



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
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Inclusive Workplaces (Accessibility) Advertising Campaign Creative Testing with Small and Medium Size Enterprises Executive Summary

Prepared for Employment and Social Development Canada

Prepared by Narrative Research Inc.

PSPC Contract Number: G9292-217748/001/CY

Contracted Value: \$50,951.70 (taxes included)

Contract Award Date: March 4, 2021

Delivery Date: March 2021

POR Registration Number: 127-20

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Background and Research Methodology

In support of the Speech from the Throne, the Inclusive Workplaces Advertising Campaign was developed in an effort to support the Government of Canada's plan to create more jobs and incentives for employers to hire and retain workers; strengthen employment futures by connecting workers to employers and good jobs; and introduce a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities, as part of a Disability Inclusion Plan.

Building on previous learnings from the pilot initiative, the campaign aims at increasing awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. More specifically, the goal of the campaign is to increase employers' awareness and knowledge about the value of hiring persons with disabilities, and inform them of the availability of tools and resources designed to help employers create inclusive workplaces.

To address the goal of the campaign, three concepts were developed and had to be tested with the primary target audiences (Canadian small and medium size businesses) prior to one being finalized in preparation for launching the campaign in April 2021. As a separate initiative led by ESDC, the concepts were also informally tested with stakeholders representing persons with disabilities. The final choice of concept will also be informed through recommendations from the Accessibility Advertising Working Group, which includes program representatives from the Office for Disability Issues, the Accessibility Secretariat and the Skills and Employment Branch.

The objectives of the current research included to test three concepts for the outreach campaign to determine how well the main messages are understood and perceived; whether the ad concepts grab employers' attention and what components (design, vocabulary, imagery, tone) are successful/not successful; assess the clarity of the concepts; understand the strengths and weaknesses of the ad concepts; determine how employers prefer to receive information about this topic; and generate other suggestions for improvements.

To meet these objectives, a total of eight online focus groups were conducted on March 22nd and 23rd, 2021 in four regions (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario and Prairies/West). In each region, one group was conducted with businesspeople from small organizations (1 to 99 employees) while one group was conducted with those from medium size organizations (100 to 499 employees). Sessions each lasted between 90 minutes and two hours and participants received \$150 in appreciation for their time. Representatives from those organizations were all involved in recruiting for their company or employer, and thus they were all familiar with the hiring and human resource practices for their business, to varying degrees. In total, 72 individuals



were recruited while 64 took part in a session. All participants were recruited per the recruitment specifications for the Government of Canada.

Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Representative of Narrative Research that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed

Margaret Brigley, CEO & Partner | Narrative Research

Date: March 29, 2021

Key Findings and Conclusions

The following summarizes the key findings and conclusions from the focus groups on the ***Inclusive Workplaces (Accessibility) Advertising Campaign – Creative Testing with Small and Medium Size Enterprises*** (POR-127-20) research study.

Employers that took part in the research believe in the value of inclusive workplaces, and as such, they welcomed an outreach campaign that reminded them of the benefits. That being said, all three concepts tested were seen as educating employers on the value of inclusive workplaces, rather than providing more actionable information to assist them in implementing inclusiveness, and thus none of the three approaches was seen as strongly compelling. Consideration should be given to include a more specific call-to-action in the final campaign, as well as make available information, assistance and support programs to help employers implement inclusive workplaces.

Of the three concepts presented, the Persons with Abilities outperformed the two others for its positive tone and the illustration of people, which helped humanize the message. The concept's intent was understood as informing employers of the importance of an inclusive workplace through hiring persons with disabilities for their abilities and the resulting value they bring to employers. Despite the message being clearly communicated through the text, it was not properly conveyed by the image of three people standing still, sideways. Indeed, employers felt that seeing inclusive workplaces exemplified in images or photography would help reinforce the message. The provision of testimonials or real-life examples of effective hiring of persons with disabilities also held great appeal and should be considered as part of the campaign or in supporting materials. At the same time, there is confusion with how inclusive workplaces are defined, and as such, the illustration of various gender and ethnicities gave the impression that it refers to diversity beyond persons with disabilities.

Both employers and persons with disabilities were seen as the target audience for this concept, given the use of the expression "I have ability" next to the image of the persons with disabilities and the direct question to



employers about hiring in the opening statement. The ad's opening statement was questioned, however, as some employers do not believe that organizations hiring persons with disabilities outperform their peers. In addition, at a glance, the statement could be misinterpreted to say that persons with disabilities, not organizations, outperform their peers.

The concept's positioning statement, "Disabilities don't define ability. Hire inclusive.", was well received for being forward-thinking and positive, though some questioned the claim as they believed that ability can be impacted by a disability. Likewise, the concept's statement held appeal, though both the tagline and the statement were seen as not properly reflected in the creative for the social media post.

Mixed reactions were offered with the Myths & Facts concept. Although the provision of factual information and the approach of debunking myths held some appeal, the negative tone and the questionable claim strongly contributed to the lack of appeal. Providing factual information about inclusive hiring was appreciated by employers, who expressed interest in understanding the more specific and varied benefits of inclusive hiring, as well as how to implement this kind of workplace. That being said, employers disliked that the Myth & Fact concept focuses on the costs or barriers of inclusive hiring rather than the benefits, in addition to presenting the fact in a negative light (i.e., it costs money to hire a person with disabilities), rather than focusing on the positive (i.e., the majority of employers spent nothing). At the same time, the average amounts claimed for accommodating an employee with disabilities appeared high to some employers (notably small businesses) while it appeared low to others who noted that the cost of hiring includes training and supervision which can be higher for an employee with a disability in some instances than for other employees. As such, some felt that the factual statement was meaningless and somewhat misleading.

The Myths & Facts social media post design was felt to be outdated and too simplistic which contributed to diminishing the message's credibility. The concept tagline, "Consider the facts. Hire persons with disabilities.", received mixed reactions, while employers generally disliked the statement's focus on the costs or barriers of inclusive hiring.

Reactions to the Inclusive Workplaces concept were also mixed. While the positive tone and its focus on the benefits of hiring inclusive were well liked, the message lacked clarity and the claim lacked proper context. To be more compelling, the claim needs to specify how performance is defined (e.g., financial, reputation, employee satisfaction) and measured (e.g., 8 times more than what?). The concept was also seen as more narrowly targeting employers who are in the process of hiring, due to the opening statement starting with "Hiring?".

The Inclusive Workplaces design appeared outdated to employers and the use of the puzzle pieces was generally associated with the subject of autism, rather than disabilities more broadly. A number of employers disliked the description of persons with disabilities as "a valuable missing piece" of the puzzle, as it was not seen as being consistent with the ideas of inclusion, teamwork and togetherness. The concept's tagline, "Hire persons with disabilities. It's good for business.", was liked by some who felt it highlighted successful business outcomes as a benefit, while others felt that it did not effectively represent the more intangible benefits of inclusive workplaces (e.g., employee morale, good corporate citizenship).



As ESDC finalizes the development of the campaign, consideration should be given to further developing the Persons with Abilities concept with some modifications, including editing the opening statement (i.e., “Hiring? Diverse organizations that include...”), illustrating how persons with disabilities add value to an organization, providing precise statistics on value and benefits, and clarifying what constitutes an inclusive workplace. The call-to-action should also be clarified by directing employers to existing resources to help them implement an inclusive workplace. In launching the campaign, a mix of social media, professional associations, job posting sites and webinars should be considered to communicate campaign information to employers.