

Interbrand

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

# The Pursuit of Barrier-Free Brand Experience



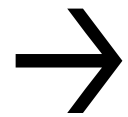
Let's get going →

# The Pursuit of Barrier-Free Brand Experience

Image courtesy of Zebedee Management

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# Globally, disabled people represent a market larger than China.\*



With the definition of disability evolving and people across the globe living longer, inclusivity is becoming an increasingly important business driver, and is therefore crucial for brands.



## **BARRIER-FREE BRAND EXPERIENCE: THE RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR BRANDS.**

In recent years, disability has appeared more regularly on our screens in the form of presenters, actors or in advertisements. It is also more likely to be discussed openly in the workplace or between friends. This accelerated rate of change over just a few years has helped break down barriers that have been holding people back for centuries.

But significant challenges still remain. Challenges that go deeper than representation. It's now crucial to focus on how we address disability in all aspects of business, including customer experience.

Such focus will enable truly enhancing experiences: from retail access and product development to cultural engagement.

The key to achieving this is working with disabled and older consumers in order to understand what needs to change.

With increased population longevity and universal celebration of the value of diversity, brands now need to do more. Businesses across every sector must take action

by identifying and addressing barriers to participation across their touch-points.

This is about embarking on a journey, not to reach the end, but to make a continued commitment to learning and evolution. It's a process of awakening which requires having new and different conversations on an ongoing basis.

By having these conversations and by using key insights from disabled and older people as a creative starting point, brands can ensure that no-one is left behind.

Accessibility is the bedrock of improved experiences not only for this market, but for nondisabled people too, as our collective desire for innovation, utility and simplification grows.

Interbrand is no exception to this. As builders of some of the world's biggest brands, we want to open up the disability dialogue to enhance connection and understanding within this underserved group.

We're inviting you on our journey towards a barrier-free future.

Despite a \$13tn opportunity, businesses are failing to meet the expectations of this market.



**“We have more clothing in stores for dogs than we do for people with disabilities.”**

Stephanie Thomas,  
Founder of Cur8able

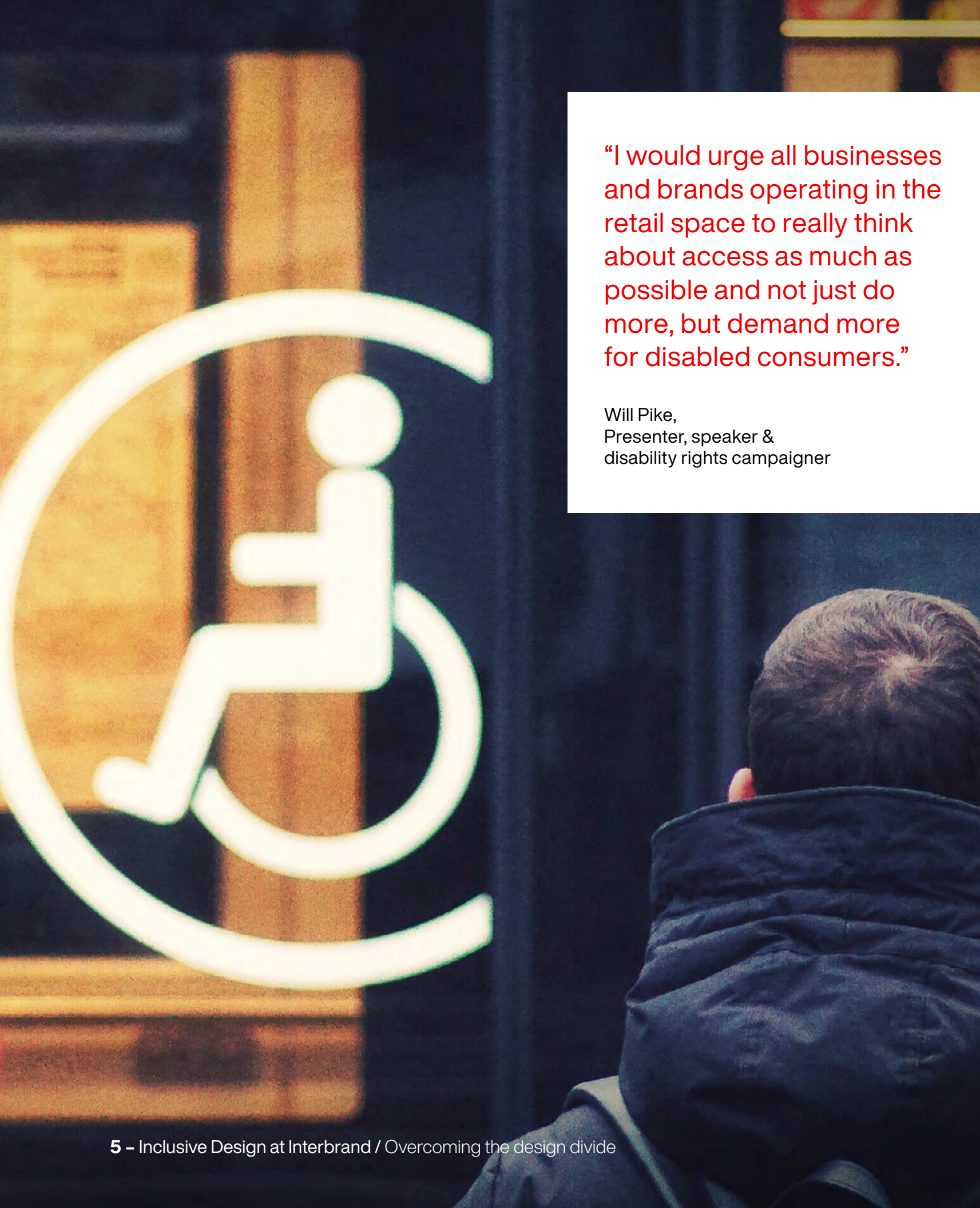
73%

of consumers are touched by disability and yet...

75-80%

of customer experiences are deemed to be a failure by disabled people.

Source: The Return on Disability Report



“I would urge all businesses and brands operating in the retail space to really think about access as much as possible and not just do more, but demand more for disabled consumers.”

Will Pike,  
Presenter, speaker &  
disability rights campaigner

## The result: a design divide

In reality, we will all experience disability at some point in our lives - some sooner than others. This could be as a result of long-term illness or health challenges, temporary disabilities (poor mental health or short-term injury), or situational disability (exclusion experienced through lockdown restrictions).

Through these experiences, it becomes increasingly clear that our ability to progress and participate does not just depend on personal capabilities, but on the accessibility of our environments, interactions and experiences. We should therefore not see those without disabilities as ‘normal’ but instead as ‘temporarily nondisabled’.

Outdated ideals, apathy and an historic fear of disability have led to a ‘design divide’. In prioritising the needs of nondisabled people, the majority of experiences have been built to exclude a substantial section of society. Brands have been unwittingly

instrumental in perpetuating this divide, resulting in widespread inaccessibility, diminished opportunity, discrimination and stigma. We want to break down this divide by working to make every experience equitable and seamless.

Rather than one-off projects, or quick-fix ‘firework’ efforts, brands need to invest in longer-term efforts to remove barriers.

Ability is a continuum, so part of navigating this journey will be learning how to flex between the common needs that unite us, as well as the changing needs of individual experiences.

By combining disability-led insights with brand thinking, we will introduce deep-rooted, repeatable processes and models which will remove barriers, reduce the divide and create a world that works for more people than ever before.

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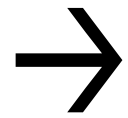
We want to break down this divide by embedding inclusive design at the heart of every brand experience.



**THIS INVOLVES:**

- Combining disability-led insights with the power and scale of global brand thinking.
- Identifying and addressing existing barriers across the entire experience.
- Operationalising inclusivity and accessibility-led strategy to improve governance and leadership.
- Ensuring that each touchpoint across a customer journey has been considered and enhanced.

# What is inclusive design?



**PUT SIMPLY, IT'S JUST GOOD DESIGN.**

At Interbrand we design to change behaviour; to forge stronger relationships between all audiences and the products, services and experiences they need and desire. We want to change courses of action and interaction, from what is current to what is preferred.

Our aim is to break down the design divide by putting diverse human perspectives at the core of the creative process.

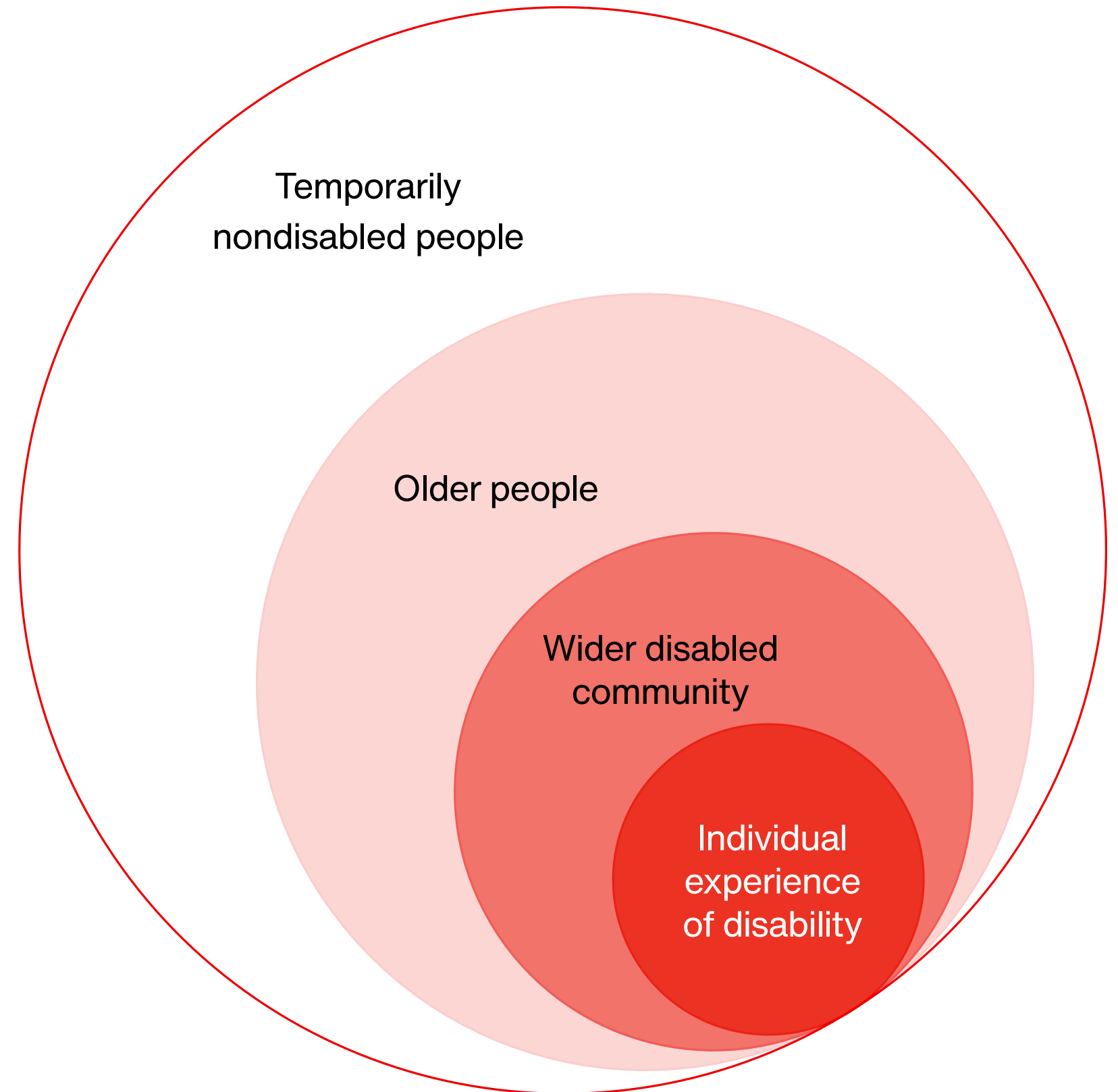
Doing so will lead to design that transcends all aspects of the human experience, including age, disability, language, culture and gender.

This enables greater autonomy and choice through meeting different personal preferences.

Although it's difficult to meet the needs of everyone, this practice gets us a little bit closer.

We need to get back to the fundamental role of design; to create, devise and construct in order to solve problems.

## The impact of inclusive design



# Why the time is now



Image courtesy of Zebedee Management

**BARRIER-FREE BRAND EXPERIENCE HAS A VERY SIMPLE GOAL: TO CREATE EXPERIENCES THAT WORK FOR AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE, FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.**

The number of mainstream brands tackling exclusion and inaccessibility is still small.

Despite universal ambitions to be 'Inclusive, Innovative and Empathic,' 96% of brands\*, when asked about how they cater to the needs of disabled and older consumers, do not have an answer.

However, brands like Apple, Amazon, P&G and Netflix understand that inclusivity provides sustainable growth opportunities. As such, they are increasingly investing in the removal of barriers for disabled consumers across their customer journeys.

In doing so, these brands are starting to see the business benefits of connecting with a wider spectrum of humanity.

There are benefits to individual brands too, including; stronger brand loyalty; increased brand value; greater differentiation; enhanced credibility; new innovation opportunities; improved talent retention and higher brand engagement, to name a few.

If we can learn one thing from these proactive businesses, it is that successful inclusivity efforts must go beyond box-ticking and following trends. Real change can only be achieved as part of organisation-wide programmes that shift attitudes and fundamental behaviours.

It will take time, investment and perseverance. But the time is now and the only real risk is being left behind.

\*The Valuable 500





Driving engagement and affinity:

Gucci Beauty's social post featuring Ellie Goldstein became the brand's most liked image ever, demonstrating the value in representing and serving this market.

# The benefits of Barrier-Free Brand Experience

Brands who champion a wider spectrum of human need are starting to experience key benefits. These include:

- Stronger brand loyalty
- Increased brand value
- Greater differentiation
- Enhanced credibility
- New innovation opportunities
- Higher brand engagement

# The economics of inclusively designed brands

Over recent years, Interbrand has observed a correlation between accessibility and its Best Global Brand rankings. It's becoming clear that by putting accessibility at the heart of their strategy, brands can positively impact their brand strength and improve their value.

This is especially true of the three most crucial levers of brand strength: Agility, Affinity and Empathy.

However, building Barrier-Free Brand Experiences can also help brands score higher in five other areas: Distinctiveness, Coherence, Participation, Trust, and Presence.

[Follow this link for more information on our Best Global Brands.](#)

**The World's Fastest Growing Brands overindex on three key brand attributes:**

## Affinity

Apple is the brand of choice for many disabled people. This has as much to do with the seamless nature of the communications as it does with the accessible features.

By learning from and leading with experience of disability, they have driven a deeper sense of brand loyalty and affinity.

## Empathy

The Gillette Treo razor was designed to enhance assisted shaving, inspired by the need to make caring for loved ones easier.

This iconic move was launched with online tutorials from carers which provided extra guidance around safe shaving.

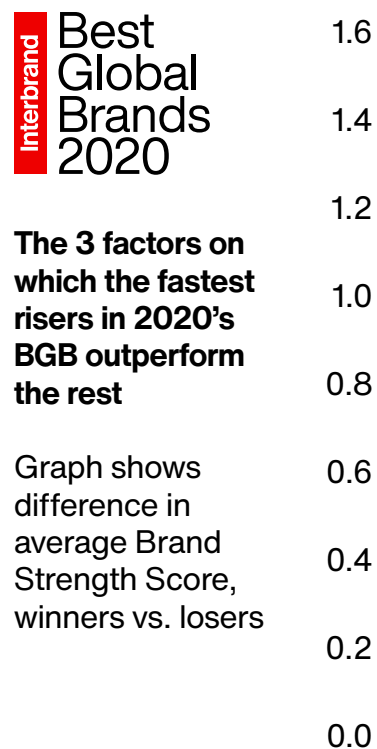
## Agility

From the Amazon Echo to the Fire TV Stick and One Click, Amazon have cut through user and purchasing barriers to create technology that makes life easier for disabled and nondisabled people.

This investment in accessibility resulted in record sales and profit during the height of the pandemic – a period that caused many retailers to struggle.

“The solution that has changed my life is the introduction of online shopping. I suddenly went from being restricted by what I could buy, and how I bought it, to having the whole world open up to me in just a few clicks.”

Shani Dhanda, Multi-award-winning disability specialist



# How we make it happen



Interbrand brings a unique perspective and skillset to the practice of inclusive design. Our global reach coupled with our partnerships with local experts, gives us the ability to facilitate disability-led exploration in order to identify and address barriers experienced by consumers across the world.

Interbrand wants to help brands move from 'passive' to 'purposeful' in their inclusivity efforts.



1.  
**WE BEGIN WITH PURPOSE**  
Purpose and ambition are crucial in how we define brands.

By identifying a business' north star, we can determine the reason for its existence, what it aims to achieve in the world, and more specifically, what it aims to do for people.

Purpose-led inclusivity efforts enable brands to root accessibility deep within their business strategy and functions. This helps ensure that inclusively designed touchpoints are an inherent part of the entire brand experience.

2.  
**WE BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH COALITION**  
Delivering barrier-free experiences depends on the convening power of experts across the world.

In order to respond to diverse needs and perspectives, we combine our global brand and customer experience capabilities with local inclusivity expertise.

Our alliances with external and internal specialists allow us to work with disabled and older consumers across the entire process of definition, design, implementation and ongoing assessment.

3.  
**WE DRAW FROM HUMAN TRUTHS**  
We lead with empathy and understand how people's changing needs can help businesses shape their 'next'.

We apply the lens of 'human truths' to uncover not just what's going on, but the sincere meanings and motivations behind behaviours. What we derive are insights that are fresh; whether they stem from long-term, temporary or situational disability, these human truths drive connection and innovation.

“The single most iconic solution for me as a blind person, has to be my iPhone. In my opinion, Apple products are the best thing to happen to the blind population and community since the invention of braille.”

Lucy Edwards,  
UK based broadcaster  
and presenter



4.

**WE EXCEED EXPECTATIONS**

**We know that base-level compliance and hygiene factor accessibility is no longer enough.**

By exploring a broader variety of perspectives, we can push beyond accessibility basics to create truly transformative experiences.

We work to expand the limited beliefs around disability and design in order exceed expectations for this market.

By striving for aspirational touchpoints and interactions, we aim to rebrand and destigmatise the world of access.

5.

**WE HUNT FOR THE ICONIC**

**A brand's iconic status is determined by its relationship to cultural, social and economic transformation.**

We strive for iconic, inclusive moves that have the power to alter the competitive landscape, capture people's imagination and promote more progressive brand experiences.

These don't always have to be loud, large-scale showstoppers. Small but significant and purpose-led efforts to drive change can be just as game-changing.

6.

**WE ENABLE GROWTH**

**We're not interested in concept pieces or PR stunts.**

We are interested in pursuing and identifying continuous, scalable changes that lead to the growth of individuals, businesses and economies.

# We support brands in the pursuit of Barrier-Free Brand Experience across five key areas:

1.

**IMMERSION,  
AWARENESS & TOOLS**

**Empowering teams  
for inclusivity**

Educating and upskilling internal teams in the theory and practice of Inclusive Design and Barrier-Free Brand Experience.

2.

**EXPERIENCE  
AUDITS**

**Identifying brand  
experience barriers**

Assessing the accessibility of a brand's experience against its purpose, values and principles.

3.

**INSIGHT, DESIGN  
& INNOVATION**

**Co-creating  
barrier-free interactions**

Working with expert disability and ageing partners to help brands remove barriers and elevate their customer experience.

4.

**GOVERNANCE  
& STRATEGY**

**Setting strategic  
direction**

Clarifying the role of inclusivity and exploring optimum structures and processes for delivery.

5.

**BARRIER-FREE BRAND  
COMMUNICATIONS**

**Telling  
authentic stories**

Following the lead of disabled creatives and experts in order to authentically represent a variety of perspectives.

These services are supported by a promise that all creative work and production is designed, as standard, with accessibility in mind.

# Here are a few projects we're proud of

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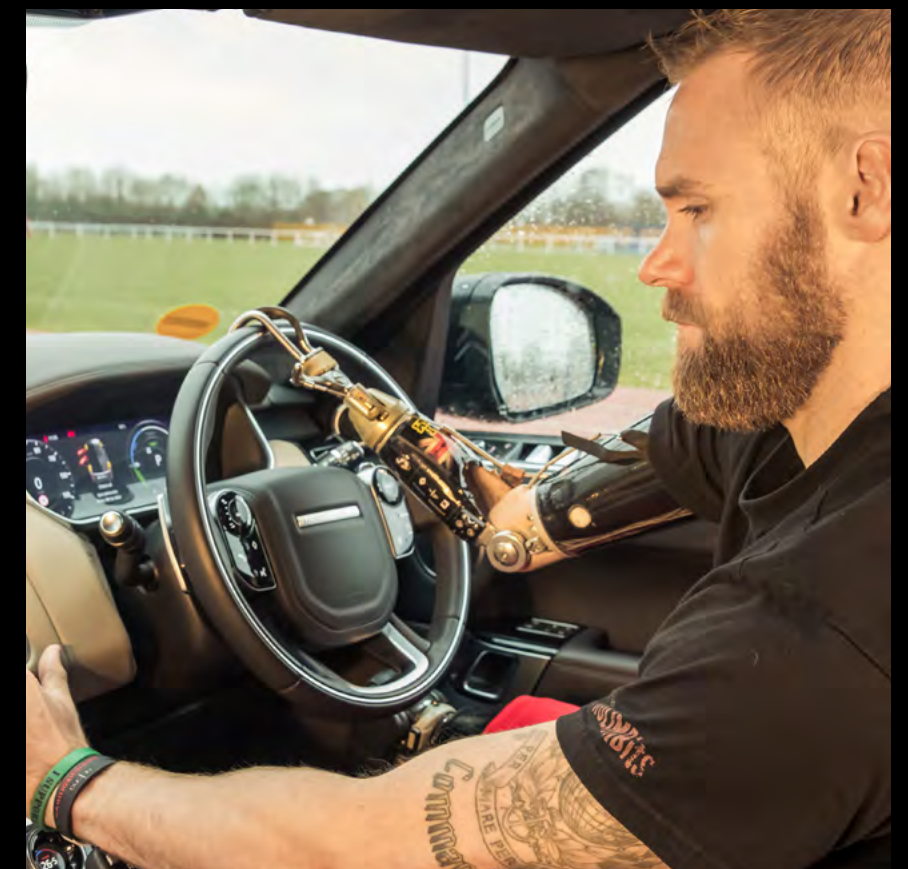
Designing the Inclusion Revolution



Helping people feel better & live longer



Reimagining the future of mobility



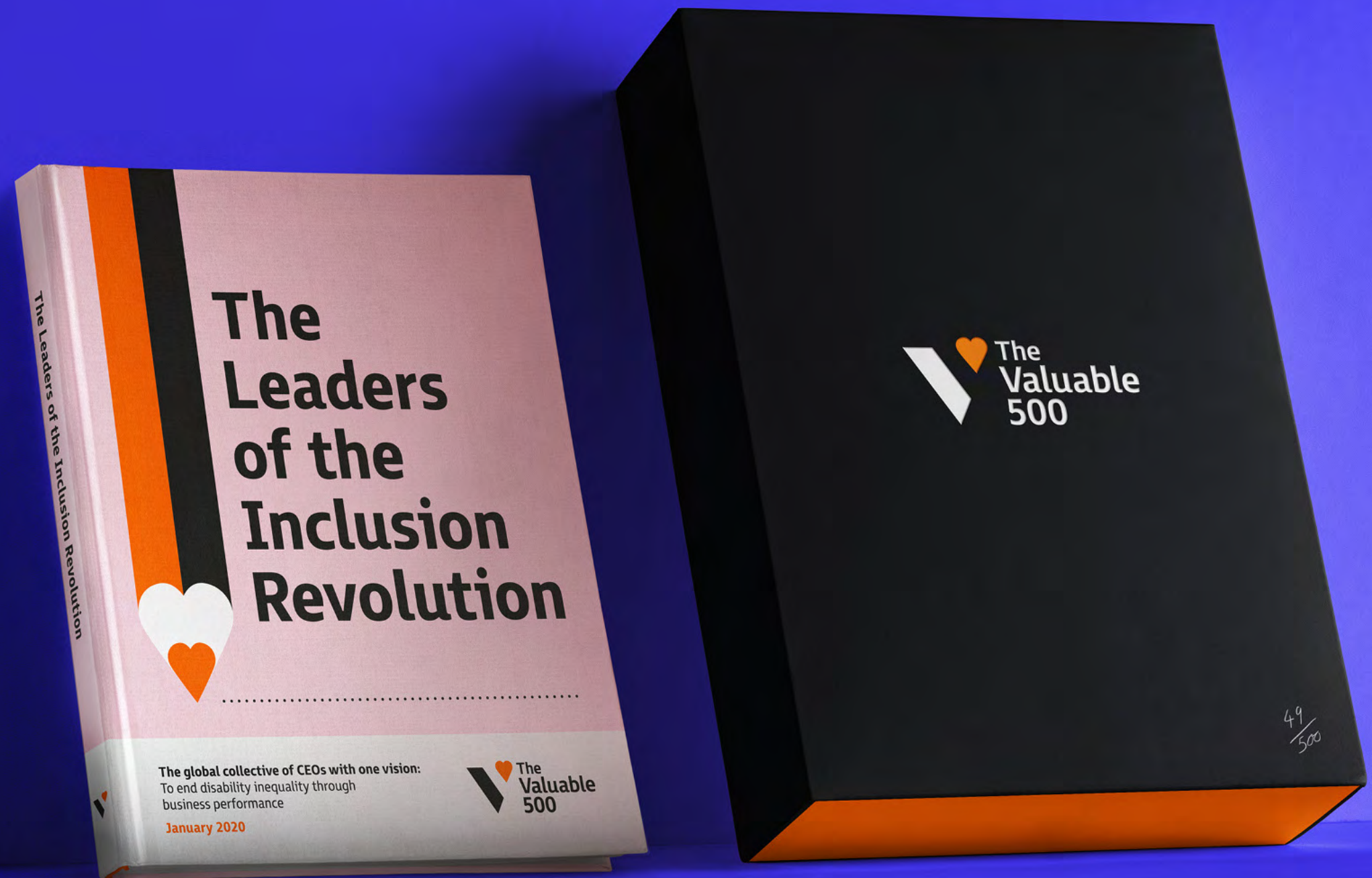
## CASE STUDY

# Designing the Inclusion Revolution

The Valuable 500 is a global movement putting disability on the business leadership agenda. For the launch, a new visual identity was required which would encourage CEOs to engage with an underexplored topic – disability.

Taking the lead from the movement's founder, Caroline Casey (who happens to be legally blind), Interbrand designed the brand assets to be fully accessible. The result was an identity which successfully marries the strength of business with the heart of responsible leadership. It repositions disability from a 'charity' to a 'corporate' issue.

Experts across the world have deemed The Valuable 500 to be the most successful global disability campaign to date. Its inclusively designed core elements meant that it was fully embraced by corporates, their leaders, NGOs, Governments, and disability activists.

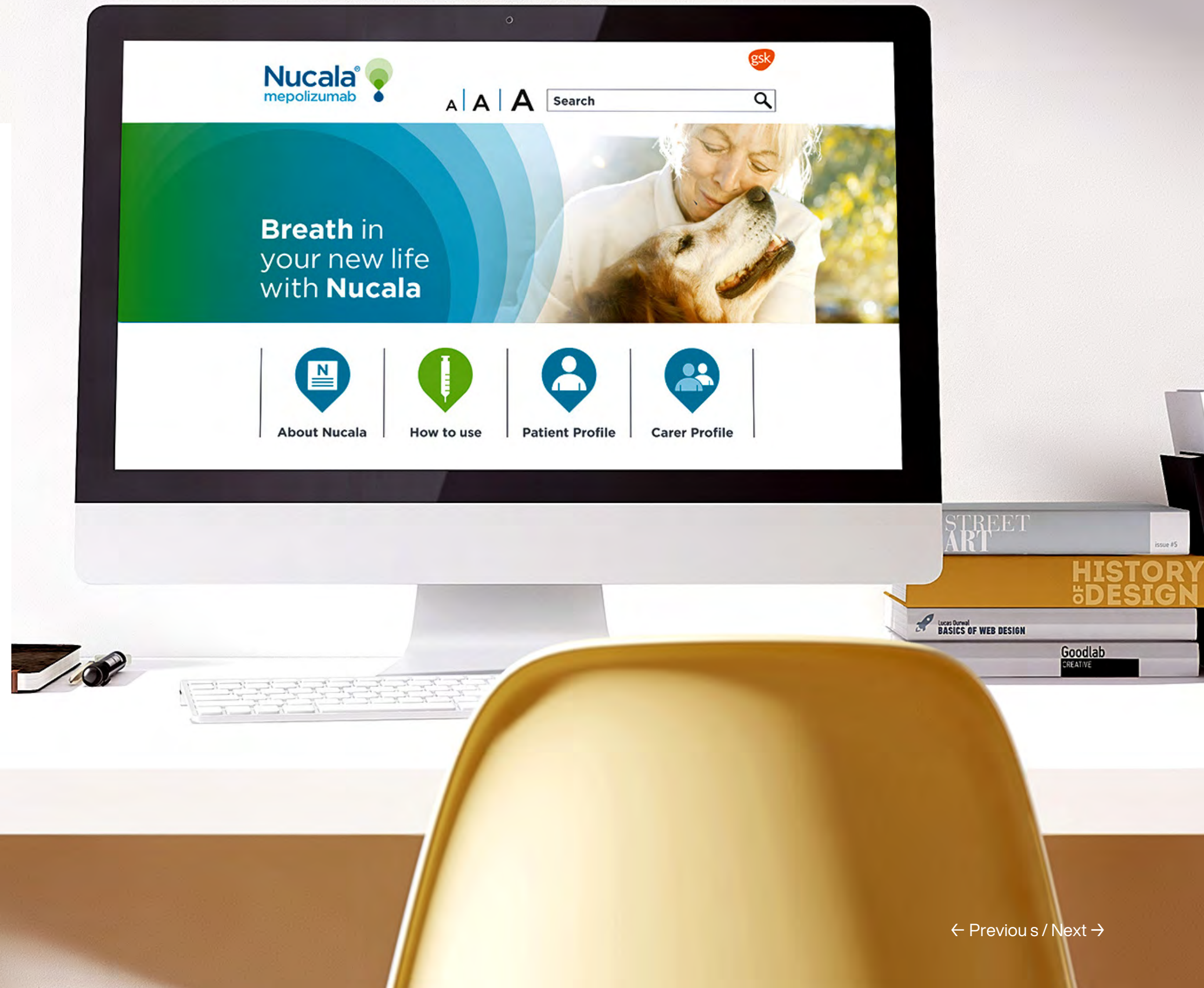


## CASE STUDY

# Helping people feel better & live longer

When GSK made the decision to put inclusive design at the heart of their business strategy, the Interbrand team were asked to help on a number of ground-breaking pilot projects. The aim of these projects was to develop a best practice approach to using inclusive design as a basis for all new development briefs. Using the patient and carer experience as a starting point, Interbrand and the GSK design team developed the ground rules and resources for embedding inclusive design throughout GSK's creative ecosystem.

The result was a comprehensive methodology and set of tools which improved creative outcomes and promoted alignment of product teams working from different locations. Ultimately, this made GSK's products easier to use, enhanced the user experience and improved the brand's understanding of patient needs and modes of treatment.





CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY

## Reimagining the future of mobility

Jaguar Land Rover has a long-standing partnership with THE INVICTUS GAMES. In 2017 the JLR team asked C Space, part of Interbrand Group, to help explore how they could move beyond their corporate partnership and work with Invictus veterans to create meaningful experiences. For the last two years, the brand has been on a journey, led-by veterans, to overcome mobility barriers by co-creating new products, improving customer experience and changing processes to weave inclusivity into the very fabric of the business.

Three core research projects led to a complete transformation of JLR's approach to inclusive design, including creating a wider cultural shift and adoption of practices across the organisation via internal immersion sessions.



Contact:  
**Marianne Waite**  
Director of Inclusive Design  
Interbrand

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With over 14 years' experience in the world of design. Marianne has spent her career working to harness and empower the world's best branding minds to shift attitudes towards disability.

Marianne has shared her work on platforms across the world, including The World Economic Forum and The United Nations. She is also the UK Government's Disability and Access Ambassador for Design and is a Trustee of The Disabilities Trust.

# Get in touch to find out

## →

How to identify the barriers across your brand experience.

How you can set your culture and teams up for success.

Where the inclusive innovation opportunities are for your brand.

If you're interested in exploring these and other drivers, or would like to pursue your own iconic move, [get in touch](#) to start a conversation.



Image courtesy of Zebedee Management

# We're on our own journey

We are working through barriers across Interbrand's touchpoints, so if you run into any access issues, please send Marianne an **email**.

This document has been remediated for accessibility and works with screen readers, but if you need this information in an alternative format, just ask.

## Special thanks to our global experts

Simon Minty, Natasha Trotman, Shani Dhanda, Lucy Edwards, Mike Alhadeff, Rick Williams, Bryce Weiler, Dr. Elizabeth DePoy and Dr. Stephen Gilson.



Image courtesy of Zebedee Management

## IMAGERY COURTESY OF ZEBEDEE MANAGEMENT

Zebedee, a specialist talent agency for disabled and visibly different actors and models in the UK and the US. Set up by sisters in law, Laura and Zoe in 2017. Zebedee works with brands including H&M and Gucci. Zebedee's rapid growth and success has led to it being featured across media including BBC News, The Guardian and Vogue.

Founder, Laura Johnson says "Companies want their campaigns to be diverse. They want them to be inclusive, to represent the population. But disabilities still don't show up on people's radar, which I think is more of a long-term, systemic problem. However, I do believe that brands are finally starting to realise the value in including people with disabilities."

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Find out more →

