

New British Standard on managing inclusive design will help reach wider markets, comply with recent legislation, and enhance brands

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BS7000-6 Guide to managing inclusive design, to be published end-January 2005, provides a comprehensive framework to help all enterprises, public sector and not-for-profit organizations introduce a professional approach to inclusive design.

Why inclusive design needs to be addressed

Disability is not a simple consequence of an individual's impaired capability, but results from a failure to take proper account of the needs, capabilities and preferences of all potential users when designing products, services and facilities. Legislation, regulations and changing attitudes around the world are generating increasing pressures for more inclusive societies.

Inclusive design is comprehensive, integrated design that encompasses all aspects of a product (or service) throughout its lifecycle from conception to final disposal. The goal is to meet the needs of consumers of diverse age and capability in a wide range of contexts because appropriate access to information, products, services and facilities is a fundamental human right.

Inclusive design needs to be a key element in an inclusive *business* strategy. Organizations that adopt a pro-active approach based on a better understanding of consumer needs and aspirations stand to benefit from:

- higher quality products, services and facilities;
- increased sales, customer satisfaction and loyalty;
- stronger brand values and enhanced brand recognition;
- greater profitability and improved returns on investment.

Everyone benefits through inclusive design.

By contrast, failure to act could expose organizations to the possibility of litigation and damage to their reputations, especially since the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 came fully into force last October.

What the standard provides

This standard provides a framework by which executives – owner-managers, board directors and principal officers down to junior executives – as well as design practitioners can understand and respond to the needs of diverse users without stigma or limitations. These may include people who:

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- have impaired vision and/or hearing (including colour blindness, etc.);
- are from different cultures (with different languages, values and/or customs);
- have language and/or speech impairments (resulting in difficulties with reading, comprehension and in expressing oneself);
- have physical limitations (whether due to temporary or permanent reductions in strength, movement and/or co-ordination; allergies, sensitivity to electromagnetic radiation, etc.);
- are of different ages;
- have varying cognitive abilities;
- have different dietary requirements for medical reasons or through choice;
- have different requirements because of their gender.

The standard concentrates on the *management* of inclusive design, not the practice of inclusive design. The two main sections contain guidance at the organization and project levels respectively.

Introducing a professional approach to inclusive design at the organization level

The standard sets out a comprehensive framework for introducing a professional approach to inclusive design into an organization which requires more than an adjustment of processes and guidelines. Preparatory groundwork and changes are required to organizational culture and infrastructure which may have far-reaching effects and extend beyond design to other mainstream disciplines. Therefore, clear direction and support are needed from senior executives.

Issues clarified include top-level responsibility for inclusive design, and the formulation of a business case for adopting an inclusive approach that is tied closely with an organization's core objectives, strategies and plans.

Guidance is also provided on how current operations and facilities might be reviewed to check their appropriateness, and how experience and best practices elsewhere might be harnessed effectively. Development and marketing strategies are outlined relating to new products and services.

The standard highlights the importance of conferring with target customers to ensure approaches and solutions are appropriate. Emphasis is placed on ensuring close co-ordination during the development process so all disciplines contribute effectively at all stages, before and after introduction to market. The importance of preparing markets for new products and services is highlighted. Getting the launch right is crucial to raising the profitability of the product, as is ensuring that promotion, distribution, customer support are all harnessed effectively throughout its lifecycle.

Communicating the central messages about the ‘inclusive design’ approach is essential to get the early backing of key staff. Specialist terms are defined towards the beginning of the standard to facilitate comprehension and enhance communication inside an organization and with outside audiences.

Other issues covered include the legal aspects, drawing up and reviewing investment programmes, and evaluating corporate performance.

Readers will find a useful diagram and checklist that provide summary overviews of what needs to be done by senior executives and officers at the organization level.

All about the prime stages of inclusive design projects

The section on managing inclusive design at the project level is taken up largely by figures on all prime stages of inclusive design projects. Each includes details of the stage aims, inclusive design tasks to be undertaken, tools and techniques that facilitate work, key outputs, and the basis on which a project might progress to the next stage.

Guidance also covers the focus and iterations between stages, and the importance of concurrent working, stage gateways and reviews. Stress is placed on the quality of project proposals as these can do much to stimulate fresh approaches and encourage new terrain to be explored, so raising the chances of creating innovative solutions that are attractive to target markets.

A diagram provides a useful overview of prime project stages, while a checklist summarises the main factors to be considered at project level.

Extensive annexes and links to practical references

Two annexes include further evidence to reinforce the case for adopting a professional approach to inclusive design. One summarises trends in population, society and legislation, providing some insights into the diversity of society, different kinds of impairments and the implications for work and public environments. The other outlines the tools and techniques that facilitate work at different project stages, some developed specifically for inclusive design work.

This new British Standard includes a brief bibliography plus links to the websites of key organizations (RNIB, RNID, Design Council, etc) which will guide readers to an extensive range of up-to-date practical references.

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How to order

BS7000-6 will be available in standard and large print (14 point) versions: price £122 or £61 for BSI Subscribing Members. (P&P £3.90 UK, £5.45 overseas; free P&P to BSI Subscribing Members). Pre-payment is required from non-Members. Other formats may be available in due course.

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