

EY on DEI: An Interview with Tammy Morris

Podcast v.1.2 - Final Cut

[Upbeat music plays briefly. Then Abilities at Work podcast interviewer Glen Walsh begins speaking. He introduces Tammy Morris, Accessibility & Neuroinclusion Leader for EY Canada.]

Hello, and welcome to Abilities at Work, a podcast hosted by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment. Coming up now, we are going to hear from Tammy Morris at Ernst & Young.

[There is a brief pause. Then Glen begins interviewing Tammy.]

Hello. So the first question I have is why do you feel diversity is important to Ernst & Young?

[Tammy answers.]

Thanks Glen. Diversity is just core to who we are, right? It's at the heart of our values of EY. And I think sometimes, in visiting other organizations, really coming back home, I appreciate it. We have a great understanding that we're all multi layered individuals and including a disability, right?

There is intersectionality and all of those many layers. And of course, personally, the disability in the workforce component of all of our D E I efforts and networks and communities, but our many layered folks we are.

[Glen responds to Tammy and asks her another question.]

That's great. Why do you feel or EY is investing in neurodiversity strategies?

[Tammy replies.]

So it's been quite some time. So over a decade in looking into future proofing the workforce and looking at all talent populations to ensure that we were intentionally including, and of course that helps the community, but also helps us. And so that includes women in technology, newcomers to Canada, Indigenous professionals, and also people with disabilities.

And that's really what drew us to understanding. So EY is, we do very technical work in the work that we do in tax and audit and strategy and consulting. So we knew that we had many neurodivergent professionals working at the firm across all ranks. But we also knew and we're learning that some people were struggling with the traditional hiring process.

So that was about a decade ago now, where we deconstructed that hiring, the sort of that interview - basically, we threw it out, to be honest, we threw out that behavioral interview and reconstructed a methodology that was more inclusive and accessible for everyone. And that's really when we started intentionally hiring neurodivergent professionals, in addition to the many that we know already exist within the organization.

[*Glen inquires further.*]

So how are you implementing diversity at EY?

[*Tammy explains.*]

So I would say, being inclusive, nobody does that alone. So there are many components to that, many more than people realize sometimes. Our digital accessibility, the accessibility of tools to help everybody. So whether you've come from a different sector or you're a new grad or you're a newcomer, or you're a person with a disability.

So having things that already exist and onboarding and a welcome process that's accessible for everyone. So it's really what drew me to EY was knowing that you could navigate all of that without having to share your story. Or you could take part. So I think it's really multiple stakeholders that deliver that.

And everybody, all of our teams, as well every day. So it's hard to name just one thing.

[*Glen then asks another question.*]

So learning from your experience, what would you recommend to an organization to strengthen their diversity strategies?

[*Tammy provides the following recommendations and information.*]

Yeah. So we know that there's more interest, right? So this disability employment has been a very slow moving ball.

So decades long changes from way back from institutionalization to segregated employment to then integrated and competitive employment and really embedding everybody into teams. But that took decades long. So we're very excited to see that there's interest. And, statistically from 1 percent to 4 percent jumped up to 23 percent of organizations looking at a disability hiring strategy.

And I would really say that is really putting the thought and the strategy into it. So not just rushing out to hire people, because the most important thing that we're most proud, of course, is our retention. So we want to set people up for success in the workplace, and so building the support system and the ecosystem and the plan, from end to end.

So what we help our clients do is from communicating with the community, recruiting, hire to retire, and everything in between, making sure there's a career path and a trajectory as well. So I would say, obviously we have our methodology, but there are many things that are easy to achieve, I guess I would say for all organizations to do.

[*Glen asks Tammy a final question.*]

And so, what practical tips, strategies, or information do you want to share with other companies or organizations about building a culture of inclusion?

[*Tammy answers and elaborates.*]

I wish that everybody could walk, right? You want to walk in somebody else's shoes. So disability is a place where sometimes it's improving, but of course, if you substitute it in the word disability for some things, people's jaws would drop if you said he couldn't possibly do that job because he's Black or she couldn't possibly do that job because she's a woman, right?

We still face those barriers and that hesitation sometime by the nature of somebody's condition. And so I think, moving beyond to zero tolerance in that space or having conversations about it. So I would say, considering from the employee experience, that candidates experience – it's a two way street.

Candidates are evaluating organizations as well as we're evaluating candidates. So what do you have to offer? What sort of level of support do you have to offer? What opportunities for a career trajectory do you have to offer that individual? And keep that in mind. And then are we setting folks up for success?

Will they have the tools that they need from day one or beforehand? Will they have the support that they need and the mentorship that they need are all – some of those things that need to go into that plan. And I would say, I often recommend to people outside of the planning and setting up that ecosystem – there's so many things that are free.

We know there's a lot on the plates of D E I and H R professionals these past years, for sure. But there are many things that don't cost anything. So mentorship is free. Education and listening to the voice of employees who have disabilities is free. It doesn't cost anything.

There's so many, such a growing body of research and evidence to help make, set your return on investment. And of course, this is Canada. We have federally funded organizations that also are helping to support employers move this needle forward as well. So I think it's, just to start having conversations.

So my sort of motto is just to call in conversations. So we know that most organizations, their numbers, their disability representation is not where they hope it to be. And so we're not about calling people out, but call people in and find out what are the obstacles and helping them manage those obstacles as we go forward.

[Glen thanks Tammy and concludes the interview.]

Wow, thank you so much. I think it was very insightful and we learned a lot today.

[Tammy responds and thanks Glen.]

Great. Thanks, Glen.

[Glen finishes the podcast episode by mentioning the following information. The upbeat music at the start of the episode plays again.]

If you like this podcast, be sure to subscribe and share. For more resources and to learn about supporting people experiencing disabilities, visit supportedemployment dot c a.

- Transcript of 7 minute and 20 second Podcast Season 4 audio file titled “EY Podcast v.1.2
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