



Tokenism-to-Inclusion (T2I) Model: A Framework for Measurable Disability Inclusion

Submitted to:

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Letter from the Author

Dear Readers,

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in workplaces and decision-making spaces has long been a pressing issue. While many organizations strive for diversity, too often their efforts result in tokenism—a superficial form of inclusion that lacks real empowerment. As a researcher committed to disability rights and economic inclusion, I have observed how tokenism undermines progress, leading to a cycle where persons with disabilities are visible but not meaningfully engaged.

This paper presents the Tokenism-to-Inclusion (T2I) Model, a framework that combines behavioral economics and disability inclusion strategies to help organizations assess and combat tokenism systematically. By providing the Tokenism Scorecard and an Intervention Toolkit, this model moves beyond theoretical discussions and offers practical, evidence-based solutions to foster genuine inclusion.

This work aligns closely with the mission and strategic research priorities of the Center for Services and Information on Disability (CSID), which has been at the forefront of advocating for disability inclusion, employment rights, and accessibility. CSID's ongoing research and policy efforts highlight the urgent need for data-driven approaches to inclusion—ensuring that policies and workplace initiatives do not just fulfill quotas but create equitable opportunities for persons with disabilities.

I invite policymakers, employers, disability advocates, and researchers to engage with this model, use the Tokenism Scorecard, and integrate the recommended interventions into their organizations. Real inclusion is not about checking a box—it is about structural change, active participation, and creating spaces where persons with disabilities are valued contributors and leaders.

Thank you for taking the time to explore this work. I hope it serves as a useful tool in advancing meaningful and measurable disability inclusion.

Sincerely,



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Executive Summary

Purpose and Significance

The **Tokenism-to-Inclusion (T2I) Model** is a conceptual framework introduced to address the gap between superficial diversity efforts and genuine inclusion of persons with disabilities. The paper’s purpose is to define and combat **tokenism** – which is essentially a perfunctory, symbolic form of inclusion (e.g. hiring a single person with a disability “for appearance” or compliance) without empowering that individual or removing systemic barriers). Tokenism creates an *illusion of diversity* that “**merely tolerates difference... at best, stagnant inclusion; at worst, an illusion**” (leading to negative outcomes like isolation and stalled careers for the tokenized individual. In contrast, meaningful inclusion means fully valuing people with disabilities as equal participants – ensuring their voices are heard, needs met, and opportunities for growth and leadership are provided. By highlighting this contrast, the T2I Model underscores the significance of moving beyond token gestures to true empowerment and belonging. This is not just a moral imperative; it is also strategic – research shows that truly inclusive teams outperform homogeneous ones, whereas tokenism results in stress, isolation, and loss of talent. Thus, the T2I Model is significant as it provides a clear pathway to transform the illusion of inclusion into a reality that benefits individuals, organizations, and society.

Alignment with CSID’s Mission and Work

This paper directly aligns with the mission and ongoing work of the **Center for Services and Information on Disability (CSID)**. CSID envisions “*an inclusive society where all disadvantaged people including persons with disabilities are living with equal rights, opportunities, access and dignity*” In line with this vision, CSID’s mission emphasizes **reducing** discrimination against persons with disabilities and creating a barrier-free, empowering environment for their full participation (The T2I Model supports this mission by targeting one of the subtle yet pervasive forms of discrimination – tokenism – and offering solutions to ensure people with disabilities are not just present but truly included with dignity. CSID’s ongoing activities and programs already focus on advocacy, awareness, employment, and inclusion of

people with disabilities The T2I Model builds upon these efforts as a strategic research initiative, extending CSID's long-standing work in advocacy and policy research. Notably, CSID has conducted numerous studies on disability inclusion issues (education, employment, national budget impacts, etc.)

From Tokenism to Inclusion: An Actionable Framework

The T2I Model is a practical tool designed to drive genuine disability inclusion beyond theory. At its core is the Tokenism Scorecard (TS), which helps organizations assess where they stand on the **tokenism-to-inclusion spectrum**. It evaluates key dimensions such as **representation**, workplace accessibility, participation in decision-making, career advancement, and employee voice, providing a clear picture of inclusion gaps. Repeated assessments ensure measurable progress and accountability, preventing inclusion from becoming stagnant.

Beyond assessment, the Intervention Toolkit guides organizations from diagnosis to action through strategies like bias training, accessibility improvements, mentorship programs, inclusive policies, and continuous feedback mechanisms. By following these structured steps, organizations can break the cycle of tokenism and foster a culture where people with disabilities are valued, empowered, and integrated members of the workforce.

Intended Impact and Audience

The T2I Model is designed for **policymakers, employers, researchers, and advocates** to advance disability inclusion:

- **Policymakers** can use it to develop meaningful inclusion policies beyond quotas, aligning with **CSID's advocacy efforts** to shape inclusive legislation.
- **Employers & Organizational Leaders** can apply it as a **self-assessment and planning tool**, ensuring disability inclusion is **intentional and measurable**, guiding improvements in hiring, workplace culture, and leadership.
- **Researchers & Advocacy Groups** can leverage the model to **measure inclusion outcomes**, refine interventions, and provide **data-driven advocacy** for policy and business practices.

Catalyst for Meaningful Change

The T2I Model transforms inclusion ideals into actionable steps, pushing stakeholders to ask: *Are persons with disabilities in our organization truly included, or merely present?* By bridging research, policy, and practice, it operationalizes CSID's mission, helping turn commitments into measurable action. Ultimately, this model ensures that disability inclusion is not about optics but about empowerment, fostering innovation, problem-solving, and a stronger, more inclusive workplace culture. The T2I Model serves as a roadmap for organizations and decision-makers committed to advancing disability inclusion beyond tokenism, aligning with CSID's vision of an equitable and inclusive society.

1. Theoretical Foundation of Tokenism vs. Inclusion

Defining Tokenism: *Tokenism* refers to a superficial form of diversity practice – it is “the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to be inclusive”, typically by including a very small number of people from an underrepresented group to give the *appearance* of diversity (Nicklin, 2021). In other words, organizations engage in tokenism when they recruit or showcase one or a few individuals with disabilities *solely* to signal inclusivity, without empowering those individuals or addressing systemic barriers. Such efforts are often for “representation’s sake” – aimed at compliance or optics rather than genuine equity (Jena & Hari, 2021). As a result, the included person is treated as a “*token*” representative of their minority group, and true change in organizational culture or practice does not occur. Tokenism has rightly been called “*hypocrisy*” because it “merely tolerates difference... At best, tokenism is stagnant inclusion; at worst, it is an illusion – a false narrative of fulfillment of diversity” (What Is Tokenism? — R-Squared, 2023). Research on tokenism, dating back to Kanter’s seminal work, has documented the negative impacts on those who are tokenized (e.g. isolation, stereotyping, stalled careers)(Childress et al., 2024). For instance, being the only employee with a disability in a department can lead to intense visibility, pressure to represent “all disabled people,” and exclusion from informal networks – all classic symptoms of tokenism (Bohnet & Chilazi , 2021)

Defining Genuine Inclusion: In contrast, *genuine inclusion* means meaningfully integrating and valuing people with disabilities as equal participants in all aspects of an organization. Rather than just being present, individuals are truly included – their voices are heard, their needs are met, and they share power in decision-making. Inclusion has been defined as an environment where those in the minority “*experience acceptance of their identities and ideas, feel a part of the system in both formal and informal ways, and sense that their voices and opinions are welcomed at every level of decision making*” (Moore et al., 2020). In practical terms, genuine disability inclusion ensures that a disabled employee is not just hired as a token example, but is given real opportunities for input, growth, and leadership, with the necessary accommodations and respect. Scholars emphasize that achieving true inclusion requires deeper structural changes – addressing biases, altering practices, and reforming organizational culture – rather than one-off symbolic gestures (Thompson, 2015). In the disability context, “*nothing about us without us*” is a guiding principle: genuine inclusion invites people with disabilities to actively shape policies and programs, rather than being passive participants. When inclusion is authentic, people with disabilities feel a sense of belonging and psychological safety at work, as full members of the team. This stands in stark contrast to tokenism, where they may feel isolated or pigeonholed.

Behavioral Economics Concepts and Tokenism: Understanding why tokenism persists requires examining the subtle cognitive biases and heuristics at play.

Behavioral economics and social psychology shed light on how well-intentioned employers might still fall into tokenistic practices due to unconscious biases:

- **Implicit Bias:** Implicit biases are unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence behavior without conscious awareness (Hrala, 2024). Many people, including hiring managers or colleagues, may harbor implicit biases about disability – for example, assuming someone with a disability is less capable or “risky” to hire. Research confirms moderate negative implicit biases toward people with disabilities are common (e.g. subconsciously viewing disabled individuals as *incompetent* or “child-like”) (Antonopoulos et al., 2023). Implicit bias can lead to tokenism, where a person is hired to signal diversity but not given equal opportunities due to unconscious assumptions about their competence. Overcoming tokenism requires addressing these implicit biases to prevent people from being relegated to perpetual token status.
- **Availability Heuristic:** The availability heuristic is a mental shortcut where people judge the frequency or importance of something based on how easily examples come to mind (Bohnet & Chilazi, 2021). Leaders can overestimate their organization's inclusivity based on a few salient examples of disabled individuals. This availability bias reinforces tokenism, as leaders may believe that having one visible disabled person fulfills the diversity quota. Combatting this requires focusing on actual data about disability representation within the workforce.

- **Confirmation Bias:** Confirmation bias, the tendency to favor information that confirms existing beliefs, can perpetuate workplace tokenism. For example, a manager may focus on a disabled employee's attendance issues, ignoring successful disabled employees and systemic problems. This bias blinds people to diversity issues by making them focus on isolated positive examples while ignoring systemic discrimination. To overcome confirmation bias, leaders should actively seek out information that challenges their beliefs (Dr. Gleb Tsipursky, 2022).

In summary, implicit bias can lead to underestimating or marginalizing people with disabilities, the availability heuristic can give decision-makers an inflated perception that they've achieved diversity (after a token hire), and confirmation bias can cement false narratives (e.g. *"those one or two individuals are all we need, and any problems just confirm broader issues with disabled workers"*). These cognitive factors create a *behavioral economics* explanation for why tokenism is so pervasive: even with good intentions, our brains have blind spots that can perpetuate superficial inclusion. Integrating insights from behavioral economics into the T2I model means actively checking these biases – for instance, using objective metrics and external feedback to counter mental shortcuts.

Literature Bridging Disability Inclusion and Bias: Both disability inclusion research and behavioral science underline the importance of combating tokenism through awareness of these biases. Studies in disability inclusion often highlight how attitudinal barriers and stereotypes hinder true inclusion. For

example, a systematic review found that people with disabilities are frequently implicitly stereotyped as less competent, which likely contributes to their exclusion from employment opportunities (Antonopoulos et al., 2023). At the same time, organizational research on diversity shows that being a lone minority (a “token”) in a group leads to distinct disadvantages. Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s early work on women in corporations (1977) demonstrated that when women were tokenized in male-dominated teams, they experienced high visibility, stereotyping, and isolation – effects that impaired their job performance and advancement (Childress et al., 2024). These findings apply to disability as well: a lone wheelchair user in an office may be subjected to extra scrutiny or tasked with speaking for **all** people with disabilities, rather than being seen as an individual contributor. Recent studies continue to emphasize this “**numbers**” problem – *members of small minority groups stand out and face added pressures in skewed environments* (Bohnet & Chilazi , 2021). One analysis noted that in skewed groups, minorities are not only more visible but also bear a heavier burden to assimilate, and are often excluded from informal networks, reinforcing their token status (Bohnet & Chilazi , 2021).

Crucially, both streams of research point to *organizational culture and systemic change* as keys to moving beyond tokenism. Disability inclusion scholars argue that adding a few people with disabilities to a workplace without changing the environment leads to poor long-term outcomes (e.g. those individuals feel isolated, hit glass ceilings, or leave). This aligns with behavioral research

suggesting that **structural solutions** are needed to overcome biases – for instance, implementing bias training, inclusive policies, and accountability measures, rather than assuming individual goodwill is enough (Dr. Gleb Tsipursky, 2022). In fact, unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion has been identified as a major barrier to diverse workplaces, including for people with disabilities (Dr. Gleb Tsipursky, 2022). Bridging the two fields, we see that *tokenism is not merely a social injustice but also a cognitive trap*: organizations might honestly believe they are inclusive based on surface indicators, while deeper patterns and perceptions tell a different story. The Tokenism-to-Inclusion (T2I) Model is rooted in this interdisciplinary understanding – it recognizes that fostering genuine inclusion for people with disabilities requires both attitude shifts (addressing biases) and systemic changes (policies, practices, and representation). In the following sections, we translate these insights into practical tools and strategies within the T2I Model.

2. Practicality of the T2I Model

Refining the Tokenism Scorecard (TS)

A core component of the T2I Model is the *Tokenism Scorecard (TS)* – an assessment tool designed to gauge where an organization falls on the spectrum from tokenism to inclusion. To strengthen its utility, the TS can be refined with

specific, concrete questions and a weighting system that reflects the relative importance of different inclusion dimensions. The goal is to create a nuanced picture of the organization's disability inclusion status, highlighting both strengths and gaps. Below, we outline key domains to assess, example questions, and suggested weightings for each domain (with weights indicating the proportion of the overall inclusion score each domain contributes):

- **Representation and Hiring (15%)** – This domain measures how many people with disabilities work at the organization and in what roles. It asks questions like: "What percentage of employees have disabilities?" and "Are people with disabilities concentrated in junior roles?" A tokenistic organization would score low, with few employees with disabilities. A truly inclusive organization would have a good representation of people with disabilities at all levels.
- **Workplace Accessibility (15%)** – This section examines if the environment is accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities. It asks if the facilities are accessible, and if assistive technologies and accommodations are readily available. A high score means the company actively removes barriers to enable equal participation. This domain gets 15% weight because if an employee with a disability cannot access meetings or information, they are effectively excluded.

- **Participation in Decision-Making (20%)** – This category assesses if disabled employees are included in core business activities and leadership. It looks at their involvement in high-level meetings and strategy discussions, senior leadership or management roles, and committees. It also questions if they have authority and responsibility. True inclusion means disabled employees have a voice and power, so this domain is weighted higher.
- **Employee Voice and Belonging (20%)** –To assess if disabled employees feel valued, conduct climate surveys and interviews. Key questions should focus on comfort levels in voicing opinions, experiences of microaggressions or exclusion, and recognition for contributions. A high score on survey items like “I feel like a full and equal member of my team” indicates a culture of belonging. A low score suggests tokenism—where disabled staff feel isolated and only recognized for disability-related issues. This sense of inclusion is crucial, even if representation is improving, as tokenism can lead to feelings of isolation and invisibility.
- **Career Advancement and Development (15%)** – Do employees with disabilities have equal access to opportunities for advancement, including promotions, raises, and professional development? Is there a "glass ceiling" that prevents them from reaching upper management? Does the organization provide mentorship and coaching to support their career growth?

- **Inclusive Policies, Education and Culture (15%)** – This domain assesses an organization's commitment to disability inclusion through formal policies, disability ERGs with executive support, manager training, disability awareness initiatives, and measurement of inclusion efforts. High scores indicate that disability inclusion is integral to the organization's culture, while low scores suggest tokenistic efforts. This 15% category reflects the intentionality and structural support for inclusion, as an organization could have employees with disabilities without an inclusive culture. Policies and education indicate sustainable inclusion.

Scoring and Weighting: Each question or indicator on the scorecard can be rated (e.g. on a 5-point scale from very poor to very good, or a binary yes/no for some checklist items). The weighting system means that after assigning scores, each domain contributes a weighted score to an overall *Tokenism Index* or inclusion score. For example, if an organization scores an average of 4/5 on Representation (15% weight) and 2/5 on Participation in Decision-Making (20% weight), those are multiplied by their weights and summed with other domains to give a total percentage. The weighting ensures that even if an organization tries to “game” the system by, say, hiring more people with disabilities (Representation) but not empowering them (Participation, Voice), the score will reflect that imbalance. A truly inclusive organization needs to perform well across all domains, especially the high-weight areas of voice and decision-making. The TS can therefore diagnose nuanced issues: for instance, a scenario might reveal strong

accessibility investments (high Accessibility score) but weak culture (low Voice/Belonging score), pointing to a need for culture change initiatives.

In strengthening the TS, it's also helpful to incorporate qualitative anchors for the scores. For example, a 1 in Voice/Belonging might be anchored by "Multiple accounts of disabled employees feeling isolated or leaving due to non-inclusive environment," whereas a 5 might be "Disabled employees report high satisfaction and a sense of belonging equal to others (confirmed by survey data)." This kind of rubric adds clarity and reliability to the scorecard. Ultimately, a refined Tokenism Scorecard serves as both a diagnostic tool and a benchmark. It gives organizations a clear snapshot of where they stand on the tokenism-to-inclusion continuum and identifies specific areas for improvement. Moreover, repeating the TS periodically provides a measurable way to track progress after interventions (e.g. an increase in the overall score or in key domain scores over time would indicate movement towards genuine inclusion).

Data Collection via a Mixed-Methods Approach

To effectively use the Tokenism Scorecard and truly understand the state of disability inclusion, the T2I Model employs a **mixed-methods data collection approach**. This means gathering both quantitative data (numbers, ratings, metrics) *and* qualitative data (personal experiences, stories, context) to inform the assessment. A mixed-methods strategy is valuable because tokenism can have subtle manifestations that pure numbers might miss, and conversely,

personal anecdotes alone might not reveal systemic patterns. By blending methods, we get a more holistic and validated picture. Key components of this approach include:

- **Surveys:** Anonymous surveys with Likert-scale questions aligned with the Tokenism Scorecard domains can measure the inclusion climate and gather quantitative data. The survey results provide metrics for the Scorecard and reveal patterns of inclusion, and gaps in perception between employees and managers.
- **Interviews:** Interviews with key stakeholders provide deeper insights than surveys. Employees, managers, and HR can be interviewed to elaborate on survey findings and contextualize the Tokenism Scorecard results. Integrating interviews into the research design adds qualitative data that explains quantitative data, offering a more nuanced understanding of disability inclusion in the workplace.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus groups can also be used to test preliminary ideas for interventions (e.g., “*Would a mentorship program help, or what do you all feel about that?*”). In short, they are a qualitative tool that captures group norms and the *breadth of shared experiences* in a way one-on-one interviews might not. Focus groups of 4-8 people can discuss their experiences collectively. An inclusion expert could facilitate a candid conversation about tokenism among disabled employees. The interactive

discussion in focus groups allows for richer exploration and validation of shared experiences, unlike one-on-one interviews. They can also be used to test preliminary ideas for interventions and capture group norms.

- **Observations and Document Analysis:** To assess a company's inclusivity, observe workplace practices (e.g., team meetings) and review company documents (e.g., policies, diversity statements). These reveal the difference between formal commitment and employee experience.

Mixed-methods data collection, using surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations, is best practice in inclusion research. This approach improves reliability by triangulating data, ensuring that findings are solid and credible. Implementing mixed-methods means engaging with people at multiple levels, while ensuring anonymity and trust. The data collection itself signals that the organization is taking inclusion seriously. The findings feed into the Tokenism Scorecard, providing concrete evidence and preventing leaders from relying on assumptions.

Intervention Toolkit: Strategies for Moving from Tokenism to Inclusion

Assessment is only half the battle – the T2I Model also provides an **Intervention Toolkit** to help organizations move from diagnosing tokenism to implementing *concrete changes* toward inclusion. This toolkit is essentially a menu of strategies,

programs, and policies that research and practice have shown to be effective in fostering disability inclusion. Strengthening this toolkit involves detailing specific steps for implementation, anticipating potential challenges, and considering the resources required for each intervention. Below, we expand on key components of the Intervention Toolkit with practical guidance:

1. Leadership Commitment and Policy Reform – *Set the tone and rules from the top.* One of the first and most impactful steps is securing genuine buy-in from senior leadership and embedding inclusion into organizational policy. **Implementation steps:** Establish a high-profile **disability inclusion task force or council** that includes at least one executive sponsor (e.g. a VP or CEO) and employees with disabilities. This body will oversee inclusion initiatives and ensure accountability. Have leadership publicly commit to moving beyond tokenism – for example, an executive might issue a statement or internal memo acknowledging the Scorecard findings and expressing commitment to improvement. Update company policies to reflect this commitment: include disability in diversity/equal opportunity statements if not already, and explicitly prohibit ableism or disability-based discrimination. Incorporate objectives related to disability inclusion into strategic plans. Some organizations set specific goals or targets (not quotas per se, but goals like “increase representation of employees with disabilities by X%” or “ensure 100% of managers complete disability inclusion training”). **Potential challenges:** Leadership commitment can’t be one-off; there’s a risk of initial enthusiasm fading. Also, some leaders might fear the unknown (“Will

this be costly? Do we have qualified candidates with disabilities?”). To mitigate this, present a *business case* alongside the moral case: emphasize that inclusion drives innovation and avoids risks of legal issues or bad PR. Indeed, diverse teams (including people with disabilities) bring fresh perspectives and can help businesses reach new markets (Dennis, 2021). Middle management buy-in is also key. Involve respected managers in the task force and link inclusion progress to performance evaluations. **Resources needed** include executive time, consultancy support, and communications resources.

2. Education and Bias Training – “*Educate, educate, educate*” (Dennis, 2021). To reduce bias and foster inclusivity, organizations should implement disability awareness training, including unconscious bias training and inviting speakers with disabilities to share their experiences. Distribute educational materials and encourage interactive learning, normalizing conversations about disability and appropriate language. Challenges include resistance to mandatory training and discomfort discussing disability. To overcome these, make training relevant, relatable, and reinforce it over time. Emphasize a culture of learning and allocate resources for professional trainers and materials (Hrala, 2024).

3. Improving Accessibility and Accommodations – To create an inclusive workplace, conduct an accessibility audit of both the physical and digital environment. Implement a clear accommodations process and be proactive in making adjustments. Budget constraints and ignorance about accessibility needs

can be challenges. Involve disabled employees or consultants and allocate necessary resources like funding, IT support, and time to ensure ongoing commitment to accessibility.

4. Fostering Inclusive Culture and Support Systems – To build a community and amplify voices, companies can establish ERGs, mentorship programs, and disability inclusion communications. Small actions like inclusive meetings and accessible events also foster change. Open communication is vital, including feedback channels like roundtables or suggestion boxes. Challenges include slow culture change, hesitation from employees, and avoiding a savior mentality. Resources include people's time, budget, and leadership support.

5. Collaborative Problem-Solving and Inclusive Decision-Making – To avoid tokenism, involve disabled employees in designing and implementing solutions. Consult them when creating new initiatives, and include them in decision-making committees. This ensures interventions are relevant and effective. Avoid overburdening disabled employees by spreading responsibilities, recognizing their contributions, and bringing in external voices when possible. Show that their input is valued by implementing their suggestions or seriously considering them (Gillespie, 2020).

6. Accountability and Continuous Improvement Mechanisms: To sustain progress, integrate Tokenism Scorecard metrics into regular reviews. Make department heads responsible for improvements and conduct follow-up surveys.

Celebrate successes to reinforce company values. Tie inclusion to business priorities and have policies to institutionalize commitment. The T2I Model's toolkit transforms the workplace so that people with disabilities are integrated team members, leading to increased hiring and retention, improved job satisfaction, and enhanced organizational performance. (Gillespie, 2020).

3. Clarity and Illustration of the T2I Model in Action

Hypothetical Case Study: From Tokenism to Inclusion at ABC Corp

Background: ABC Corp, a mid-sized tech company with 250 employees, prided itself on diversity but had minimal disability representation. Maria, a blind software developer, was often showcased as proof of inclusion, yet she faced workplace barriers. Over five years, she remained in low-profile roles, excluded from leadership opportunities. Meanwhile, exit interviews revealed that other

employees with hidden disabilities left due to lack of support. This prompted leadership to assess if their disability inclusion efforts were genuinely effective or merely symbolic.

Applying the T2I Model: ABC Corp partnered with an inclusion consultant to conduct a **Tokenism Scorecard Assessment**, involving surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The findings were stark: disability representation was below 1%, accessibility was inadequate, disabled employees lacked decision-making power, and the absence of an Employee Resource Group (ERG) reinforced feelings of isolation. Maria's case exemplified tokenism—highlighted externally but not empowered internally. Leadership realized urgent change was needed.

Interventions and Implementation

ABC Corp formed a **Disability Inclusion Task Force**, prioritizing **three key areas**:

1. **Accessibility Improvements:** They revamped internal tools (adding alt-text, captions, screen reader compatibility), upgraded facilities (ramps, lighting), and created a formal accommodations budget.
2. **Cultural Shift & ERG Formation:** They launched *Abilities at ABC*, an ERG for disabled employees and allies. Monthly discussions, Slack forums, and direct leadership engagement fostered inclusion.

3. **Bias Training & Career Development:** Managers underwent disability bias training, a mentorship program was introduced, and promotion criteria were revised to eliminate bias.

Challenges & Adjustments: Resistance surfaced initially, with some managers questioning the need for changes. Transparent discussions and demonstrating the business benefits of inclusion helped gain buy-in. Practical obstacles, like funding accessibility upgrades, were addressed by framing them as long-term investments.

Outcomes After One Year

- Employees disclosing disabilities rose from **1 to 8** (~3% of workforce).
- Maria, with mentorship and visibility, earned her first promotion.
- The Tokenism Scorecard re-evaluation showed notable improvements: higher accessibility scores, increased participation in decision-making, and a shift in workplace culture.
- A new **voice control feature**, initially proposed for accessibility, became a mainstream success, proving that inclusion drives innovation.

Visualizing the Process: From Tokenism to Inclusion

1. **Recognition & Initiation** – Identifying potential tokenism and committing to action.

2. **Assessment (Tokenism Scorecard)** – Evaluating representation, culture, and inclusion gaps.
3. **Diagnosis & Feedback** – Sharing findings with stakeholders to drive awareness.
4. **Action Planning** – Developing tailored interventions using the **Intervention Toolkit**.
5. **Implementation of Interventions** – Executing changes in **accessibility, culture, and policies**.
6. **Monitoring & Support** – Regular progress assessments and leadership accountability.
7. **Evaluation & Iteration** – Reevaluating inclusion efforts and refining strategies.
8. **Sustaining Inclusion** – Embedding successful practices for long-term impact.

By following this iterative process, ABC Corp moved from tokenism to **true inclusion**, ensuring that employees with disabilities were **not just present, but empowered**. The case study illustrates how organizations can translate **commitment into concrete change**, leading to a more equitable and innovative workplace.

For a visual summary, imagine a **flowchart** with these elements in sequence:

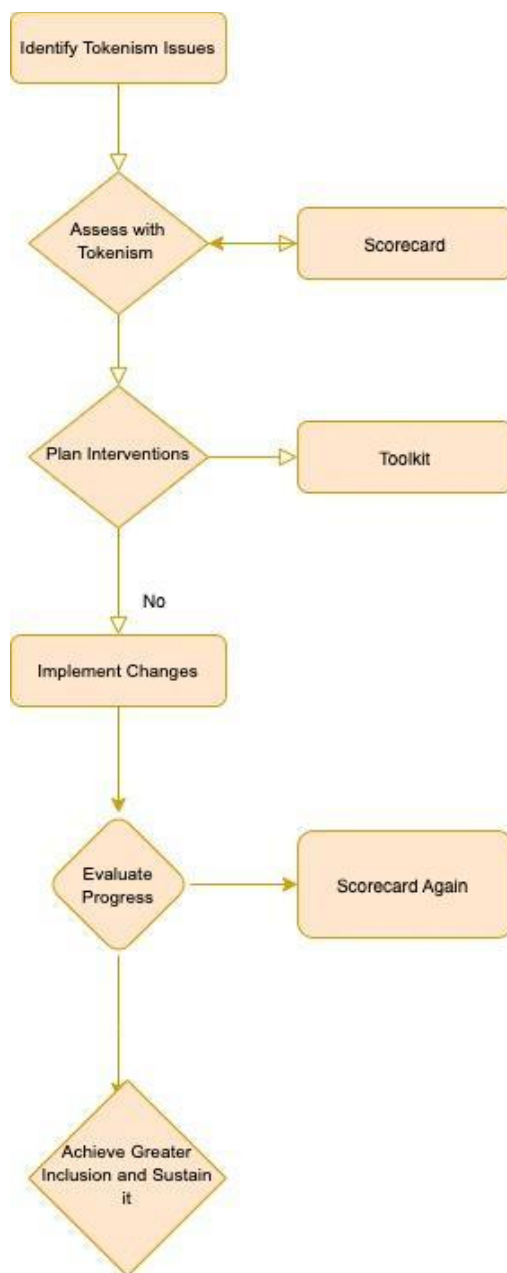


Figure 1T2I Flowchart

Each arrow signifies the transition to the next phase, with feedback loops enabling continuous improvement. The end state is not a one-time destination but an ongoing commitment to inclusion.

This flowchart underscores a critical point: tokenism to inclusion is not achieved by a single action but through an iterative, multi-step journey. By following these steps, an organization systematically breaks the tokenism cycle and builds an inclusive environment where people with disabilities are integral members, not tokens.

4. Conclusion – A Call to Action

The Tokenism-to-Inclusion (T2I) Model provides organizations with a clear roadmap to transition from token gestures to meaningful disability inclusion. This is not just a moral imperative but a strategic move that fosters creativity, problem-solving, and overall workplace well-being. Research underscores that inclusive teams outperform homogeneous ones, while tokenism leads to isolation, stress, and loss of valuable talent. When individuals with disabilities are empowered with voice and influence, both the organization and its culture thrive.

Leaders, HR professionals, and diversity champions must take proactive steps. Assess your workplace—are disabled employees truly included, or merely symbolic figures? The **Tokenism Scorecard** offers a structured way to evaluate and address gaps. Inclusion initiatives require more than policy statements; they

need investment, leadership commitment, and active participation from employees with disabilities in crafting solutions.

Imagine a workplace where disability is normalized, employees feel safe to disclose their needs, and leadership genuinely integrates diverse perspectives. Such a shift transforms inclusion from an obligation to an asset. The T2I Model offers the structure, but it is the commitment to action that makes the difference.

The time to act is now. Whether you are an executive, a manager, or an employee, you have the power to initiate change. Start by asking: *How inclusive are we really?* By using the T2I Model, workplaces can move beyond tokenism, fostering environments where people with disabilities are not just present but actively contributing and leading. This transformation benefits everyone—unlocking innovation, strengthening company culture, and ensuring a truly equitable workplace.

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