

## DISABILITY ABSENT FROM LEADERSHIP STRATEGY IN MAJORITY OF GLOBAL BUSINESSES

- *New research reveals majority (56%) of global C-Suite executives rarely or never discuss disability on their leadership agendas*
- *Only 7% of business leaders identify as disabled – despite 15% worldwide living with disability*
- *1 in 5 C-suite leaders with a disability do not feel comfortable admitting their disability to colleagues*

**London:** New research released today by #valuable, the worldwide call to action for business to recognise the value of disabled people, has found disability is still woefully absent from the majority of board level discussions globally - with the majority (56%) of global senior executives rarely or never discussing disability on their leadership agendas.

The investigation, carried out by EY on behalf of #valuable, surveyed business leaders at C-suite level from a range of industries and across 17 countries worldwide, exploring board level attitudes to disability inclusion in business.

*Disability Confidence: The Business Leadership Imperative* has found business leaders with disabilities are twice as likely to be underrepresented in companies globally: though 1 in 7 of the world's population live with a disability, fewer than half this figure (1 in 14 or 7%) of board level executives consider themselves to have a disability.

Of these, 1 in 5 do not feel comfortable admitting their disability to colleagues – highlighting that disability continues to be a taboo subject for many of the world's leading businesses.

Founder of #valuable, Caroline Casey, commented:

“The research reveals we still have a long way to go to ensure disability inclusion is discussed at the very top of business and is taken seriously enough to be built into the leadership strategy at global businesses.

“Although 7% of leaders identified in this survey have a direct connection to disability, there are very few leading high-profile voices for disability inclusion. In the last 30 years, bold business leadership has played a crucial role in driving social change. Now is the time for us to see a bold leader stand up for disability.”

The research has also found that visibility of senior leaders with a disability increases the prevalence of discussions about disability inclusion at board level. 63% of C-suite execs who know disabled board-level colleagues report that disability is discussed at leadership level, compared with only 37% of those not aware of any disabled board-level colleagues.

Senior leaders with a disabled family member are significantly more likely to report disability on their leadership agenda (54%) than senior leaders without a disabled family member (37%).

This snapshot of attitudes towards disability inclusion was conducted following in-depth conversations with business leaders about their experience with disability and disability confidence



in their organisations. It reveals that business leaders can experience significant benefits from high levels of disability confidence within their organisations.

Business leaders cited that disability confidence helps them capture new markets, demonstrates relevance to clients and consumers, and helps build their brands. Furthermore, promoting disability confidence is central to attracting and retaining talent and can result in greater productivity levels.

Today, more than one billion people across the world live with some form of disability - 15% of the global population, or 1 in 7 people - but their value is routinely ignored by business, equivalent to disregarding a potential market the size of US, Brazil, Indonesia and Pakistan combined.

Along with their friends, families and communities, the one billion disabled people worldwide also hold a disposable annual income of \$8 trillion a year, equating to an opportunity that business cannot afford to ignore.

Of those one billion, 80% of disabilities are acquired later life, and our ageing global population means the prevalence of disability is on the rise.

The current global employment rate for disabled people is half that of non-disabled people, a gap that has widened since 2010. According to the World Health Organisation, up to half of businesses in OECD countries choose to pay fines rather than meet quotas on disability.

Launched in 2017, #valuable is a catalyst for an inclusion revolution that exists to position disability equally on the global business leadership agenda. It is spearheaded by award-winning activist, social entrepreneur and Binc founder Caroline Casey, who is registered blind.

Learning from past campaigns, which have led to systemic change, #valuable is working to engage the world's most influential businesses leaders, brands and platforms to make a global call to action.

Last month, #valuable announced the support of high profile global business leaders and companies, including strategic partners Omnicom and Virgin Media, and leaders including Virgin Group Founder Sir Richard Branson, Unilever's Paul Polman and Omnicom's Janet Riccio.

Mark Weinberger, EY Chairman & CEO, today announces his backing of the campaign:

"Diversity & Inclusion are essential elements of culture, which is the lifeblood of an organisation. At EY, this is a core piece of our Vision 2020 strategy, as we know we can't be successful unless all of our people are involved and engaged. EY is proud to support the research on inclusion of those with diverse abilities and as the initial results indicate, we all need to work together to bring more attention to this issue.

"We've seen the power of these initiatives first hand through our Neurodiverse Centers of Excellence, which recruits, trains and employs individuals on the Autism spectrum. #Valuable is an important part of enabling all individuals to be engaged in our workforce."

#valuable is proud to announce that it has joined forces with the World Economic Forum, which announced last month that disability inclusion will form part of its Annual Meeting agenda. This will be the first time that Davos has included disability on the main stage with the support of global business leaders.



Among other highlights of the Forum's disability inclusion agenda, Caroline Casey and Paul Polman will be part of a press conference with other prominent business leaders on "The Case for Disability Inclusion" and talk about the ambitions of the #valuable campaign on Thursday 24 January 2019.

Caroline Casey added:

"Disability inclusion is an issue that has been pushed to the sidelines of business for far too long. Our research shows that disability confidence is lacking in many global businesses, and that people with disabilities still face significant stigmas imposed in the workplace. We must act now to change this, for the sake of the 1 billion worldwide living with a disability.

"Business has proven its social muscle time and time again, making huge progress advancing gender, race and LGBTQ+ equality over the last 50 years. The route to a truly inclusive world is through the creation of truly inclusive business. We know that if business values disabled people equally then society will too."

#valuable – it's everyone's business.

- Ends -

## Notes to Editors

### Methodology

This research was carried out by EY on behalf of #valuable, in Autumn 2018. The survey polled 138 C-Suite Executives from 17 different countries across a wide range of industries, on the topic of disability.

Countries surveyed include: The United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, the United States, Mexico, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Australia, Colombia, Luxembourg, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Spain.

Industries include:

- 31% Professional Services
- 29% Technology, Media and Telecommunications
- 11% Consumer Products and Retail
- 11% Financial Services
- 3% Health Sciences
- 2% Advanced Manufacturing and Mobility
- 1% Energy
- 1% Smart infrastructure
- 11% Other

The survey defined a "disability" as:

- An impairment that may be visible or invisible – cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some combination thereof
- Substantially affects a person's life activities
- May be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime



## **Media contacts**

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## **About #valuable & Binc**

Launched by Binc, #valuable is a campaign working to ensure businesses globally recognise the value of the one billion people around the world living with a disability. We believe that building a global society that recognises the value of the 1 billion people living with a disability starts with business. We're on a mission to make sure businesses across the world recognise the value of the one billion people living with a disability.

Binc was founded by social entrepreneur and activist Caroline Casey in 2015, with a mission to ignite a historic global movement for a new age of business inclusion. Binc is capitalising on Caroline Casey's 18-year track record of success engaging over 450 organisations and working with 500,000 business leaders. Binc fundamentally believes that inclusive business creates inclusive societies and is initiating a new approach to business that genuinely includes the 1 billion people living in the world with a disability. Binc is the founding team behind valuable, an ambitious global campaign to put inclusivity on top of the business agenda around the world in 2019. Binc is using a tried and tested formula that has worked in the past for gender, race and LGBT to leverage the exponential rise of The Diversity and Inclusion Agenda.

## **About Virgin Media**

Virgin Media offers four multi award-winning services across the UK and Ireland: broadband, TV, mobile phone and landline.

Its dedicated, ultrafast network delivers the fastest widely-available broadband speeds to homes and businesses and it's expanding this through its Project Lightning programme, which could extend its network to up to 17 million premises.

Its interactive Virgin TV service brings live TV, thousands of hours of on-demand programming and the best apps and games to customers through a set-top box, as well as on-the-go through tablets and smartphones.

Virgin Mobile launched the world's first virtual mobile network and offers fantastic value and innovative services with 4G connectivity. It is also one of the largest fixed-line home phone providers in the UK and Ireland.



Through Virgin Media Business it supports entrepreneurs, businesses and the public sector, delivering the fastest widely available broadband speeds and tailor-made services.

Virgin Media is part of Liberty Global, the world's largest international TV and broadband company. Liberty Global connects 21 million customers through operations in 10 countries across Europe subscribing to 45 million TV, broadband internet and telephony services. It also serves 6 million mobile subscribers and offers WiFi service through 12 million access points across its footprint.

### **About Omnicom Group**

Omnicom Group ([www.omnicomgroup.com](http://www.omnicomgroup.com)) is a leading global marketing and corporate communications company. Omnicom's branded networks and numerous specialty firms provide advertising, strategic media planning and buying, digital and interactive marketing, direct and promotional marketing, public relations and other specialty communications services to over 5,000 clients in more than 100 countries.

### **Definition of disability:**

#valuable uses the definition provided by the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with disabilities, which defines a person living with a disability as 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/chapter8.pdf](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/chapter8.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> WHO

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/chapter8.pdf](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/chapter8.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Return on Disability, 2016

<sup>5</sup> Scope and Landman, Enabling Work

– [https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Landman\\_Report.PDF?ext=.pdf](https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Landman_Report.PDF?ext=.pdf)

### **Disability and the Sustainable Development Goals**

The need to advance disability inclusion around the globe is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Disability or 'persons with disabilities' are specifically referenced 11 times in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a further six references to 'persons in vulnerable situations'. Principally with reference to: promoting inclusive economic growth that allows people with disabilities to fully access the job market and guaranteeing equal and accessible education through the creation of inclusive