



BETTER THAN NORMAL

Mellener :

Good Afternoon Everybody, it gives me a great pleasure to welcome you to the virtual conference hosted by Community Business. This session Better than normal will be with our guest speaker Hitesh Ramchandani. To begin with a few introductions, am going to be your moderator today, I am Mellener and I head Diversity & Inclusion at Northern trust. Diversity & Inclusion has been a progressive journey for us at Northern Trust. And with different areas of focus and one of them being inclusion of people with disability, we have about 20 people partner / employees with disability at Northern Trust. And apart from accommodation and accessibility, we focus very much on the attitude, our focus has been moved forward with need to hire and retain people with disability focusing more on solution and ability rather than inabilities and barriers. We also have a disability employee resource group which focuses not just to the needs of our employees but also on our employees with caring responsibilities people with disabilities. Northern Trust has a culture of caring and corporate social responsibility has embedded in a mission and culture over many years. We work with several NGOs in India towards social inclusion some being the Association of People with Disabilities and Margadarshi. Our contributions are both financial and as well as our employees volunteering their time to support these NGOs. To give you an example we have supported the association of People with Disability by providing them with hydrotherapy centre, a computer lab and most recently our employees volunteered to help the students with their exams. At Marghadarshi we support a job readiness fair to enable women with disabilities from underprivileged backgrounds be prepared to enter into the work force. On that note I would like to welcome our guest speaker for today once again Hitesh Ramchandani. Hitesh was born with cerebral palsy and he spent all his life determined to prove wrong who said that he would never have a normal life. In his book Better Than Normal he challenges the assumptions that people have about disability and the negative stereotypes. Due to certain medical conditions at the time of his birth Hitesh was born with cerebral palsy and he grew up with some challenges with his mobility and speech. But he was determined not to let this disability affect his life. On one hand the medical professional very pessimistic and said that he would never walk and talk. But on the other hand, he had tremendous support from his parents and his friends. And through his life story and his journey he has clearly proved to us that disability was not a barrier but rather than something to motivate to move forward with life. Today Hitesh is an author, a national Paralympic footballer, a NLP Practitioner, a motivational coach and a transformational speaker. His key message is one of personal empowerment, we are all faced with obstacles in life and his message to us is get up and never give up. Hitesh has an ambition to transform the life of 50 million people by the year 2050 and he has already achieved that by inspiring 1.2 million people from 32 different nationalities both offline and online. On that note I would like to welcome Hitesh. Hitesh over to you.

Hitesh:

Hi everyone, I am Hitesh Ramchandani. I am a global speaker from Singapore. What so special about me is that I was born with a disability called cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is a neurological disorder which usually affects the person in a physical manner, so let me share with you how I ended up with cerebral palsy, when I was being born there was a huge medical negligence and I was upside down in my mother's stomach and doctors recommended to do a C section. What a C section means cut the stomach and take the baby out. But the doctors didn't follow the orders. They did a normal delivery. And due to that I was born upside down. Usually when a normal child is born, his head comes out



first my leg came out first and my head got struck in my mother's womb and due to that I lost oxygen for 90 secs. One mistake by the doctor destroyed my life. When people meet me for the first time they usually ask bro are you drunk, I say no I am okay, but the doctor was drunk. When I was born the doctors told my parents that I am going to die within 24 hrs, surprisingly 25 years have gone but I am alive, but I think the doctor died. I was very blessed to be born in a good family. My parents believed that god has given them such a child for a better purpose. They brought me up with the mindset that I would champion and that I can beat in any adversity in life. I was brought up with that kind of mindset when I was young when my condition was 10 times worse. I know this is online, so you can't see me physically but at the age of 6 I couldn't walk, I was recommended to be in a wheelchair, I could barely talk, and I would slurp, and doctors and teachers – everyone, said that I would be better off at a special school. But my parents wanted me to live a normal life. They wanted me to be treated normally. And they fought the system and ensured I went to a normal school with a normal education system just like everyone else. At the age of 6 I went to a normal school. I would get bullied every day. School was like a jungle. I would face lots of obstacles not only socially but even academically due to my physical weaknesses. I was slow, weak and unsteady, I never looked forward to going to school. But some how I managed to go pass it using my will power. At the age of 13 my life took a big turn due to this thing called puberty. So, when I hit puberty my confidence was crushed. I realised I had a disability and I was different from everyone else and so that shattered my self-esteem. I got bullied even more because you know at that age everyone's hormones are more aggressive. I had no friends, society judged me, I had no girlfriends - too bad the girls did not know that one day I would be a global speaker. Today I play in the better Paralympic football team, I have written my book called 'Better Than Normal' and I am a global speaker. I have done seminars in over 8 countries, I have spoken to 100s and 1000s of people globally. I have been featured on tv, radio, magazines. Why I am bragging to you is if I can do it, you can do it too. See in life if you want something you will find a way, if you don't want something you will find hundreds of ways not to get it. But only one guy decides your destiny and that is you, nobody else. The short introduction about me now we are at the main path. Now I am going to teach you the main part of Diversity & Inclusion. Now I am going to tell you my formula on how we on how we can create more D&I work for your company or even an organisation. So, there will be 3 steps A, B C. Let me start with A, A stands for acceptance, in order to be more diversified and included we need more acceptance, we need to accept ourselves and accept everyone around us. But before we can accept everyone around us, first you need to accept yourself. Let me share with you a good story. When I was in high school in Singapore everyone had to do a running test and this running test was a 2.5km run. In my first year I was 13 years old, my teacher told me 'Hitesh you are disabled, you don't need to run'. I was very tiny and weak, so they told me that don't run don't waste your time. But, you know I always wanted to be included with other normal kids and I wanted to prove myself. So, I told my teacher 'no, I am going to do this run'. The teacher said 'ok, do whatever you want'. At the age of 13 very tiny weak me, I went to do take part in 2.5km run. I got ready, I warmed up, I stood at the start line. When the teacher blew the whistle I started running, after few steps I couldn't breathe I was losing oxygen fast. I was struggling. All my friends had gone past me, but I was the last guy struggling and struggling. By the time i reached the midline everyone had completed the run. But i was still struggling and struggling. After lot of time and a lot struggle I finally completed that run. So, it took me about 25 minutes, but the story does not end here. I was about to complete the run but one of my friends, he was getting impatient so he shouted, 'hurry



up man, even my grandmother can run faster than you'. I went home that day crying, 3 reasons why I cried number 1 i failed the run number 2 i came in last number 3 my friend claimed that his grandmother could run faster. Now I don't know when he went running with the grandmother. But since he claimed, okay we will give him the benefit of doubt. That day i had 2 choices, number 1 i could give up number 2 i could get up. I decided to get up and do something about my life. I joined a gym i started yoga, i started playing football. I did whatever i could to improve my endurance my stamina and strength. Every day after school all my friends would go home but i would train for 2 hours daily. Four years later, it was the last year of high school, we were going to graduate but we had to do the running test for the last time. So, my teacher told me 'Hitesh you don't need to run, every year you run and you fail what is the point'. I told him 'No, it's the last year and i am going to run'. He thought i was a nutcase, stubborn kid. So, he told me 'ok do whatever you want'. Four years later, I was 17 years old slightly taller, muscular, stronger I went to do the run. I got ready at the start line, when the teacher blew the whistle i started i didn't look left i didn't look right i focused on my goal and ran as fast as i could. I kept running and running. I ran and ran and ran and ran and before I knew it i completed the 2.5km run. Four years later i took about 11 minutes less than half the time four years ago i took 25 minutes now i took 11 minutes, that's half. So, you know the story doesn't end here. I completed the run i was trying to breathe at the end line. Like you know i got, i was trying to breathe, but when i turned back i saw my classmate still running the same guy. So i shouted 'hurry up man, even your grandmother can run faster than you'. So, what's the moral, what's changed four years ago and now. Let me tell you, nothing changed, everyone was the same my teacher didn't believe in me, my friend was the same idiot, but one thing changed that was acceptance. I was ready to accept my weakness and make it a weapon. And in order to succeed in life or create more length you need to apply the formula of acceptance. Once you accept who you are, you will accept everyone around you. It's an it's a psychological factor in order to love others first you must love yourself. So A was acceptance. Now time to move on to B, B is called breaking stereotypes, in B i wouldn't say much but I am going to do one thing I am going to show you a quick one-minute video. "The Spartan Race is a good platform where I get to test my limits. Hi, I am Hitesh Ramchandani and i am iron Spartan. Hitesh is very strong got great will power. He has achieved lot so things despite having cerebral palsy. My aim is to finish the race and try to do as many obstacles as possible. The last push is my brother. Whenever i am out of energy he gives me the last boost. Yeah, in life of course sometimes we do think of giving up but what is important is you get up and fight back. That's will power. Saw the video, B was breaking stereotype, this was my first Spartan race I did about 2 years, 2 years back with my brother. As you can see without him I wouldn't have never completed the run. So, B is breaking stereotype after doing the Spartan race I realised that life is similar like a Spartan race every few meters you are you are going to face obstacles and adversity stereotypes. In order to grow, you have got to be ready to break the stereotype. The more you break the stereotype, the obstacles, the more you are going to grow. So just remember B is breaking the stereotype. Now I am going to move on to the third formula C. But I am not going to tell you what C say, but instead i am going to invite my brother who is also in this webinar to share more about the formula C. And that guy is none other than Vicky the man whom you just saw in the Spartan video. Can we have Vicky on the webinar.

Vicky :

Hitesh you almost said up on stage but definitely thank you for the introduction and like what Hitesh said , Hitesh has talked to you so far about A which is Acceptance –



acceptance is all about self-love which is definitely one thing which to be very honest with you knowing Hitesh for a very long for 26 years now -myself I am 29. From the time he was born, of course he struggled a little bit with the acceptance but slowly and surely he has been reached a point where he has gotten to a level of self-esteem where he can honestly and truly love himself first before he can provide all the value that he is providing to all of you and teach all about breaking stereotypes. You saw that example because who would have thought that somebody with cerebral palsy would be able to do such an amazing Spartan Race, and as you can see in the video it was very challenging times. That video actually went all around Singapore it was showed on National Day in Singapore and it was there live on TV for everybody to see. What I am here to talk to you about what I am going to share with you guys us actually about is about C. You know in the whole picture about diversity & inclusion what I feel is leadership is a very important element. I think all of you would agree all of us are leaders in a way but especially for leaders at the top level and their recruitment level I would say C is very important. So, what is this C that I am referring to, C refers to customised leadership and why do I say customised leadership. Let me just give you an example of what is customised leadership as you know Hitesh has got a book and this is the book that he keeps talking about 'Better than Normal'. You can google 'Better than Normal' Hitesh and you would see that this is the book that he has written and literally when I say it's written I mean it figuratively because you know let me just tell you how the book had actually started and what do I mean by customised leadership. There was a time when Hitesh had just graduated from his college and his college teacher actually his principal told him 'Hitesh you are a role model in our school why don't you write articles for our school magazine you know every school has got their magazine right. Hitesh said yes sure of course I would love to do that but so he would write out or typed out an article he would send it over to me for me to edit because his English was not really his strongest point, because he was a little bit slow in his English and then I would have to edit the whole article and then send it back to him and then he would say yeah wow. The principal was so impressed that she would say Hitesh you have done a wonderful article why don't you send us another one for the second time. The same process repeats he would write the article and I would have edit it and I had to send it back and she was impressed, and it became round three and it became round four. He had written five rounds of articles by this time and I was also busy with my work and all my studies – so I told Hitesh why don't you just write a book and when I said that he gave me a look with his eyes wide open, and you can tell the look that he has on his face sometimes he gave me a with his eyes wide open and he gave me three words 'Are you Crazy' – that's what he said to me. How can I write a book I am struggling to even write one single article I can send it to you. I told him that's exactly the point because you already sent me five articles which means five chapters in your book, why don't you write six more or seven more twelve chapters will give you a full book. That's when we realised that hey Hitesh has got a story, Hitesh has got the potential to become an author and he got somebody in this same room that I am sitting right now and we got an editor to come in, we got a writer to come in as well and me and Hitesh were sitting and we were having a dialogue and literally I would say he did not have to write it and to become an author the truth is you don't have to write it or type it out. What me and Hitesh did in our situation was what we customised as his brother, as his cousin, as his leader as he would say as his mentor – what I did was I customised the situation so that it could suit his strengths. I know his strength was story telling as you can see he has such an amazing ability as a story teller right ...that's when I customise it we would have that conversation with the editor from the young till now what he has



gone through all the different challenges all the different stages in life that he has been through and all these wonderful stories and tips his motivational quotes all of that is what you can find inside this wonderful book called better than normal. If you want a copy of this book I will get to that a little later on. So that's what I mean by customised leadership – it is how you actually as a leader, how are you able to as a leader to turn the weaknesses of your team members into their strengths use it to their advantage. Another example if you come back to the book you can see that Hitesh is holding a soccer ball, or football whatever ball you want to call it . So, he is holding on to a ball right as you can see co incidentally he gave a speech for the India National Football Team as well, he did a speaking engagement for them. But coming back to the ball that Hitesh is actually holding – this ball the reason how he ended up there the reason how he ended up playing for the Singapore team, you can see the Singapore flag that is there as well. Hitesh used to come very regularly for my Sunday football league you know 11 a side we would play very Sunday , he would come all the way from the East side of Singapore to wherever the games were being held travel all the way for thirty minutes to an hour and then in that process he would get to play but only he would get to play for 5 to 10 mins sometimes even 10 minutes may be on a good day sometimes on bad days he would not get to play at all and then he got a little bit disappointed at the end . This went on for two months, three months, six months and then there was one match that particularly ended Hitesh I could see that he was particularly upset he was really deep in thought. I asked him 'bro what's wrong', he said I am very unhappy, I am very sad, I am upset. Because I can play better football, I am better than some of the guys in the team I can run faster than them. But, why don't you let me play? Just because I have a condition is it? And I said, No. It's my job to take care of you. It's my job to make sure that you don't get hurt, because these guys even though they are amateurs, sometimes they play like hooligans, sometimes they get into fights and they tackle unnecessarily. That's when Hitesh told me that no, but I want to play, if you don't let me play, then I am not going to come for the games again, I am not going to come for the matches anymore. And I said, Ok, Ok, hold it there. Why don't you go and join the Paralympics football team? And then, again, he gave me a weird look and with his eyes wide open, he said, is there such a thing. At point of time, to tell you the truth I had no idea if there was such a thing such as a Paralympics football team. But it makes sense right/ If you got Olympics football, then obviously you have to have a Paralympics football for such an established country like Singapore. So, that's when he said, he went that night, googled it up Singapore Cerebral palsy, Singapore football, Paralympics team. Went for the trails next week, got selected into the team straight away and since that day I would say he has not come back to the matches with us. Because he has been travelling all around the world, he has been to Europe to play for the Singapore team, played against Germany, Holland, all the big teams, all these huge countries he had matches again. He has played in Japan, he went all the way to Japan for football tournaments in different parts of the world. He even got to play in the national stadium which is the dream of every footballer in Singapore, to get to play in the national stadium. So, he has been travelling, all of that has happened, why did all of that happen, coming back to why it had all happened. It is because of customized leadership, and in the diversity and inclusion space, it is very important for the leaders to be able to customise your leadership style, your leadership methods and your leadership day-to-day actions which you are taking so that it suits the people in your organisation. So that you can use weaknesses. So, like Hitesh says, turn your weaknesses into your weapon. That is what I am here to share with you about, which is the C – Customized Leadership. And as we are coming to the end of webinar, I would just like to pass the



webinar back to Hitesh. As well, Hitesh will share with you a little bit more about the story behind, Better Than Normal. I am sure before today, better than normal didn't mean anything, it didn't matter to you. And I guarantee you that by end of today, you will always remember this word – better than normal. Hitesh, would you like to share what is the meaning of Better Than Normal and how did it actually come about.

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Thank you Hitesh for that wonderful story behind better than normal, and as we come to the end, I would just like to share with you. If you would like to have a copy of the book, do let the Community Business team know. If you want a copy of the book, we can make arrangements for that. And also, I have got with me, Hitesh's speaker profile. Because what Hitesh does as a professional is, as a professional speaker, his speaker profile is here. If you would like to have him in your organisation to deliver this keynote. What you saw just now, is actually to be honest, 10% of the potential, because you won't get the affect that is there on a webinar, but embrace the technology, we embrace everything which is coming about. But his speaker profile is here, and if you want a copy, let me know and we can get that arranged. If you want a copy of the book, let us know as well. But I think Hitesh would really appreciate an opportunity to come to your organisation and share with you his message, of becoming better than normal. And we are on this crazy mission, we are on this mission to inspire 50 million people by 2050. 50 million people, of 50 million people, or whichever way you want to look at it, 50 million people by twenty, two- zero- five-zero to become better than normal. At the moment we are at 1.2 million and we would like to thank Community Business for this opportunity, for having us on your platform. It was really wonderful experience and we are hoping to work together and create some change together in the world. Because I see so much similarity in the vision and the mission that we both have. And Hitesh, would you have any last passing words that would you like to share. If people to follow you, for people to try to get to know a bit more, because they are inspired, how would they do that.

Hitesh:

So, what you just saw was less than 10% of the whole story. I would suggest that you watch more of my videos on Youtube, Facebook, Instagram. What you can do is search for Better Than Normal. And if you all are in the corporate sector, you can connect with us on LinkedIn. Just look for Hitesh Ramchandani. And I really hope that one day I won't only be talking to you via webinar, but live conferences. Thank you.

Mellener:

Thank you, Hitesh, that was a really inspiring presentation. You have said that you have inspired 1.2 million. I am sure that you have inspired many of us on this session today. And you have definitely inspired me. I was going through parts of your autobiography, and few things really stood out for me. You know, the biggest thing you say is disability, the only disability we have as human beings is a bad attitude. And I cannot agree with you more. Because I truly believe that human spirit is one of ability, courage and perseverance. And that absolutely no disability can take away. And Hitesh with your session today and what you have achieved with your life. You have really showed that to us. Thank you so much for being on this session, it is a pleasure to have you. On behalf of community Business and Northern Trust. And to our audience out there, thank you for joining. Just to remind you that the recording of this session will be available for 30 days. Please do stay tuned for the other sessions that we have planned for today. Thank you so much and have a great day.



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