

Titan enables the differently abled

Since its inception, Titan Company has provided differently-enabled employees with equal career opportunities and, at the same time, ensured they are as comfortable at the workplace as anyone else

Srinivas has been a cashier in a Titan Eye Plus store in Bangalore for over five years. Having won the Impression regional award thrice, he credits Titan Company and his colleagues and seniors for his success. Srinivas is one of the 135 differently-abled people who work for Titan, a company which has based its people practices on the principles of respecting diversity and inclusion (D&I). Even in its early years, and without a specific D&I policy in place, the Titan management identified and recruited youngsters from the most backward areas in Tamil Nadu's Krishnagiri district (known as Dharmapuri at the time). The tone for Titan's inclusive agenda was set in the formative years of the company during the visit of then Chairman JRD Tata. After meeting the differently-abled youth working there, he asked the management to ensure that they were treated the same as the rest of the staff.

BLURB: Titan management identified and recruited youngsters from the most backward areas in Tamil Nadu

Since then, the company has engaged closely with organisations who work with the differently abled to help them make the most of livelihood opportunities. "Inclusion of varied kinds, be it differently abled or affirmative action — Titan has embedded this as part of the way it works. It has been focusing on D&I as an important aspect of its people practices both within and outside the company for many years," says NE Sridhar, General Manager and Head of Corporate Sustainability at Titan.

Equal opportunities for all

Titan's differently-abled employees include those who are physically challenged, as well as those with hearing, speech or visual challenges. These employees work across the company's plants in positions that are suited to them. They handle assembly operations such as watch packing, working on machines and some are

even involved in housekeeping. The management has adopted workplace solutions such as handrails at workstations to make it easier for them.

Differently-abled employees enjoy the same benefits and career growth opportunities as others in the company. Over the years, many of them have grown higher in the company and earned laurels for their work. A few years ago, the company management renewed its focus on inclusion through differently-abled employees. They were recruited and specifically trained for positions such as watch technicians or cashiers in retail stores. Titan has also worked with vendors who only hire differently-abled youth for its watch strapping operations.

As a part of its larger D&I focus, Titan has undertaken several initiatives to support the differently abled. It works with the Spastics Society to provide support for rural vocational trades for spastic children. Apart from this, it supports skill development and employability training by reputed NGOs. Titan has also been actively involved in the creation of the Accessibility Index for the differently abled, which was launched by the Government of India.

The company is now working to create a formal policy on D&I. The first step has been to engage with a renowned NGO to map around 50 positions that will help create work opportunities for the differently abled, along with appropriate workplace solutions. With such focused efforts over the past 15 years, it is no surprise that Titan has received the President's Award four times for its work with the differently abled. Titan's D&I journey shows true merit and success.

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BOX: PROVIDING THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

- Over the years, several differently-abled employees have worked at Titan's manufacturing locations, stores and in corporate roles.
- Twenty seven differently-abled employees work at Titan's watch assembly unit in Dehradun. The unit received a state-level award from the state Chief Minister for employing differently-abled employees in 2005-06.
- In 2015, non-profit organisations supported by Titan trained 110 youth who found jobs in various organisations.