

6 PRACTICAL WAYS

to effectively support employees living with disabilities



We know diversity and inclusion are good for business. We envision workplaces where we can honestly claim that we don't see differences or diversity as a challenge or an afterthought but as rights for all individuals.

Focusing on the skills and abilities a diverse workforce can bring to a business will create an environment that celebrates people's individuality and reflects the diverse community we live in.



1. FACILITATE WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS

- Allowing a person living with disability, injury or health condition to have some flexibility in their working hours, such as working part-time, starting and finishing later, or working from home for part of the week
- Introducing fair, more equitable recruitment processes, such as standardised interviews
- Redistributing minor duties (not inherent requirements of a job) that a person living with disability finds difficult to do
- Buying or modifying equipment, such as speech recognition software for someone with vision impairment, height-adjustable workstations or an amplified phone for a person who is hearing impaired.

atWork Australia can help your business access funding from the Australian Government to cover the costs of making workplace modifications relevant to your employee's requirements. If you need to buy equipment, make modifications or access services for your new employee, help is at hand to manage the application process at no cost to your business.



2. PROVIDE EDUCATION & TRAINING

Educate staff on the intricacies of diversity and inclusion – communicating and practicing the use of inclusive language, accessible training for specific job roles and communicating the challenges that someone living with disability may face so they can receive support from teammates.



3. USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Verbal and non-verbal language plays a major role for everyone to feel included regardless of race, geographic location, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, and appearance.

- a. Evaluate the language used in documents
 - b. Observe how language is used through written and verbal dialogue
 - c. Look out for gendered or exclusive terms / phrases (e.g. Guys) or phrases with racist origins or against those living with disability
 - d. Put people first (e.g. person living with disability)
 - e. Don't be afraid to ask as language is nuanced and often reflects a person's personal preference
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4. CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

- a. Assign a buddy or mentor like you would for any new starter
 - b. Extend invitations to team meetings or lunches
 - c. Settings with a lot of people can be confronting – be conscious of this with new members of the team, like you would for any new starter
 - d. Forget 'fit' and focus on helping individuals thrive
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5. EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP

While top-down leadership is fundamental to driving culture and cultural change, it is the responsibility of all individuals to be open and inclusive. There are several narratives that run congruently in the workplace.

As a manager or executive, contribute by filtering behaviours, emotions, experience and education down to teams. Express why you care, why it matters and why it should matter to all staff.



6. CELEBRATE AND LISTEN

Inclusive cultures make people feel valued and proud of whom they are, giving them the confidence to feel like they can contribute freely and without the feelings of prejudice every day.

Take the time to listen to your various groups; segmenting employee surveys will allow you to get a true cross-section of data and begin to understand where issues may lie or what the needs of individuals are.

Hiring a diverse workforce will facilitate different methods of communication, collaboration and leadership to balance out working styles and create a fluid and dynamic culture.

atWork Australia is focused on providing employers with resources and guidance on how to implement an inclusive workforce where diversity is celebrated.

If your business needs support, please visit the atWork Australia website or reach out to our Employment Engagement team on 1300 080 856.

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