

# Disability Confidence

The Business Leadership Imperative



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# 53%

of people are  
touched by disability\*

# \$8 trillion

The spending power  
of disabled people and  
their families\*

# 4%

of businesses are  
working to become  
more inclusive\*

# Foreword

## Taking Disability Seriously

I still remember walking into the HR office of a dream graduate job and telling my employers I wasn't able to see. After years of hiding the fact I was legally blind – with a condition called ocular albinism – I had come to realize I could no longer deny it.

Growing up I was determined my disability would not hold me back. The same determination drives me today to push for an inclusion revolution that positions disability equally on the global business leadership agenda with the world's most influential leaders, brands and platforms.

That's why I'm proud to introduce this investigation into disability inclusion within business, carried out by EY on behalf of #valuable. The report spotlights just how far we have to go: revealing disability to be woefully absent from the majority of board level discussions globally.

Even though 1 in 7 of the world's population live with a disability, fewer than half this figure (1 in 14) of board level executives consider themselves to have a disability. Of those who identified as having a disability, 1 in 5 do not feel comfortable admitting it to a colleague – proving that the disability taboo is live and well.

Why the focus on business? In the last 30 years, bold business leadership has played a crucial role in driving social change, advancing gender, race and LGBT+ equality. The route to a truly inclusive world is through the creation of inclusive businesses. Where business goes, society follows.

As well as being 'top-down', these changes have to be comprehensive – we cannot have a la carte inclusion where firms pick and choose what they want to include. It won't work.

Sadly, high-profile leaders championing disability equality are few and far between. That is why #valuable is delighted to feature here the likes of Paul Polman, Jeff Dodds and Janet Riccio, who present a clear case for why business has to take disability seriously.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank #valuable's corporate partners, Virgin Media and Omnicom, for their support – and to EY for the research and the report, which I hope will shift the needle on global inclusion.

Together, I believe we can and will inspire and spur life-changing action on disability.



**Caroline Casey**  
Founder and Director  
of The Valuable 500



# Introduction

**The World Health Organization estimates that there are one billion people in the world – 15 percent – currently living with a disability. That’s one in seven of us. Disability is the only “intersectional” equality issue affecting every person on the planet at some point in their life experience. Moreover, 80 percent of people who experience a disability acquire it between the ages of 18 and 64, i.e. while they are working.**

By “disability”, we mean an impairment that substantially affects a person’s life activities. A disability may be visible or invisible – cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some combination of these.

While diversity and inclusion, in general, has become mainstream for leading businesses, they have focused almost exclusively on diversity in terms of women, LGBT+ employees and to a lesser extent cultural and ethnic diversity. As a result, disability remains a minority issue with far reaching societal consequences of marginalization, exclusion, and poverty.

We believe that business can’t afford to ignore the value of those one billion people. Combined with their friends, families and communities, they hold a disposable annual income of \$8 trillion a year. They also represent a vastly untapped source of talent, creativity, and potential. Most fundamentally, inclusion of people with disabilities, is the right thing to do.

# About this document

**We want to put disability inclusion and disability confidence on the CEO agenda. For us, disability inclusion means making sure that everyone is supported in their workplace to reach their full potential while disability confidence refers to the practice of regularly engaging with your disabled employees to understand what support is required.**

From our experience, we believe that the greatest barriers to executives taking a leadership role in promoting disability confidence in their organization are often self-imposed. One such impediment is a lack of knowledge — about the prevalence of disability in society and in business organizations; the business benefits that can be realized by promoting disability confidence; and best practices for disability inclusion. A second impediment is fear and potential discomfort. One business leader we spoke with put it this way: “In trying to do the right thing, we had a fear of doing the wrong thing.” This should not stop us.

To this end, this document tackles both of those impediments. First, we share the results of a brief C-Suite survey. Second, we present short summaries of conversations we conducted with thoughtful and distinguished business leaders about their experiences with

disability and promoting disability confidence in their organizations.

This research was conducted in Autumn 2018, and we would like to thank EY and Longview Global Advisors for their support in producing this pathbreaking work. We view this effort as the first iteration of a multi-year research, awareness-building, and C-Suite engagement agenda.

We hope you will pledge to champion disability confidence and share your experiences and inspirations as well.

# Disability in business today

## Survey Results

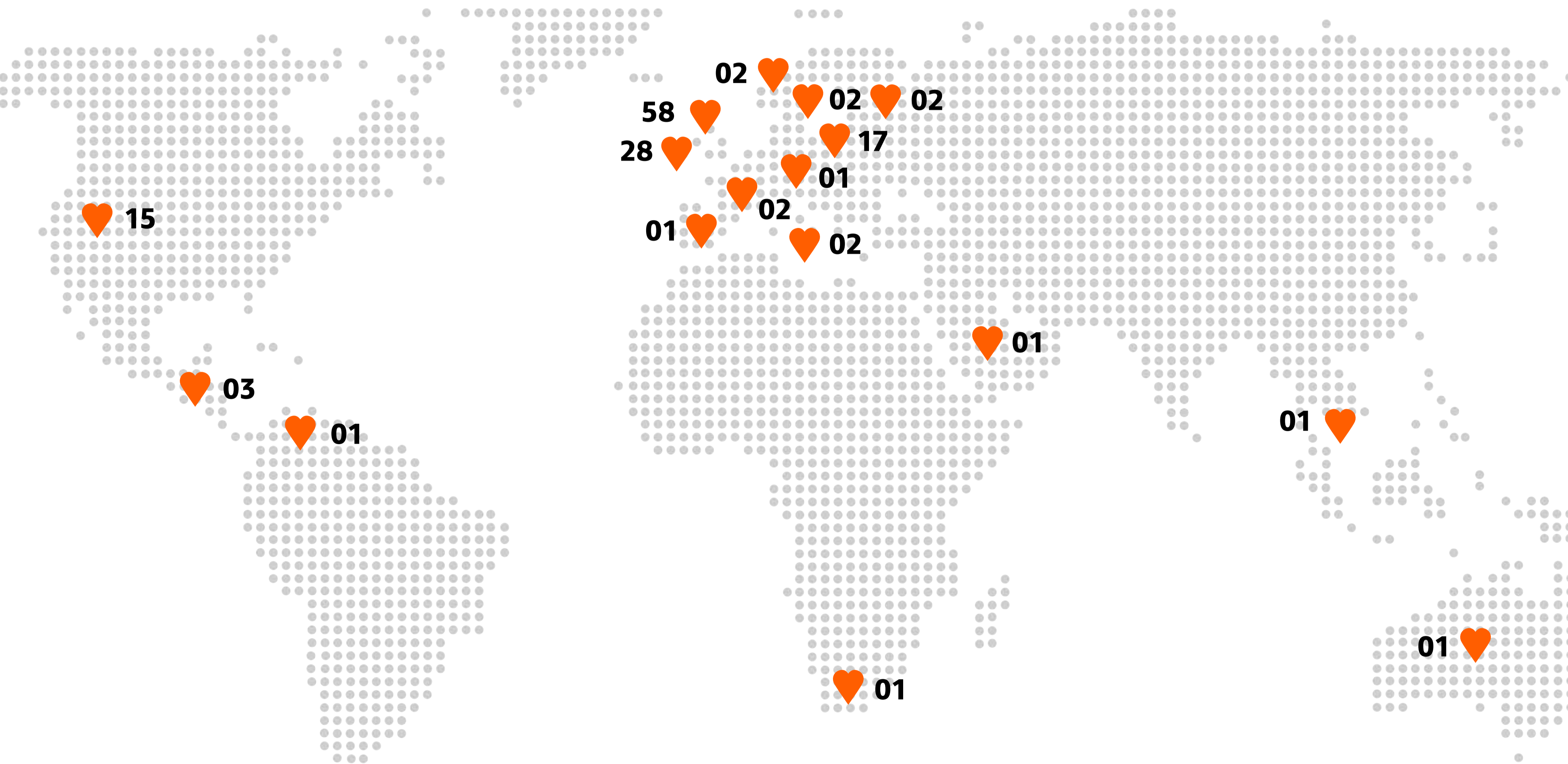
In Autumn 2018, EY conducted a brief online survey of C-Suite members on the topic of disability.

138 executives responded

17 different countries

80% were from the UK, Ireland, Germany & the US

In what Country are you based?



Respondents were based in seventeen countries, 80% of whom were located in four countries: the UK, Ireland, Germany, and the US.

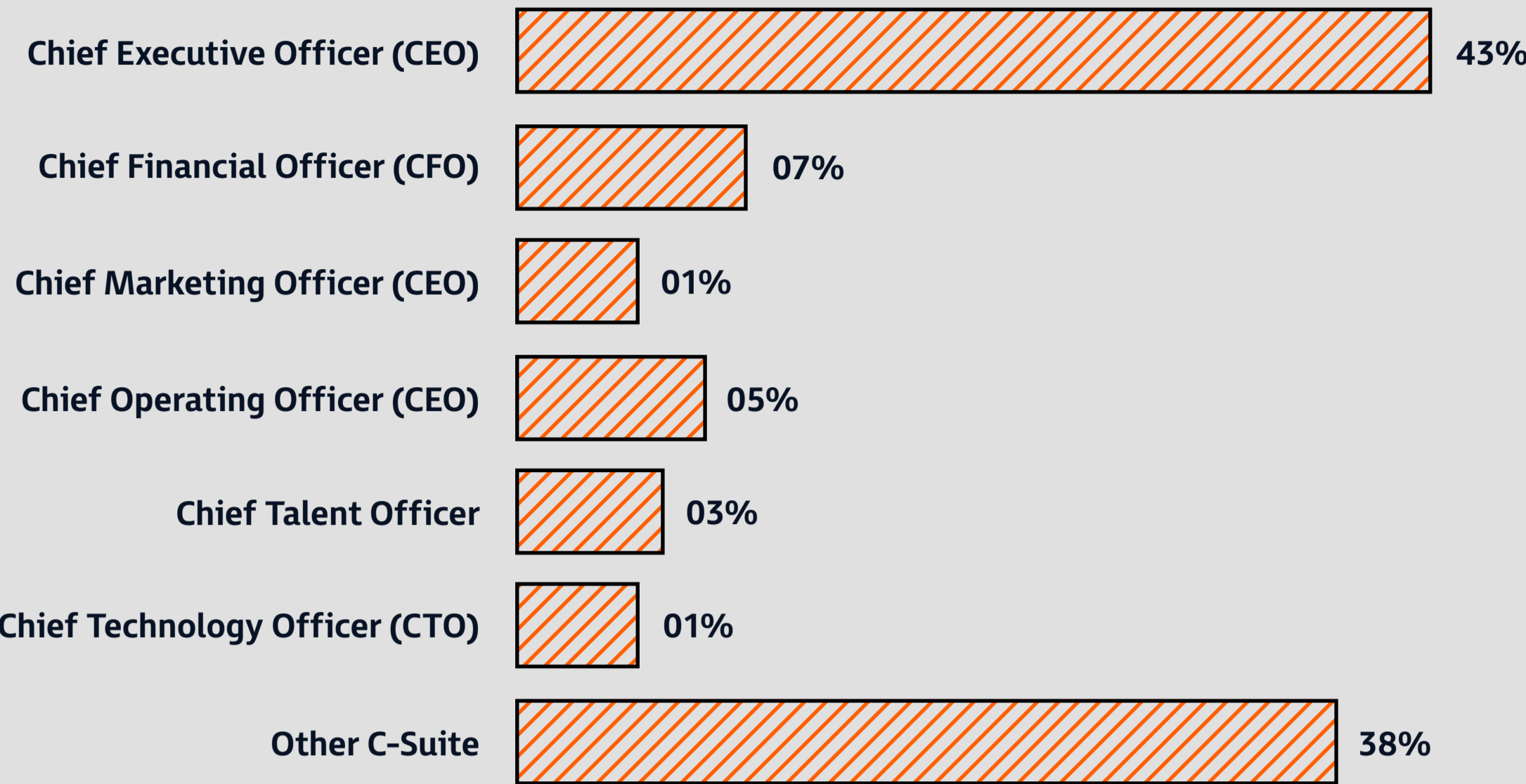
Number of respondents per Country

58 United Kingdom	02 Italy	01 Luxembourg
28 Ireland	02 Netherlands	01 Saudi Arabia
17 Germany	02 Poland	01 Singapore
15 United States	02 Sweden	01 South Africa
03 Mexico	01 Australia	01 Spain
02 France	01 Columbia	

43%

respondents are CEOs

What is your job title?



What industry do you work in?

31%

Professional Services

29%

Technology, Media, & Telecommunications

11%

Consumer Products / Retail

11%

Financial Services

11%

Other

03%

Health Services

02%

Advanced Manufacturing & Mobility

01%

Smart Infrastructure

01%

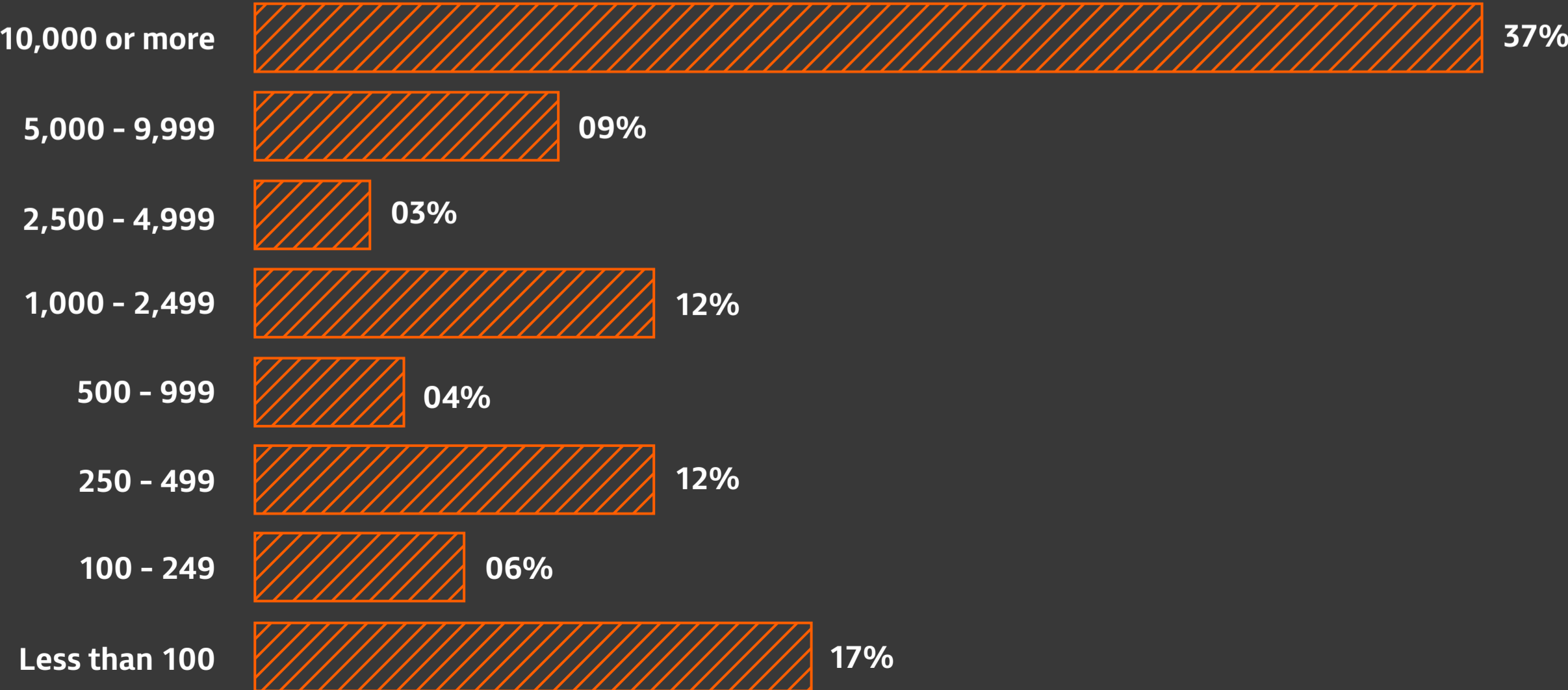
Energy

31%

work in Professional Services

Participants crossed a range of industries, while professional services and technology, media, and telecommunications were the most popular industries represented (60% of respondents).

How many employees in your organization?

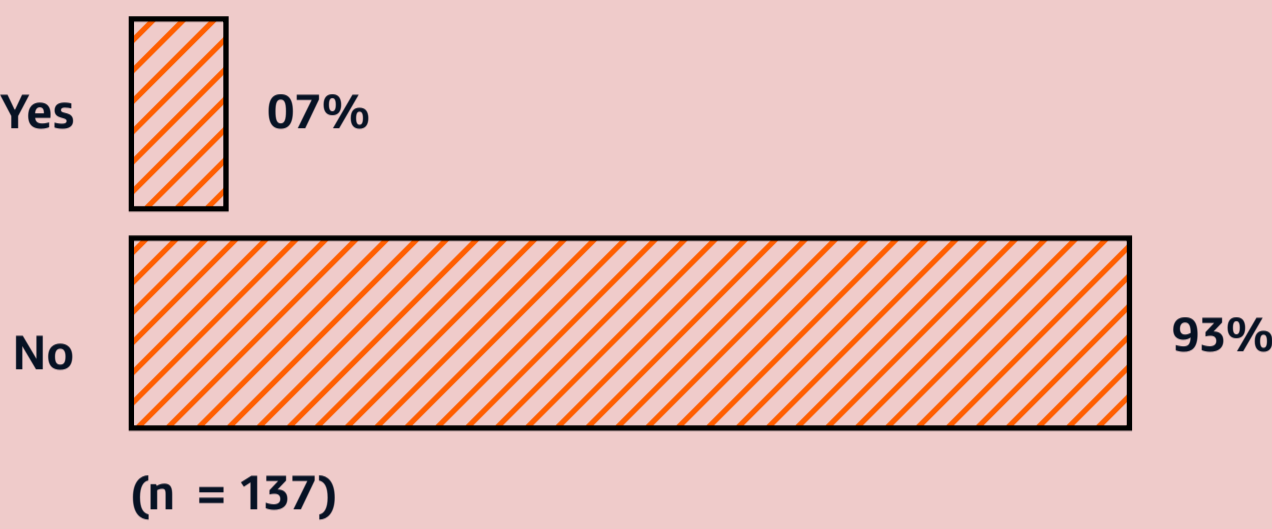


37%

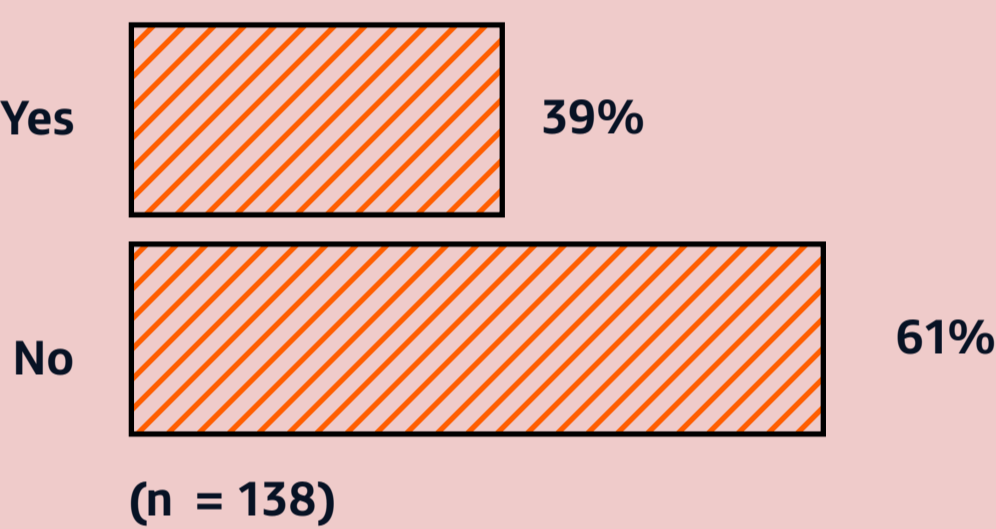
have 10,000 or more employees

Finally, the respondents typically led very large firms: 38% had 5,000 or more employees.

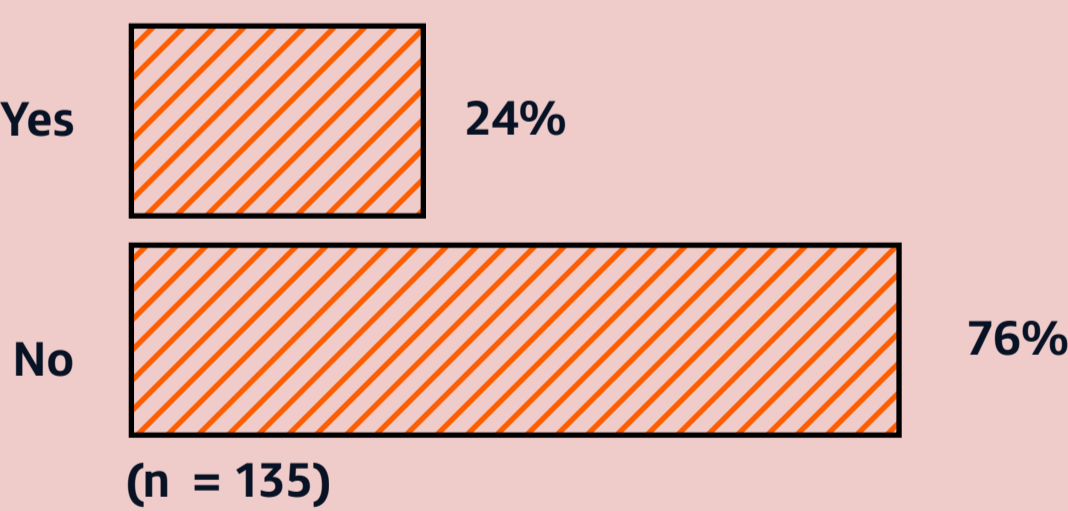
Q1: Do you consider yourself to have a disability?



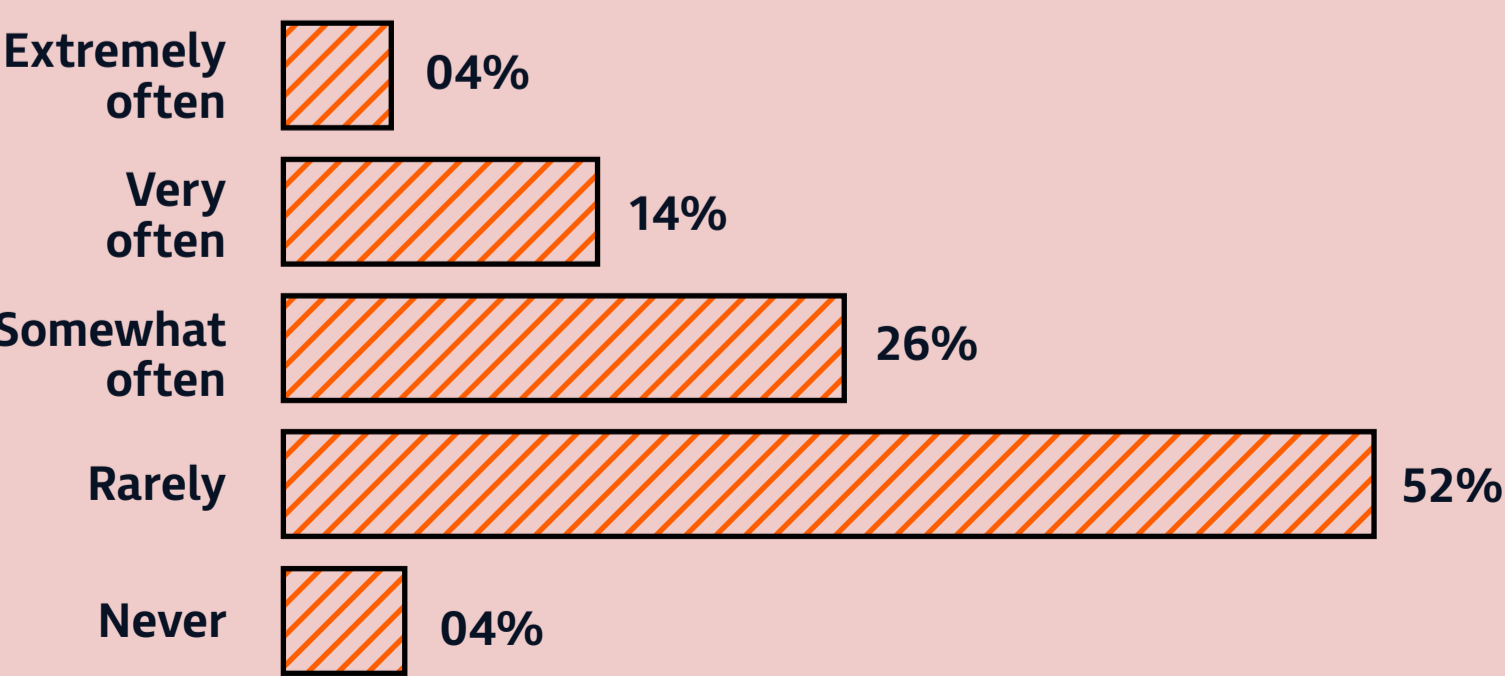
Q2: Do you have a family member that has a disability?



Q3: Are you aware of any C-Suite colleagues within your organization that has a disability?



Q4: As a C-Suite leader, how often does the topic of disability come up on your leadership agenda?



# What did the survey find?

C-Suites could be more representative of the communities in which they work.

7% of executives reported personally having a disability. This compares with 15% estimated by the WHO in the world at large and 18% of the working-age population in Britain, according to the Employers’ Forum on Disability. In short, C-Suites could be more representative of the communities in which they work.

Executives have more familiarity with disability than commonly perceived and they have a solid base of personal experience on which to build disability confidence initiatives.

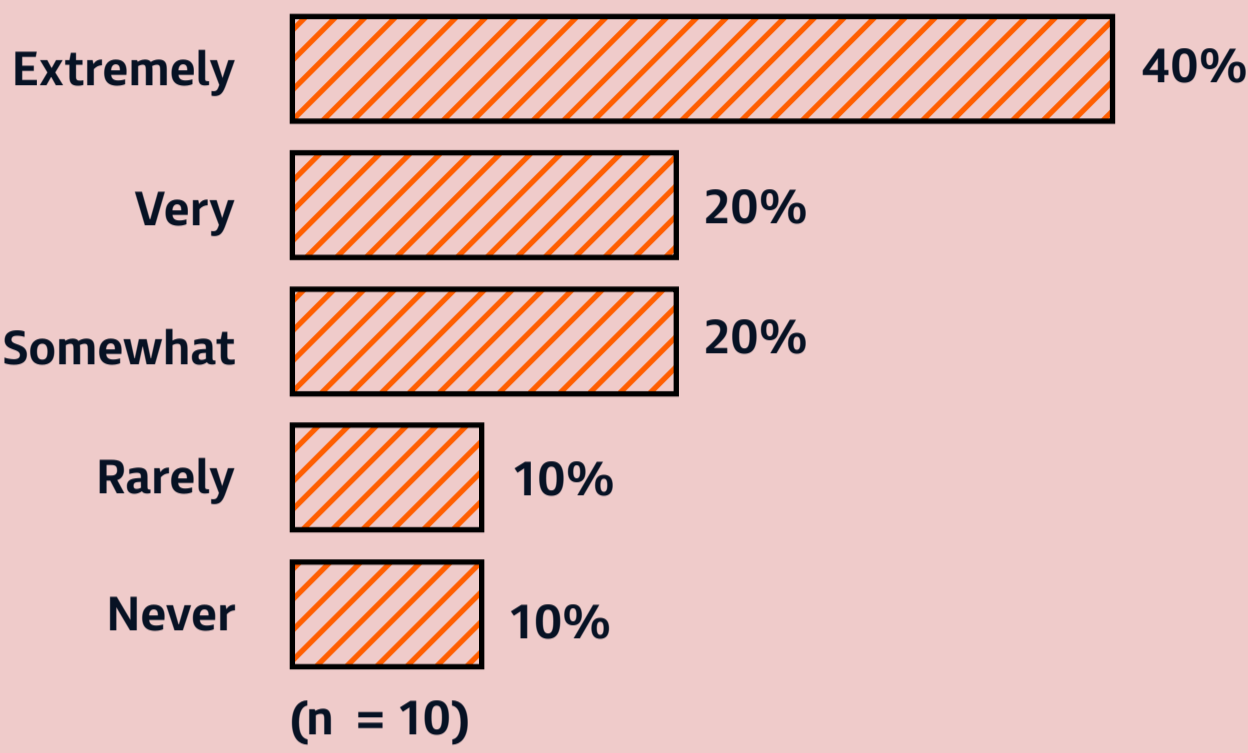
That said, personal experiences with disability among the executives surveyed was significant: 39% reported that they had a family member with a disability and 24% reported that they were aware of other C-Suite colleagues within their organization that had a disability. This suggests that executives have more familiarity with disability than commonly perceived and they have a solid base of personal experience on which to build disability confidence initiatives.

...the topic of disability rarely or never comes up on their leadership agenda

That said, 56% of executive respondents indicated that the topic of disability rarely or never comes up on their leadership agenda. Only 18% reported that it came up extremely often or very often.

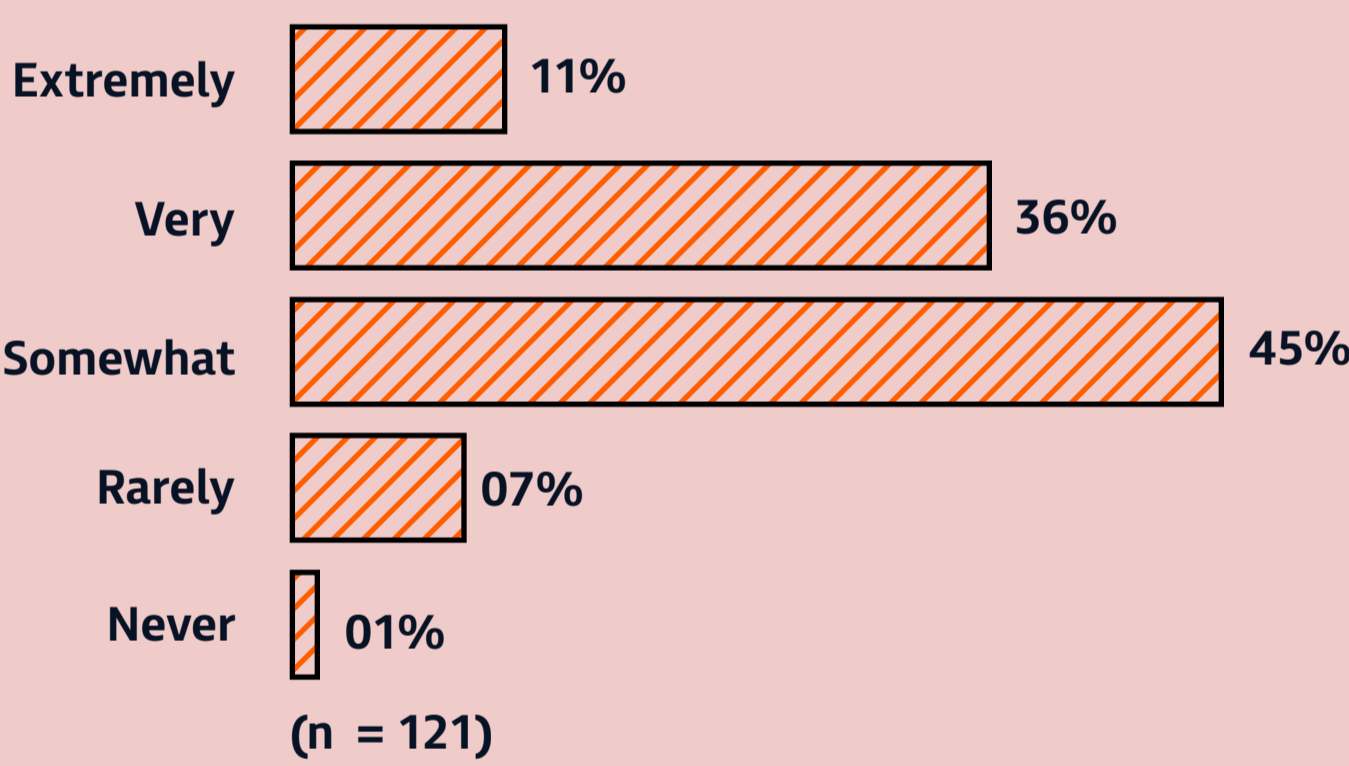
Q4a: How comfortable are you with sharing that you have a disability with your colleagues? (asked only of people who indicated that they had a disability)

Respondents with disability:



Q4b: If you personally had a disability, how comfortable do you think you would be sharing that information with your colleagues?

Respondents with no disability:



This suggests that the stigma of disability is still significant.

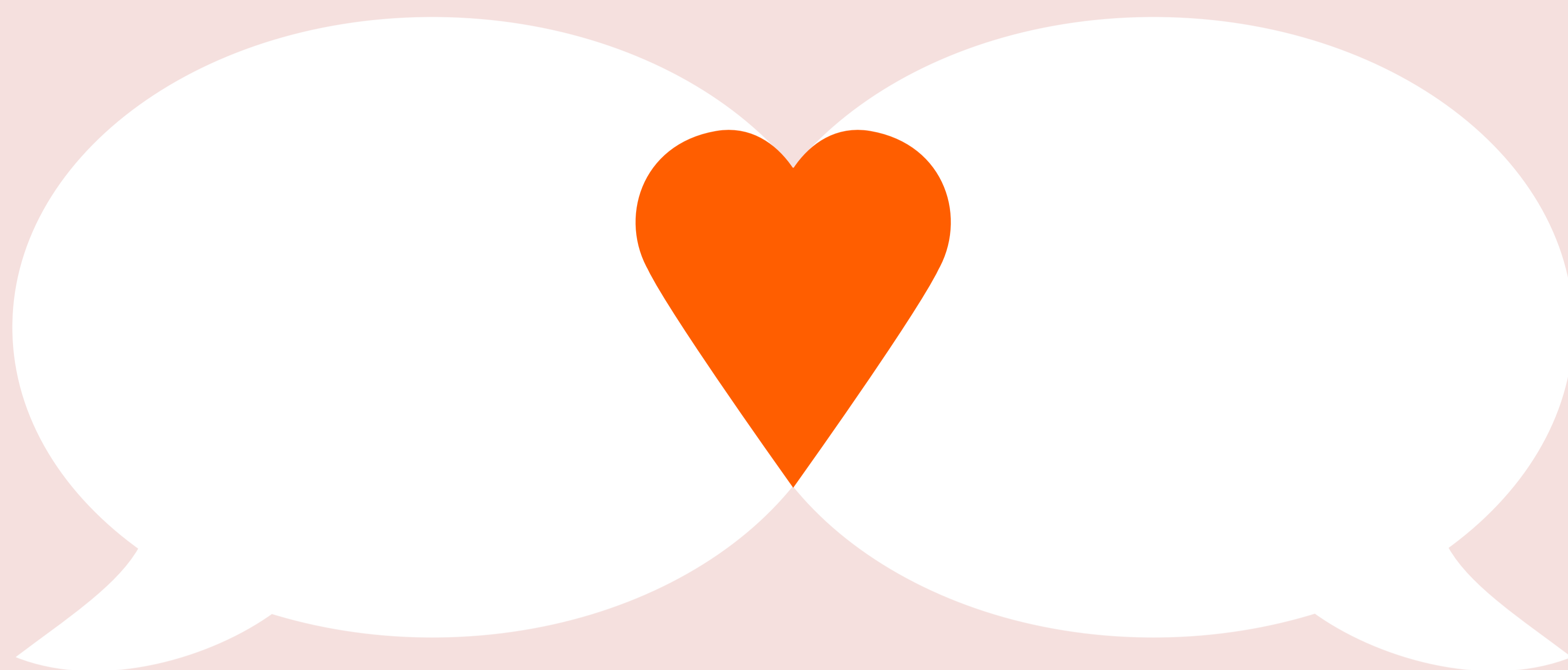
The difference in experience shapes perceptions of disability in the C-Suite. Of those reporting that they had a disability, 60% felt extremely comfortable or very comfortable sharing that information with colleagues. Those who reported not having a disability, were more reticent: If they personally were to have a disability, 47% said that they would be comfortable sharing that information colleagues. This suggests that the stigma of disability is still significant.

This suggests that the stigma of disability is still significant.

Disabled respondents were more likely to report being extremely or very comfortable sharing a disability than non-disabled respondents reported being about a hypothetical disability.

# The business leader discussions

Experiences



**We conducted in-depth conversations with business leaders about their experience with disability and disability confidence in their organizations. An objective of the discussions was to give executives an opportunity to speak to other executives.**

The discussions inform the survey results, and a number of common themes emerged which we feel are important:

- Disability confidence can help firms capture new markets, demonstrate relevance to clients and consumers, and build brands.
- Promoting disability confidence is central to attracting and retaining talent and can confer significant productivity benefits to an organization.
- People with disabilities must overcome significant stigmas imposed in the workplace, but when given opportunities they typically exceed expectations.
- Disability confidence requires vision and courage. Despite wanting to do the right thing, business leaders have taken limited steps to promote disability confidence.

Ultimately, disability confidence it is the right thing to do and an indicator of a humane and modern organization.

We invite you to read about their experiences.

# Thomas Crampton

Global Chair, Digital, Edelman



**“It’s not just about hiring more people with disabilities. As with all colleagues, they must have a genuine and meaningful role.”**



Thomas Crampton has a sibling with a disability that has had a profound effect on her life and this experience has fundamentally shaped his approach to people generally and disability confidence in particular.

Crampton notes that people often perceive illness and disability in fixed, narrow and negative ways — usually as a form of weakness — and they project that sense of weakness back onto the subject. This can create a pernicious environment that undermines the self-worth of a person with a disability, when in reality they are much stronger than assumed, given the tremendous challenges in life that they have overcome.

In Crampton’s assessment, the business community has a terrible record integrating people with disabilities, even though the business case for inclusion is crystal clear. He cites news organisations as an example: Their role is to follow and interpret what is going in the world — a world in which one in seven people has a disability. “If you don’t have people with disabilities on staff, how could you possibly understand the experiences of a significant portion of the population?” He draws the same conclusion for communications,

marketing, and consumer businesses: If people with disabilities are not included, the organization risks being out of touch with the realworld.

At a time when talent is both in high demand and highly mobile, disability confidence is an important element for recruitment and retention. “The right talent wants the right environment, and that kind of environment is inclusive and supportive,” says Crampton. When companies are not supportive of employees who develop a disability, this undermines morale and productivity. The reality is that a life-changing situation can happen to anyone, and the ideal is to “create a human organization” that accommodates for this, says Crampton.

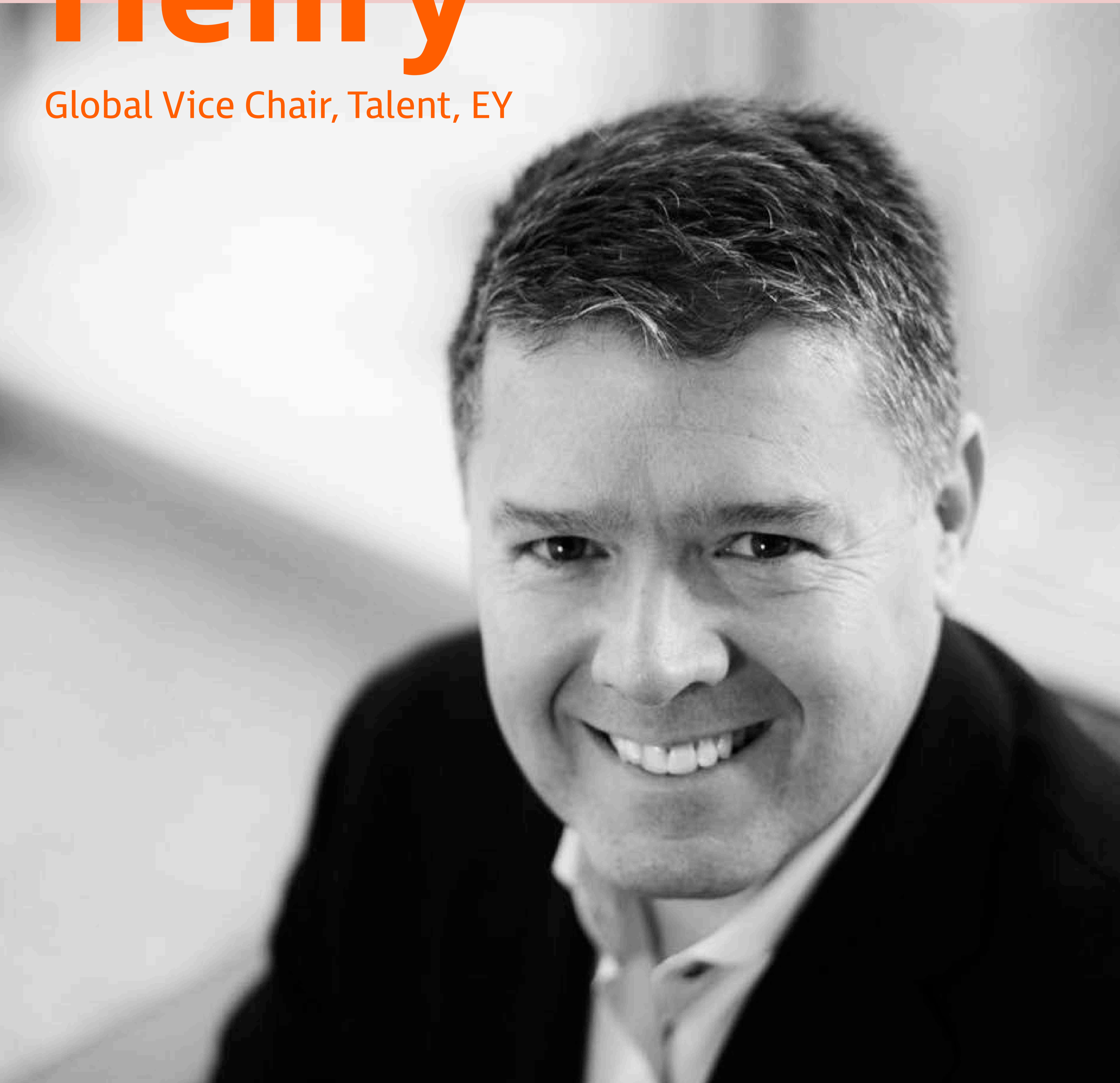
There is another reason for creating an empathetic organization. Innovation and creativity are often critical to business success, but to realize this potential, employees must come to work feeling comfortable with who they are. Crampton notes that novel ideas can be fragile. If colleagues feel vulnerable talking about their lives, they are also likely to censor the brilliant ideas that do not fit in the organisation’s mainstream thinking.

Crampton believes that businesses and broader society have a long way to go to improve disability confidence. In addition to raising awareness of the issue, companies must also thoughtfully address the implications, including tackling the prevalence of conscious and unconscious biases. He cautions against “tick-box” approaches, isolated “disability programs”, and tokenism: “It’s not just about hiring more people with disabilities. As with all colleagues, they must have a genuine and meaningful role in the organization.” This requires thoughtful strategies. “The narrative is really important. Why are we doing this? The answer must be genuine and have clear proof points.”

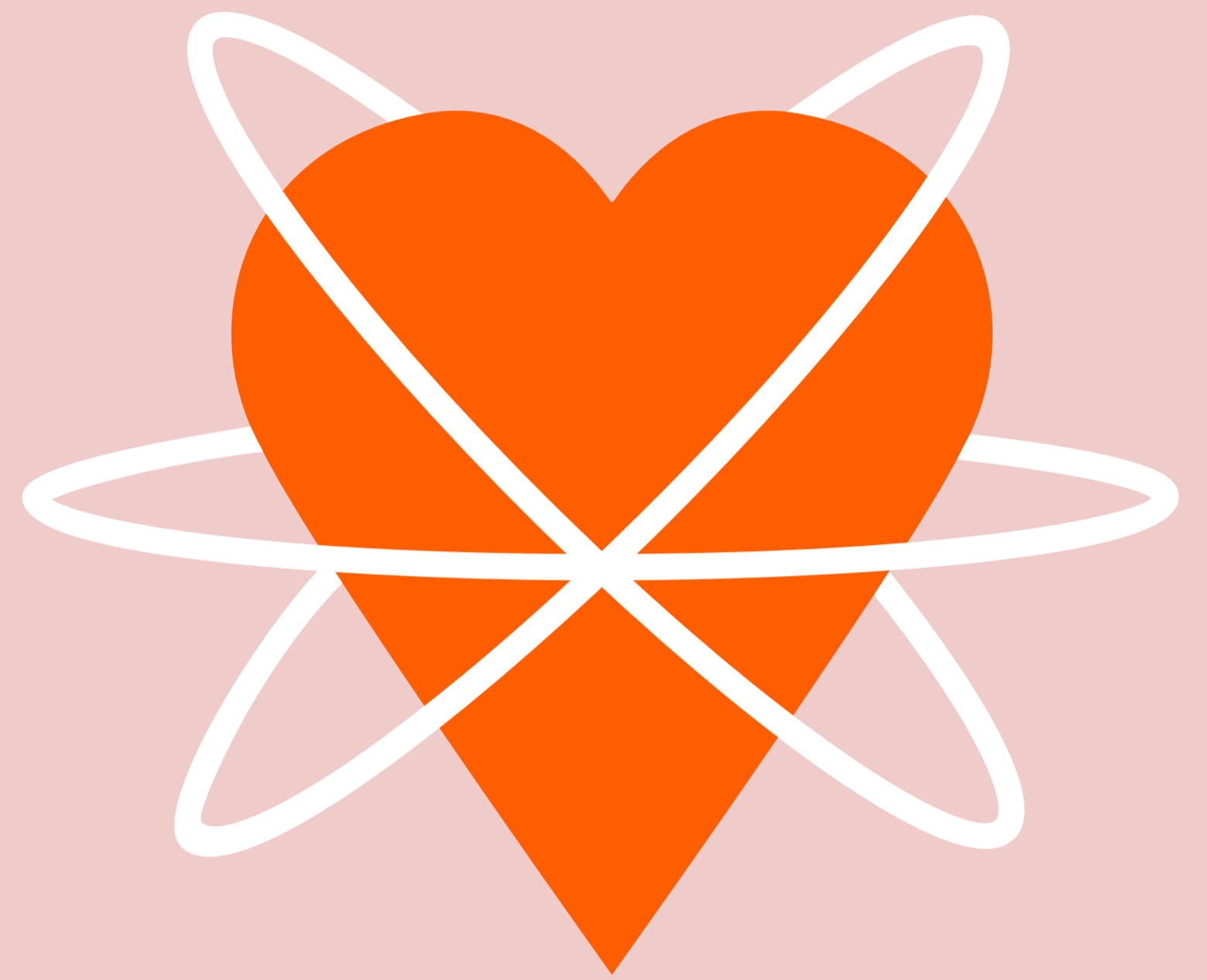
Organizations tend to put people in boxes that are based on stereotypes, he says, and this is the same for people with disabilities. Instead, Crampton focuses on peoples’ potential. Accountability is important, and lowering expectations of a person with a disability demonstrates a lack of respect. “Put a big challenge in front of someone with a so-called disability, you will be surprised how far they can go.”

# Trent Henry

Global Vice Chair, Talent, EY



# “What does leadership in the Transformative Age look like? It’s building a culture where all people can experience a sense of belonging.”



For Trent Henry, the business imperative of promoting disability confidence and creating a more caring organization is crystal clear.

Henry knows well of the challenges that come with navigating the world of mental health. He also knows the challenges of workplace biases that can be associated with nonvisible disabilities. “The reality is that people feel challenged to come forward. The stigmas are still very powerful.” The interesting paradox, Henry notes, is that when others are aware of a disability, they want to be of help.

While Henry was EY Canada Chairman and CEO, the organization expanded programs for mental health care. “As accountants we are very good at measuring productivity. Like all organizations, we lose work days to illness, and mental health issues.” To respond to its people’s needs, the organization introduced pilot programs offering cognitive and behavioral therapy (CBT) services and the uptake by workers far exceeded management’s expectations and was “off the charts” he reports.

Henry presently is the Global Vice Chair of Talent at EY. He is responsible for leading the global talent function for more than 270,000 people in over 150 countries. “What does leadership in the transformative age look like? It’s building a culture where all people can experience a sense of belonging.” High-performing workers want to join organizations that

have a sense of purpose and a culture where people feel like they belong. What aspects of corporate culture make that real? Activating purpose, creating a culture that respects and celebrates differences and encourages people to bring their authentic selves to work, and addressing workplace issues such as flexibility, wellness, and accessibility. EY is committed to recognizing the diverse abilities of its people which has business-building value as well: Clients look to the organization for insights on best practices, and disability confidence as part of the future of talent.

Drawing from his experience, Henry offers several concrete ways business leaders can promote disability awareness and inclusion within their organizations while improving business performance at the same time.

First, think of accessibility in terms of flexibility. Flexible working arrangements have become a hallmark of company policies, and these are especially salient for workers that have mobility issues or care for a family member with a disability. “This really opens up your talent pool.”

Second, many companies are investing heavily in office amenities that are accessible and promote collaboration and wellness such as airy and open workplaces with abundant natural lighting and many opportunities to congregate. Such facilities should also include workspaces that are quieter and have soft lighting for workers with attention, anxiety,

and visual sensitivities. Organizations seek diversity in their workforces, says Henry, and they should design their workplaces for differences as well.

Third, examine your company’s culture and tackle conscious and unconscious biases. Stigmas around mental health are particularly prevalent. Business leaders haven’t considered this enough and need more exposure to people with disabilities. Ask them a question: “How can we make you feel like you belong?”

Fourth, take advantage of technology. Henry notes that simple CBT tools—those that address anxiety for example—led to significant improvements in staff performance in his organization. Digital tools can also help remove biases in hiring. Online learning programs can easily be adjusted to accommodate those with visual and hearing impairments at minimal cost.

Finally, executives need to take some risks. Don’t fret about asking silly questions or making mistakes. Ask people how you can help them to be more successful.

Henry notes that the issues of culture and purpose are central to great leadership in business and when organizations get mobilized around disability confidence, people rally. “What this does to your corporate culture and your DNA is amazing.”

# Jeff Dodds

Managing Director, Virgin Media  
Executive Committee Member  
Accountable for Disability





**“Have the right intent and don’t obsess about getting everything right.”**

Jeff Dodds has a number of personal experiences with disability: “Like most people, I’ve grown up with it around me, whether it’s visible or invisible.” For example, his father was in the British fire service and suffered a back injury while on the job and was forced to retire due to disability. Dodds noted that his father’s disability took a toll not just on his physical health, but also his mental health: He had commanded hundreds of firefighters and then overnight he had to adjust to a new and very different life.

Dodds, an ultra-marathon runner, also suffered a severe back injury that required multiple surgeries and forced him to be absent from work for an extended period and also required some workplace adjustments. While Dodds does not recall an obvious change in others’ perceptions of him as a business leader, he nevertheless felt “personal guilt” and was concerned about what others thought of him, especially since he was walking with a stick and needed time off for post operative care. This drove him back to work sooner than advised to demonstrate to his peers that his disability was not a professional barrier.

Virgin Media has been working to raise consciousness of disability issues for a number of years, says Dodds. And from this, he draws several lessons. To get started, business leaders need to know the basic facts: For instance, with one in five workers in the UK being disabled,

it means that disability is something that’s relevant to all organisations. “A huge journey of education is required,” but then the imperative of disability confidence becomes more evident.

Second, it’s important to have open and confident conversations about disability in the workplace. Dodds notes that many people shy away from talking about disability for fear that they might not know the most up-to-date language and say something inappropriate. “If you’re having the conversation with the right intent, then don’t obsess about getting everything right.” Business leaders are already having similar discussions around other areas of inclusion, such as gender and LGBT+, so they are already well placed to broaden the conversation to include disability confidence. It just requires business leaders to have the courage to bring the topic forward.

Third, companies must create a supportive culture that encourages people to be open about their needs. As with his own experience of questioning his professional contribution, Dodds notes that disabled people often question the value that they can bring to an organisation and this is inherently self-limiting. He cited the example of a recent starter who has cerebral palsy: Once he started in the role any incoming anxieties about how he might perform dissipated and he excelled in ways that were not imagined.

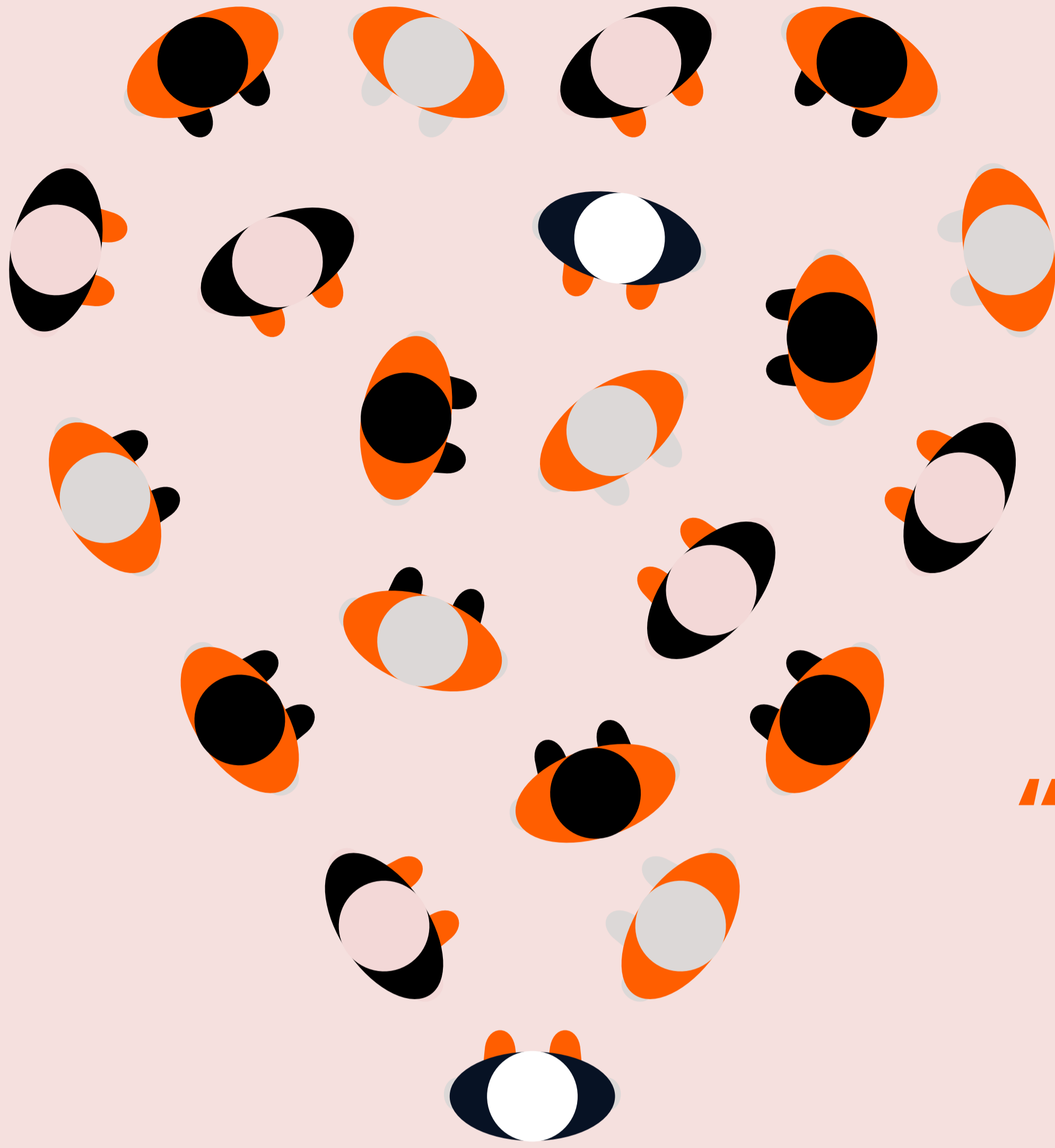
Employing disabled people can have significant business benefits. “As humans we are all different: We have different experiences, values, we think differently, and we bring different talents to the organisation.” For a customer-oriented business like Virgin Media, it is important that its employees think like the people and communities they serve – in terms of both product and service design. Because of the barriers they have had to overcome, disabled people are often incredibly innovative and creative problem solvers, Dodds observes.

Dodds downplays the business case as a primary motivation to pursue disability confidence: Including all people in society is paramount. “The opportunity to transform the lives of disabled people is incredible and the opportunity to change the organisation is just as powerful. Embracing difference in its broadest sense is a fabulous thing to do.”

# Paul Polman

CEO, Unilever





**“We need to give everybody a chance.”**

For Paul Polman, people with disabilities are important members of society and they should be valued as such. He reels off World Health Organization data: an estimated 1.3 billion people or 15% of the world’s population have a disability. And he proffers another way to think about disability: “different ability.” “We all qualify as people with different abilities,” he says. “I can’t sing or play basketball, but we don’t disqualify people for that....We need to give everybody a chance.”

With this framing, there is a clear market case for inclusion, states Polman. Why not tap in to the 15% that has a disability? He notes that companies have come to realize overlooking women means overlooking half the population of consumers. The experience with LGBT+ inclusion offers another important lesson: If you don’t take this segment of the population seriously, these consumers and their allies will take their business elsewhere. To his peers, Polman suggests asking a simple question “How do we tap into this economic force?” Otherwise, he asserts, “You are missing out.”

Disability confidence also represents a tremendous talent opportunity to unlock, says Polman. Young workers today increasingly are skeptical about working for large and established organizations. Moreover, they are looking for meaning and purpose at work and they want to know that the companies they work for are doing the right thing in terms of their

role in society. A corporate commitment to disability inclusion can drive energy across the firm to a higher level. However, he warns, tokenism, charity, or relegating disability inclusion to the CSR portfolio won’t work. People with disabilities must be given the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

To be successful, management must put a “disability lens” on everything it does. Improving accessibility across the organization is an important step, but he also adds that unconscious bias must also be addressed. This is particularly problematic in the screening of job applicants. As a result, Unilever has put technology solutions in place that help take disability biases out of the process. The effort has been so successful, that the system has been extended to screening all 2million applications Unilever receives.

Unilever has made a commitment to disability inclusion and working groups across the organization have been established. For a large global firm such as Unilever, progress has emerged in different ways across the organization. The Egypt and Mexico business units, for example, have taken a lead on addressing issues concerning visual impairment. The rest of the organization is learning from these regional accomplishments.

Setting an example at the top is critical, but he observes that executives are not dealing with disability inclusion as well

as he would like. While most business leaders are well intentioned, a reason they may not be taking more action, Polman believes, is they haven’t seen the overwhelming evidence that disability confidence has material benefits for the business.

Boards also have very crowded agendas. One way to address the issue is through the diversity and inclusion agenda. Firms have made commitments to gender equality, LGBT+ inclusion, and inclusion of people with diverse cultural backgrounds. Disability should be seen as a natural extension of these efforts. “Most companies are ready. We should not treat this as a different process.”

Ultimately, CEO’s must be prepared to bring the issue to their executive teams and to the board. One helpful first step is to draw closer personal connections to people with disabilities. This includes meeting with and listening to them and understanding that they are real people. From his experience with one-on-one encounters, Polman says, he has come to see people with disabilities as remarkable individuals who only see opportunity, not limitations.

While the business case is compelling, the pressing importance of disability inclusion is based on his desire to “make humanity function better,” affirming, “My goal is to have no one left behind. I like to fight for that.”

# Janet Riccio

Executive Vice President, Omnicom Group  
and Dean of Omnicom University



**“Any company that can authentically crack the code of inclusiveness of all types is going to set themselves apart.”**



Janet Riccio had been experiencing challenges with the mobility of her right hand since the summer of 2013. Her diagnosis was changed to Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) in June 2018. Five months later she was also starting to feel the effects of the neuromotor condition in her legs. “I am very slow moving,” she notes.

“This is pretty new to me: It’s only been in the last few months that I am clearly disabled.” Asked how her peers were responding to her situation, Riccio quickly responds, “In one word: Generously. When people see me struggling, they always offer help. It’s just amazing and I’m a little blown away by the humanity of those around me.” She adds, “My colleagues keep me going.”

In her leadership and training roles, Riccio meets with hundreds of executives, and in an effort to put others at ease, she often acknowledges up front that she is a person with a disability. “I want people to be cognizant and comfortable and then we move on....” Some may be uncomfortable, but Riccio doesn’t attribute this to ill will. Rather, many business leaders don’t have a lot of experience working with people with disabilities that they are aware of.

The business case for disability confidence is compelling, says Riccio. The lens on the world for a person with a disability is unique and it shapes one’s spectrum of thought. So, when companies consider strategy, they should welcome those with different perspectives, experiences, and data points. Speaking of the retail and consumer sector, Riccio observes that marketing campaigns routinely consider the perspectives of women. Why not add the lens of people with disabilities? “Any company that can authentically crack the code of inclusiveness of all types is going to set themselves apart.”

Still, Riccio acknowledges that for many companies, thinking about the business case for disability confidence is not very advanced. Pointing to the world of marketing communications, Riccio notes that industry is populated by a large number of healthy, young professionals. “I rarely see a disability, so it hasn’t been top of mind....That situation is what I am hoping to change.”

For the situation to change, Riccio notes it requires both individuals and companies to take a stand. Awareness-building is a critical first step. Executives have a lot on their plates and people with disabilities

must be visible and make their concerns known. “You have to get the attention of senior leadership.”

Moreover, while physical disabilities like hers are easier to spot, cognitive issues, such as dyslexia, depression, and ADHD are not—even though awareness of these conditions in society is rising. Interestingly, in creative industries such as advertising, Riccio senses that cognitive challenges are fairly common though not acknowledged or actively accommodated. Riccio believes people with disabilities need to come forward and talk about visible as well as invisible disabilities.

Another first step is for companies to conduct a census: “Poll the employees and ask them if they are impacted.” Business leaders are likely to learn that their ranks reflect the larger population and include many people with disabilities. To other executives, Riccio says, “Be cognizant, see that we are not all the same, and be aware of ways you can help.”

In any event, Riccio asserts that people with disabilities don’t want to be looked at as incapable of rising to challenges. “It’s important that we treat people in the context of their lives.”

# Rafael Augusto Salazar

Architect



**“I would encourage other business leaders to open their minds to disability inclusion. It is not something to fear, but an opportunity.”**



As an architect in commercial real estate in Colombia, Augusto Salazar has always been aware of the need for physical accessibility, but his relationship with disability changed radically after an accident in 2004 that resulted in his son becoming a quadriplegic. “This event turned our world upside down and was very traumatic at the time,” he says. “But our family is very optimistic, so we took it on board and looked into options for this new reality in our lives.”

There were very limited experiences to learn from locally at that time, Salazar says. “We discovered that having a disability in Colombia led to exclusion, particularly in the work force, despite the large number of casualties from the country’s recent civil war. Of the three million people with disabilities in Colombia, over one half are of working age but only 15% have any kind of employment.

Salazar rejected this situation and looked to experiences in other countries and brought them back home. “All of my designs are now fully accessible and I will never go back.” In addition to employing people with disabilities in his design group, about 30% of the employees at Gran Estación, a shopping centre he developed in Bogotá, have some form of disability.

“I find that employees with disabilities have many strengths and skills to contribute to my business across different areas, including building maintenance and customer service.” Salazar has no complaints: “They are talented and dedicated employees who are productive and responsible in their roles.” He adds, “While I firmly believe access to employment is a fundamental human right, I am not doing any of these employees a favour, they are valuable contributors.”

There are other business benefits: People with disabilities bring diversity to the organization, which is a reflection of larger society. “Our initiative drew lots of attention in Colombia and further afield, improving our corporate image and attracting talent.” Disability confidence is not charity, he says flatly.

“Yes, we are still behind on disability inclusion in Colombia,” Salazar acknowledges. “There are still many physical barriers for people with disabilities — in restaurants, cinemas, workplaces, and across our transport systems — so we need to invest more money and other resources in public infrastructure.” While building codes in Colombia have been changed to promote accessibility, he notes that a lot

work is needed to change the culture, get rid of prejudices, and open people’s minds.

For this, education and communication are critical to highlight and support successes and share know-how with others. With this in mind, Salazar set up a foundation to propagate his firm’s learnings and to create more opportunities for people with disabilities. “We were very much pioneers in Latin America and our work has since spread to other countries such as Chile, Peru, and Argentina.”

Salazar concludes with his optimistic perspective: “I would encourage other business leaders to open their minds to disability inclusion. It is not something to fear, but an opportunity. It has undoubtedly been for me and I am proud to be an example for others.”

# Dame Cilla Snowball

Former Group Chairman and  
Group CEO AMV BBDO (Emerita\*)



**“Have humility and take the time to understand the issue.... When you dive in competently and confidently you can do great things.”**



Cilla Snowball views disability confidence as a measure of courage. Business leaders and their organizations must overcome resistance, take risks, and address the issue in a thoughtful and engaging way.

From her experience, Snowball feels that while business leaders' intentions regarding people with disabilities are honorable, "meaningful action isn't widespread and firms have merely scratched the surface" — whether it is giving voice to people with disabilities or addressing impediments in public infrastructure. Snowball believes that one impediment is that executives often don't feel like they have the right information or know-how. To overcome this, she advises them to look for and showcase best practices. In a large organization, celebrate teams that have succeeded in some way. This will encourage others to take steps.

Care is critical, especially when it comes to hidden disabilities, Snowball notes. "Disabilities are often deliberately and willfully hidden and we have to respect that." Snowball references a close friend and former business leader with a brain disease: "She doesn't want the world to know and she doesn't want to be seen

as different." In addition, she counsels business leaders to avoid tokenism and "bolt-on" approaches to inclusion.

For creative and services businesses, the imperative of disability inclusion is clear: The organization must be representative of the populations they are serving. "We will get better employee engagement and we can serve clients and customers in more modern and relevant ways," Snowball says. Moreover, diverse teams produce better results, and given their everyday challenges, people with disabilities have "superhuman qualities" observes Snowball.

Her firm's production of a major advertising campaign for Maltesers focusing on people with disabilities which aired during the 2016 Paralympic Games, was an intense learning experience and required a lot of courage and insight. The team had set ambitious goals, yet, she noted, "In trying to do the right thing, we had a fear of doing the wrong thing." Collaborating with people with disabilities was critical to success. "We partnered and worked with organizations of people with disabilities to get it right. Such partnerships give you courage...out of this came some very fresh, brave, and inspiring work." In addition

to being a major marketing success for the client — a prominent consumer goods brand — the campaign also helped change disability confidence ambitions within the company and motivated them to try things they hadn't done before.

"Everyone has a desire to be included," says Snowball. "Everyone is different and that needs to be celebrated." Don't let the fear of doing the wrong thing get in the way, she warns: Disability inclusion offers the firm tremendous cultural, social and commercial value. "Have humility and take the time to understand the issue." With that, it's also important to take risks: "When you dive in competently and confidently you can do great things."

# Mark A. Weinberger

EY Global Chairman and CEO



"Diversity & Inclusion are essential elements of culture, which is the lifeblood of an organization. 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.

#Valuable is an important part of enabling all individuals to be engaged in our workforce."

# Thank you to Longview Global Advisors for their contribution to this report.

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