



Inclusive Production Toolkit

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A01	Studio	1
B01		
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	12/22	Taste Creative Bus Stop Films

OPEN SOURCE



The Inclusive Production Toolkit

A Guide for Authentic Inclusion Behind the Camera

This document belongs to Unilever but may be used by other organisations in advertising and marketing in order to improve inclusion. Please note this document is intended to provide help and guidance and does not amount to legal advice.

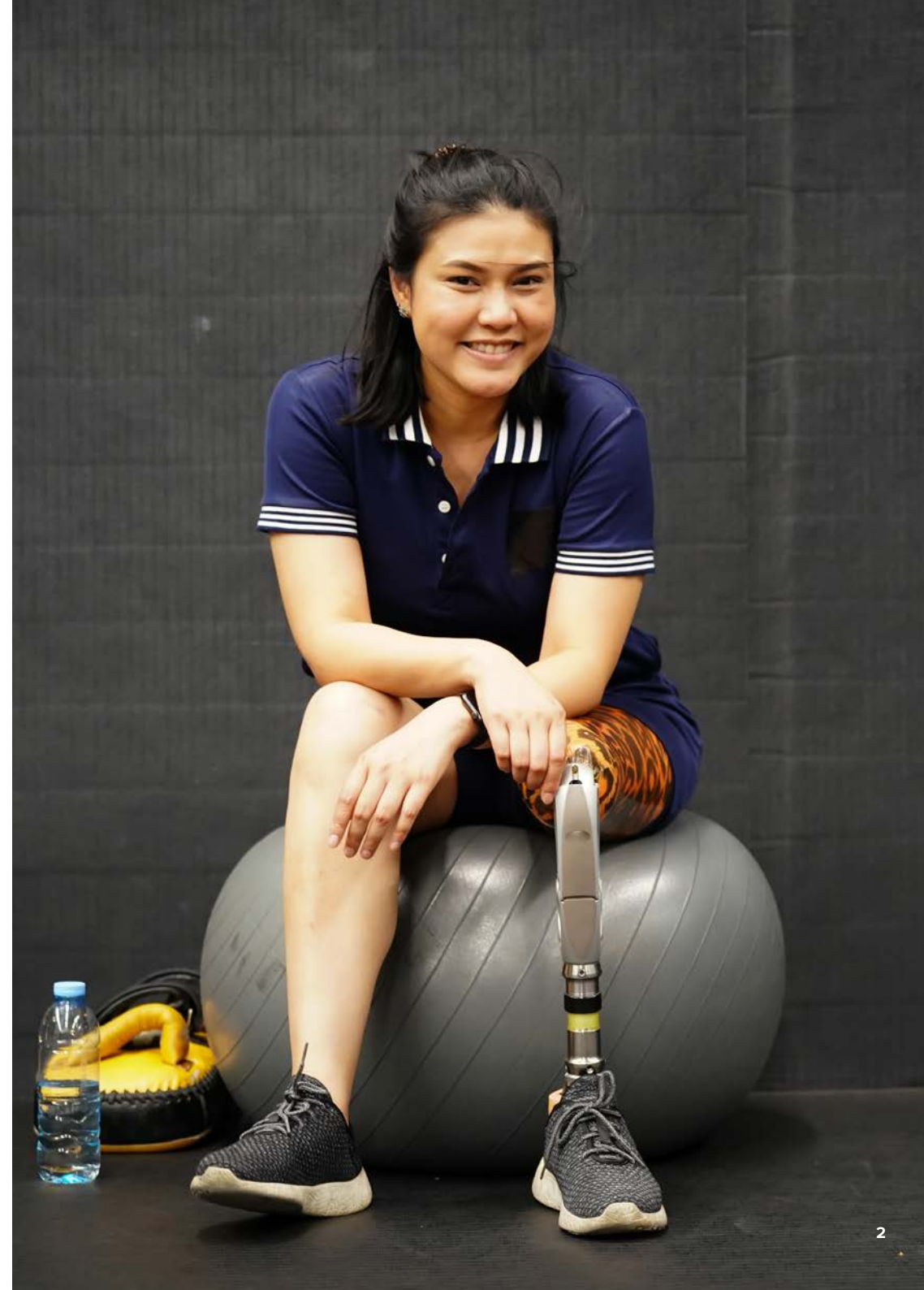
What is Disability?

1. **Social model of disability**
2. **Medical model**
3. **Economic model**
4. **Charity model**

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), “persons with disabilities include 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”.¹

Currently, in alignment with the UNCRPD, it is best practice to view disability via the social model of disability, which we outline below. Refer to page 52 to learn more about the social model of disability and other disability models.

It is interesting to note when looking at disability that it is a minority cohort in which any of us can find ourselves. We can acquire a disability at any stage in our lives, due to age, genetics, injury or illness. We can't change our cultural background, race or age but we can move from being a person without disability to a person living with disability. It is a paradigm that is an inherent part of the human experience.



1. www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html

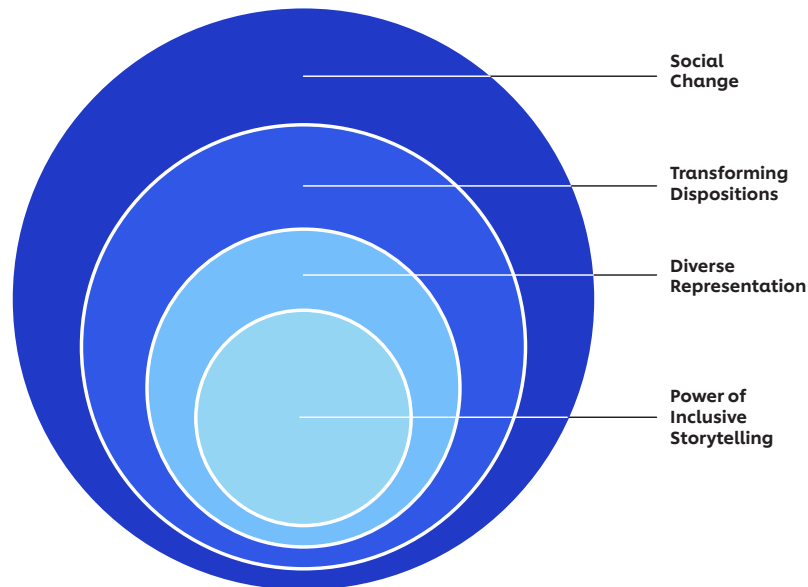
A Method Backed by Research

Professor Kyja Kristjansson-Nelson’s international research into the theory of dispositions in filmmaking and leadership concluded: “Working toward [inclusive production practices] will place greater emphasis on the need for an inclusive culture, in which all voices can participate

without the interference of attitudinal barriers.” The diagram below is adapted from her thesis.

The research also noted: “Inclusive leadership and inclusive filmmaking, combined with a ‘people first’ purpose, created an inclusive culture driven by

The Ripple Effect of Inclusive Filmmaking



Headline contributions on and off-screen (UK)^{2B}

	Off-screen contributions	UK national workforce	On-screen contributions	UK national population
Female	52.8%	47%	52.4%	51%
Transgender	0.3%	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%
50 and Over	21.7%	31%	25.4%	36%
Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic	12.9%	13%	20.9%	12.8%
Disabled	6%	17%	8.3%	18%
LGB	15.6%	6.4%	14.2%	6.4%
Total	650,532		209,071	

collaboration between team members who are committed to the social impact of their work. At the heart of these relationships, transformation was evident; transformation of students, transformation of industry professionals, and the transformation of audience perspectives.”^{2A}

The 2021 “Fifth Cut” report made it clear that people with disabilities are significantly under-represented in the production industry. While this group comprises 18% of the UK’s population, only 6% of production crew and just 8.3% of on-screen

talent are made up of people living with disability.^{2B}

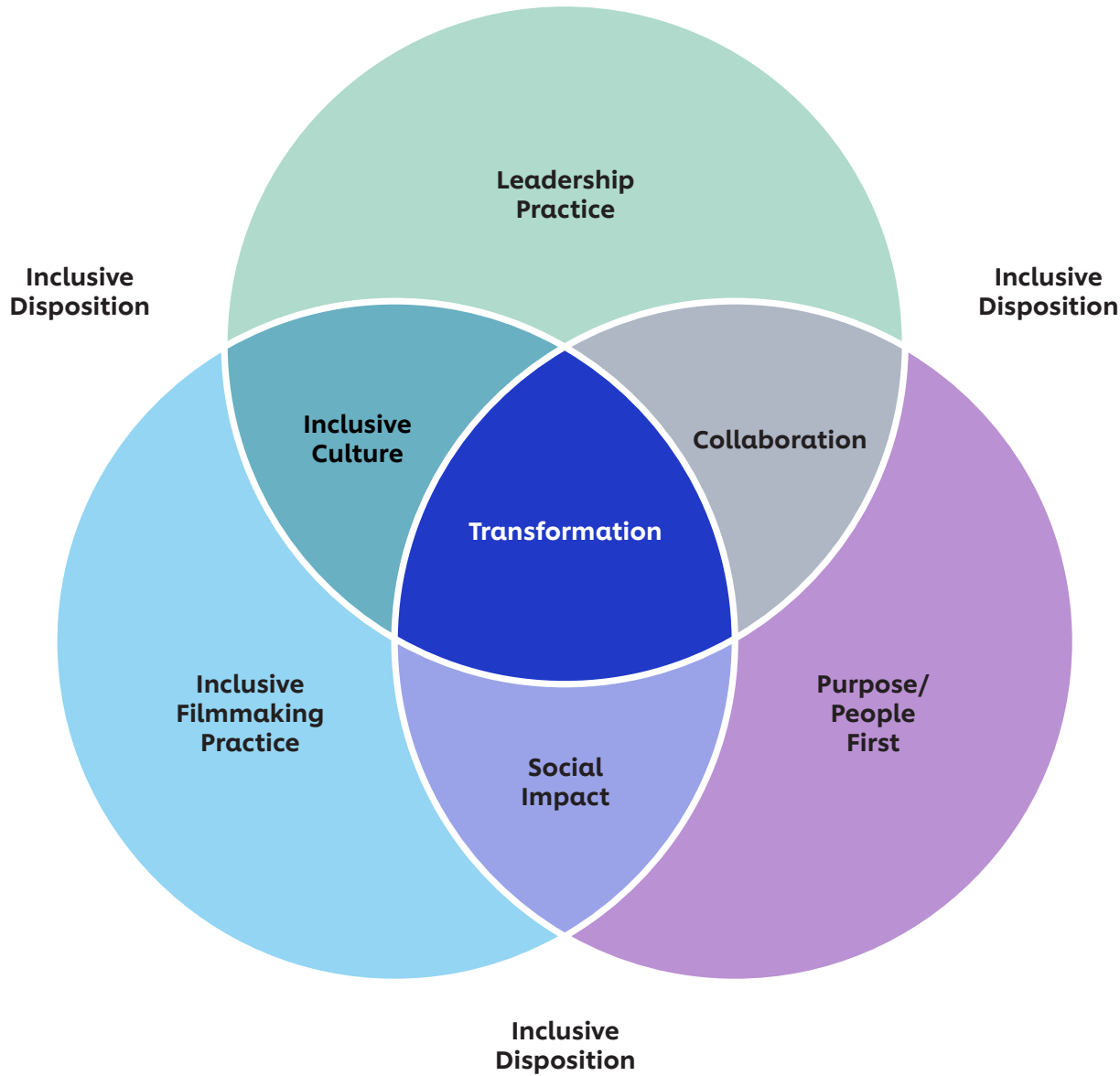
In the US, people with disabilities are the largest minority group at approximately 20% of the population, yet the disability community is often forgotten in conversations about diversity and inclusion.^{2B}

Almost 80% of people surveyed in CDN’s “Doubling Disability” report stated that management’s poor understanding of disability and discriminatory views about people with disability had limited their career progression.^{2C}

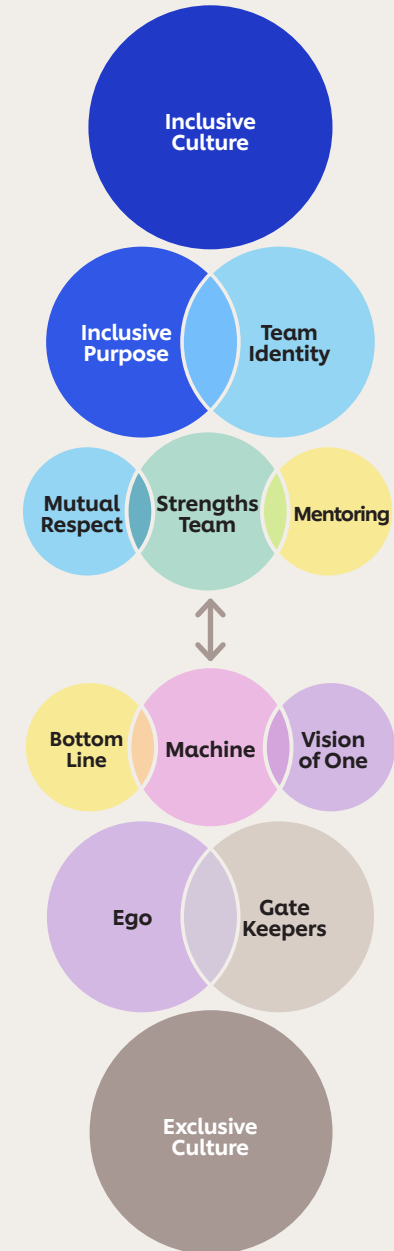
2A. Professor Kristjansson-Nelson is Full Professor of Film at Minnesota State University Moorhead. She holds a Doctor of Education in Education Leadership. www.red.mnstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1323&context=thesis

2B. www.reativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TheFifthCut-Diamond-at-5.pdf
2C. www.creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Interim-Briefing-Report-on-Doubling-Disability.pdf

Inclusive Disposition in Filmmaking^{2A}



Dimensions of Filmmaking Culture and Leadership^{2A}



2A. www.red.mnstate.edu/cgj/viewcontent.cgi?article=1323&context=thesis



Changing the Narrative

Storytelling that Aligns with the Social Model and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

When filmmakers and creatives ask us how to go about writing a story about disability, the question we often ask back is: who are your friends with disability? More often than not, people without disability who have no connection to the community, and no friendships or relationships with people with disability, try to represent disability on screen.

What often happens is that their own ableist point of view pervades. This includes those people who have family members with disability; the stigmas, prejudice and low expectations that pervade society also infiltrate the mindsets of family members. So just being related to someone doesn't mean you can tell the story authentically. In order to do this, you need inclusivity.

Disability is often seen through the lens of tragedy and "inspiration porn" – showcasing people with disability doing well or achieving success "despite" their disability to extract sympathy. Other strong tropes are that people with disability are asexual; that we must save or fix the person with disability; we must pity them; excuse bad behaviour from them; or mock or ridicule them. In some cases film narratives have told the audience that it is

better to be dead than have a disability, such as the 2016 romance film "Me Before You", which had major backlash from the disability community. These are all variations on a theme that is often presented in storytelling around disability.

However, if we change the narrative towards a more inclusive and empowering point of view we can create a volume of endless dynamic and respectful stories through our craft. Reflecting on the social model of disability and drawing from the UNCRPD, we should "undertake to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability".

Consider creating content involving people with disability that moves past the disability, setting stories of people first, who just happen to live with disability. Rather than focus on their disability, treat it as an incidental aspect of their lives. This can only be achieved through co-creation and collaboration with people with disability and getting involved in this community.

Inspiration Porn: What is it and Why it is it Harmful?

Inspiration porn is when someone calls a disabled person inspirational just for existing and doing everyday things. This is something many disabled people experience frequently and it often makes them feel uncomfortable. It may be well meaning, but it often comes from a position of pity rather than equality.

Check that your theme, story and content uplifts and doesn't feed into the pity model of disability.





Cultural and Social Benefits of Inclusive Commercial Film Production

Cultural Benefits of the Commercial Film Industry

Commercial production and advertising are powerful tools to share culture between communities and promote cultural connections. Inclusive commercial filmmaking helps break down stigmatised attitudes to disability that can be present in some communities. It helps progress disability rights and showcases to the community the capacity, capability and contribution of people with disability to our society.

The connection we gain through seeing other cultures and people different from ourselves on screen helps bring people together, breaks down the barriers to understanding and encourages sharing when we see others in the stories of our communities.

Seeing people with disability living fulfilling lives where they are contributing members of society reinforces the fact that people with disability are not to be pitied or praised for simply living their lives. They are people like everyone else who want to belong, be accepted and included in all aspects of society including open employment.

Cultural Benefits of Inclusive Commercial Production in Advertising

The commercial film set culture of all projects should be positive and encouraging – a place where people are celebrated, respected and valued no matter what role they take on. The director of the projects within a framework of inclusive commercial production is not an auteur; whilst they show leadership and direct the film production, they should aim to work shoulder to shoulder with the cast and crew to ensure that the experience of making the commercial is just as rewarding as the end result.

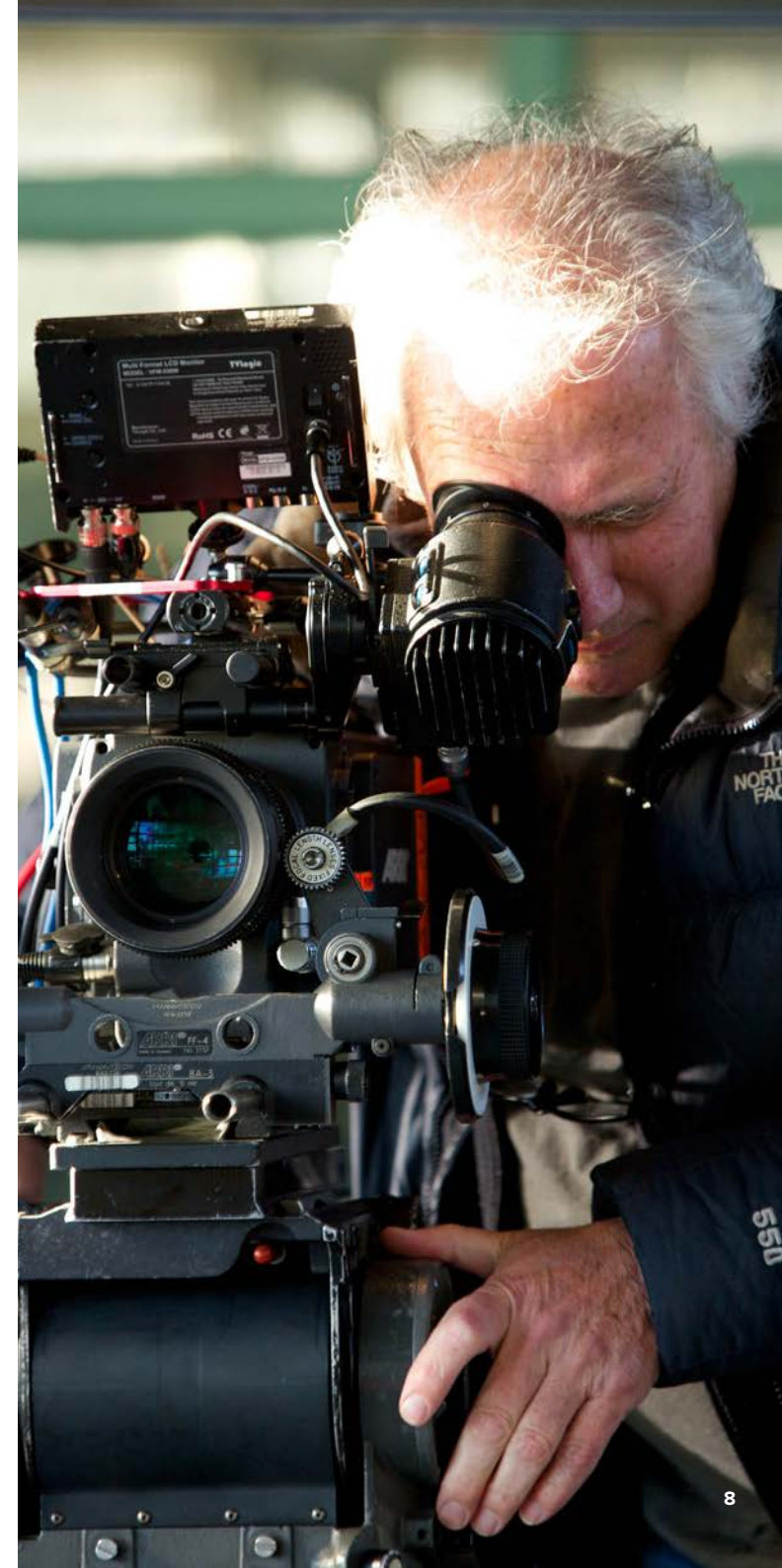
An inclusive director will not sit above the crew, they'll chip in and help where needed. For example they might take out the trash and make cups of tea for the other crew members, which is traditionally not how a set is run. Inclusive commercial production leans into servant leadership, where people in leadership positions understand that the reason why we are making this commercial film is to include people who are traditionally excluded and to transform and challenge the way commercial film projects are conventionally made.

Traditionally, the organisational structure of production is severely hierarchical; advertising execs and above the line roles are at the top and below the line roles are expected to follow

orders. This pyramid structure can often lead to negative consequences in the lives of crew and fosters exclusion. Commercial productions generally do not have an organisational structure which allows for accountability to a Human Resource manager.

Those leading the projects seldom ever have experience in HR, conflict resolution training or dealing with complaints of bullying, harassment and abuse. It is one of the reasons why we have witnessed the #MeToo movement; a lack of accountability and abuse of power in a hierarchical structure means that people can become exploited without any consequences for fear of not being hired again later on.

Inclusive commercial film production works in the opposite way to traditional commercial film production: instead of auteurship, where the project is more important than the people making it, the people on the project are more important than the work. Leadership is driven by values such as valuing crew wellbeing and ensuring people are included, so that we make a great product while treating people well.





Disability Pride and Deaf Culture

Disability Pride

People with disability are the largest and most diverse under-represented group within populations worldwide, representing all abilities, ages, races, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. It's also a community anyone of us can become part of at any point in our lives.

Disability Pride has been defined as accepting and honouring each person's uniqueness and seeing it as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity. Disability Pride is an integral part of movement-building, and a direct challenge to systemic ableism and stigmatising definitions of disability.

Around the world, July is Disability Pride month. This movement supports and drives people with disability to celebrate their community and push back on ablest ideals and discrimination. The "Crippling Up" by non-disabled actors to play disabled people is one aspect that has fuelled the Disability Pride movement, as the community takes back ownership of their culture and identify and pride themselves in being disabled.

Non-Visible Disability

There are visible disabilities as well as non-visible disabilities, meaning not all disabilities are apparent.

A non-visible disability is a disability or health condition that is not immediately obvious. It can defy stereotypes of what people might think disabled people look like.

Many disabled people self-identify in different ways. There are several ways of talking about non-visible disabilities.

Some people with disabilities that are not obvious prefer the phrase “non-visible”. This is because the word “invisible” can erase the legitimacy of the disability, or imply the disability does not exist.

“Hidden” disability can imply a person is hiding their disability on purpose. “Less-visible” disability does not encompass those whose condition is completely non-visible. With non-visible disabilities it is important to emphasise that even though the disability cannot be seen, it does not mean it does not exist. Some “non-visible” conditions are visible or obvious sometimes. Also, they can be “seen” by some people who might have a better understanding of the condition.

But they are not usually visible to others. Non-visible disabilities are named this way because you cannot always easily see the nature of the disability. Some people with non-visible disabilities might use mobility aids, whereas others will not.

Also, some people with non-visible disabilities might have a “dynamic disability”. This means that sometimes they might use a mobility aid, but other times they might not need it. Likewise, sometimes they might need to use a priority seat on busy public transport. Other times they may not feel they need to. A person may make a request or act in a way that seems strange to you. That request or behaviour may be disability-related. For example, you may give seemingly simple verbal directions to someone, but the person asks you to write the information down. He or she may have a learning disability that makes written communication easier. Even though these disabilities are hidden, they are real.



Inclusive Language

It can be difficult to keep up with what is the acceptable terminology in relation to disability. People with disability prefer to define who they are, so as you build relationships with individuals with disability you will learn what they prefer. For instance, the late Stella Young³ preferred being called a disabled person. That term has been politically incorrect in the past, but many people are now reclaiming it.

When it comes to the UNCRPD, the terminology of impairment is an accepted way to refer to disability, as the individual is impaired because social and environmental structures are not accommodating of them. However, many individuals prefer not to use this term.

Recognise the person's individuality:

- ✓ Focus on the person rather than disability, be respectful and just get to know them as an individual.

Extend appropriate language to facilities that support people with disability:

- ✓ Accessible facility e.g. toilet/car space
- ✗ Disabled facility

Learn the local vernacular of disability language where you live and work. If in doubt ASK! As we have seen with pronouns (he/him, she/her and they/them) and many people self-identifying how they prefer to be acknowledged, with disability, asking someone how they like to be addressed is best.

3. Stella Young was a disability advocate and comedian. Her Ted Talk "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much" on disability representation went viral. www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much



It is so important that everybody recognises themselves in the stories that we absorb on TV, in advertisements and online. When people with disability regularly do not see people that look and sound like them, they are subconsciously told that they do not fit and do not matter.

So, if 20% of the population are people living with disability, we should be seeing a lot closer to this number of people with disability reflected in our stories. And not just as a lowly character with a disability, but as prominent, world-changing characters. A more accurate portrayal.

Henry Smith
Co-Founder and CEO, Taste Creative



What isn't Inclusive Filmmaking?

Crafting roles for people with disability or other marginalised groups on screen is a significant step towards greater representation in storytelling and casting, but it's only the tip of the iceberg towards inclusive commercial film production and advertising. If people with disability are not involved in the key process of the production, then has true inclusion taken place?

Our answer is no. You can't simply cast a person with disability and call it an inclusive commercial film or advertisement if you haven't included people in the process of making the commercial. All you have done is make a casting choice; that's as far as you have gone.

What is Inclusive Filmmaking?

Inclusive commercial film production means inclusion throughout all aspects of the process. Inclusive commercial film production is just that, involving people with disability or other marginalised groups in the end-to-end commercial filmmaking process. Every creative agency, creative team or production supplier can be inclusive right now, even if it is just one role in one aspect of production.

Anyone can include people with disability at any time; it comes down to your attitude.

Here are some actions you can implement to help you become more inclusive in your ideation, in the production of advertising assets and in your shoots, teams and advertisements:

- ✓ Consider your storyline and invite members of the relevant disability community into your writers' room. Give this representative your trust. Authenticity in storytelling is a brilliant outcome from inclusion. Furthermore, it ensures your representation of disability, should you be writing on the topic, is authentic and truthful.⁴
 - ✓ Look for opportunities in the production office to engage a person with disability in the team. This could be an internship, work experience or paid role. We all have to start somewhere and in this "exclusive" industry, getting a foot in the door is the first step. Frame opportunities like this and consider a person with disability on your crew. Use the [AdPro Inclusive Framework](#) when considering applicants for these types of roles.
 - ✓ Don't undervalue unpaid work experience or volunteering. Whilst we should always pay our cast and crew, if there is merit in offering a very junior position or opportunity to a person to gain experience, consider it. Conversely, as a company consider volunteering your time to give back to a community group.
- Many companies now give staff a day of leave to volunteer in a community project to show their commitment through corporate social responsibility. Consider the disability organisations in your area and reach out about volunteering.
- ✓ Consider how the pre-production period and tasks could be adapted to be more inclusive. There is much to do around sound design, lighting, wardrobe, set design and casting
- When casting roles, consider how you might include people with disability. Authentic casting is the gold standard of inclusive filmmaking. Refer to the [AdPro Inclusive Casting](#) Best Practice.
- ✓ Consider the departments in the production, how each team is resourced and what roles a person with disability could undertake in the same way you would when reviewing any mentoring opportunities. A buddy system on set is a great way to offer an opportunity to learn through mentoring. Consider rotating the opportunities to work through different units to learn new skills, and get a feel for their preferences.
- ✓ Editing and post-production offer a unique set of tasks and situations that present synergistic opportunities for people with disability. Editing and post-production offer a unique set of tasks and situations that can present synergistic opportunities for people with disability.
 - ✓ Another opportunity for disabled creatives and production inclusivity is to hire an accessibility coordinator on set.

⁴ Case Study: Ben Phillips, an actor who is blind, was working on a TV series. The writers wrote the character as being able to recognise someone's face using his hands. Ben corrected them on set, but if they had included someone with vision impairment in the writers' room, this wouldn't have been an issue.

Myths and Stereotypes

Myths and Stereotypes Regarding Inclusion and Employment

Myth: People with disability are best suited to unskilled work. We know people with disability have a wide range of skills and talents which they can bring to the workplace. A common myth is that people with disability can only work in unskilled jobs.

Myth: Employing a person with disability in my commercial will make everything take longer. Even if a production is slowed down, it's ultimately more accessible and safer to do so for everyone. It's so normalised in production to have extremely long days that we forget that this practice will often impact output, safety and wellbeing of the crew.

In general, at Bus Stop Films we work with up to 15 people with disability on our sets at any one time. Our productions rarely run over time, in fact we have often finished ahead of schedule, a win for any production!

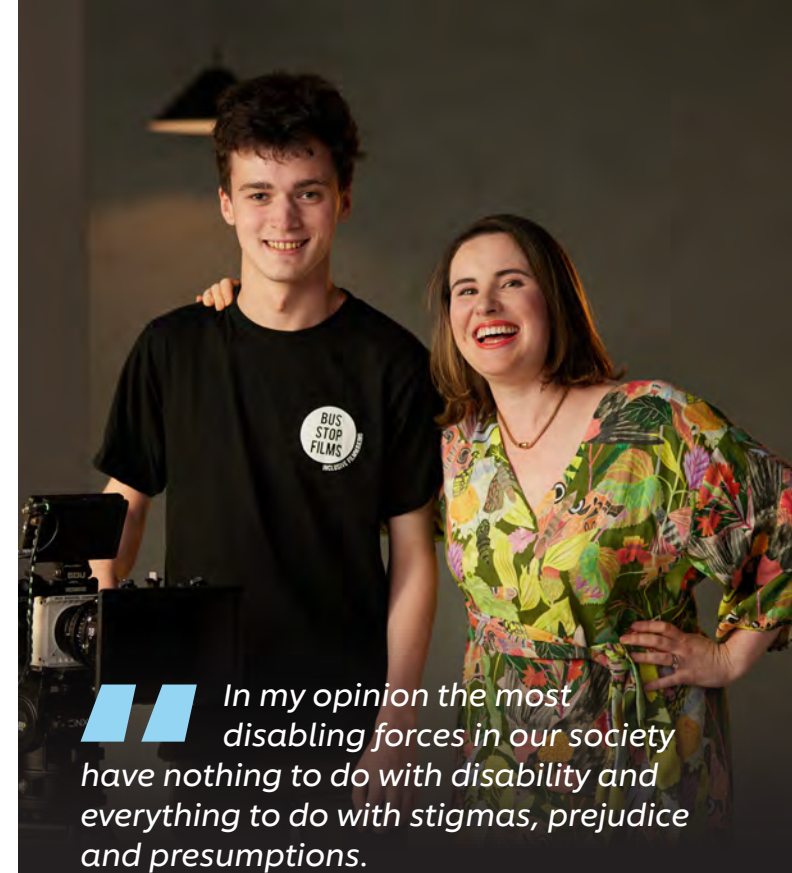
Myth: People with disability won't fit in with the rest of the crew. Given that people with disability make up 20 per cent of the population it is likely that your cast and crew have a relative or friend with disability. Commercial filmmaking is truly a team sport.

Myth: It will cost me more to hire a person with disability. Rather than seeing costs associated with inclusion as "draining" or

"additional" or "unnecessary" we need to view them as investments in the production. There may be additional costs to hire someone with disability; however, if we view this as a drain, we may miss out on the myriad benefits having that person on the production will bring.

Shifting the idea to costs being beneficial investments means that we see this as a value add. In relation to some people, there will be no increase in costs to employers around insurance or admin or production costs. If there are additional costs, we must consider the benefits of the cost and investment first, rather than be dismissive. Accommodations for disabled people more often than not benefit everyone (e.g. ramps, accessible seating, large print), so this investment ultimately allows for a more efficient production. Most accommodations are also affordable and definitely feasible with careful planning.

Myth: Employing people with disability won't change broader community attitudes. While you may only have one person in your team identifying as living with disability, the flow-on effect to the team around them and outwardly into the team's broader networks is profound. Research shows that the most effective way of countering negative attitudes towards people with disability is through direct exposure to people with disability.



In my opinion the most disabling forces in our society have nothing to do with disability and everything to do with stigmas, prejudice and presumptions.

Our productions at Taste Creative and Bus Stop Films do not get slowed down because we include people with intellectual disabilities; quality is not compromised; and it is not harder to make a film or produce work with people who have intellectual disabilities on set. In fact, our crews adore working on our films because they love to mentor and help others to learn and grow.

Genevieve Clay-Smith
Co-Founder, Bus Stop Films
Co-Founder and Director, Taste Creative



Bringing the Community Onboard from the Start

Nothing About Us, Without Us

This powerful phrase was used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy. In its modern form, it was invoked by the South African disability rights movement in the 1990s, as the clarion call of activists organizing to overcome systemic oppression and empower persons with disabilities to take control over decisions affecting their lives.⁵ True inclusive advertising in relation to people with disability means including people with disability in all aspects of the project development and execution, and ensuring that those people benefit from the project being made.

If your project includes Indigenous themes or First Nations issues please ensure you connect with that community for collaboration, permission and authenticity. Similarly, when exploring intersectional aspects of disability such as broader cultural diversity or the experience of those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or the LGBTQIA+ community, connect with and seek input from members of those community groups.

#NothingAboutUsWithoutUs

5. Charlton, James I. (1998). *Nothing About Us Without Us*. University of California Press. ISBN 0-520-22481-7. Retrieved 2010-06-22

Barriers to Inclusion and Making Adjustments in the Workplace

Workplace adjustment is a modification of a workplace or process, policy, procedure or situation that enables an employee with disability to perform their job in a way that minimises the impact of their disability. In some countries, we refer to “reasonable adjustment”.

It is important to be aware that it is a legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate people with disabilities.

Workplace adjustments allow a person to:

- perform the standard or essential requirements of their job safely and respectfully in the workplace;
- have equal opportunity to take part in recruitment processes, be promoted and/or be considered for ongoing professional development;
- experience equitable terms and conditions of employment;
- maximise productivity of all.

Many labour force policies require employers to make adjustments to accommodate an individual’s disability, unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship. In filmmaking, what does this look like? This could be:

- printing the script in larger font for a person with low vision;

- moving a production meeting to a wheelchair accessible location;
- equipment adaptation to allow a camera to be supported on a wheelchair or frame.

Each person and workplace is different, so a bespoke approach works best.

There are many barriers in life that impact the inclusion of people with disability and when you place them in an industry that is very exclusive, the barriers seem to become stronger.

Many employers view adjustments as financial strain. While sometimes readjustments can cost extra, rather than view these adjustments as a cost to business, we can view them as an investment. Why? Because we know that statistically, diverse teams perform better; they enhance culture; they identify risks more efficiently; and they problem-solve better.

Each person will naturally have a unique set of circumstances, so optimum day-lengths should be discussed ahead of engagement on any production. Another factor for consideration will be an individual’s ability to work based on their current employment status and/or government wage assistance benefits they might be receiving. The hiring

supplier should ensure remuneration is discussed with the individual or their advocate, ahead of engagement on any production, to ensure that all these factors have been fully considered and discussed to ensure fair and equitable compensation is provided, in compliance with local country discrimination laws.

In some markets, government funding is available for “access to work” type schemes and job support coaches are available to work with both parties during the placement period.

Furthermore, if you are developing a campaign about disability and are making the production inclusively, you can draw on the lived experience of your crew member with disability to ensure your project is authentic. Our view is that reasonable adjustments are an investment in the:

- culture and wellbeing of the crew;
- productivity of the crew;
- ability of the team to problem solve and eliminate risks;
- authentic portrayal of disability .



[Sample Accessibility & Participation Plan](#)

Attitudinal Barriers

How will they keep up, will they fit in, how will they manage the equipment, what if they fail? The truth is that the barrier of attitude is what actually makes a person disabled. It's not the person's mobility or physical disability, it's how others respond to it that is the issue.

If you genuinely run an "inclusive lens" over your projects and your workplaces, you will be surprised by the shift in attitude you can achieve. It's low expectations of people with disability that often stops them from achieving – and if they fail, that's life. Isn't it better to have tried than to have never had the opportunity to give it a go? Failure is everyone's human right; it's how we build capacity and resilience.





Physical Barriers

Moving onto physical barriers, commercial film sets can sometimes mean poor access. Studio shoots are often easier in terms of physical access, but how do you manage a location shoot which may be outside, hard to reach or unsafe for some? While not always possible, we encourage commercial filmmakers to “ask, assess and address” before dismissing the idea of inclusive filmmaking. For example:

- Can you move the shoot to a more accessible location?
- Is there a quiet area or unit from which a person with sensory issues can work?
- Do you have wheelchair-accessible bathrooms and meal areas?
- How accessible are your offices and workplaces?
- Do you need to consider where hair and make-up is located?

Here are some great case studies where Bus Stop Films made simple but effective adjustments:

- We filmed a short film in a TV studio where the make-up area and green room were upstairs. This would not work for our students so the make-up area was set up downstairs at the side of the studio floor, which was accessible.
- We chose a filming location at an abandoned hospital and realised that one of our filmmakers with disability couldn't walk up the stairs to set. We re-set the film downstairs and the result was definitely better; the new space was cinematically more impactful than the original spot we had chosen.

From Pitch to Performance

How Do Agencies Around the Globe Engage with the Disability Community? Where Do You Find People Living with Disability for Your Cast and Crew?

Try starting with a simple Google search relating to government disability organisations. Where these don't exist consider other trusted organisations such as Paralympic organisations to get recommendation of other disability groups or organisations. There are many disability organisations and online communities, but be sure to do your research and take leads from trusted sources.

Parent groups, disability organisations and Facebook groups for the specific type of disability you are looking for offer a brilliant source of information and talent for your commercial production. Bus Stop Films' casting calls on social media for talent with disabilities are our highest shared posts, reaching tens of thousands of people each time.

If your regular casting agent doesn't have people with disability on their books, community organisations and sporting groups are a great way to source diverse talent.

With the growth of the disabled sports movement through the Paralympics and Special Olympics, sporting associations for people with disability are a brilliant source of talent for casting. A skilled commercial director can get a great performance out of a first time or non-acting talent. However, not everyone has the skill and talent to be an actor so we shouldn't assume everyone can act in the disabled community either.

Start with a simple email or phone call to discuss your commercial production: this is a great step to introduce your company and your project. Building a relationship first will give you a great cast and crew later.

Learn more about inclusive filmmaking:

 [Watch video](#)





Authentic Casting


Authentic casting is the process of casting a person with a lived experience of disability in the role of the character being represented. For example, if the role is that of a wheelchair user, you would look to cast a person who actually uses a wheelchair.

Similarly, if the role is that of a person with an intellectual disability then the role is performed by someone who identifies as a person with intellectual disability. Sometimes this might mean casting non-actors in roles, and this is where the director can step up to get the best out of their talent. There is nothing more disempowering for the disability community and for the advancement of inclusion than to cast an actor without disability in a role where a person with lived experience could have performed the role. Ben Phillips, an actor who is also blind, shares his experience of authentic casting here.


 [Watch video](#)

Examples of authentic casting:

Standing Up for Sonny

 [Watch video](#)

Shakespeare in Tokyo

 [Watch video](#)

The Silent Child

 [Watch video](#)

Non-Traditional Casting

Non-traditional casting is where characters for a performed work (theatre, TV, film) are cast without regard to race, gender, age, etc. This can happen when a character is created with a personality, but without a defined set of physical characteristics, such as disability, age, gender or race. This may lead to the reformations of some tropes connected to age, gender or race, and is not always directly prescribed. In some adaptations, women playing parts traditionally played by men (when the gender of the character is not essential) or a person of colour playing a role traditionally played by a Caucasian person.

When writing a role, or even casting a role, consider enacting non-traditional casting, creating further opportunity for a person with disability to be considered. The role of Nan, a character in “American Horror Story” portrayed by Jamie Brewer, was not written as a person with Down syndrome; however, the role was offered to Jamie and she brought a strong element to it that perhaps would have been missing if a person without disability was cast.

Here is a great little clip about authentic casting:

 [Watch video](#)



How Do You Ask People to Identify Their Disability in a Casting Call or Crew Recruitment?

Often producers get worried about asking a person with disability about the condition, mainly out of fear of being insensitive or unkind. But when aiming to cast authentically and to ensure you are supporting a person's access needs, it's ok to ask about any adjustments or accommodations that might be required. Please note in some markets asking questions directly related to an individual's disability (not specific to their adjustment/accommodation needs) is not legal, so ensure you are aware of local government regulations.

In markets where it is legally allowed to ask more information here is an example of how you might ask.

So that we can be sure we are connecting to a diverse group of people and ensure a wide variety of lived experiences contributes to our project, we would like to know more about you and your disability. This will allow us to best support you through this process. Sharing this information is completely optional and it's ok if you'd prefer to not answer these questions:

- Please tell us about your disability? E.g. intellectual disability, upper limb amputee, low vision, Deaf/Hard of hearing etc.
- Do you use any assistive equipment or additional resources? e.g. wheelchair user, hearing aids, cochlear implant, talk-to-text technology, assistance animal etc.
- Do you have any additional access or support needs that would assist us to support you? e.g. Do you require a sign language interpreter, reading assistance, large print or plain English instructions etc.





Access

Access vs Dignity

If you are going to be inclusive of crew or performers with a disability, you need to make sure that the location is accessible. It is unethical to ask a person with disability to compromise their dignity to make an inaccessible location work for you. For example, if you choose a location that doesn't have an accessible bathroom, or accessible entrance to and around the building, you cannot ask that person to use alternative bathroom facilities that might be different to what everyone else is using, and you cannot offer access to the building whereby they are physically lifted in. They need to be able to independently enter and move around the building: this gives the person dignity and independence.

Not considering a person's bathroom needs or shooting in a location where a person must be dependent on others to enter and move around a location ultimately segregates the person and can have a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Ultimately, prioritising location over people is not inclusive and means that you will run the risk of excluding people because of your decision. Over the past decade of

facilitating inclusive commercial productions at Taste Creative and Bus Stop Films, we have never found that prioritising inclusion has compromised the quality of our productions. In fact, we have seen that as we prioritised this need, we found locations that have been creatively perfect as well as accessible. It just takes looking further.

You can explore hiring aids to make a building accessible—for example, depending on the gradients of steps into the building and throughout a building you can arrange to hire a ramp or stair lift to be installed for the duration of using the location. You can hire mobi mats and beach wheelchairs to make sandy or rough exterior locations accessible as well. Ultimately, you will need to make sure the aids you hire will indeed ensure the location is accessible for the person who needs them, so this will require having a conversation with the person centred around their needs.

Preserving the dignity of disabled people through ensuring locations are accessible is vitally important to inclusion and needs to be thought of at the beginning and throughout the pre-production phase. It cannot be an afterthought.



We're on Set. Now What?

There are many ways you can include inclusive practice on set:

- Ensure you include a call to action on your call sheets. E.g. "We value inclusion on our sets and expect all cast and crew to treat each other with respect." This messaging should be just as important as information about safety around equipment or COVID-19 protocols.
- During the morning crew call safety briefing acknowledge inclusion as being important and encourage each crew member to treat each other with dignity and respect.



Head of Department Guides

Task Suggestions for Industry New Starters

Here are some handy tips on how to support a person with disability in your department on set and tasks suggestions for them that will both help the production and make them feel welcome. A good guide is to match the person's experience and skill to the role: for example, where an individual has no prior production or applicable industry experience they might be best suited to an entry level role. However, where a person with disability has prior industry experience, they should be hired based on their experience and expertise within the applicable department. A bespoke approach works best and the person's skills, experience and qualifications should always be recognised.



1st Assistant Director

- Call "Roll Sound" and "Action"
- Distributing call sheets at the beginning of the day
- Escorting actors or talent to and from set
- Relaying messages and following up with crew on ETAs and requests
- Keeping track of time and scheduling



Art Department

- Helping to bring in props from the trolley and making any choices
- Dressing the set in the morning and any cleaning that needs to be done
- Setting up props
- Helping with any adjustments to dressing or props throughout the day
- Cleaning up at the end of the day



Behind The Scenes

- Helping with set up
- Interviewing each other and being interviewed.
- If you are comfortable with this, holding the camera
- Choosing shot size and background for interviews
- Deciding what action on set they want to capture



Camera Department

- Filling in camera reports. If possible bring extra so that the assistants can have a go.
- Clapper board – students should have been practising this and can be helping with this most of the day
- Laying down any tape to mark spots for talent
- Carrying gear
- Controlling the haze machine: if being used



Gaffer and Grip Departments

- Carrying equipment and setting up
- Switching on lights and calling “striking”
- Managing cables
- Helping with setting up lights and gels, etc.
- Packing up at the end of the day



Hair and Makeup

- Carrying and setting up gear
- Cleaning brushes and tidying area
- Choosing colours
- On set with hand cream, etc. for closeup of hands
- Simple applications



Production

- Distributing call sheets at the beginning of the day
- Escorting actors or talent to and from set.
- Relaying messages and following up with crew on ETAs and requests
- Keeping track of time and scheduling.
- Helping with collecting any signatures/release forms etc.
- Laying out unit stuff, catering set up
- Making sure that the green room, makeup room and wardrobe is tidy



Sound Department

- Setting up equipment
- Holding the boom
- Calling "Sound Speed"
- Turning performance music on and off
- Any record keeping
- Collecting background sound



Wardrobe Department

- Helping to decide on any costume options for interviews or performances
- Making sure that wardrobe options and talents' own clothes are in order. Helping to check costumes are looking ok during final checks
- Helping with any ironing or cleaning shoes, etc.





Support Workers or Personal Care Assistants (PCAs)

A support worker or PCA is a person engaged to provide assistance to a person with disability. Some people with disability require no assistance with day to day activities, while others may require additional support. It is important to recognise that each person's support levels are different.

Having a support worker or PCA in the writers' room or on set can seem cumbersome at first. However, they are there to assist the person with disability, and essentially are a piece of supportive equipment much like a cane for those with low vision, a hearing aid for the hard of hearing or a wheelchair for those needing mobility support. However, in this case, the supportive piece of equipment just happens to be a human. These workers may come to work with the person for the first few days and focus on elements such as travel training, logistics and task training, or they may be an ongoing part of the person's needs.

In terms of how they fit into the team and the nuances of filmmaking, they are equally obliged to adhere to set protocols around confidentiality, intellectual property, safety and respect. Having a support worker sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement around a project is perfectly acceptable.

Such workers generally know their clients well and are a wonderful source of encouragement and support to help the person with disability gain the most from the opportunity.

Assistance Animals

Some people who live with disability are assisted by animal supports. These animals may be used by people who are low vision, hard of hearing or living with autism or anxiety. Each country will have their own legislation around assistance animals. It would be advantageous to ensure that your set is accessible to assistance animals when working with those who require them.





Set Protocols and Inclusive Production Quotas

What exactly can you ask a person with disability to do on a commercial set? Essentially what you would ask of any person undertaking the role they are performing, at the level they are engaged, framed against an understanding of the capacity of the person along with their experience.

If the person is attached as an entry-level production assistant, tasks like getting coffee, setting up catering and helping with props are fine. If the person is engaged as a camera assistant, then requesting their assistance to set up, clean, check and pack down equipment is appropriate. The support offered, directions given and tasks assigned should match their skill level, capacity and role engaged – just like anyone else.

Don't be afraid to support them to undertake new or more challenging tasks as a learning pathway, particularly if you see potential for their growth. With the right supports in place, allowing new staff to "act up" can be a fantastic way to unlock new skills. We don't want to see people with disability exploited in their roles, but it would be remiss to not extend an opportunity to someone to get a foot in the door out of fear that the tasks would be too menial, or that to ask them would be disrespectful.

There is a wealth of roles on set and all are important to the overall flow of a production. There are busy times and quieter times when your role is not needed, and that is ok. Think ahead and work out how to best support the person in the quieter times, such as while waiting for a scene to be set up.

The "toolbox talk" around set protocols, roles, set safety and culture at the start of the shoot should be offered to all. Respect and kindness should be leading the way, especially around behaviour and civility. Living with a disability does not absolve someone from acting with respect towards others. Open communication around expectations of behaviour should be maintained at all times.

At Bus Stop Films, we follow a rule of having mentees on set 90% of the time in inclusive commercial filmmaking. We choose 90% because sometimes people get sick, they need to leave early or they need time out, and that's all part of making workplace adjustments.

Set a goal about how inclusive you can make your set. Sometimes you might only have capacity to engage one person, or you might have capacity to engage more. Don't forget to think about all areas of production including pre-production and post!

Cast and Crew Communication

This is a critical component to achieving inclusion. Commercial film sets are busy places with many people and pieces of equipment, sounds and colours. Not knowing who is who can make engaging in the process overwhelming. Where possible we suggest making a time for the cast and crew to meet ahead of the production. A good idea is to include a note about bullying, respect and positive workplace culture in the call sheet. This way everyone on set receives the same message about inclusion from the director, down to the fourth assistant catering coordinator!

If this is not possible, ensure from day one that the person has a designated crew member to connect with if they have any issues or concerns. You might like to talk about how they will manage if they are feeling overwhelmed or are not across a task they have been requested to do.

On sets, we connect each person with disability with a mentor; this helps with the sharing of knowledge and the learning of new skills. It also helps to identify to the mentee who they are working with and in which department. It also offers their industry mentor a chance to get to know mentee more closely.

Catering, Craft Services and Outsourcing

We all know that a great way to keep your cast and crew happy is through their tummies. When you're hiring your caterers and setting up your craft services or coffee run, consider using a company that hires people with disabilities or from diverse backgrounds to cook, deliver and serve their products.

There are a number of social enterprise services that hire people with disabilities, youth at risk or migrant workers from emerging communities in the food service industry. Take a look at what's happening in the community startups. Ethical businesses are a growing sector. Think about who you hire equipment from for camera, sound and lighting etc. and consider the companies that have diversity and inclusion within their business and usual practices.

Also, consider where and how meal breaks are taken. If all the key cast and crew eat together and the below the line staff are made to eat separately, this creates divisions between people and is not inclusive. Sharing a meal or even just a cup of coffee can promote a sense of community and belonging on set.



The Goal

Naturally Authentic: Integrated into the Everyday

The end goal of engaging with and maintaining relationships with community and individuals is to drive social change holistically. Some of your employees might never have met a person with a disability before or had friendships with a person with a disability. Engaging with people from marginalised communities professionally will help to drive inclusion at a broader social level.

The ripple effect of this connection can be extremely transformative for all involved and more broadly. While engaging with individuals and communities may begin as a formal arrangement with HR, and measured with KPIs, the end goal is naturally authentic connection, which is not forced or measured. This might take time, but understanding that this is the end goal means that you can begin to cultivate it through your endeavours.

What we ultimately want to see develop is the following:

- Authentic relationships with the community are easily maintained without effort: you are hiring people with disability with ease and providing opportunities and this is now second nature.
- A sense of connectedness to the community is present throughout the

whole organisation. For example, it becomes business as usual and normal for your organisation to engage with people with disability, it's expected and your employees see inclusion as normal.

- People with disability; and those from marginalised communities are visible throughout your workforce and productions.
- The company culture becomes more focused on wellbeing and understands that achieving an excellent product can happen whilst also cultivating a people-first culture.
- Reasonable adjustments on production and in the office are benefiting all employees, not just those with disability.
- Flexible work arrangements are benefiting all employees, not just those with disability.
- Employees who have been masking their invisible disability have developed the confidence to disclose their disability to management and ask for reasonable adjustments to help them do their job with even more efficiency.
- Access is not an afterthought. All decision making about access and inclusion is front of mind and decision making is framed through a lens of access and inclusion.



Closing Words

This toolkit is only a **starting point**: actual transformation requires leadership, cultural change, collaboration and most importantly a willing desire that reaches far beyond this guidance.

Finding new and diverse talent from the disability community for both sides of the camera starts with building relationships through advocates and community groups, making a connection and getting to know them. As well, teams need to be trained to become disability confident through the community engagement.

It is unethical to ask a person with disability to compromise their self-respect to be a part of an inaccessible production. The journey to inclusive production must be done thoughtfully and respectfully and should be undertaken strategically from the outset of any production.

Access is not an afterthought or a box ticking exercise that erodes the dignity of a disabled person. Engaging with people from marginalised communities professionally will help to drive inclusion at a broader social level.

Where to from here?

Inclusively Made is the true mark of authentic inclusion in film and commercial production. Founded by Bus Stop Films and Taste Creative, **Inclusively Made** empowers organisations to operate inclusively with people living with disability.

 inclusivelymade.com





About the Authors

Bus Stop Films and Taste Creative have been working together since their inception, now combining more than 20 years of filmmaking and commercial production experience. We are global leaders in #InclusiveFilmmaking and founders of Inclusively Made.



Bus Stop Films

Bus Stop Films is a pioneering, not-for-profit organisation that uses filmmaking and the film industry to raise the profile of people living with disabilities and other marginalised groups, on both sides of the camera.

The Bus Stop Films filmmaking model has been refined by years of inclusive filmmaking and is still growing and developing. Starting out on a small scale with a bold vision and strategy to include people with disability in filmmaking and production, Bus Stop Films has been a global leader in this style of filmmaking since its inception.

Through our Accessible Films Studies Program and the brilliant films we create, we provide a platform for the voices and stories of our participants to be shared around the world, whilst advocating for a more inclusive film industry and society at large.

busstopfilms.com



Taste Creative

Taste Creative is a film production company that produces world-class stories for purpose-led organisations.

With a passion to see authentic diversity in the film industry, we create employment opportunities for people living with disability pursuing professional careers both in front and behind the camera.

Taste Creative works collaboratively to create high-quality film and creative content and uses this space to explore authentic stories that empower the disability community. This is achieved by collaborating with people with lived experience throughout the storytelling process, as well as providing people with disability meaningful employment within the creative industry.

tastecreative.com



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Please note this document is intended to provide help and guidance and does not amount to legal advice.



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