

TO BRING ABOUT REAL CHANGE WE HAVE TO STOP TREATING DISABILITY AS A TABOO TOPIC

Through conversation, better awareness and understanding, we can smash the limitations we place on people with disability – within our industry and society at large, writes James Nicolaci.

Hi, my name is James. I've been a client associate with iProspect for just over six months now.

Before discussing the sensitive topic of disability, I'd like to fill you in briefly about my experience. I have a right-side hemiplegia, a significant loss of strength and control over the right side of my body, which has impacted me my whole life.

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Individuals' circumstances and experience with disability can range from inconvenient to life changing, and no single perspective can encompass it all. I try to see it as a challenge, a limitation to overcome with creative problem solving, such as how do I plot my route involving the least amount of walking? Or how do I carry three beers back to the table with poor dexterity? It isn't easy, but sometimes the additional difficulty can make results that much more satisfying.



James Nicolaci is a client associate at iProspect.

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I've been told by numerous people with the best of intentions that it doesn't define me. Then at the same time, I always see it as the first thing someone notices about me. I'd love it if it didn't define me in any way, but it obviously does. It affects what I can and can't do daily, and that's just how it is. Everyone has unique quirks and attributes, it's just mine are much more noticeable.

People often don't ask or they dance around the topic, but you can always tell what's on their mind. I've found humour to be a great ice breaker. With classic lines, like "God knew I'd be too powerful if I could run", cutting through awkward atmospheres, helping people skip the tightrope question, "What happened to you?" There are very few joys like making someone laugh, then apologise, embarrassed that they laughed.

This is what I would say to our industry about disability: Once you stop treating it as a taboo topic, conversations become a lot more human and engaging as opposed to being treated like you're in bubble wrap

Anyone can expand their thinking on the subject of Disability.

In terms of the media industry, things are quite good. I work at a desk either at home or in the office, shops and public transport are all close by. The only thing that comes to mind, is when events have my greatest enemy – lots of stairs. More awareness and understanding will always be a benefit. With in-house training modules, as well as the SBS Core Inclusion program, anyone can expand their thinking on the subject.

To anyone in a similar position I'd say, just own it. You can't always stop people from seeing your conditions, but you can choose how they are seen. But even after saying all this, I feel it's important to reiterate – every single person is different. I hope my perspective brought some new insight. At the end of the day, we're all just people. How I walk doesn't stop me from thinking, talking, or working any differently from anyone else and I don't want it to affect how I'm treated either.

People need to see that others who have a disability are thriving.