our Worldwide Head of Real Estate, along with senior leaders from across the business and Disability employee resource group leads, make up our Global Disability Council (GDC). A key workstream is developing the accessibility of GSK facilities around the world based on our Inclusive Design Standard, which looks beyond code compliance, towards inclusion and accessibility of our built environment. We have conducted Independent accessibility audits to inform a programme of accessibility upgrade works and refurbishments, and incorporate our Inclusive Design Standards in all new works. These audits examine accessibility from arrival on site, through security, parking and reception, to accessibility of open areas, lifts, meeting rooms, catering, washrooms and other facilities.

Workplace adjustments or accommodations maturity levels of activity observed (see Chart 6 on page 59):

- Promoting reasons and rationale for adjustments or accommodations at a global level (68 per cent observed this was evident)
- Resources developed and shared across countries (60 per cent)
- Minimum standards and processes in place at a global level (41 per cent)
- Actively monitoring data, progress and end-user satisfaction in most or all locations (44 per cent).

Recruitment and on-boarding maturity levels of activity observed (see Chart 6):

- Promoting reasons and rationale for inclusive practices at a global level (64 per cent observed this was evident)
- Resources developed and shared across countries (54 per cent)
- Minimum standards and processes in place at a global level (42 per cent)
- Actively monitoring data, progress and end-user satisfaction in most or all locations (41 per cent).

Three business areas showed a relatively high level of maturity across two of the four measures (just over half of the organisations in these areas were promoting the reasons and rationale at a global level and between three and four in ten were creating and sharing resources to help raise awareness and build confidence):

- Built environment/buildings
- Digital technology
- Retention and development of employees.

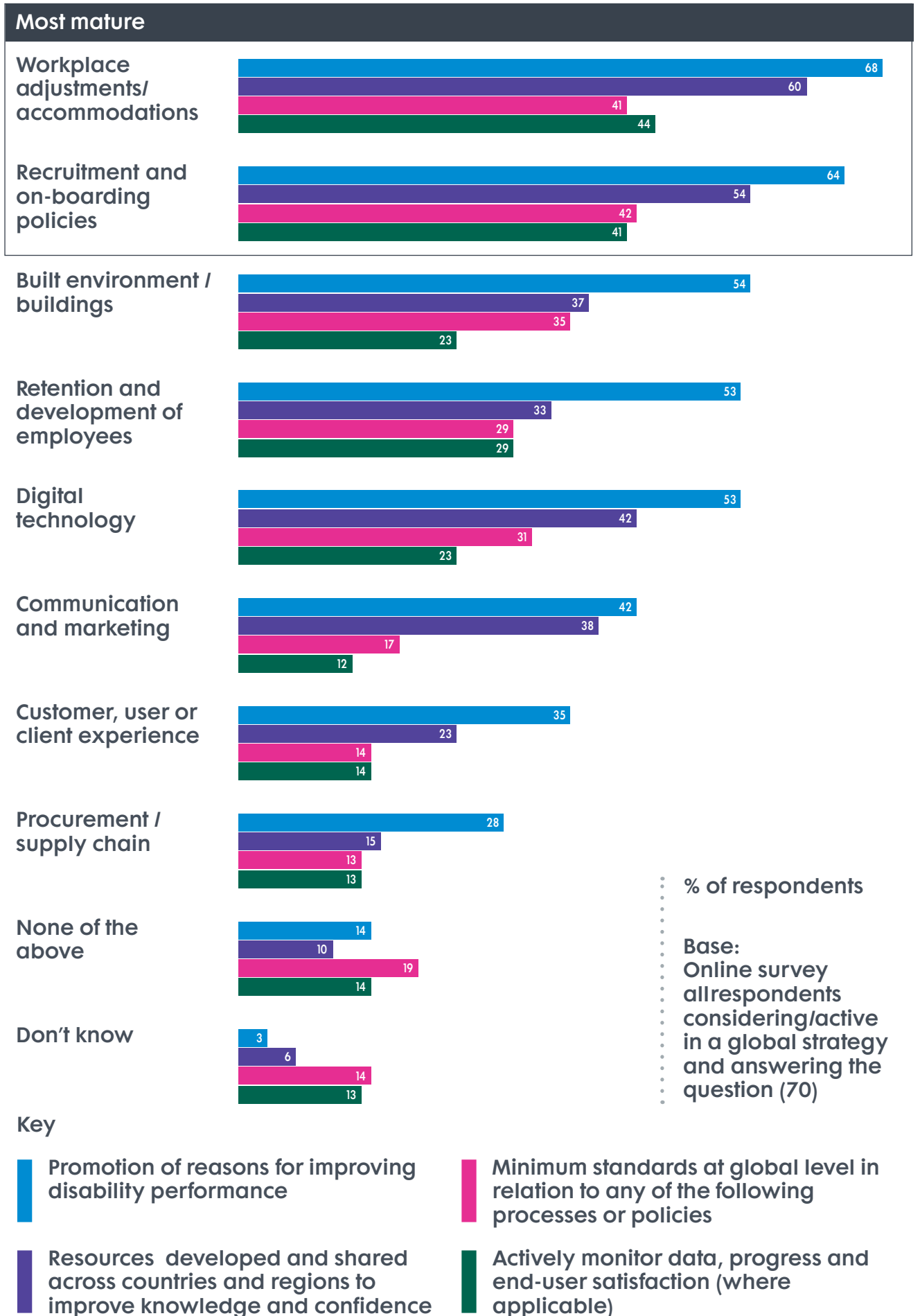
Business areas where maturity was lower in Chart 6 were:

- Communication and marketing
- Customer, user or client experience
- Procurement and supply chain.

### **Shell: Our Workplace Accessibility Service**

Shell's Workplace Accessibility Service delivers workplace adjustments and provides care for employees with accessibility needs to ensure they can perform their job effectively. It is an easy to access, employee-centric self-service supported by a human-touch through dedicated Accessibility Advisors. The portal is available globally and is enabled through a trust-based ordering approach with the line manager notified but not needed to provide cost approval. The Accessibility Service is a pioneering solution to workplace adjustments made possible by strong collaboration across IT, Real Estate, Health and HR functions. The Workplace Accessibility Service is available across 83 countries. Since its phased implementation two years ago, the service has supported over 4,000 requests (up to February 2020). This represents a 5% uptake.

**Chart 6: Rating of maturity at a global level against the ten areas of the Global Business Disability Framework**



// The business and ethical rationale for delivering consistent and well managed adjustment services worldwide, is very clear:

- Most leaders do want to treat their people properly – all their people
- A cost-effective, prompt and predictable service enhances productivity and engagement, improves employee well-being and reduces legal, reputation, and operational risks.

An inconsistent, ad hoc, 'no performance standards apply' workplace adjustment culture, will by definition be experienced as arbitrary, unfair and potentially discriminatory: as only some employees, in some locations, can count on having the tools, flexibility and access which in turn 'level the playing field' so that they can contribute on an equal basis.

Whilst it is disappointing that only 40% of those surveyed say their organisation sets minimum global standards for how quickly, efficiently and equitably they deliver WPA, the number of participants reporting that they are conveying the rationale for improvement is good news indeed. I would encourage these organisations to join forces with the ILO Global Business Disability Network, BDF and our growing learning exchange, as we set out to map the practical WPA logistics and design fundamentals that enable high performance workplaces.//

Susan Scott-Parker OBE HonD, Founder, Business Disability Forum

## Perceptions of progress

Although there were varying levels of activity and maturity across business areas, in the online survey a majority of participants reflected positively on the progress and impact of disability inclusion in their organisation:

- When considering if their organisation had progressed 'a long way since starting the strategy', 40 per cent strongly agreed that this had been the case and another 46 per cent agreed slightly. Just over one in ten (12 per cent) disagreed
- In relation to 'successfully achieving improvements for disabled colleagues and customers on a global scale', 27 per cent strongly agreed that this had been the case and another 54 per cent agreed slightly. Just over one in ten (11 per cent) disagreed.

**// Each little step is taking us somewhere and how far we have come is phenomenal. Enthusiasm, self-awareness, commitment, confidence. Knowing we can make a difference. //**

Research participant

## Current objectives and projects being prioritised

Through the course of the research, participants discussed their current objectives. Chart 7 draws this feedback into themes and gives a 'flavour' of the diversity of work being undertaken at a global level at the time of writing this report.

## Chart 7: Current objectives/projects being rolled out

### Awareness raising

- Increasing awareness to change culture/change behaviours; use of awareness days and campaigns.
- Building collateral for dissemination and/or a library of resources (Hubs and Intranets); videos, storytelling, role models, myth busting.
- Driving specific campaigns; for example, mental health, wellbeing, neurodiversity, ADHD, dyslexia and autism.

### Research and insights

- Reviewing language variation and understanding impact.
- Developing global messaging that resonates locally.
- Rolling out mechanisms for regular and systematic employee feedback (quantitative and qualitative).
- Looking across business functions that have any feed into accessibility and drilling down into improvements needed.

### Business area/project based

- Policy harmonisation across regions.
- Adjustments/accommodations; wider and consistent availability.
- Accessible premises; rolling out assessments and minimum standards.
- Development of communication plans and standards.
- Recruitment; policies and training for recruiters.
- Developing the presence of and engagement with Employee Resource Groups or networks or similar.
- Digital: improving and developing experiences online.
- Exploring standards of inclusion in the supply chain.
- Use of external standards and commitments: for example, BDF's Global Framework, signing up to Valuable 500.
- Training/L&D: rolling out extensive training and support to managers and line managers globally, training/workshops at board level and training for new teams/on-boarding.

## Lilly: Creating a Global Disability Council

Lilly have created a Global Disability Council to oversee its goal of creating a disability confident culture that enables barrier free experiences for employees and customers. The Council includes representation from regional executive sponsors, senior leaders of supporting functions, global D&I and leaders of Lilly's Employee Resource Group ENABLE. Lilly is keen to measure and improve its global approach to disability inclusion and has reviewed its performance against Business Disability Forum's Global Framework. This has enabled Lilly to develop their strategy and effectively prioritise, which was key in securing senior engagement across the organisation.

### The importance of senior leader commitment

Throughout this report we have highlighted how critical it is for organisations to gain, and promote, senior leadership commitment. It might not happen at the outset of developing a global disability inclusion strategy, but it needs to be in place when implementing it. Participants have stressed that this level of commitment had an enormous impact of getting the message out to all colleagues in the organisation, locally and globally. A progressive leader can drive momentum and if they can also discuss disability from a personal viewpoint this can be very effective for engagement.

Senior leaders will also be more impactful in engaging national leadership teams. This increased traction, particularly in locations where there are more challenges (legal and cultural), will help to drive the right behaviours to sustain the disability inclusion strategy and hold managers and leaderships teams, globally, to account.

- Having a senior global disability champion is essential to the success of a global disability inclusion programme



- agreed with this statement (66% agreed strongly).
- Base: Online survey all respondents considering/active in a global strategy and answering the question (70)

**// Leadership is fundamental so it's no surprise that having a senior global disability champion is viewed as essential to the success of a global disability inclusion programme. This is why we launched The Valuable 500.**

**Using their position, influence, and openness to learn, this unique 500 strong global CEO collective is the missing piece essential to radically transform the business system to integrate disability inclusion across supply chains and harness the value, growth, innovation and opportunity this market offers. //**

Caroline Casey, Founder and Creator, The Valuable 500'

#### **Atos: Global expansion of the use of frameworks**

The Accessibility Maturity Model (AMM) was developed as a tool for measuring and guiding high standards of accessibility in IT systems. It was authored by members of Business Disability Forum's Technology Taskforce, including Neil Milliken, Global Head of Inclusion at Atos. The AMM establishes a performance baseline for IT accessibility and enables users to go beyond minimum compliance to bring greater benefits to their business. After securing senior level buy-in, it was put into practice in the UK and used to set an international standard for the organisation.

Key factors in the successful take up of the AMM in other countries were; having senior champions to drive take-up and buy-in among regional managers, supporting the use of the model via meetings and discussions and being prepared to approach offices at very different stages of the accessibility journey. Atos has built upon the original AMM and has deployed maturity modelling in their regional business units across Europe, APAC and the USA as well as using maturity modelling methodology to aid clients that require support with disability inclusion initiatives.



## Standard Chartered: Continuous improvement in the journey to becoming disability confident

As a leading international banking group, with a presence in 59 of the world's most dynamic markets and serving clients in a further 85, we recognise that our footprint is in different stages of their diversity and inclusion journey due to varying cultural, legal and historical contexts. To demonstrate collective progress, we have asked every market to complete an internal Disability Confident Assessment and use the results to address key areas for improvement through their local D&I plans and objectives. This includes a holistic and tailored solution to meet the requirements of the local environment with a focus on awareness and commitment, accessible recruitment and workspaces, assistive technology and accessibility and engagement with our communities and supply chain.

## Planning activity and building on success

### Developing practical initiatives in pilot sites

Participants discussed the use of pilot sites for different projects and expanding their work after lessons had been learned and they had evidence of success. In order to do this, organisations needed to prioritise projects and locations globally that would engage colleagues in a very deliberate way. Across the interviews a range of aspects were considered:

- **Prioritising locations:**
  - Countries or regions that were already showing an understanding and passion for engaging in disability inclusion
  - Where leadership commitment to disability was strong
  - Where ERGs were influential
  - Where there had been a change toward disability in a legal sense
- **Prioritising projects:**
  - Projects that have been prioritised for roll out at a global level that need to be supported at a local level, for example workplace adjustments or accessibility audits of premises
  - Issue specific projects that have been designated as needed by the global disability leads in particular countries, for instance, recruitment or management training
  - Building or consolidating projects that are already underway and can be replicated in other countries, for example, gathering data and insights from disabled people.

**“Do fewer things but do fewer things well.”**

Research participant

### **Using targets and measuring progress**

Organisations had different views on whether targets should be used when developing disability inclusion strategies. Mostly this depended on the ‘DNA’ of the organisation and if targets were more commonly used more generally across the business.

Examples of targets could be:

- Increase of ‘disability champions’ by [stated percentage] every year
- Built environment or premises accessible by [stated year]
- Digital technology accessible by [stated year].

Examples of goals could be related to:

- Demonstrating progression, for example, all markets using an internal ‘scorecard’ relating to disability inclusion or increasing the level of insights from disabled employees and customers
- Statements about value and commitment, for example, to be the global employer of choice for disabled people by [stated year].

Some felt that the time to introduce targets would be once the maturity of their disability inclusion strategy had ‘hit’ a particular level across countries. It was also felt that care was needed in developing and articulating targets as they should consider the whole employee lifecycle for example, attraction, recruitment, on-boarding, development and retention, and what is feasible. There was also a degree of nervousness from participants, that, if targets for progression are scrutinised at local levels, they could be treated as being competitive and work against the original intention. Where used, targets should drive the right behaviours and ideally be co-produced with those who need to deliver them.

## Summary of discussions and insights

- ✓ The levels of work that showed most consistency, at a global level, were related to the foundations of a disability inclusion strategy; establishing and publicising commitment, working on a definition of what disability is and beginning to share best practice.
- ✓ The importance of senior leadership is critical. If this is not in place initially, it needs to be a priority in the early stages of the strategy. Once in place, the traction for the global strategy, at local levels, will be vastly improved. Think about how senior commitment can be secured in your organisation at the earliest opportunity.
- ✓ Insights from colleagues and disabilities are instrumental for measuring progress and exploring issues and barriers to build into action plans. Systematic and standardised data collection should be considered, but will be difficult to achieve in the early stages of disability inclusion. The message from the research was to get started, don't wait until all locations are on board as this will be an evolving commitment over time.
- ✓ Begin to prioritise projects and locations for pilot projects. Work on the basis of developing projects at local levels and then proving their impact in order to move forward. Evidence of success is powerful in engaging further activity.

# Conclusions

This research has revealed the challenges for organisations when they are creating or considering a global disability inclusion strategy and discussions have yielded many insights into possible responses and solutions.

A detailed scoping of any data available, internal processes and policies at a country level, in connection with considering the local context has proved effective in anticipating the challenges ahead. Building a team of local disability leads who are passionate about the agenda is crucial to drive continuous delivery, but, maximising engagement at a country or regional level will at some point depend on having the visible involvement and influence of senior leaders. Global leaders of disability inclusion need to be highly effective in nurturing and supporting collaboration which takes into account local sensitivities and cultural responses to disability with varying levels of awareness and understanding. The skills needed to open up conversations at a global level so that they are inspirational and motivating should not be underestimated. The research reveals how important it is for global leads in this space to seek ideas and support from both within and outside their own organisations.

Whilst many organisations we spoke to as part of this research were not fully resourcing a global disability inclusion strategy at this current time, a strong commitment to do so is there. For those that are working on this agenda already, the impacts are being observed. This report aims to give those who work within organisations a 'window' into what is needed and what others have experienced. Amongst the thematic analysis from insights collected, the 'case study' paragraphs from organisations supporting this research provide some practical and tangible examples of what businesses are doing to inspire those who are on the same journey.

Of course, there is more to be done. This research focusses on the strategic view. It would be a complement to this if further research were aimed at reviewing the perceptions of people with disabilities and conditions in various countries and regions to see how disability inclusion is effectively working for them.

# Appendix A: Business Disability Forum: Global Business Disability Framework

## Developing a global framework

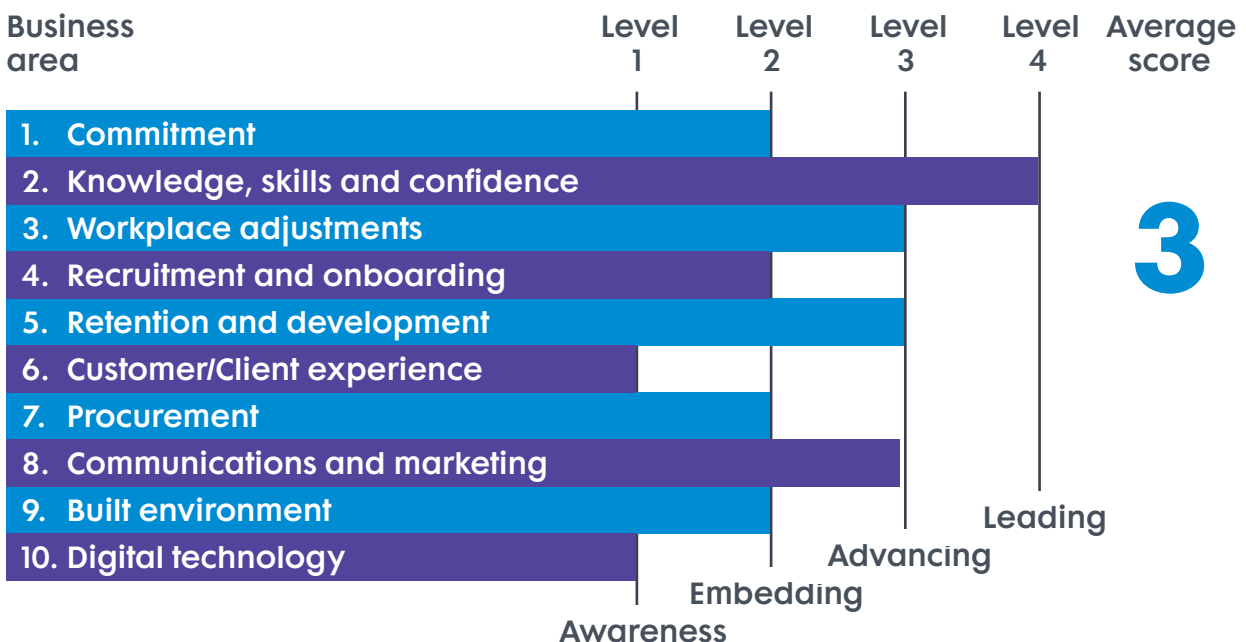
Since 2005, Business Disability Forum’s ‘Disability Standard’ has helped organisations to understand how disability-smart they are across the whole business.

An early focus for Business Disability Forum’s Global Taskforce was to develop a version of the Disability Standard for people with global responsibility for their organisation’s approach to disability inclusion.

Launched in 2018, the Global Business Disability Framework helps global organisations to measure and improve their approach to disability inclusion across a range of global business functions including learning and development, recruitment and onboarding, retention and development, customer experience, digital technology and the built environment.

These global business areas are measured against four levels of ‘maturity’, from Awareness (Level One) through Embedding (Two), Advancing (Three) and Leading (Four). Under each level is a specific set of criteria which allows an organisation to make a relatively quick assessment of current performance and identify ways to improve.

### Global Business Disability Framework



# Appendix B: A 'roadmap' - the route travelled and key milestones

## Raising awareness and embedding

### Understanding the current context

Review any existing internal disability-related data at both corporate and local levels. Gather insights from colleagues and customers with disabilities.

Explore legal and cultural aspects of disability at a country level via your local sites, NGOs and national business and disability networks where they exist.

### Connecting to key values

Develop a set of motivations and messages about why becoming disability smart is a global business priority. Link these to business objectives where appropriate.

Start to anticipate the main global challenges based on insights about engagement with disability inclusion gathered at a country level.

### Establishing senior commitment and alliances

Identify a senior global disability champion. Visible engagement by senior leaders proves vital for the success of a disability inclusion strategy – start to explore these opportunities.

Create and establish a community of local and regional sponsors for disability inclusion.

### Setting the foundations/formalising a strategy

Confirm your global disability inclusion commitments, definitions and values.

Confirm priority areas of focus i.e. colleagues or customers or both. Develop strategy and action plans and allocate resources. Be mindful and respectful of local context (time and resources, ownership, budget, historical relationship autonomy and control).

## Advancing

### Consolidation and collaboration

Leverage senior leadership commitment and establish a global disability steering group comprising of leaders from key global functions.

Establish a way of working with 'leads' in each location (meetings, agreement of activity and responsibility). Build trust; nurture and facilitate but do not 'take over'.

Source or develop content relating to disability inclusion for local dissemination.

Networking is important; connect to other organisations who can inspire and inform.

### Planning activities and projects

Use insights generated when 'starting out' to prioritise your objectives.

Confirm priority areas of focus such as colleagues, customers or both. Target specific projects, or countries, and scale up.

Be prepared to 'flex'; think about levels of autonomy or compromise if needed.

### Consider targets and progress

Report regularly to senior leadership on progress.

Use targets or public commitments for establishing the next phase of work on disability inclusion if they work for the organisation. Consider how replicable and feasible they are.

Start to define and agree minimum standards for key business areas (see the Business Disability Forum: Global Business Disability Framework for reference).

## Leading

### Further action planning and review

Evaluation of initial projects should inform next steps including new projects or scaling up.

Continuously promote successes.

Continue to connect to other organisations, share examples of good practice.

Activity in all locations is informed by insight from people with disabilities.

Progress a long-term action plan.

### Monitoring and support

Review disability-related data in a systematic and regular way, across as many locations as possible.

Develop ways to measure and report progress more formally.

Share lessons learned externally.

Influence and engage with other global organisations.

Contribute to the development of external guidance and/or standards.

Formally report on global disability performance.

Gather evidence of improving global disability-related performance impacting positively on the business.

# Appendix C: Technical note

## Approach

The project combined both qualitative and quantitative methods to complement each other. There were three stages of data collection, including two 'bursts' of qualitative 'deeper dive' interviews, an online consultation of over 100 senior professionals in large global organisations with a level of responsibility for disability inclusion and also a workshop with global Diversity and Inclusion (hereafter D&I) leads.

### Chart 1: Overall approach



#### Stage 1 (Qualitative)

Desk research and qualitative interviews within Business Disability Forum membership



#### Stage 2 (Quantitative)

Wider consultation with Business Disability Forum Membership and key partners (online questionnaire / 115 respondents)



#### Stage 3 (Qualitative)

Further qualitative interviews amongst global organisations



#### Stage 4

Workshop: review of insights and collective response



## **Stage 1 and stage 3: Qualitative interviews**

A total of 25 depth interviews were undertaken (most of them lasting one hour) across Stages 1 and 3. One-to-one interviews ensured that participants had the time and space to speak freely about the challenges relating to global strategies. Participants were senior leads in disability inclusion, either at a local or global level. The achieved sample covered a range of sectors and levels of maturity in terms of resourcing or considering a global disability inclusion strategy.

The topic guide covered the following three broad areas:

- The current context (understanding the challenges of a central global strategy)
- Ambitions (moving forward)
- How to work collaboratively across regions to advance the disability inclusion agenda.

## **Stage 2: Online consultation**

Business Disability Forum asked their global membership organisations, partners and stakeholders to share a link to an online survey which explored their organisation's experiences of developing a global inclusion strategy. The survey was open for large organisations operating in more than one location and respondents themselves needed to be working in Disability and Inclusion or other related functions at a local or global level.

The survey link remained open from late October to the end of December 2019. In total 115 respondents completed at least one module of the survey. Not all of these respondents went on to fully complete all modules in the questionnaire, but a judgement was made that it was important to include partial submissions. The reader will therefore note that base sizes vary in the report.

Of the 115 participants to the online survey, over half had a strategic responsibility for disability inclusion at a regional or global level. The full breakdown of responsibilities illustrates that most professionals in this area had multiple roles and responsibilities.

## Chart 2: Area of responsibility (participants to online survey)

**53%** Strategic responsibility: regional or globally (creating or managing overarching strategies)

**17%** Strategic responsibility: country level (creating or managing overarching strategies)

**26%** Responsibility for specific aspects of disability inclusion: regional or global

**16%** Responsibility for specific aspects of disability inclusion: country level

**17%** Other responsibilities for regional or global D&I (but not specifically disability inclusion)

**10%** Other responsibilities for country level D&I (but not specifically disability inclusion)

Base: 115 participants

Respondents to the survey were working within large organisations; 27 per cent stated their organisation employed between 1,000 and 9,999 staff worldwide, 26 per cent estimated employment as between 10,000 and 49,999 and 39 per cent said their organisation employed 50,000 people plus.

Of course, when an invitation to a survey is disseminated in this way, those who respond are self-selecting and will not represent those who are not associated to the channels disseminating the survey link. This being the case we cannot report the findings as representative of all large organisations globally, but they do represent a body of opinion that is critical for this enquiry. Each and every response reflects valuable reflections and experiences and we thank everyone who took the time to respond.

### Stage 4: Results workshop

Business Disability Forum also facilitated a collaborative working session with a number of global disability leads to capture their response to interim insights generated by the research. The workshop helped the project teams at Business Disability Forum consolidate their understanding of the implications of the insights and gather some actionable advice to empower others wanting to drive their global strategy forward.

## Contributions and support for this research

Many organisations gave Business Disability Forum their time and support in putting this report together in the form of their qualitative feedback via depth interviews.

- Accenture
- Anglo American
- Atos
- Cummins
- DFID
- Enterprise
- EY
- GSK
- HSBC
- ING
- Kingfisher
- Lilly
- Microsoft
- RBS
- Shell
- Standard Chartered
- Total
- Unilever
- Vodafone

Other large business organisations informed our research in the same way but remain anonymous.

We would like to thank them, along with the participants of the online survey and the survey results workshop, for all their time and support.

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