



**Disability and work
conference
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Staffing in public organisations and challenges for employees with disabilities and greater support needs in the cleaning trade

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Thank you

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Outline

- Community organisation project
 - My contribution as a researcher
- Outcomes of the project
- Challenges encountered
- Lessons learned



Community organisation

- Community organisation providing socio-professional training in commercial cleaning
 - Wages and working conditions in the cleaning sector are above minimum wage
- Participants are men and women excluded or “far” from the job market
- Paid-training, 910 hours, including an internship
- Semi-skilled trade certificate issued by the Ministry of Education
- Program modified to be more inclusive/accessible
 - For autistic individuals, individuals with ID or with neurological conditions
 - Additional support to transition to the job market



Context of the project

- Public and private organisations hire program graduates
- Public organisations offers the best work conditions, but are reluctant to hire graduates with disabilities
- The community organisation launched a project to explore challenges and solutions for hiring this specific group of program graduates in public organisations
- Three public organisations agreed to participate



Project – participants and activities

- Participants
 - “A” HR Deputy director; 18,000 employees, over 180 locations
 - “B” DEI professional; 7,500 regular and 6,500 occasional employees, 3 locations
 - “C” Professional working with individual with disabilities in the organisation; 11,000 employees, over 100 locations
- Meetings with the community organisation (group meetings and individual meetings)
- Participants held meetings in their own organisations
- Collaboration with the community organisation when a program graduate was identified as a good fit for a job opening
- 2 years

Research methods

- Participation to the community organisation project
- Detailed note taking
- Interviews
 - project manager of the community organisation
 - “B”, “C”
 - “A” *declined being interviewed but consented to information used for the research project*
- Coding of documents and interviews
- Analytic questioning with specific questions
- Literature



PROJECT OUTCOMES



Staffing process in public organisations

- Very strict and formalized staffing process
 - Built over decades
 - From negotiation with stakeholders, unions
 - Equal treatment as an objective → avoid arbitrary decisions and favoritism
 - Strictly enforced job descriptions
 - Hire for a position, then assignment to a specific job
 - Unflexible by design, embedded in IT systems
- Includes criteria/provisions difficult to meet for individuals with greater support needs
 - High school diploma required for all positions
 - Entry into the organisation via the callback list
 - Flexibility in schedules, locations, tasks, colleagues

Project outcomes

- Hiring
 - “A”- One organisation hired a program candidate
- No hiring
 - “B”- interview with a candidate, but decided not to hire them
 - “C”- met significant resistance from HR to hiring candidate
- Exploration and understanding of obstacles
- Lessons learned for future projects



FACILITATORS



Formal decision-making power and strong leadership

- “A” – hiring - in the organisation where the HR Deputy Director was part of the project
 - Had formal decision-making power
 - Exercised great leadership toward their team
 - Had a detailed map of the staffing process (over 20 steps) and the needed adaptations for a program graduate
- Still → Had to intervene at several stages to authorize staff to forgo normal procedures for the candidate, even when there had been prior discussions authorizing them



Formal decision-making power and strong leadership

versus

- “B”- DEI professional - Advising role in the organisation
 - Not normally part of the staffing and selection process
 - didn't know the usual expectations for the role,
 - possible accommodations
 - Felt uncertain how to promote flexibility in the staffing process
- “C”- Professional – could not gain support from the HR team and the union president

Planned adaptations to a system

- “A” treated this project as a global reflection, with the HR team

versus

- “B” – facilitated the discussion between the community organisation and the hiring supervisor
- “C” believed that a specific candidate should be identified prior to mobilizing the individuals in the organisation

Community organisation as a trusted partner

- Good collaboration with the community organisation
 - Motivation
 - Quality of training
 - Previously hired trainees
 - Honest representation of the candidate

*Honestly, I wouldn't do it without
[community organisation], because I have a
great deal of confidence in the training
[community organisation] provides.
Participant "C"*



External factors

- Labour shortage at the time of the project
- Targets from the Provincial Equal access employment program (*Act respecting equal access to employment in public bodies*)

But now we've got reporting to do. It's like, we're going to be, we're going to be, we're forced to do it. I think it's something I would have liked to do, [...] We want to do it, but it's the law that's going to force us to do it, sadly.

Participant "B"



CHALLENGES



Stigmatisation and closed-mindedness

- Cleaning work is a stigmatized trade
 - “Community organisation”: the job is misjudged, more complex than it seems,
 - “C”- HR professionals did not want to spend time on a project about cleaning jobs, judging people who work in this trade
- Disability
 - “C” - Union president opposed to the project, felt it discredited the janitorial profession
 - “B” – Individuals with disability are recipients of the organisation’s service, not potential employees

Complexity and time pressure

- Many internal and external stakeholders to consult and mobilize



LESSONS LEARNED



Multiple levels of adaptations/accommodations

- Trade
 - Performing the actual job
 - Tools, tasks, work organisation

→ *Job crafting*
- Human
 - Attitudes
 - Supervision practice

→ *Leadership*

*We could have a portion of the tasks, not all of it. A portion of the tasks that would support the janitor. But then, the janitor would also have a role, accompanying this person.
Participant "C"*



Multiple levels of adaptations/accommodations

- Trade
 - Performing the actual job
 - Tools, tasks, work organisation

→ *Job crafting*
- Human
 - Attitudes
 - Supervision practice

→ *Leadership*
- System
 - IT system
 - Staffing processes

→ *Capacity diversity*
→ *Collective agreements*



Organisational flexibility is an important factor in the successful inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace (Kulkarny & Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Wooten, 2008)



Regulatory, normative and cultural-cognitive elements maintain stability in organisations (Scott, 2008)



Creating flexibility in the staffing process

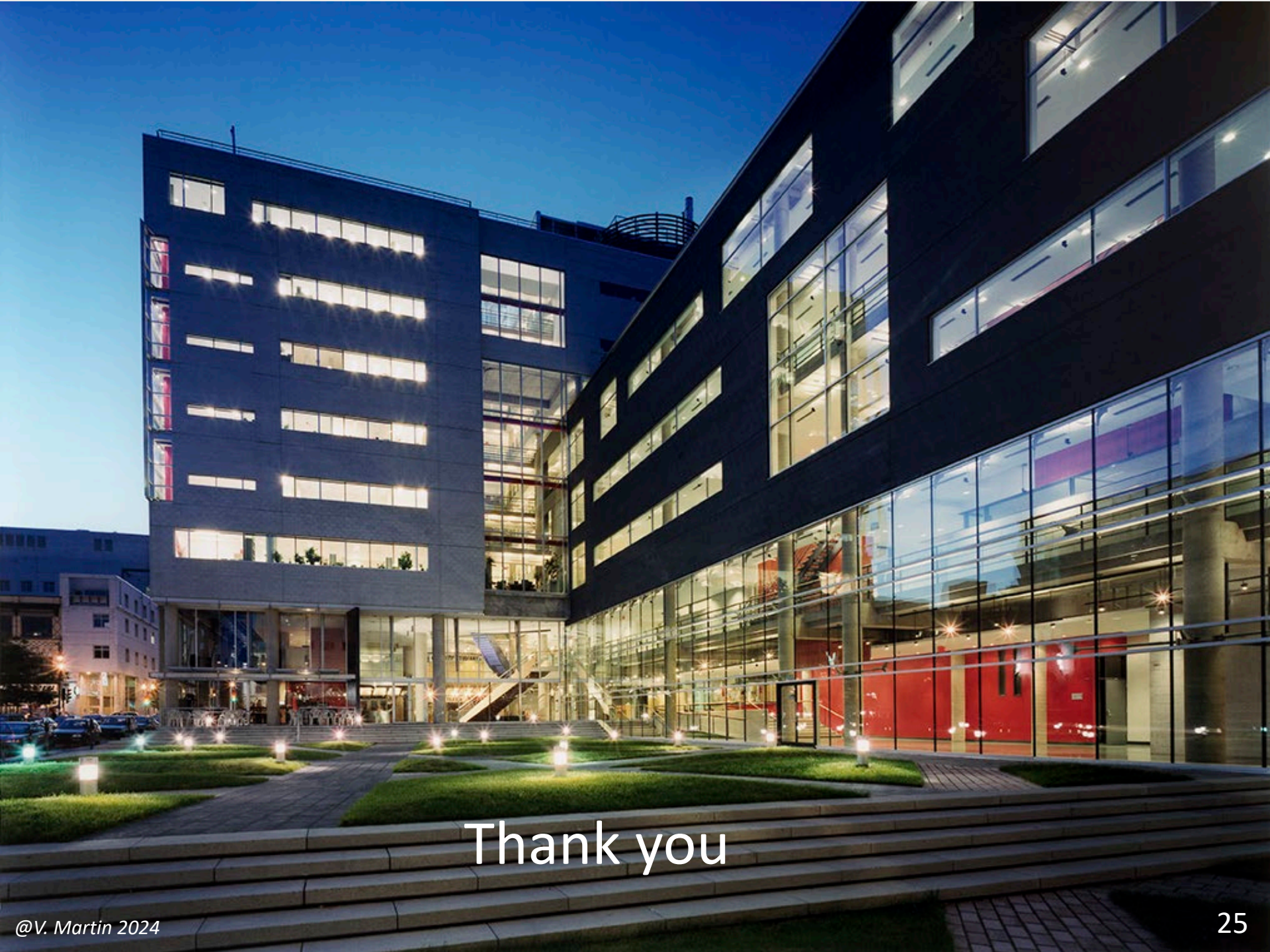
Requires more than identifying obstacles

- Changes to norms, attitudes and processes
 - Organisational transformation project
 - Multiple stakeholders needs to be mobilized
 - Convinced
 - Work → examine, negotiate, decide, communicate, enforce



Creating flexibility in the staffing process

- Project, parallel to existing structure
 - Around specific candidates
 - Sensemaking → mobilization
 - Job crafting
 - Dependent on local support from certain people
- Transformation of staffing process
 - More complex, time consuming
 - Challenging existing practices, pointing out ableism
 - Leadership
 - Communication
 - INCLUSIVE for various adaptations needs



Thank you

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