



Disability, Diversity, and Inclusion: Lessons Learned from Industry Leaders

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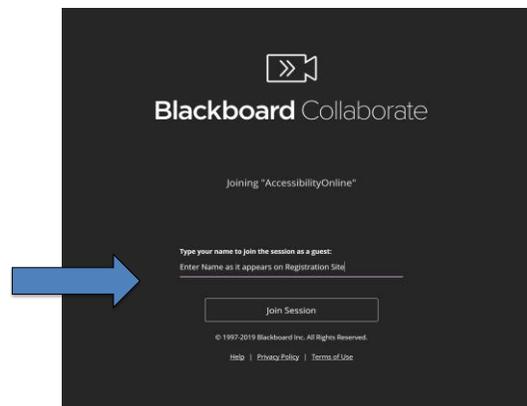
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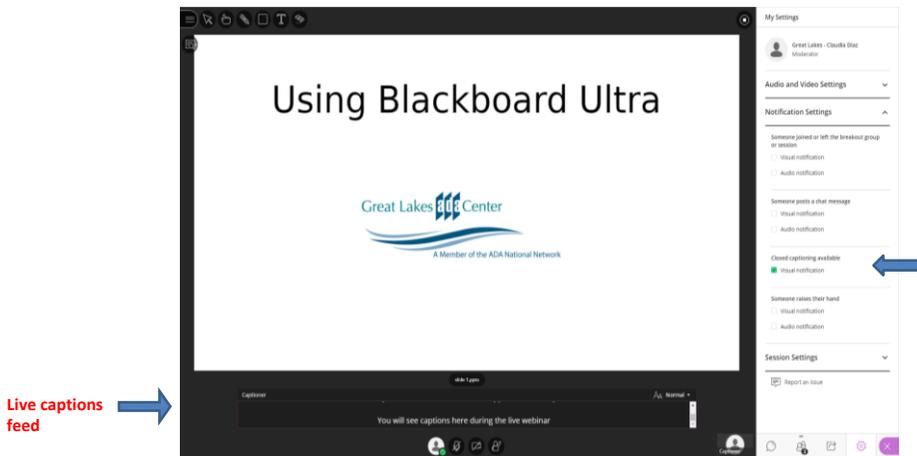
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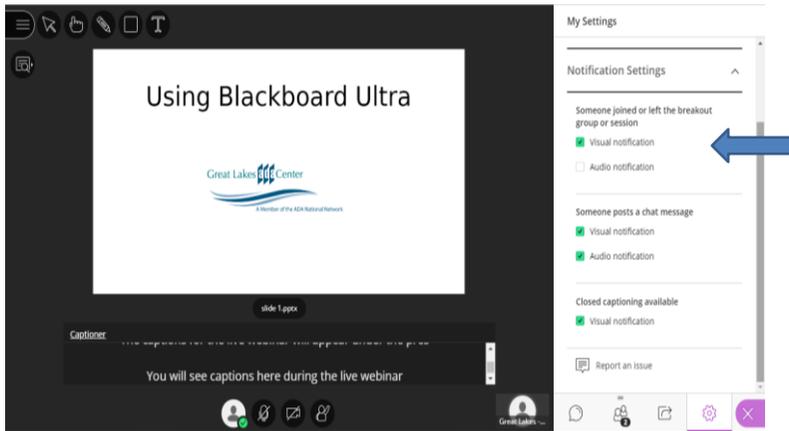
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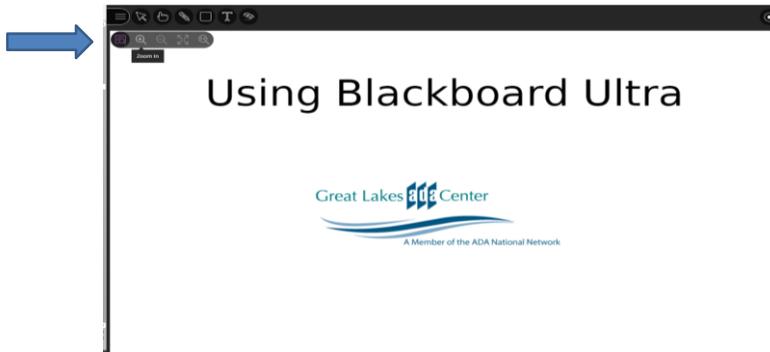
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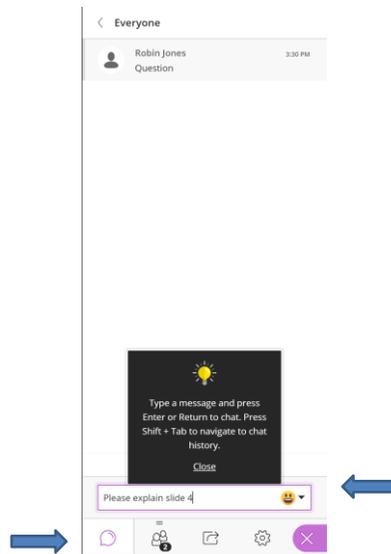


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DISABILITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS

Tuesday February 18, 2020

DISABILITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES



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Agenda

- 1 Key policies supporting disability employment.
- 2 Recent research on disability in the workplace.
- 3 The business case for disability inclusion.
- 4 Findings from research on organizational strategies that position disability as diversity.
- 5 Discussion and recommendations for practice.
- 6 Questions.

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Overview

ADA Great Lakes Center research project

One of four research projects on ADA implementation
<http://www.adagreatlakes.org/Research/>

The Goal of this Project

To improve understanding about organizational factors that lead to excellence in ADA compliance, implementation, and disability programming.

Steps in the Project

- Review of Corporate Social Responsibility Reports.
- Qualitative interviews.

Purpose

1. To identify how leaders in the region recruit, support, and retain people with disabilities.
2. To explore how disability is approached in Diversity and Inclusion efforts.
3. To understand lessons learned and key takeaways for businesses interested in inclusion efforts.

In their own words (quote from interview)

"...[T]oo many times it is viewed that diversity inclusion is about gender and race and ethnicity, whatever. But that disability is not seen in some ways, it's not even brought to the table... as you look at the workforce that's coming up, there is not a lot of people and we all know that disability is the largest gapped, untapped resource that's out there. So, I believe that larger companies, maybe even medium size, are at least starting to think about it and looking at where are they going to find that talent."

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Methodology

Research Questions

1. How is disability included in broader diversity efforts?
2. What strategies do organizations use to implement and promote disability as diversity?

Review of Corporate Social Responsibility practices

- Companies that scored 100% on 2016 USBLN (aka Disability:IN) Disability Equality Index.
- 2015/2016 corporate social responsibility report or equivalent.
- Public facing reporting (e.g. found on company's website).

Interviews with Disability and Inclusion professionals

- Representatives of organizations recommended for disability inclusion efforts.
- Key knowledge of multiple aspects of organizational strategies.

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Disability employment in the U.S.

- People with disabilities participate in the labor force at a much lower rate compared to people without disabilities in the U.S.¹

People without disabilities	77.3%	People with disabilities	33.3%
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- People with disabilities are also more likely to be under employed than people without disabilities, as almost twice as many PWD have part time employment.²

People without disabilities	17%	People with disabilities	33%
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- Employment continues to be a major issue for PWD and point of advocacy.

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Policies to promote workplace/workforce inclusion

- Several policies have been developed to address these disparities.

Title I of the ADA³

- Prevents discrimination on the basis of disability.
- Secures reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

Employment First⁴

- State lead initiatives that draw on multiple strategies to encourage community based, competitive employment for people with disabilities.
- 40 states have Employment First policies or legislation.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)⁵

- Enhances regulations on activities done by state systems to encourage competitive employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

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Policy impact and areas of concerns

Implementation barriers associated with policies and related research:

- 1 Focus on complying with the law, rather than moving beyond compliance and changing workplace cultures.
- 2 Misunderstanding of accommodations and rights as “special treatment”.
- 3 Traditional focus in research and practice on the “supply side” of employment rather than “demand side” of employment. ^{6, 7}

Supply side: focus on individuals for training, skill building, and other ways to prepare people with disabilities for employment.

Demand side: focus on employment environment to explore market needs and skillsets that employers want in employees.

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Supporting disability inclusion: Research trends

Research is shifting towards identifying business practices that enhance disability inclusion in the workplace rather than individual attributes.

Commonly reported business practices
linked to inclusive workplaces.



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Disability and organizational culture

- Diversity and inclusion are complex concepts that are impacted by organizational culture and employment practices. Disability is not typically considered part of workplace “diversity.”

DIVERSITY: differences in experiences, thoughts, and demographics of employees ¹³

INCLUSION: “the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness” (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265)

- **82%** of sampled organizations from our research (received accolades for disability inclusion) included disability in diversity and inclusion statements ¹⁴
- While disability is increasingly becoming a focus of business diversity and inclusion initiatives, it is still often overlooked as a dimension of diversity ^{15, 16}

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Shifting towards disability as diversity

Reasons for businesses have disability inclusion initiatives. ¹⁷



Compliance with public policies

- Comply with regulations.
- Shown to have a limited effect on HR or other business practices.



Social responsibility

- Employers seek social legitimacy.
- Disability inclusion seen as the “right thing to do” by the public.



Benefits of inclusion

- Business case for diversity and inclusion.
- Benefits of diversity and inclusion strategies outweigh potential costs.

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The business case for diversity and inclusion

- Diversity is not just a “good thing to do” but is recognized as “good business”.
- Market value in fully supporting diverse employee base to match diverse markets.
- Disability groups largely untapped as source of innovation.

*Diversity and inclusion strategies have been shown to:*¹¹



Increase customer bases.



Recruit top talent.



Encourage innovative thinking.

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Business case – Employer benefits

- Other research has identified specific benefits unique to including employees with disabilities.

Employees with disabilities have been shown to have longer tenure, which decreases turnover costs.¹⁸

Providing accommodations can:

- increase productivity,
- increase likelihood of employees to stay with the company,
- improve employee morale and job satisfaction.¹⁹

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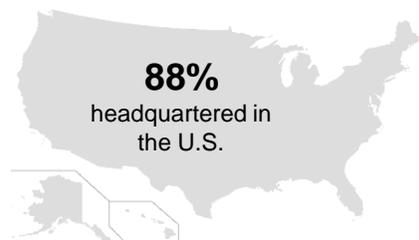
METHODS AND APPROACH

Corporate social responsibility reports

Reviewed strategies found in 34 publicly available CSR reports from companies recognized for their disability inclusion efforts.



Most common industries
Healthcare
Aerospace
Technology
Financial Services
Airlines



All companies had
more than 4000
employees.

Organizational interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews with representatives of 11 large organizations (5000+ employees) located in Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

FAST FACTS

- **All** have a disability-based employee resource group (ERG)
- **Five** have paid positions working on disability inclusion
- **Nine** explicitly include disability in supplier diversity initiatives.

Industries include

- Insurance
- Financial services
- Accounting and consulting
- Healthcare
- Medical technology

Roles of interviewees include

- Human resources
- Diversity & inclusion
- Disability & inclusion
- Recruitment specialists.

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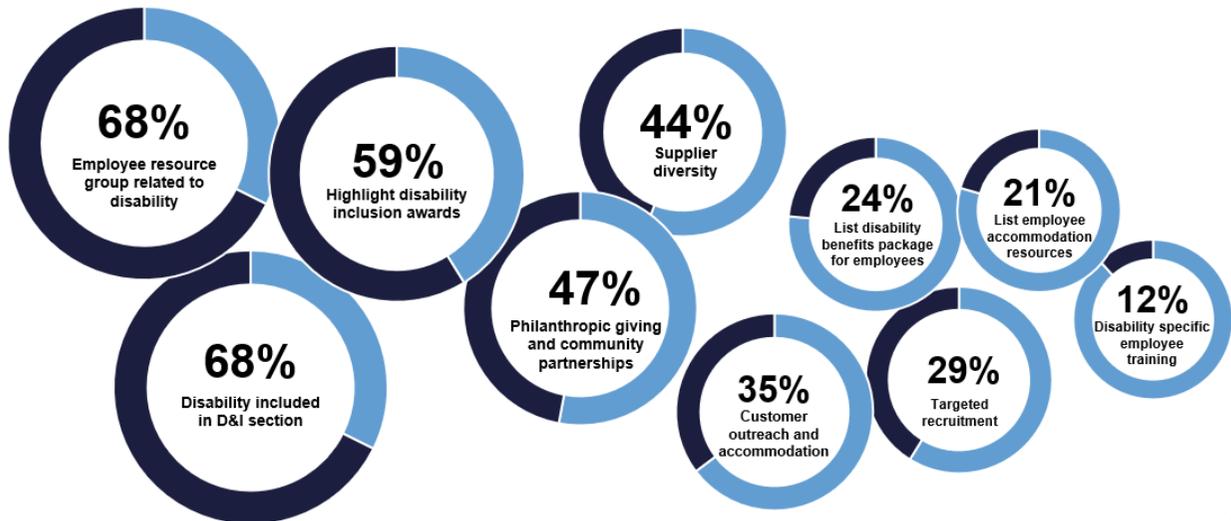
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HOW DO BUSINESSES APPROACH DISABILITY AND INCLUSION?

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Commonly reported CSR strategies



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Approach to diversity & inclusion (D&I)

[In their own words] "So disability is one of the big eight...dimensions of diversity. And so, that's one that we have woven into our [diversity and inclusion] strategy."

- All of the organizations interviewed have existing D&I infrastructure, and a specific commitment and effort towards supporting a diverse workforce.
- Disability is integrated into broader D&I efforts through:
 - Corporate Social Responsibility planning.
 - Employee Groups and internal communications.
 - Broader Diversity Council initiatives.
 - Recruitment.
- Three key strategies identified by all interviewees: Communities of Practice, Employee Resource Groups, and Senior Leadership Buy-in.

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Findings 1: Community of Practice (COP)

What is a COP?

- Standing resource for ongoing conversations about business needs and and community partnerships
- Often business to business groups. Partnerships may also include collaboration with disability orgs.
- Opportunities for trainings, recruitment, and partnerships

Who participates in a COP?

- Communities can include external partners in similar industries. Many have an “executive sponsor” or participation from a senior leader
- Members often part of multiple diversity groups; focus is on partnering with other regional groups for activities.



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What does participating in a COP look like?

- Learning/sharing with other companies to develop strategies, discuss best practices and common barriers, raise awareness of/share resources, learn from each other regarding disability inclusion.
- Identifying and bringing experts to consult on disability inclusive strategies.
- Tapping into regional resources to enhance disability inclusion (universities).
- Bridging between disability providers to build talent pipelines.
- Examples of COP: Disability:IN, local disability inclusion business groups, National Organization on Disability, local disability-related organizations (such as vocational rehabilitation providers) to enhance disability inclusion in the workplace.

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Communities of Practice – Understanding the benefits

Primary benefits detailed by interviewees:

- Starting point: “Better together” approach—learning from other businesses; not reinventing good practices.
- Demonstrates organizational commitment to disability inclusion; raises awareness within the organization.
- Beneficial to client relations/networking opportunities as well as learning best practices.
- Helps organizations prioritize and strategize on disability recruitment, employee supports, and customer outreach.
- Provides increased leadership and visibility, opportunities for additional training, and ways to “embrace passion.”
- Provides “diversity of thought” to company activities; opportunities for advocacy around accessibility and accommodations.
- May help with self-identification initiatives (people are more comfortable disclosing when there is a group).

In their own words

"We had started doing some work around building our own training programs, but we've kind of paused that, waiting to see if there's other external organizations that have something to offer... that's where we go back to our link in with [the community of practice]... perhaps there's something that we can leverage from..."

"...we have a board member on [the community of practice].... We believe in hiring people with disabilities, so we would be a part of that group in support of that, and all of the initiatives that they provide and the trainings."

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Findings 2: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

In their own words

" [The ERGs are] really trying to build advocacy from within the company itself. But then there's also connections... so the D&I area actually drives more in terms of what the company is doing from a marketing perspective, from a recruiting perspective."

What is an ERG? (Also known as Business Resource Groups or Affinity groups)

- Employee networks developed to support inclusion and learning related to various aspects of diversity.
- Structures and supports may vary (e.g. centralized leadership, direct D&I support, fixed budgets for activities).
- Internal resources to inform, educate, and empower other employees.
- Participation is often done in addition to regular job tasks.

Primary roles include:

- Raise awareness of disability inclusion and activities within the organization.
- Develop disability inclusion strategies (e.g. strategic plans, advising D&I divisions).
- Implement inclusion activities (e.g. awareness events, trainings, meetings).
- Advocate and modeling access (e.g. encouraging accessible features in meetings or buildings).

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How and why do employees get involved with an ERG?

- Disability-based ERGs are often newer than other affinity groups; membership typically includes people with disabilities, family members/caregivers of people with disabilities, and allies.
- Incentives and supports for involvement such as professional development support and paid time for meetings.
- Often have a page or link on an intranet page.
- Usually have designated leadership (either rotating president or executive leadership).

In their own words

"There's so many different reasons people get involved [in ERGs]. And I think the shift that we've seen over these ten years is that ally component and having people just get involved because they want to learn more about the disability community and that people can do things in a different way and don't assume they can't do x, y, and z when they're interviewing because of a disability that's visible."

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How do ERGs impact the workplace?

- Members often host events such as trainings or awareness raising activities.
- Leadership opportunity to promote internal growth and networking.
- Inter-organizational collaboration for such as reviewing key policies, plans, and data.
- Involved with plans or activities that are linked to/guided by company core pillars/core values (connect business strategies with disability inclusion activities).
- Internal advocacy to improve disability inclusion efforts, including self-identification and accessibility initiatives.

In their own words

"Being a leader in the ERG is means a lot of exposure to a lot of different executives, being exposed to a lot of different type of work that you might not get in your current job. You get a lot of different training and self-development opportunities..."

"We had each member of our senior leadership has responsibility for each one of our business resource groups. So it's at the very top level that they're pushing the agenda to make sure that the business resource group has the support, the tools, and the resources that it needs to continue to head out in that particular direction. But also, we're kind of relying heavily on the business resource groups to a certain degree to kind of tell the firm what it is that we should be doing, what we should be participating in, and where we should be."

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Findings 3: Senior leadership buy-in

What is senior leadership buy-in?

- Expressed support and participation in disability inclusive strategies from top level senior leadership.
- All organizations strongly recommended the need for senior leadership buy-in for disability inclusion to:
 - Set the tone within the organization.
 - Raise awareness of the disability inclusion issues.
 - Ensure other members of the organization were also committed to disability inclusion efforts.
 - Gain support and resources to accomplish disability inclusion activities.

What does senior leadership involvement include?

- Executive sponsors of Employee Resource Groups (some assigned, others volunteer with a personal connection).
- Diversity councils or other groups comprised of senior leaders that set strategic direction.
- Senior leaders participating in diversity inclusion activities (such as self-Identification campaigns).
- Senior leaders participating in communities of practice (such as local disability inclusion strategies).
- Designated senior leader roles for disability inclusion (such as providing budgets, approving activities, spreading awareness, and providing direction on disability inclusive strategies).

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In their own words

"I think that people can only be successful with top down. I really do. I think you need to have the leadership support, the tone at the top, and I know these are all cliché phrases... But it's true. Having them push D&I as something that's part of the core of the firm and our core values, those are the types of words we use. And I think a majority of the people at the firm believe in that as well. But it's because the top down has been so vocal on this topic."

"I think a lot of it ... starts with the senior management of organizations as long as they're supportive and provide the resources. I think ...if [employees] can see that their leaders are supportive on [disability inclusion] efforts... then I think it gets spread across the firm... it can kind of be embraced more so."

"I think it starts with the top of the house and through that engagement, we... continue to work through our senior HR partners and our business leaders on a country level. We've got various steering committees ...So, it's not just one team driving [disability inclusion initiatives]. It's truly a partnership working with the senior leaders from the business and HR perspective to determine... the rollout plan."

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DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Collaboration for disability inclusion

What can be done to better support disability inclusion in the workplace?

Business networking groups to share strategies and resources, facilitated through advocacy organizations, public agencies, and businesses.

Working groups and conferences on regional and national levels to enhance information sharing and thought leadership.

Partnerships and internal dialogue through development and use of internal audit tools, like Disability:IN and National Organization on Disability.

Training and consulting on disability inclusive strategies by advocacy groups and other experts.

Discussion and key recommendations

- Start with “low hanging fruit” through business to business networks, and conversations with local Communities of Practice.
- Review diversity and inclusion strategies: is disability included alongside other aspects of diversity, inclusion, and identity?
- Disability inclusion is an *ongoing* and *evolving* process.
- Explore the business case for disability inclusion. Internal organizational efforts mirror external markets. Transformative potential of internal practices.
- Find a balance to sustain growth. Find a champion but don’t let them be your only resource. Find a community partner but don’t let them be your only network. Top-down commitment is essential but only one part of the process.

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Recommendations *In their own words*

“I think the most basic level...if an employer can get employees in similar situations together just to provide support to one another, I think that's a great start. I think that the ideal level, the most mature level, this needs to be integrated across the employee life cycle...part of recruiting, ...part of the onboarding, ...part of the ongoing development. Making sure the employees are aware of the support that's out there, throughout their entire duration at the company.”

“Disability etiquette, I think that's something that a lot of people don't have, they don't grasp, they don't even know that they need to learn about it, and as much as you can raise awareness at your firm, make sure people are treated the way that they want to be treated. Teach people what that means, because a lot of times people mean well... So it's, in my mind, the best thing is that we start doing it; openly having conversations about differences, and not making it taboo, on the contrary, encouraging uncomfortable conversations to take place.”

“...how do we get connected and build that strong thought leadership, best practice sharing, better understanding, because every organization is going to be built a little bit differently. And they're going to have their different approaches, but I'm a firm believer of understanding your organization well enough to know what's going to work well, what's not, and how do you infuse a little bit more of that stuff that's going to work well into your existing environment and slowly start to change culture in a positive way.”

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QUESTIONS?

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