

Discussion Guide for the Campaign for Disability Employment's "I Can" PSA

Fostering CAN-Do Attitudes at Work



What can
YOU do?

The Campaign for
Disability Employment

www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org

About the *Campaign for Disability Employment*

The *Campaign for Disability Employment* is a collaborative effort between several disability and business organizations that seek to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talent they bring to the workplace, as well as the dividend to be realized by fully including people with disabilities at work.

Partners



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Funding and Support



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Guide available in alternative formats.
For more information, please visit:
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“I Can” PSA Discussion Guide

Introduction

At work, it’s what people CAN do that matters. That’s the simple yet significant message that several leading disability and business organizations decided they wanted to communicate when they joined forces to create the Campaign for Disability Employment.

Because myths and stereotypes continue to create barriers to employment opportunities for qualified people with disabilities, members of the *Campaign* launched *What can YOU do?* – a national public education effort to emphasize the value and talent people with disabilities add to businesses and organizations. As part of the *Campaign*, they decided to produce a public service announcement (PSA) featuring people with disabilities – not actors

– who CAN and DO make valuable contributions to America’s workplaces and economy every day. The result was “I Can.”

“I Can” features seven people with disabilities sharing what they “can do” on the job when given the opportunity.

They represent different ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds and disabilities – some of which are apparent and some not. The people in the PSA were chosen

to reflect the diversity of skills people with disabilities offer and to challenge common misconceptions about disability and employment.

“I Can” was filmed in July 2009 at participants’ actual workplaces. The people featured include:

- **Bob Boorstin**, a Fortune 500 corporate policy director
- **Patty Rivas**, a grocery store co-owner and manager
- **Michael Saulter**, a carpenter and landscaper
- **Mat McCollough**, a communications manager
- **Josh Sundquist**, an author and motivational speaker
- **Meg Krause**, an Army veteran and public relations consultant
- **Cheryl Collier**, an elementary school teacher

After sharing their job skills, participants remind viewers that at work, it’s what people CAN do that matters and ask the viewers to consider what they can do to advance disability employment and America’s ideal of equal opportunity for all.

What can?
YOU do?

“I Can” features seven people with disabilities sharing what they CAN do.

Suggested Use for Guide

When it comes to doing business, an environment that is inclusive of people with disabilities – in recruitment, retention and advancement – can offer companies a competitive edge. People with disabilities are experienced problem solvers who contribute to the development of creative business solutions and add value to a business. Additionally, they represent different ages, genders and ethnic backgrounds and enhance the diversity of the workforce. What’s more, people with disabilities mirror an important and expanding customer base.

Everyone has a role to play in, and benefits to gain from, improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For this reason, the *Campaign for Disability Employment* highly encourages the use of the “I Can” PSA as a tool to start a discussion about the benefits of fostering a work environment that is flexible and open to the talents of *all* qualified individuals, including those with disabilities.

What can
YOU do?

Foster an environment that is flexible and open to the talents of all qualified individuals.

This guide may be used to plan and lead a discussion among employees in the workplace or during work-related retreats and planning sessions. It can also be a useful tool for employee resource groups (ERGs) or affinity groups to use in efforts to promote disability and diversity inclusion within their organizations. In addition, the “I Can” PSA and guide can be used to stimulate discussion among civic leaders and others involved in workforce issues, such as workforce boards and economic development councils.

The objectives of such a discussion are to encourage people to:

- Recognize that incorrect assumptions create obstacles to employment success for people with disabilities
- Understand the benefits of a work environment inclusive of people with disabilities
- Realize that by modeling positive and inclusive attitudes and behaviors, workplace leaders can play an important role in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Planning for a Good Discussion

A good discussion can take place anywhere if the location is accessible to all participants and steps are taken to help participants feel comfortable listening and speaking without being judged. This means making sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute if they want to and encouraging participants to follow basic courtesies, such as taking turns to speak and respecting others’ comments even if participants may disagree with them.

A discussion about the “I Can” PSA is not meant to be a formal training exercise. Rather, it is meant to help people think about certain things more broadly – specifically assumptions they may make about people with disabilities. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the suggested questions included in this guide. It is not recommended that participants be required to take notes. However, participants might be provided with pen and paper to write down any thoughts or reactions they want to remember later. A discussion handout with brief information about the “I Can” PSA participants is included at the end of this guide.

When it comes to ensuring accessibility, the two main areas the leader needs to consider are physical access to the meeting space and access to the discussion content. The discussion should take place at a location that is accessible to anyone using a wheelchair or other mobility aid (for example, there should be a ramped or level entrance to the building and access to an elevator if the meeting room is not on the ground level), has accessible restrooms, and offers seating useable by all participants.

If any print materials are used (such as the recommended PSA participant handout provided at the end of this guide), versions in alternative formats, such as large print, CD or Braille, should be provided, if necessary. It is also important to determine whether a sign language interpreter, realtime captioning or assistive listening devices are needed. Please keep in mind that securing an interpreter, materials in Braille or other accommodations may take time, so this should be taken into account when planning the discussion.

The “I Can” PSA is captioned and, thus, accessible to viewers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty processing audible information. The discussion leader is encouraged to use the audio introduced version of the PSA to ensure that the video is accessible to viewers who are blind or visually impaired, and also as a tool to teach the importance of descriptions when showing visuals.

Further information to assist in ensuring accessibility of a meeting site is available at www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm.

The recommended amount of time to allow for this discussion is about 45-60

minutes. When possible, smaller groups are preferred in order to more easily encourage sharing of information and asking questions. Group size should be taken into consideration when setting up the meeting room. For example, circle style might work better for a small group (5-15 people) while classroom style might work better for a larger group (15-30+).

Materials Checklist

- Access to “I Can” PSA on DVD or via whatcanyoudocampaign.org
- Audio/visual equipment (DVD player, computer, speakers, projector, extension cords, etc.)
- Copies of recommended handout included as page 14 in this guide
- Whiteboard or flipchart and markers
- Blank paper and pens or pencils for group participants

Discussion leaders new to the concepts presented in this guide may want to review information about recruiting and hiring people with disabilities, as well as basics of disability etiquette, prior to the discussion. Relevant sources of information include:

- EARNWorks Fact Sheet, “Focus on Ability: Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities”: http://www.earnworks.com/docs/FactSheets/Employer/FS-ER-InterviewTips.pdf?article_id=2
- EARNWorks Fact Sheet, “Creating a Welcoming Workplace for People with Disabilities”: <http://www.earnworks.com/docs/FactSheets/Employer/FS-ER-Welcoming.pdf>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Fact Sheet, “Disability Etiquette Tips for Speaking Engagements”: <http://askjan.org/media/disetispeakingfact.doc>

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- JAN Fact Sheet, “Disability Etiquette in the Workplace”: <http://askjan.org/media/employmentetifact.doc>
- National Disability and Business Council Disability Etiquette Online Presentation: https://admin.na6.acrobat.com/_a203284292/disabilityetiquette
- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Fact Sheet, “Effective Interaction: Communicating With and About People with Disabilities”: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/effectiveinteraction.htm>

Facilitating the Discussion: Suggested Leader’s Guide



Below is a suggested script and structure the discussion leader may follow to facilitate a conversation among employees or others about the “I Can” PSA. Please note that the discussion leader is not required to follow this script. Rather, the suggested discussion is meant to serve as a guide to assist in moving the conversation forward, if necessary. If the conversation progresses naturally without participants needing to be prompted, then there is no need to stick to the script, but the questions may be helpful in directing the group discussion. The discussion leader should pay attention to the conversation to determine when more or less direction may be needed.

**Welcome the
talents and skills
of *all* people.**

Before Showing the “I Can” PSA


Group Leader: *Introduce yourself and invite others to do the same.*

We’re here today to talk about the importance of welcoming the talents and skills of all people in the workplace, including people with disabilities. Every day, people with disabilities add significant value to America’s workplaces and economy. Their skills and talents benefit businesses of all sizes and in all industries. They are entrepreneurs, innovators and community leaders. However, in good economic times or bad, people with disabilities still have far fewer job opportunities than those without.


Before we get too involved in our discussion, I would like to make it clear that this is not a formal training exercise and there are no wrong answers to any questions I might ask. Rather, we’re going to discuss some important issues about work and the way we think about and treat others. In this spirit, please use respect and listen to others. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to our discussion by taking turns and listening respectfully to what each member of the group has to say.

Now, as I mentioned, we’re here to talk about the importance of having a workplace that is open to all qualified individuals – including people with disabilities. Disability is part of the natural diversity of life and touches all of us, whether through our own individual experience or that of a family member, neighbor, friend or colleague. As a result, we all have a role in – and benefit to gain from – advancing equality for people with disabilities in all sectors of society. As with other forms of diversity, experience with disability

can offer varied perspectives on how to confront challenges and achieve success, whether at home, school or work.

 I'd like you to think for a minute about someone you know who has a disability. **Do they work? Do they go to school? Do you think about their opportunities for employment differently than you may others' opportunities? Do you think others do?** I'm not asking you to share this information, but just to think about it for a moment.

Group Leader: Allow a few seconds for reflection.

 **What do you think happens when people make assumptions about what a person can or can't do?** Again, I'm not asking you to share this out loud, but just to think about it.

Every day, people with disabilities CAN and DO add significant value to America's workplaces and economy. Their skills and talents benefit businesses of all sizes and in all industries. But despite the achievements of many talented individuals with disabilities, negative stereotypes about disability and employment persist. Many of these stereotypes exist because some people focus only on what someone with a disability can't do. But at work, it's really what people CAN do that matters.

Before we move on, let's talk a little about what each of us "can do." Specifically, I'd like to invite you to share one of your skills. This skill could be related to your current job or your previous work experience, or maybe a skill you hope to use in a job. I'll start.

Group Leader: Share a skill or talent. The types of statements that might be appropriate include:

- I can manage a staff.
- I can help customers.
- I can meet deadlines.
- I can multi-task.
- I can write.
- I can use computers.
- I can help people stay healthy.

 **What can YOU do?**

Group Leader: Encourage each participant to share something.

Now I'd like to introduce you to a few other people and what THEY can do. Pay attention to what the people in this video have to say.

Group Leader: Share PSA participant handout and show "I Can" PSA. May want to dim lights during showing.

After Showing the "I Can" PSA

 **First, I'd like to ask what are your reactions to the video? What did you like about it? What didn't you like?**

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for general responses.

Now, I'd like to tell you more about each of the people in that video. There were seven people altogether, and they are all people with disabilities, not actors playing roles. *Each* of them has a disability. Some of their disabilities are visible, for instance, the woman who uses a wheelchair. But others are not.

**What can
YOU do?**

Meet the “I Can” PSA Participants

The first person was **Bob Boorstin**, who



said, “I can solve difficult problems for a Fortune 500 company.” Bob is an executive for

the company Google and a former speechwriter for a U.S. president. He earned a degree from Harvard University. Bob has bi-polar disorder, a mental health condition. Bob feels key factors in his career success have been taking care of himself and understanding how to manage his condition.

The woman who said, “I can run a successful business” is named **Patty Rivas**.



Patty co-owns and manages a grocery store. She holds a master’s degree in social work

and worked as a social worker before becoming an entrepreneur. She decided to join members of her family in opening the grocery store because she thought it seemed like an exciting challenge and liked the idea of being her own boss. Patty also has paraplegia. Patty says the big factor in her career success has been support and encouragement from her family and friends.

The man who said, “I can manage your home improvements” is named



Michael Saulter. Michael is a landscaper

and carpenter. Since the time he was young, he always enjoyed building things and so Michael chose this line of work with this interest and skill in mind. Michael has an intellectual disability that impacts his reading and writing. He says his disability wasn’t a factor when deciding what job to pursue, but that he has had to develop different ways to make sure he understands his customers’ needs. He says even though he works with his hands, comprehension and communication skills are an important part of the job.

Mat McCollough is the man who said,



“I can publicize your message.” Mat is a communications director for an office within a

large city government. His job involves a lot of writing, working with the press and strategic planning with city leaders. Mat has an undergraduate degree in political science and a master’s in public administration. His first professional job was as a grants manager. Mat has cerebral palsy and uses crutches to help him walk. His speech is also impacted by his cerebral palsy.

**I CAN
add value
to your
workplace.**

**What can
YOU do?**

The woman who said, “I can put my military experience to work for your



company” is **Meg Krause**. Meg is an Army reservist. She served two tours of duty in the Iraq

war as an Army medic. When she returned, she earned her degree and today works as a public relations consultant. Her education was supported by the GI Bill, which helps active service members and veterans pursue higher education. Meg has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Meg says the key to not letting PTSD prevent her from succeeding on the job is effective communication with her employer and co-workers.

The man who said, “I can motivate your audience” is



named **Josh Sundquist**. Josh is a motivational speaker and best-selling

author who earned an undergraduate degree from the College of William and Mary and master’s degree from the University of Southern California. He is also a skier who competed in the 2006 Paralympics in Italy. Josh has one leg. His left leg was amputated due to cancer when he was nine years old. He got started speaking after hearing a motivational speaker at school and realizing that his experiences might also help others confront challenges in their lives.

The woman who said, “I can teach your children” is



Cheryl Collier, an elementary school teacher who is deaf. Cheryl teaches at the Mary-

land School for the Deaf and uses sign language to communicate with her students and others. She went into teaching because she has always liked working with young children. When not in her classroom, Cheryl provides mentoring and support to middle school students as a volleyball coach.

Challenging Assumptions

Each person in the video shared what they “can do” when given the opportunity – what they can do on the job. But they also said some statements that go beyond their skills and talents. These statements were:

- I can boost your bottom line
- I can add value to your workplace
- I can be a loyal and productive employee

What can YOU do?



What do you think these statements mean?

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for general responses.



What are some of the ways you think organizations can benefit from the talents and perspectives of people with disabilities?

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for

general responses. You could mention that people with disabilities often have new and creative approaches to solving problems and accomplishing tasks.

In the video, we also heard the people featured say they can't put their skills to work:

- If I'm not given the opportunity
- If you don't recognize my talents and ability
- If you don't hire me
- If you don't have an open mind and a workplace that is open to everyone
- If you don't realize that America works best when EVERYBODY works

What can
YOU do?

? Why do you think someone might not give a person with a disability an opportunity – whether that opportunity is a job or anything else?

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for responses.

What do you think happens when people make assumptions about what a person can or can't do?

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for responses.

In some circumstances, denying someone with a disability an opportunity may be illegal. There are laws in place to protect people from discrimination based on disability. One of the most well known and wide reaching of these

laws is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA was enacted to make America's communities and workplaces fully accessible to people with disabilities.

? Were you surprised by the type of job some of the people in the video have? Why?

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for responses.

? Can you think of people with known disabilities who are in careers or jobs that you might not expect?

Group Leader: For example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States, was a polio survivor and used a wheelchair; Stevie Wonder, award winning singer-songwriter, is blind; former Major League Baseball pitcher Jim Abbott, who pitched for several Major League teams, has one hand; Aimee Mullins, athlete, actress and model, had both legs amputated below the knees when she was a child; Steve Jobs, co-founder and chief executive officer of Apple and previously Pixar Animation Studios, has dyslexia; and Robert David Hall, an actor known for his role as Dr. Albert Robbins on the show CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, has two prosthetic legs.

? How can changing what we assume about what people CAN do impact others' successes and failures?

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for responses.

Conclusion

As the people in the “I Can” PSA said, when it comes to work, it’s what people CAN do that matters. As an organization or business, we need to focus on how people’s talents and skills come together to help us all succeed at work. Work is important to everyone, not just a business or employer, and means more than just a paycheck. Having a job or a career means being able to make your own choices about how you want to live your life. The right to work and be recognized for your accomplishments is an important aspect of America’s ideal of equality and opportunity for all.

I hope today’s discussion will help you think more about the many things YOU can do, not just in your everyday life and activities, but also in the way you treat and interact with other people. By recognizing, respecting and welcoming the skills and talents each person has, YOU can play an important role in sharing the message that it’s what people CAN do that matters.



Everyone has a role to play in fostering inclusive attitudes in the workplace. **When we leave here, what is one positive thing you can do in your workplace to share this “can-do” message and make a difference?**

Group Leader: Allow a few minutes for each participant to respond. Consider capturing participants’ responses on a flip chart.

What will YOU do to help spread the message that at work, it’s what people CAN do that matters?

The video we saw is called “I Can” and was created by the *Campaign for Disability Employment* – a partnership of leading disability and business organizations, funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. It’s easy for everyone to help drive positive change by participating in the *Campaign*. For example, the *Campaign* maintains a website, whatcanyoudocampaign.org, that includes practical information about disability employment efforts and provides the opportunity for employers to share positive employment experiences and best practices. Please visit the site to learn more about the importance of welcoming the talents and skills of *all* people in the workplace.

As an organization, we are proud to support the *Campaign for Disability Employment* and commit to workplace policies and practices that promote equality and full access for people with disabilities.

Group Leader: Thank everyone for participating and share with participants any information about diversity and/or disability-oriented initiatives within your organization. Examples of such initiatives include corporate policy statements on disability, employee resource groups (ERGs) or affinity groups related to disability, and centralized accommodation units.

What can YOU do?

Meet the “I Can” PSA Participants



At work, it’s what people CAN do that matters. People with disabilities CAN and DO make important contributions to America’s workplaces and economy. The “I Can” public service announcement (PSA) introduces us to seven people with disabilities – not actors playing roles – showing what they “can do” on the job when given the opportunity.

What Can YOU Do?

“I can solve difficult problems for a Fortune 500 company.”

-Bob Boorstin

Bob is a corporate policy director for technology provider, Google. As one of the millions of Americans living with bi-polar disorder, he works to reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions.



“I can run a successful business.”

-Patty Rivas

Patty, who uses a wheelchair, co-owns and manages a grocery store. Her customers evaluate her on her ability - not her disability.



“I can manage your home improvements.”

-Michael Saulter

Michael owns a successful landscaping and carpentry business. He also has an intellectual disability that impacts his reading and writing.



“I can publicize your message.”

-Mat McCollough

Mat McCollough has a challenging career as a communications manager. Every day, Mat, who has cerebral palsy, puts his talent and skills to work for his employer, the Government of the District of Columbia.



“I can motivate your audience.”

-Josh Sundquist

Josh is a motivational speaker, author and business owner. Josh’s left leg was amputated due to cancer when he was nine years old.



“I can put my military experience to work for your company.”

-Meg Krause

Meg is a public relations consultant and Army veteran. She has not let her post-traumatic stress disorder prevent her from succeeding on the job.



“I can teach your children.”

-Cheryl Collier

Cheryl, a teacher who is deaf, proves every day that at work, it’s what people CAN do that matters.

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