Beyond Compliance: Leveraging Accommodations Data to Build an Inclusive, Adaptive Workplace

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The Opportunity

Accommodations as a starting point: Shift from *compliance* to *culture* using accommodations as a springboard for systemic inclusion.

Inclusion by design, not just by request

Framing the Concept

Traditional role of accommodations

- ✓ Reactive
- ✓ Individualized
- ✓ Legally required

The opportunity

Use data on common accommodation requests to design flexibility into the workplace for *everyone*

Framing the Concept, cont'd.

Why?

- ✓ Reduced need for formal accommodations → this frees up leave and disability team bandwidth for more complex case management
- ✓ Improved retention, morale, productivity
- ✓ Inclusion without disclosure

Real-World Example: Meet Savannah

Savannah struggles to maintain focus in long meetings. She has never pursued formal diagnosis, but given her executive functioning and concentration struggles, she's long wondered if she might have ADHD. She's struggling to remember the key takeaways and action items assigned to her in meetings, and it's impacting her performance.

Real-World Example: Meet Malik

Malik works in a manufacturing plant. He has always been bothered by different fabrics and textures but self-manages the sensitivity through careful selection of his clothes. His employer is implementing a new uniform policy that has Malik concerned.

"Fast Yes" Accommodations

What are they?

Low cost, low friction, high benefit

Ask:

    What do we always (or almost always) say yes to?

    What are we already doing informally?

What are the benefits?

    ✓ Low cost

    ✓ Low disruption

    ✓ High value

Activity: "Fast Yes" Accommodations

1. What accommodations are frequently requested at your organization?
2. Which are already being approved easily and consistently?
3. Which could be pre-approved or added to a general policy for all employees?
    Consider a "how might we" approach to overcome potential barriers

Stakeholders

Strategies to bring stakeholders along

- ✓ Make sure you understand who your stakeholders are
- ✓ Use internal data (approval trends, common asks)
- ✓ Tie to organizational goals: Inclusion, retention, engagement
- ✓ Start with a pilot and measure the impact

Addressing specific concerns

"This will cost too much" → Many accommodations are low/no-cost

"This is only for people with disabilities" → Inclusion benefits everyone

Activity: The Accommodation You've Never Asked For

1. Individually write down a flexibility/change you'd like but have never formally requested
2. Share in small groups: How could this become a universal option?
3. Report back a few themes

Activity: Inclusive Accommodations (Handout)

1. Discuss inclusive innovations in small groups.
2. Would these work in your organization? Why or why not?
3. If no, brainstorm together other related solutions that *could* work.

Closing

Inclusion is a *system*, not a request
- ✓ Consider how you can use accommodations as culture drivers
- ✓ Look for fast yes opportunities
- ✓ Inclusion by design, not just by request

Challenge
Identify one practice to review in your organization using this lens.
What can you change in your organization starting next week?

Let's Stay in Touch!

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