

Issue No.7 · June 2021

Make→Shift



The new social justice frontier?
Accessibility. Get ready to turn barriers
into innovations.

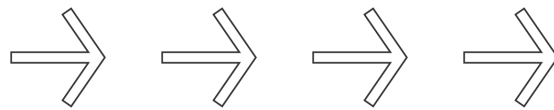
Make→Shift is part of TrendWatching's [Free Trend Updates](#). Each monthly issue examines one cross-industry movement no brand can afford to ignore, answering 'why now' and spotlighting the opportunities brands can act on today.

All in a six-minute read.

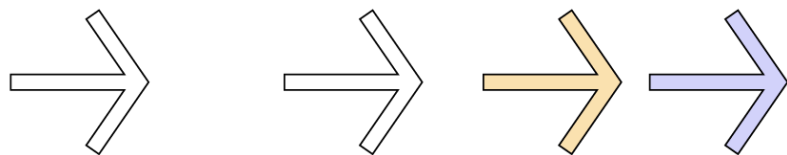
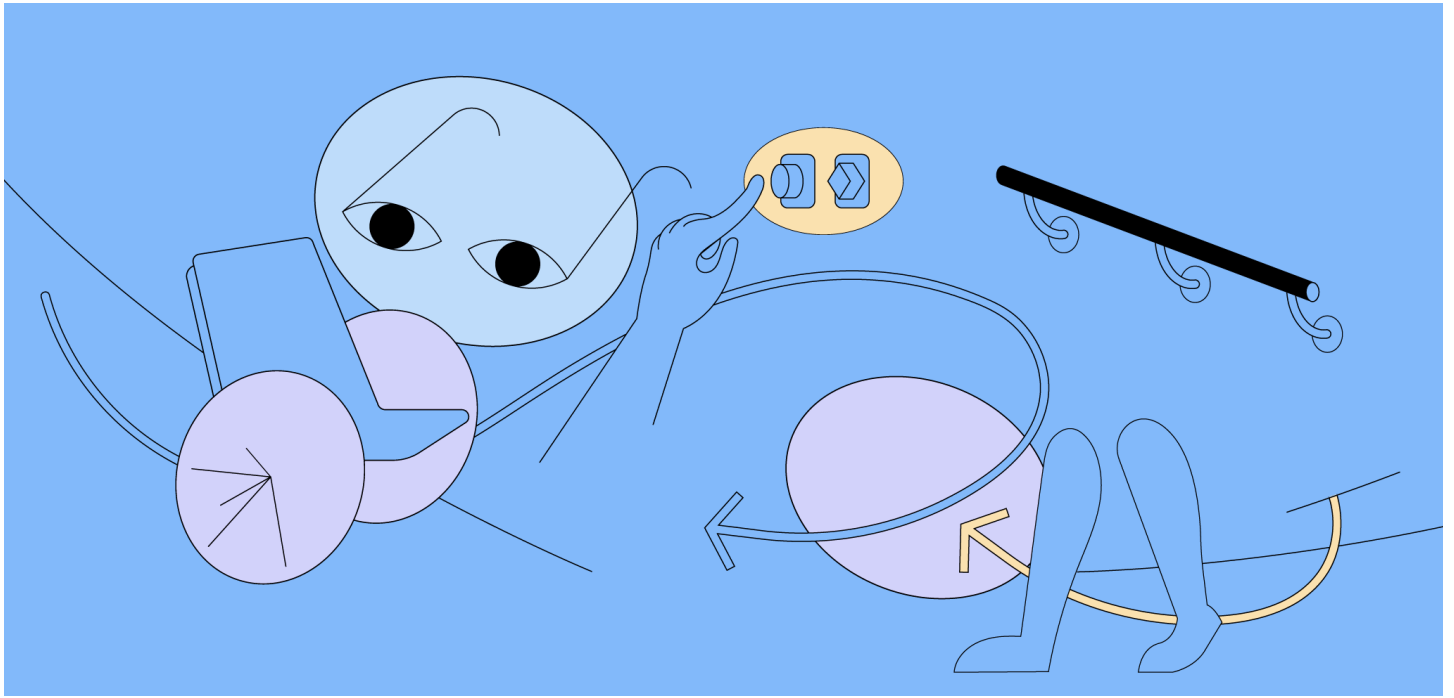
Accessibility isn't just an opportunity, it's an imperative. No ifs, no buts.

First #MeToo, then BLM. Now, society's on the precipice of an OMNIBILITY revolution, with consumers championing brands that bust down barriers to entry. Tweak your existing products or launch brand new services that enrich life for everyone – whether they're living with or without disabilities.

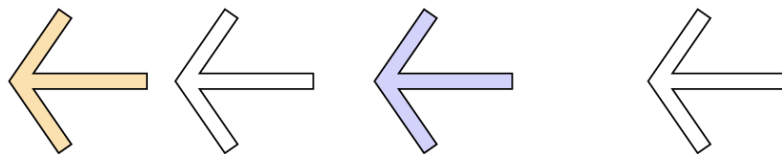
The right side of history? We can help you with that.



How will you take your accessibility aspirations forward?



WHY NOW?



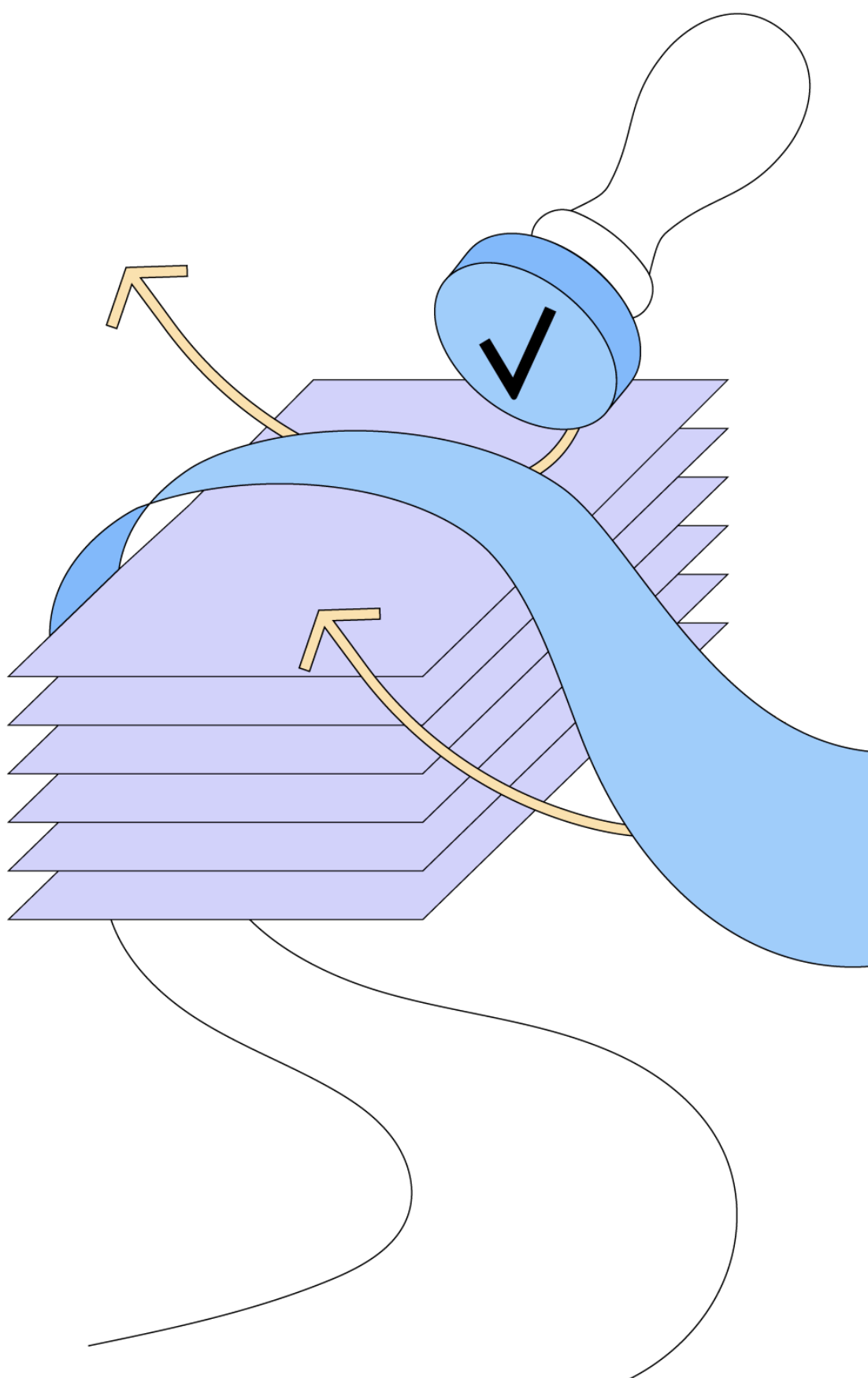
DISABILITIES DESTIGMATIZED

Influencers with disabilities are providing glimpses into their own everyday lives and redefining normality for millions of followers. These stories are now amplified, as being housebound during the pandemic confronted everyone with what it's like when normal daily life is beset with obstacles and personal freedoms are

waylaid. Brands are winning over consumers by weaving cochlear implants and other assistive tech into their marketing campaigns. And global business leaders are holding each other accountable when it comes to putting disability on the agenda.

LEGISLATIVE DEADLINES

Governments everywhere are responding to public calls for greater accessibility. In the US, Biden is funnelling over USD 12 billion into disability services, calls for accessibility standards are ringing loud and clear in Latin America, and the EU's new and improved Web Accessibility Directive hopes to narrow the digital divide – with mid-twenties deadlines for the public and private sectors. Beat 'em to it and show consumers you're a step ahead.



PANDEMIC PUSH

There's a special place in consumers' hearts for brands that preempt government action. Now familiar with distilleries showering society with hand sanitizer and fashion houses adorning medical staff in couture PPE, consumers will expect brands to muck in when the going gets tough. Indirectly, this has bolstered a value-driven economy, with 54% of US consumers actively supporting brands whose purpose missions align with their own values.

TECH MIRACLES

Spectacular advancements in technology – think haptic design, voice tech and image recognition – have the potential to radically level the playing field for consumers like never before. We're not just talking about futuristic headsets which can read and express a user's thoughts (more on that below), but savvy apps and AR experiences that connect people of all abilities, too. Of course, in solving one problem, new tech can create others – namely, accessibility issues. To avoid that, make sure you practise OMNIBILITY throughout your design process, from Post-it to product.



COGNIXION

Headset gives voice to the voiceless

Tech startup Cognixion is on a mission to give a voice to people rendered mute by severe motor neurone disease. The **Cognixion One** headset has patches that track electrical signals in the wearer's brain, enabling users to navigate the device's internal interface. Users can pick from a selection of pre-set phrases or script their own. Replies are then generated as speech and presented as text on the device's outward-facing screen. For private conversations, users can switch to text only.

MICROSOFT

Free accessibility testing for game developers

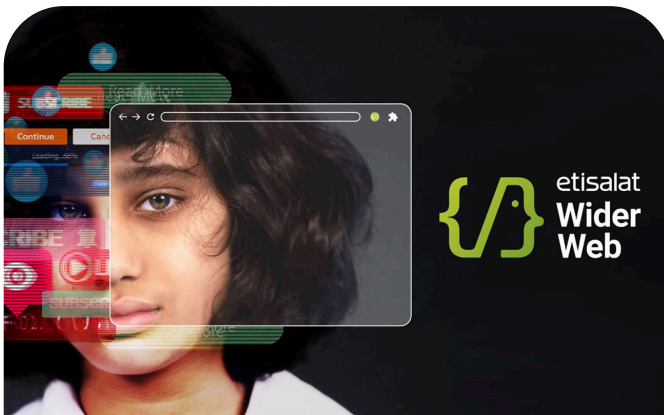
In February 2021, **Microsoft** launched a new program to improve the accessibility of Xbox and PC video games. Game developers can send in their titles to be professionally tested against the company's Xbox Accessibility Guidelines – a framework it developed with its Gaming and Disability Community. The process involves members of that community offering insights into how they experience a game and whether they run into problematic options or features.



DEGREE

One-size-fits-all deodorant

A new, first-of-a-kind package design from Degree Deodorant tries to address some of the challenges with typical deodorants. **Degree Inclusive**, which beta-launched in April 2021, features a hooked design and magnetic closure on the cap, so users can open and close the product with one hand or limited grip. A wide bottom grip makes it easier to hold, and a large roll-on applicator covers more surface area with every swipe. It also has a braille label.



ETISALAT

Autism-friendly web extension

To coincide with World Autism Awareness Day, Etisalat launched an **autism-friendly web extension** in April 2021. After downloading, users can reorganize information, change color modes and fonts, block advertising and hide irrelevant background images – with the aim of reducing the overwhelm that's often associated with web browsing. Users can also contribute to the open-source code underpinning the extension via Etisalat's website.

STARBUCKS

Café culture meets inclusive design

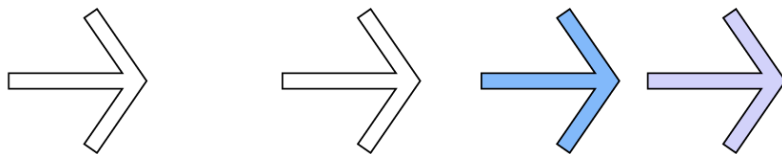
Starbucks is no stranger to inclusive design, but its latest effort – a store staffed by and made for people with disabilities – is a class act. Tucked inside Seoul National University Dental Hospital, it features contactless speech-to-text voice recognition at the counter, a braille menu and digital signage to help customers keep track of their orders. Each staff member received customized training and a basic course in Korean Sign Language before opening.



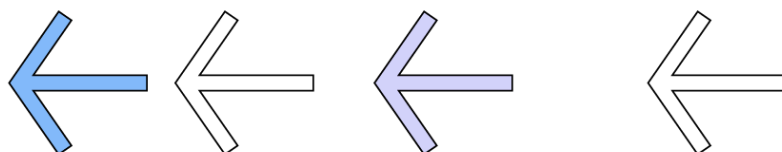
MAGGI

Sensorial cookbook brings kitchen to life

Nestlé-owned food brand Maggi has teamed up with Brazil-based Dorina Nowill Foundation to launch a **sensorial culinary guide** designed for people who are blind or have low vision. The 130-page compendium includes relief illustrations of meals, braille text, buttons which emit the sounds of cooking processes and QR codes that pull up audio transcriptions of each page. Once restrictions are lifted, the guide will be made available to those assisted by the foundation.



OPPORTUNITY



GO BIG (NOT NICHE)

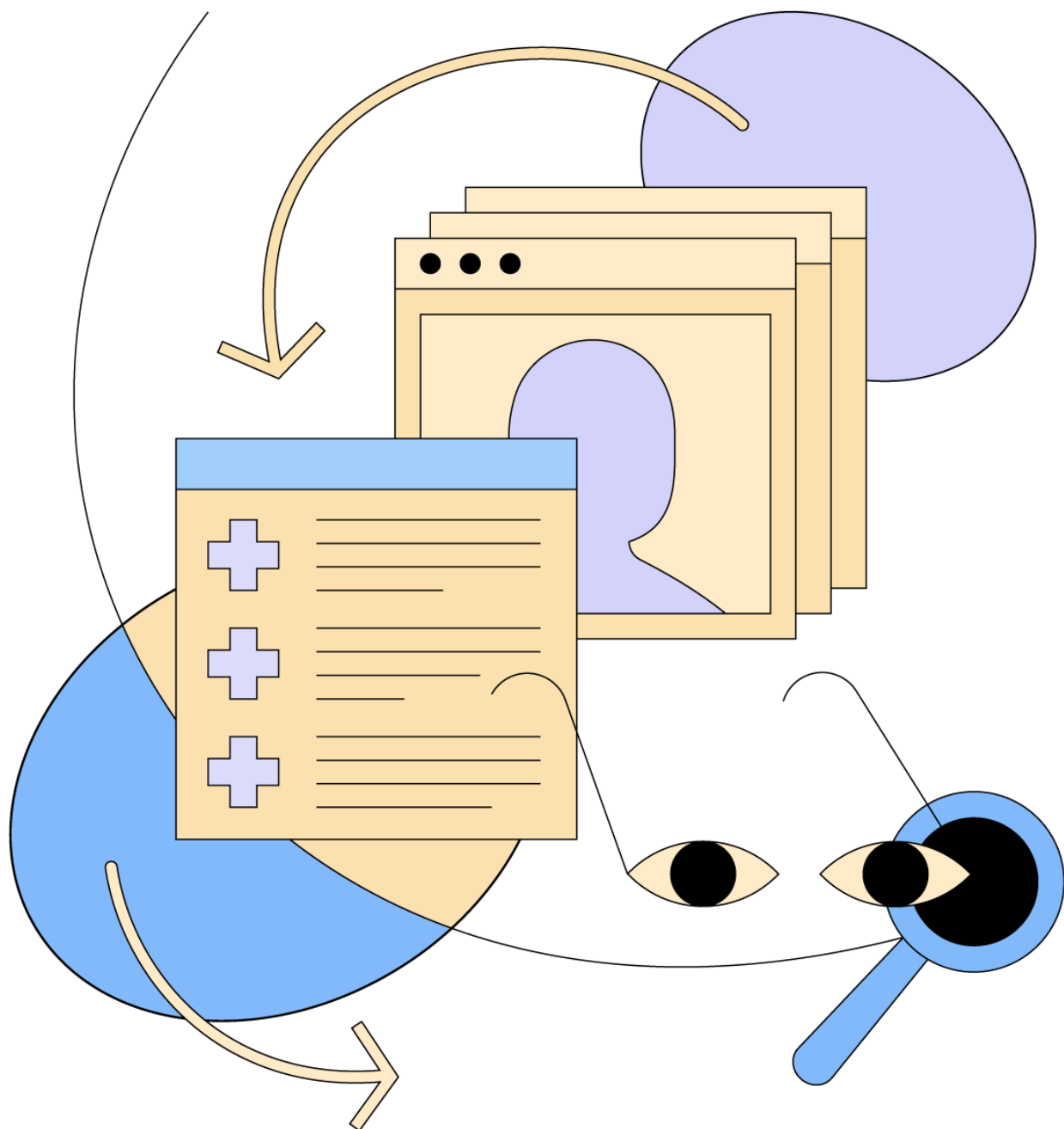
Don't think of disability as an individual problem. It's an identity that one in five people worldwide share, and that number will only increase as populations age. As the number of people with minor and major disabilities grows, the demand for accessible design will skyrocket. Don't wait around for niche brands to pick up the slack. Bring consumers' lived experiences into your brainstorm sessions. Start small – a Q&A on social, perhaps? – or make a splash by installing an Accessibility Board.

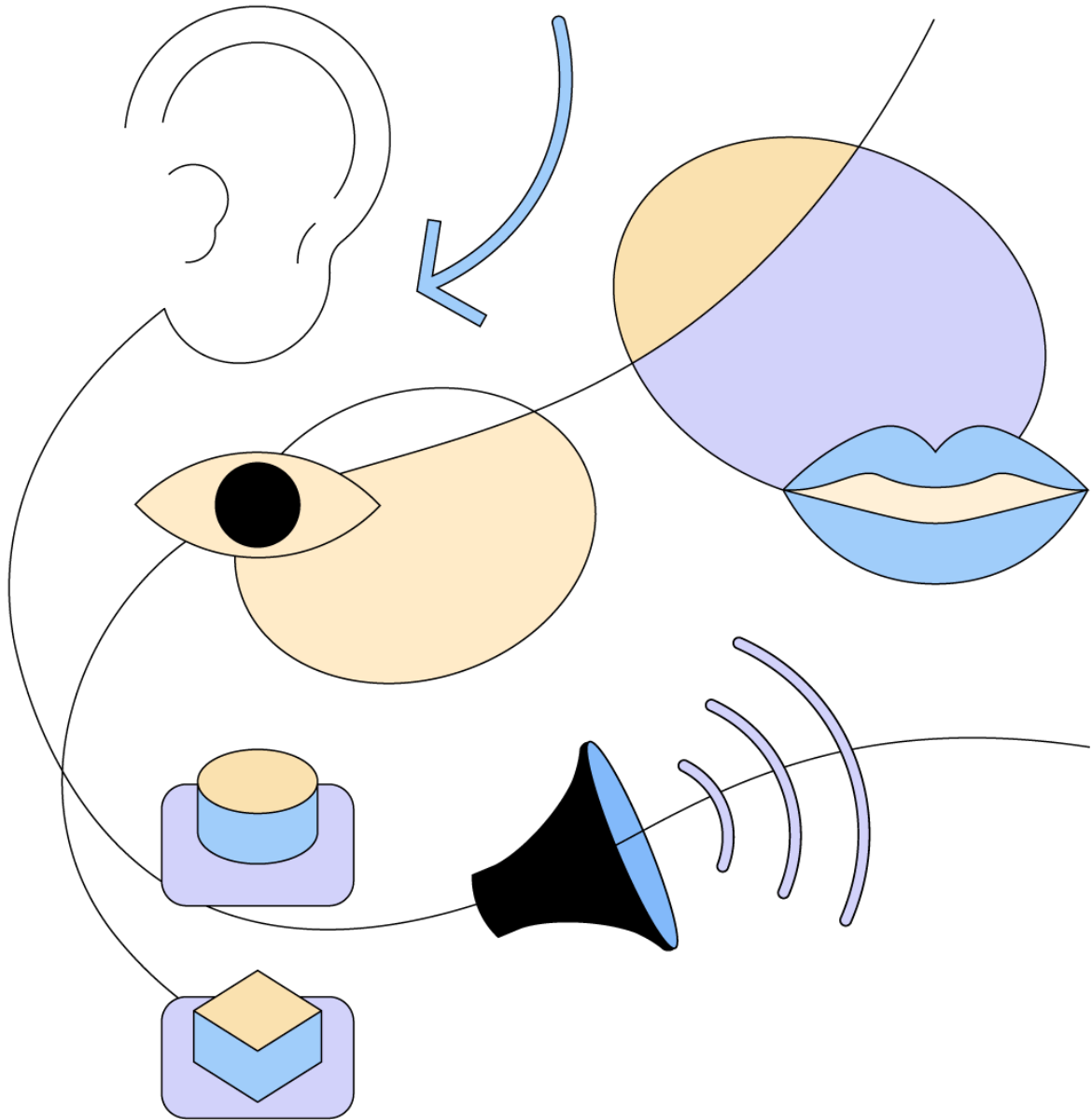
EVERYBODY WINS

Switching up your portfolio to be more inclusive by design will score top marks with value-driven consumers and can have the fortuitous upside of making life easier for everyone. Because universal design is good design. Don't just take our word for it. DHL's social media chat feature – originally introduced to help less mobile consumers update drivers on accessibility points – promises to streamline the delivery process for all. Similarly, Apple Watch's 'AssistiveTouch' technology enables everyone to control the device with a simple flick of the wrist. Serendipity at its finest.

VALU-ABLE

Who can resist the warm and fuzzy feeling that comes from supporting a do-good brand? OMNIBILITY isn't just an opportunity to broaden your demographic: it's about strengthening your brand values. Pick something simple like Voltarel's easy-to-open cap, or look beyond the perfunctory and plug the gap for accessible luxury and entertainment experiences. Our suggestion? Get a fresh set of eyes to scrutinize your portfolio: your OMNIBILITY solutions might be right under your nose...





Five easy ways to apply OMNIBILITY today:

1. **Educate** yourself on inclusive language. Create a style guide that colleagues can refer to when addressing disabilities. Refer to the NCDJ's for inspiration.
2. **Check out** the Disability Equality Index to see the benefits that can be unlocked by practising OMNIBILITY and how inclusion can drive business success.
3. Share this virtual Cards Against Humanity game with your colleagues – it's a fun, rapid-fire way to remind your team of the full spectrum of (dis)abilities.

4. Listen to Say My Meme, in which a pair of blind and sighted podcast hosts explain popular internet memes. Funny and insightful.
5. **Upgrade** your company's website to be more accessible. Try Deque's free diagnostic tool to see if you can make some quick wins.



The Make→Shifts you may have missed:

From "The Fight for Facts" to the new "Hands Off" economy, our previous Make→Shift issues provide a cornucopia of purpose-driven insights, plus actions you can take on the trends that matter.

[Read previous briefings](#)

And what's more...

- **Did someone say 4-day workweek?**

Companies across the globe are trialing or permanently implementing 4-day workweeks and employees are embracing the change. Head over to our sister publication Business of Purpose for tips on reducing hours and boosting your staff's wellbeing.

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Contributors

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2023 Trend Check

Discover the opportunities you're not running with, yet... but should.

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