



**Andres Balcazar**

***Andres Balcazar is a Mexico City based architect and consultant, currently works for the Mexican Human Rights Commission as Director of Disability Affairs. He's been accessibility and disability consultant for national and international organizations from the private, public, and civil society sectors.***

***Some of his publications and research include: Study about the situation of schools' accessibility in Mexico; Accessibility Guidelines for the Ministry of Public Education; Report on the Situation of Human Rights of People with Disabilities in Mexico, for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Accessibility assessment of Bahrain's rehabilitation center for persons with disabilities project. Accessibility assessments of several public and private facilities in Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Dubai.***

***He has participated in international research studies on disability and accessibility, including development of guidelines and standards in Mexico and abroad.***

## **Inclusive workplaces**

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**Access to work is a basic human right. The creation of inclusive workplaces contributes to the realization of providing persons with disabilities with the opportunities of being productive members of society. And the benefits are for everyone, companies, employees, and communities.**

**We might think that the current pandemic and technology that allowed us to work remotely for several months will change forever the workplace. That's true... but at the same time, not all positions in all industries are susceptible of remote working. Many of us will have to go back or are already working again in our traditional workplace. So, we still need to find ways to accommodate the needs of different groups that benefits from an accessible, diverse, and inclusive workplace.**

**I've been involved since 2007 in developing accessibility standards in Mexico, my home country, and abroad, both local and national, that are either mandatory or voluntary regulations. Since then, during this past 15 years, implementation of those standards is indeed happening, at a very low pace though.**

**The existence of a legal framework and availability of a set of standards for accessible built and digital environments doesn't seem to be enough to create overnight fully inclusive workplaces. Several cities and countries worldwide already have local or national regulations mandating inclusive environments, and that**

**doesn't seem to improve the life of persons with disabilities and their right to a decent job.**

**How do we create inclusive workplaces for persons with disabilities then? We already have criteria defining what makes an accessible environment, covering the built environment, products, and digital services. Large, multinational companies in big cities are more aware of the benefits for having inclusive workplaces. But medium and small businesses, in small cities or towns are not fully aware, and the reasons vary greatly.**

**Answering my previous question, I don't think there is one single recipe. The real challenge is still to change people's attitude towards persons with disabilities in small/medium companies and local communities worldwide, understanding the local cultural background and adapting best practices. Accessible technology and access to internet is still far of being a reality for many persons with disability worldwide, therefore, working from home is still far from being the solution.**

**Some actions include:**

- *Building capacity by providing standards and best practices to local businesses in local languages and adapting to local cultures.*
- *Training built environment and IT professionals.*
- *Involving local groups of persons with disabilities.*
- *Developing spaces to share success stories and best practices from leading businesses from different industries pioneering the inclusion of persons with disabilities to their workforce.*