

CAIP Innovative Attitude Change Project Proposal - Advancing Access and Inclusion

<p>Project Title: Workplace Accessibility Experiential Learning for CEOs (AKA "Disable a CEO for a Day")</p>
<p>Submitted by: Gary Birch, Neil Squire Society</p>
<p>Sector Targeted for Attitude Change: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employers, <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (preschool – Grade 12), <input type="checkbox"/> Community (geographic community or community of interest)</p>
<p>Specific Audience To Be Reached: Employers, broad audience of the staff of employers, senior management including CEO's and peers of CEO's/senior Management</p>
<p>Specific Attitude To Be Established: capabilities of employees who have disabilities, breaking down negative myths regarding employees with disabilities including how accommodations can be implemented/demystification around those accommodations, opening honest dialogue amongst staff of employers including those with disabilities and the peers of CEO's and/or senior management.</p>
<p>Geographic Reach: Could be scaled to be national; or implemented in a stepwise process from region to region across Canada</p>
<p>Project Description Summary:</p> <p>Opportunity Summary: The business case for employing people with disabilities is well established, yet many organizations still struggle to open up their workplaces to people with disabilities – the root cause remains rooted in a lack of leadership commitment, a need for greater organizational awareness/education/training, and a willingness to partner with community organizations. This is an opportunity for CEOs to raise their organizational awareness around their workplace accessibility and better understand the business case benefits of workplace diversity and accessibility. In partnership with a lead disability organization, CEOs will have an opportunity to experience surviving a day in their workplace with a temporary "simulated" disability. The lead disability organization staff and volunteers will partner with the CEO to provide tips, tricks, and tools to help maintain their productivity, but the CEO will experience firsthand the challenges that an employee with a physical disability in their organization might typically face on a daily basis. The emphasis of this one day event is around creating a workplace accessibility experience, with a focus on how technology, ergonomics, and workplace accommodations can increase ease of employment of People with Disabilities (PWD) as well as further engage other employees though demonstrating an organizational commitment to accessibility. Following the one day event, CEOs would have a debriefing with their senior leaders and employees and/or with other CEOs who participated in the program in order to share observations, findings, and make commitments to action.</p> <p>Proposed Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CEOs would volunteer to participate personally and to involve their organizations in the program. - CEO would voluntarily receive a "simulated" disability for a full business day. (<i>Note: while not critical, some preference could be given to December 3 the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities: http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1620</i>)

- The nature of the disability should closely mimic real accessibility levels of a person with that type of disability. An example might include a low level quadriplegic with limited function of legs, arms, hands and finger dexterity, or a visual or hearing impairment.
- Some education and training materials would be provided (online learning) in advance by the lead disability organization.
- The CEO would be fitted with whatever accessibility support is required, eg. Wheelchair, computer assistance technology and other tools, to enable them to carry out a regular work day. (Sourced through the lead disability organization).
- The CEO would be partnered with a “guide”, a volunteer sourced by the lead disability organization, or, an employee in their organization, who has a similar disability, and can share vital insights into how to navigate their day, as well as provide a first-hand account of their experience as an employee with a disability and showcase some of the accommodations that enable PWD in their workplace.
- Optional: some companies may wish to contract with a photographer/videographer, at their cost, to record segments of the experience for potential use in developing a story to be shared within the organization.
- The CEO will be interviewed by their guide at the end of the day to comment on their experience, key learnings from the day, and actions/commitments to supporting change in their workplace.
- A post event discussion and action planning session (either with the CEO’s leadership team and/or with a CEO peer network) will be conducted with a representative from the lead disability organization to review the learning from the event, the perceptions of PWD in the workplace, and the overall experience of those involved in the program.
- A representative from the lead disability organization will provide insights into the programs and services that the disability community can offer and is developing to create further advances in supporting PWD in the workplace.

The Ask:

- CEOs/Organizations willing to participate in this new program (Note: the Neil Squire Society piloted this concept with Vancity about 2 years ago and could not figure out how to scale up to other organizations without dedicated resources. Vancity’s CEO would be willing to reach out to other CEO’s to invite/encourage other CEO’s to participate. See also link to the video resulting from this pilot event <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDhUJ3JO1dM> .)
- Resources for lead disability organizations to execute these events. Amount TBD.
- The CEO would need to commit to a day of patience, some frustration, a lot of learning, and some voluntary actions that could be taken in their organization based on the experience.
- Support would be required from the Office of the CEO to coordinate the day’s events and schedule, as well as someone from internal communications to support employee communications prior to and after the event.
- The employer organization would be asked to share video and still photography from the event with the lead disability organization for the purposes of helping to further the impact beyond their own organization.
- The employer organization would be asked to provide feedback on the event in order to help the lead disability organization develop and improve upon the program for future participants.

Cost/Benefits:

- Neil Squire Society sees this as an opportunity to further its Vision of “Economic and social inclusiveness for all people with disabilities.” The lead disability organization will need to source volunteers/staff to support the CEO, provide tools and resources to prepare the CEO candidates, and be available to support the post event discussions (up to two). Funding for these activities will be needed.

- CEO's organization: there are no costs for the CEO or their organizations to participate, outside of the time commitment (<2 hours preparation; full day event; and 2-3 hours debriefing and action planning). Any follow up actions taken would be voluntary on behalf of the CEO and/or their organization. CEOs are encouraged but not obligated to make a financial donation to the overall project help the next lead disability organization to support the program (i.e "Pay it forward", enabling another CEO to enjoy the experience).

Project Outcomes:

- a) Introduce CEOs to the employment opportunities/challenges for PWD in their workplace.
- b) Gain an understanding of the broader benefits of employing PWD (culture, diversity, innovation, etc.)
- c) Raise awareness for workplace accessibility through first hand learning and sharing experiences with peers.
- d) Establish a new model for disability awareness that ensures a positive perception from the PWD community (particularly employees with a disability in the CEO's organization).

Project Lead and Partners:

Could be Neil Squire Society with a handful of partner disability related organizations or could be led by some other organization or consortium of organizations.