Dear Friends,

We're back with an update on what we have been working on for the last few months in the Disability Initiative. The past editions can be found here.

Last year in July 2014, the Foundation partnered with the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC) on “Retrofitting of IT parks in Cyberabad zone”. Under the Barrier free accessible building component, the Foundation facilitated a reconnaissance study of two IT parks and one Government building and has submitted a Feasibility Report to TSIIC. As a part of this initiative the Foundation published a handbook to guide companies and infrastructure developers to follow universal design concepts and build barrier free infrastructure. R Chandrasekhar, President, NASSCOM released a Publication on ‘Inclusion of persons with disabilities & accessibility at workplace’ at the DBI summit held in Jan, 2015.

In this edition, Shivani Gupta, Founder of Access Ability talks about the need for Universal Design to create inclusive workplaces and Bhuvaneswar Naik, VP and Head - Human Resources of SAP Labs India Pvt. Ltd shares their companies initiatives towards Inclusion.

While our work continues to be guided by the five goals, we continue to identify and address new aspects that can re-energize the ecosystem, and connect the dots, whether its skills building or employment of Persons with Disabilities. It would be great to hear your thoughts/suggestions on how we can impact your work and help in this Disability Inclusion journey.

Regards,

Disability Initiative Team
NASSCOM Foundation

SPOTLIGHT - LEARN ZONE

Universal Design and Inclusion of persons with disabilities at workplaces

According to the WHO 15% of the world population comprises of persons with disabilities. Inclusion of persons with disabilities is no longer an option but becoming crucial in all spheres of life including at workplace. The unique element necessary for including persons with disabilities is the provision of universal design that enables them to participate on an equal basis. The Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines ‘Universal design’ as the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. It also includes assistive devices that are needed by particular groups of disabled people.

The biggest benefit of providing universal design is that it benefits all users including children, elderly and persons with temporary reduced mobility such as pregnant women, persons recovering from injuries/illness etc. along with persons with disabilities. It helps illuminating any unintentional discrimination and creates an equitable environments and work places. Further it also makes good economic sense since no additional resources are required for making adaptations or providing specialized services to ensure inclusion.

Providing universal design at work place is a pre-requisite for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and may include:

- Providing an infrastructure that is accessible for persons with disabilities. Areas for consideration would include the entrance, vertical and horizontal circulation, restrooms, work areas, common areas, emergency evacuation etc.
- Having human resource policies that take into account human diversity in recruitment, training, promotion and retention policies etc. to ensure that persons with disabilities are included. Reasonable accommodations may be provided for those requiring it.
- Information and Communication Technology including company websites, dedicated software, hardware such as computers, telephones, fax etc. used at must be accessible complying to accessibility standards.

Universal design is for everybody and must not be considered as ‘special provision’ for persons with disabilities. A company is not expected to provide Universal design at the workplace overnight. Rather it must be achieved progressively in a planned and phased manner. There may be funds allocated for yearly process. Additionally two areas where there needs to be a policy plug in towards becoming more accessible are - the company maintenance and procurement policies. These may include the need to address universal design thereby requiring that all maintenance retrofitting and everything that is procured is comply to universal design standards.

In Dalai Lama's words “A journey of thousand miles begins with a single step” - let your journey towards becoming more inclusive begin with the decision to make the environment more universally designed.
SETTING EXAMPLES: COMPANY INITIATIVES TOWARDS INCLUSION

NASSCOM Foundation spoke to Bhuvaneswar Naik, VP and Head - Human Resources of SAP Labs India Pvt. Ltd on how he is driving inclusion in his company.

Bhuvaneswar Naik,
VP & Head - HR of SAP Labs India Pvt. Ltd.

NASSCOM Foundation: Please describe your current work in the area - What do you do differently?

Bhuvan: SAP is considered as a pioneer and thought leader in the space of providing employment opportunities to the people with Autism.

1. Autism at Work: SAP is utilizing a huge pool of untapped talent and therefore, also strengthening its position as a global leader in innovation. Thus far, we have 10 people who are a part of the SAP India family and we target to add around 10 employees every year. Globally, SAP has already employed more than 40 candidates. The team of passionate volunteers within SAP believe in impacting the lives of these candidates positively and have succeeded in offering roles such as Software Application testing, System Administration, Documentation and Research.

2. Project Prayas: Prayas is a computer and iPad Training Programme for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders; initiated by Autism Society of India, running in collaboration with Staptics Society of Karnataka, Indira Nagar, Bangalore. It has been financially and technically supported by SAP Labs India Pvt. Ltd. Bangalore. Project Prayas launched the online free resource www.learn4autism.com and an iPad app called "BOL" which aids learning to build concepts through association. A technical team of volunteers from SAP were involved in this along with some parents and professionals from the field of special education.

Project Prayas/Bol have been able to address some of the issues such as:
- Avenues are endless; Awareness is the key to success.
- Affordability is a question; Development is the answer.
- Accessibility is yet another question; Open- source is the answer.

3. India Inclusion Summit: SAP partners and plays an active role in managing the world disability days agenda annually with a vision of:
- Spread awareness of disability through popular mediums like movies, sports, books, music etc.
- Identify the roles which corporates and schools could play to support persons with disabilities and drive inclusivity into the system.
- Guidance to parents of children with disabilities on the possibilities and support systems that exist.
- Use of technology to enable persons with disabilities.
- Review the current Disability law and provide feedback.

4. Diversity & Inclusion HR policy: In SAP, we are currently formulating an end to end policy for the Differently abled candidates who are qualified and are willing to build their careers with us. This policy aims at providing extensive support to the differently abled candidates and the hiring teams right from Hiring to Integration with the business and post-employment support along with catering to all kinds of special requests which these candidates might have.

5. Accessibility audit: Recently, in partnership with the organization V-Sesh, we conducted an extensive Accessibility audit of our entire office infrastructure with the objective of making our workplace more inclusive than it is already. Following this, we have undertaken multiple infrastructure upgrades to enable the people with disabilities function at their 100%.

NASSCOM Foundation: Tell us about some of your partners and the work you do in Disability Inclusion.

Bhuvan: SAP in India works with Enable India as its partner for the Autism at Work program, replicating the global process where SAP has partnered with Specialisterne, a Danish organization. Enable India supports the program in its various phases - sourcing, onboarding and post-employment support. Enable India also partner with us for driving the India Inclusion Summit. For the other programs mentioned before, SAP works with: Autism Society of India, Spastics Society of Karnataka, V-Sesh.

NASSCOM Foundation: Do you look at impacting the ecosystem of inclusion through your CSR, if not - do you see this as your CSR intervention area?
One of the key focus areas of the NASSCOM’s Diversity & Inclusion agenda is the work on Inclusion of persons with disabilities which is driven by the Foundation. The theme chosen for 2015 was “Empowering Inclusion”. A session and a workshop were organized this year by the Foundation as a part of the Summit. The session was driven by senior leadership from ANZ and EMC. The session witnessed great participation from all the companies. The workshop on Accessibility was sponsored by IBM and focused on web accessibility. Read more: http://bit.ly/1sA009y

Session on “Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities at workplace”

NASSCOM Foundation partnered with Wipro for a session on “Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities at workplace”. The objective of the session was to create awareness among companies on Disability Inclusion at workplace; so that companies create an ecosystem that will encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities at the workplace. The workshop was attended by mid-level hiring managers and recruitment leads. Read more: http://bit.ly/1wfrATi

Webinar on “Moving towards Webinar on United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”

NASSCOM Foundation along with Wipro hosted a Webinar on United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The objective of the webinar was to create awareness on Article 9 (Accessibility) and Article 27 (Work and Employment) and its relevance to employers. The webinar was facilitated by Ms. Ramachari, Founder and Director, Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC) Bangalore. The webinar was targeted at Head HR, Diversity and Inclusion Leads and Recruiting Managers. Read more: http://bit.ly/1ZCLXN

Physical Accessibility and Inclusion: Making workplaces Barrier free

Session on “Moving towards a Barrier-free Environment”

NASSCOM Foundation had organized sessions on “Moving towards a Barrier-free Environment” at Tech Mahindra Info city. There were two sessions each day on Inclusion and Accessibility. The objective of the session was to sensitize Head HR/Recruiting Manager about inclusive workplaces and share steps on how to become an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Facilities Manager/Admin Heads were sensitized about physical accessibility and human centric design at workplaces. The sessions were conducted by Ms. Rama Chari, Founder and Director, Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC) Bangalore. Read more: http://bit.ly/11J3yXL

Web Accessibility

GAAD 2015: <Inclusion/> APP-ATHON:

To mark the 4th Global Accessibility Awareness Day, the Foundation joined hands with BarrierBreak and IBM to organize a first of its kind Inclusion APP-ATHON in Bengaluru on 21st May 2015. With the recent boom in mobile apps, our intention of seeing more apps accessible to people with disabilities intensified which led us to conceptualize the APP-ATHON. It was an exclusive mobile app developer-designer session and we had Amazon, Ebay, IBM, Skryo, VMWare, Xeptos, and other companies participated. 20 developers attended the APP Athon and tested their apps for accessibility.

Webinar on “No One Left Behind - Let’s Embrace Accessibility Testing”

NASSCOM Foundation along with QA InfoTech organized a webinar “No One Left Behind - Let’s Embrace Accessibility Testing” on September 12, 2014. The objective of the webinar was to give you a holistic view of accessibility both from tester and end user standpoints. Read more: http://bit.ly/1yuFYEZ

UPCOMING EVENTS

* Webinar on Digital Accessibility: The webinar aims to build awareness among product developers to understand web accessibility, compliance and guidelines.

To find the exact dates, please look at the upcoming events section.
Disability Initiative and our Goals

Through the Disability Initiative, the Foundation aims to advocate and create an ecosystem that fosters and mainstreams Disability Inclusion at workplace. The key goal areas -

Goal 1: To harmonize (adapt, adopt, localize) International IT standards for accessibility
Goal 2: To harmonize (adapt, adopt, localize) physical standards for accessibility
Goal 3: To promote and facilitate inclusion of Persons with Disabilities through employment in Industry
Goal 4: To help develop and promote affordable tools and technologies that facilitate inclusion of Persons with Disabilities
Goal 5: To advocate for national and state level policy changes for the adoption of Inclusive ICT.

We would love to hear an idea or two on how a marketplace for Disability Inclusion can be explored with companies that are interested.

If you would like to be featured in our Newsletter or talk to us on how we could collaborate to creating Inclusive Workplaces, please contact Rajalakshmi Rajagopal at rajalakshmi@nasscomfoundation.org or 09966749490