

# *Ability reveals itself* Disability inclusion at PwC

*Presented by the  
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Launch



# Introduction

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PwC's diversity efforts continue to evolve with the needs of our people, our business and the external environment, but the core of our strategy remains the same. Inclusion is about leveraging our differences to create high-performing teams.

Disability is a dimension of diversity. Actually, the disability community is one of the nation's largest groups of diverse people. Unlike other dimensions of diversity, it's also a group that any one of us can become a member of at any point throughout our lives.

This briefing outlines some of the key factors driving our strategy, the simple ways each of us can be champions of disability inclusion, and a brief overview of PwC's disability microsite and disability virtual collaboration community.



# *We all know someone with a disability*

## Background

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According to the 2010 US Census, 56 million people—or nearly 1 in 5 people—have a disability. In 2008, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition of disability was expanded by Congress to state that a person may be disabled if he or she has a physical or mental condition that substantially limits a major life activity, has a history of disability, or is believed to have a physical or mental impairment that is neither minor nor transitory (lasting or expected to last six months or less). Some examples of disabilities include blindness, deafness, cancer, diabetes, major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and physical impairments.

PwC is made up of more than 37,000 people, including individuals like Assurance Partner Jamie Draper, featured on the new “Ability reveals itself” site. Although Jamie may have a visible physical disability that requires him to walk with the assistance of canes, our people and our clients value the combination of talents that make him a partner: technical acumen, the ability to generate influential and lasting impact through driving revenue and relationships with clients, and regarded as an industry leader who inspires others through demonstrating the firm’s core values with client, staff, and other partner/principal interactions.

**In order to attract and retain people like Jamie, we need to raise awareness about the broad diversity of abilities at the firm and continue to foster an environment of inclusion that recognizes and embraces differences.**



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## How do we define disability

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has a three-part definition of disability. Under the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. has a record of such an impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such an impairment.

A physical impairment is defined by ADA as “any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.”

Given the variety of conditions and impairments that are covered under this definition, the ADA does not provide a comprehensive list.

However, some examples include:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Allergies        | Impairments requiring the use of a wheelchair |
| Asthma           | Intellectual disabilities                     |
| Autism           | Major depression                              |
| Bipolar disorder | Missing limbs                                 |
| Blindness        | Multiple Sclerosis                            |
| Cancer           | Muscular dystrophy                            |
| Cerebral palsy   | Obsessive compulsive disorder                 |
| Deafness         | Post-traumatic stress disorder                |
| Diabetes         | Schizophrenia                                 |
| Epilepsy         |   |
| HIV/AIDS         |   |

*“I’m hard of hearing, so one of my main challenges is when we’re doing an audio conference. Everyone has been really conscientious about asking if I need the volume louder or if I’m close enough to the speakerphone. It’s almost a subconscious thing, which is fantastic.”*

- Assurance Sr. Associate



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The Disability Strategy Council is a group of partners and functional group leaders focused on key policies and tools to help PwC respond to the changing environment as it relates to the employment of individuals who have a disability. We have also developed the “Ability reveals itself” microsite designed to connect our professionals who have a disability with resources within and outside of the firm, share their stories, and help those who do not have a disability learn about disability inclusion.

A disability is a personal matter and the choice to disclose in the workplace can be complicated, and is often depended on a person’s perception of whether the environment is inclusive. We should never assume that any individual has a disability, ask about their disability status, or advise them about disclosing a disability one way or another. However, we should all be aware of the firm’s disability related efforts and play our part in creating a culture of disability inclusion at the firm.

Simple actions each of us can take to help cultivate disability inclusion:

- Include disability when speaking about the different dimensions of diversity
- Practice disability inclusive language
- Consider accessibility of team communications, training, meetings and events so that all participants can participate fully

To support you, this briefing includes tools such as a guide on what individuals with a disability want you to know and FAQs.



# Disability inclusion guide

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### ***What are the objectives and goals behind our disability efforts?***

PwC wants its partners and staff who have a disability to feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work every day. Increasing accessibility and reviewing the policies and processes that impact our people with disabilities are important. However, even more critical is the need to raise awareness about the ways we can all be advocates and champions for disability inclusion.

### ***How many people with disabilities do we have at the firm?***

We know that sometimes, people with non-visible disabilities are reluctant to disclose their status formally. However, self-disclosure opportunities are scheduled annually, and the advocacy of our people as champions of disability inclusion can increase formal disclosure to more accurately reflect the diversity of our people.

### ***Can I make inquiries about an individual's disability status?***

No. While the firm offers formal opportunities for self-disclosure to all of our people using the government issued self-identification form, you should not make any individual inquiries into any personal data disability status. Doing so risks potentially violating the firm's information protection principles, as well as applicable laws and regulations.

### ***A staff member has disclosed a disability to me, what are my next steps?***

Explain to the staff member that the process of self-disclosing their disability status is voluntary and will be maintained on a confidential, but need-to-know basis. Advise staff members that while their disability-related information is personal and private, there may be

specific business-related reasons to disclose the disability status (i.e. apprising emergency personnel, managing a disability-related).

### ***I am not aware of anyone on my team with a disability. How can I manage my team more inclusively?***

Most disabilities are not apparent, so we may not be aware that our friends, colleagues or clients have them. Non-visible disabilities include partial impairments like low vision or hearing loss; mental health conditions or chronic health conditions like diabetes, asthma and orthopedic impairments. Managers and coaches have a goal to provide leadership that is fair and effective for everyone on the team.

Some practical ways to demonstrate disability inclusiveness on teams include:

- Using disability inclusive language
- Considering accessibility—such as what you can do to make meetings, events and communications accessible for people with a wide range of abilities?
- Engaging all team members in disability etiquette and inclusion training
- Encouraging other managers and partners with disabilities to publicize their experiences and their success

### ***Will these efforts be costly to the firm?***

Sixty-five percent of accommodation requests over the past year incurred less than \$500. No cost was associated with nearly one third of accommodation requests. However, the steeper cost, is potentially losing ground to our competitors and missing out on the talent available from this broad and diverse pool of professionals.



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PwC’s distinctive approach to diversity is based on a belief that we each have a personal accountability for contributing to our inclusive and high-performing culture. As with other diverse populations, we know interactions with someone with a disability may be uncomfortable, particularly if the situation is new to us, and we are unaware of appropriate social protocols and norms.

There is a great deal of stigma associated with disabilities that affect human interaction, for example a misconception that intelligence is somehow correlated with clarity of speech and other communication abilities.

The following is a 60-second guide to disability inclusive communications and interactions.



## Disability inclusive communications and interactions

✓ **Refer to the person first, then the disability.** A disability is what someone has, not what some is. For example: “manager who has deafness,” not “deaf manager” or “people with disabilities,” not “disabled people” or “the disabled.”

X **Avoid expressions that portray people with disabilities as victims.** For example: “suffers from,” “challenged by,” or “struggles with.”  
Do not use terms such as “handicapped”, “crippled”, “physically challenged”, “retarded” or “wheelchair bound.”

### When meeting people who have physical disabilities:

- When possible, place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair.
- Do not rest against or lean on someone’s wheelchair.
- When introduced to someone with limited hand use or an artificial limb, do not hesitate to offer to shake hands. Offering your left hand is also acceptable.

### When meeting people who are blind or visually impaired:

- Always identify yourself and others who may be with you.
- In a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
- Do not speak to, pet, or otherwise distract a work animal from its job without the owner’s permission.
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer for help is accepted

### When speaking with people with speech or hearing impairments:

- Listen attentively when talking with individuals who have difficulty speaking, and wait for them to finish. If clarification is needed, ask brief questions requiring short answers, “yes” or “no” responses, or a nod of the head.
- When speaking to a person accompanied by a companion or interpreter, speak directly to the person, not to the interpreter.
- When approaching a person with deafness or a hearing impairment, tap the person gently on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his/her attention.
- If a person is wearing a hearing aid, do not shout. Speak in a normal tone of voice. If the person is unable to understand what you are saying, think of ways to rephrase the same message.



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### What your colleagues with disabilities want you to know

- **The definition of disability is broader than many think.** It doesn't just refer to people who use wheelchairs or who are blind or have a hearing impairment. Throughout our lives, we all may have varying physical, cognitive and mental health abilities—and any one of us could become disabled at any time.
- **Language matters.** Words like handicap, physically challenged, retarded or crippled are offensive or outdated and have the power to exclude me.
- **Don't make assumptions.** Even if it's well intentioned, don't make assumptions about what I can and cannot do or activities and opportunities I may want to participate in. Ask me. I may surprise you.
- **Like everyone, people with disabilities are unique.** Two individuals who have the same disability may have very different approaches to the same task or assignment.
- **There are different ways to achieve high performance.** Although my way of contributing to the team may be different, it should not be viewed as less effective or valuable.
- **I don't want to be treated differently because of my disability.** I don't want to be seen as the poster child for inspiration or as someone who needs your sympathy. As your colleague, I'm looking for the same respect you would expect from me.
- **The choice to share information about my disability is as personal as the information itself.** And if I share information about my disability with you, please treat it as confidential.
- Just because you may not see people with disabilities walking your hallway, doesn't mean we're not working with you. **Many disabilities are not visible.**
- If my disability is impacting my speech, causing you an inability to understand what I'm saying, I'd prefer you tell me right away so **we can jointly decide on an alternate form of communication**, ensuring my ideas and thoughts are heard.
- Even if you think I have a disability it doesn't mean I personally identify as having a disability.

### The language of disability inclusion

Improper phrasing	Proper phrasing
<i>Handicapped</i>	Person with disabilities
<i>Crippled</i>	Person who has a disability
<i>Disabled</i>	
<i>Special Needs</i>	
<i>Differently abled</i>	
<i>Mentally ill</i>	Person with mental health disabilities Person with a mental health condition Person with mental health issues
<i>Normal</i>	Person without disabilities
<i>Deaf and dumb</i>	Person who is deaf and communicates through sign language, writing, etc.
<i>Deaf mute</i>	
<i>Brain damaged</i>	Person with a brain injury
<i>Birth defects</i>	Congenital disabilities
<i>Dwarf</i>	Of short stature
<i>Midget</i>	Is a little person
<i>Special</i>	Needs Accommodations



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The mission of the Professionals with Disabilities Network (PwDN) is to strengthen the PwC experience for all partners and staff by leveraging the unique talents of people with disabilities and fostering a culture of awareness, inclusion, leadership, and trust.

The screenshot shows the PwDN Spark page on the PwC intranet. The page features a navigation bar with 'Home', '50+', 'People', 'Content', 'Places', and 'Create'. Below the navigation bar, there are buttons for 'Share', 'Follow', and 'Join this group'. The main content area includes a large 'PwDN' logo, a 'Who We Are' section with a description of the network's mission, and a 'Featured Content' section with articles like 'PwC launches 'Ability Reveals Itself' microsite'. There are also icons for 'Who We Are', 'Our Mission', 'What We Do', and 'Get Involved'. A sidebar on the right contains icons for 'Start a Discussion', 'Post a Blog', 'Create a Document', 'Ask a Question', 'View Events', and 'Spark an Idea'. A disclaimer is located at the bottom right of the page.