

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Impact Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

CONNECTIFY

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This project was inspired by my sister, who has Down syndrome, and my belief that individuals with disabilities deserve equal access to education and employment. In Italy, we observed that companies often incur fines for not employing enough disabled individuals, highlighting systemic barriers that limit job opportunities for this group. This initiative aims to redefine normalcy, challenge cultural norms, and foster a more inclusive society where everyone can pursue their aspirations freely regardless of ability. It's more than a business; it's a mission to integrate talent fully and fairly into the workforce.

Keywords: AI Software, Classes, Disabled Workers, Education, Impact, Quota.

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1. Overview

In Italy, the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities starkly contrasts with the ideals of inclusivity and equal opportunity that modern societies aspire to. Since 1999, Italy has promoted the inclusion of disabled workers through Law 68/99, which mandates employment quotas for disabled workers based on company size, offering fiscal benefits to companies that meet these quotas and fining the ones that do not (*Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1999*). Despite these measures, important companies, such as Ferrari spend millions of euros in fines because of the absence of disabled workers within their workforce (*True-News, 2023*).

In 2023, only 265,000 disabled individuals were employed, making up just 3.5% of the total national workforce (*Istat, n.d*). This statistic highlights the profound barriers that disabled individuals face in securing employment, underlining the urgency and importance of our startup's mission.

Reports indicate that in 2023, over 100,000 job positions for people with disabilities remained unfilled in both the private and public sectors (*Il Sole 24 Ore, 2023*). This gap is not merely due to a lack of advertising by companies but also stems from the absence of a dedicated intermediary to bridge the gap between potential employers and disabled job seekers. Our initiative aims to directly tackle these challenges by providing a supportive and empowering environment that helps disabled individuals develop their skills and increase their employability. This approach not only addresses immediate employment needs but also fosters a more inclusive and equitable job market.

2. The problem and insights from experts

Experts from various fields have underscored the significant challenges that disabled individuals face in securing suitable employment, reflecting the complexity and diversity of the issue. Firstly, in the job market, disabled people often encounter prejudice and

discrimination. Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, can help create more inclusive workplaces by automating adjustments and personalizing learning and development programs to meet the needs of disabled employees. This allows them to train at their own pace and in the most effective ways, according to Mariagrazia Brunetti, CEO of Quence - TXT.

(To have a complete overview of the Interview, please refer to Appendix D)

Additionally, even after gaining employment, disabled individuals face further barriers to success in the workplace. Dr. Alessi, a seasoned psychiatrist who has collaborated with various disability associations, emphasizes the significance of adaptive technologies. These AI-driven tools are crucial for catering to the specific needs of disabled employees at work and enhancing their ability to perform their duties effectively.

(To have a complete overview of the Interview, please refer to Appendix C)

Another major hurdle is the lack of access to resources and information. Giacomo Rota, the coordinator of the AGPD association for people with Down syndrome, highlighted the importance of specialized educational programs that equip disabled individuals with social and practical skills, thus boosting their employability and helping them navigate the job market more effectively. This approach aids job seekers in finding opportunities and educates companies about the capabilities and rights of disabled workers. *(To have a complete overview of the Interview, please refer to Appendix E)*

The last factor affecting impaired workers' employment prospects is public perceptions of their condition. Any platform that helps handicapped workers find jobs must address these stereotypes via lobbying and education, fostering a more inclusive perception of the skills of disabled people. This may be achieved by using the insights offered by these experts. Encouraging and retaining handicapped personnel is difficult; overcoming these obstacles calls for a coordinated strategy that considers social and practical considerations. This entails

utilising technology to improve accessibility, offering specialised training courses, and encouraging a change in corporate culture towards equality and inclusiveness.

3. The market (TAM, SAM, SOM)

Starting from the premise that defining the market size can be challenging and potentially restrictive given the subject matter, we began by considering that today it is estimated that approximately 92% of jobs require knowledge of at least one digital skill (*National Skills Coalition, 2023*). We have thus identified the total addressable market as 92% of the 100,000 job positions available for disabled individuals in 2023. Consequently, we have defined our TAM around 92,000 available positions.

Regarding the number of companies in the territory, they represent 19% of the total number of companies in Italy. As for the corporate presence in Milan, it accounts for approximately 7.5%. We calculated the serviceable obtainable market starting from the TAM—92,000 open positions requiring digital skills—and considering that 7.5% of the companies in Italy are located in Milan. Therefore, we identified the SAM as 7.5% of 92,000, resulting in 6,900 open positions for disabled individuals in Milan (*Istat, 2024*).

As for the serviceable obtainable market, we considered that in the first three years, we aim to train at least 1,800 individuals, which represents about 28% of the SAM. We believe that with the expansion of our size and experience, we will be able to cover the initial SAM by the fifth year. This projection demonstrates our commitment to addressing the significant need for digital skills among disabled job seekers and reflects our strategic plan to expand our reach and impact within the Milan corporate sector.

4. The Solution

4.1 The Scope

The envisioned project is an extensive initiative aimed at addressing the significant barriers that young individuals with disabilities encounter when accessing and integrating into the workforce. It involves the creation of a specialized academy with a focus on technology modules, providing in-person classes specifically designed to meet the distinct needs of this group. At the centre of the initiative lies the development and deployment of cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI)-enhanced software. This software is a crucial resource, allowing participants to engage in remote learning and independently conduct practice exercises, thereby cultivating their skills in a supportive and adaptable environment. The AI system is intricately designed to identify individual profiles and adjust teaching methods and interfaces to suit various learning styles and preferences. Furthermore, the project aims to evolve also into a consulting firm. This component of the initiative is dedicated to offering tailored guidance and support services, aimed at facilitating the seamless integration of young individuals with disabilities into the professional realm. By establishing partnerships with businesses and organizations, the project endeavors to foster the creation of a workforce where diversity is not only recognized but actively celebrated and accommodated.

4.2 The Purpose

At the heart of this initiative is the goal to empower and uplift young individuals with disabilities by equipping them with the necessary tools and resources to surmount employment entry barriers. The establishment of the academy symbolizes a beacon of inclusivity, providing educational experiences tailored to transcend conventional approaches. The AI-enhanced software, a pivotal technological element of the project, facilitates remote learning and promotes autonomy by adapting to the specific needs of each individual. The project seeks to initiate a significant shift in corporate cultures through its consulting arm. By partnering with

businesses, the initiative aims to challenge and redefine traditional views of diversity and inclusion. The consulting firm is dedicated to advising companies on creating accessible workplaces and cultivating a culture that not only accommodates but also actively values the unique talents and perspectives of individuals with disabilities. This project is underpinned by a deep commitment to societal transformation, endeavoring to dismantle barriers and foster an environment where every individual, regardless of their abilities, has an equal opportunity to succeed in the professional sphere.

4.3 The Ecosystem

Different stakeholders are involved in the project:

1. *Disabled workers*: Central to our mission, disabled workers not only stand to benefit directly from our platform but are also instrumental in its refinement and success. Their engagement transcends mere usage; they are the heartbeat of our project, offering insights that can drastically enhance the platform's functionality and reach. By sharing their personal experiences and challenges in finding employment, disabled workers illuminate the nuanced obstacles they face, enabling us to tailor our solutions more effectively. Their active promotion and advocacy for the platform can foster a community of support, break down societal stigmas associated with disability in the workplace, and highlight the untapped potential within this demographic. Ultimately, their success stories become powerful testaments to the efficacy of our platform, encouraging more widespread adoption and understanding.

2. *Companies*: The role of companies extends significantly beyond creating job opportunities; they are pivotal in shaping an inclusive work environment that values diversity. By partnering with our platform, companies not only contribute to a more equitable job market but also partake in its development, helping to ensure that the platform meets both the needs of employers and potential employees. These collaborations can yield a sustainable revenue model for the platform, securing its longevity and capacity to serve disabled job seekers.

Moreover, companies that actively engage with our platform demonstrate corporate social responsibility, enhancing their brand image and attracting a broader customer base who values inclusivity.

3. *Disability associations*: The collaboration with disability associations enriches our platform with deep insights and best practices in accessibility and advocacy. These organizations offer a wealth of knowledge and resources that can significantly amplify the platform's impact. Their support facilitates connections within the disability community, broadening the platform's reach and ensuring that it remains aligned with the needs and aspirations of disabled workers. Through their advocacy, disability associations help maintain the platform's focus on empowering individuals, guaranteeing that it serves as a potent tool for change and inclusion. Associations have a huge importance also considering the “clinical” side since they are the ones who will continue monitoring the students thanks to their psychologists and psychiatrists.

4. *Government agencies*: Engagement with government agencies provides a foundational layer of support and legitimacy to our initiative. By aligning with government regulations and leveraging available resources, the platform can enhance its functionality and compliance, ensuring it meets the highest standards for accessibility and efficacy. Government partnerships may also unlock funding opportunities, essential for scaling the platform and extending its services. Additionally, these relationships can facilitate dialogue around policy changes, advocating for a more inclusive labor market that recognizes and accommodates the needs of disabled workers.

5. *Families*: Recognizing the integral role families play, their involvement in the development of our platform is crucial. Families offer unique insights into the support systems and challenges faced by disabled workers, guiding the platform's approach to user experience and safety. Their perspectives are invaluable in creating an environment that not only fosters employment opportunities but also supports the personal growth and independence of disabled

individuals. By engaging with families, the platform ensures that it addresses the concerns of those who are most invested in the well-being of disabled workers, building a community of trust and mutual support.

5. Competitor analysis

5.1 Italian competitors

AutAcademy:

- Strengths:

- **Specialized Focus:** AutAcademy specializes in training for autistic individuals aged 16-29, addressing both relational and job-related skills. This targeted approach allows them to cater specifically to the unique needs of autistic individuals, enhancing their employability.

- **Comprehensive Curriculum:** The program offers a diverse range of courses including green care, IT, arts, and photography, which are complemented by cognitive enhancement and socialization activities. This broad curriculum helps to develop multiple skills that are attractive to potential employers.

- **Community Engagement and Visibility:** Through various local events and collaborations, such as 'L'isola che non c'è' and 'In & Aut Festival', AutAcademy maintains high visibility and community engagement, which enhances its public profile and supports fundraising and partnership efforts.

- Weaknesses:

- **Geographical Limitation:** Currently operating solely in Monza, its reach is geographically limited, which could restrict the number of potential students and limit its ability to scale.

- **Potential Resource Limitations:** Relying on a single educational facility and specific local government funding could pose risks if funding Niche Market Focus: While specializing in autism provides a strong focus, it also limits the market size. The specific focus might restrict

funding opportunities and partnerships compared to organizations with a broader target demographic. change or if there are significant shifts in educational policy.

- More focused on teaching jobs instead of skills and abilities.

Gruppo l'Impronta:

• Strengths:

- Broad Service Range: Gruppo L'Impronta offers a wide array of services across different age groups and disabilities, including educational and occupational integration for both children and adults with disabilities. This broad range enables them to address diverse needs within the community.

- Innovative Programs: The initiative of their cooperative social enterprise, inTec, focuses on integrating people with disabilities into the digital workforce, demonstrating innovative approaches to inclusion. This includes professional services like software testing and e-commerce management, which are significant growth areas in employment.

- Volunteer and Philanthropic Opportunities: They offer structured corporate volunteering and philanthropy opportunities, enhancing their funding and support network while engaging more of the community and businesses in their mission.

• Weaknesses:

- Different profiles involved in their project. They do not work just with people with disabilities but they also have programs for people who come from difficult situations.

- Resource Dependency: Their extensive range of services and community projects might stretch their resources thin, especially if there is a surge in demand or a dip in funding or partnerships.

- Lack of technological support, in terms of software, for the students.

Our project focuses on broader inclusivity. In fact, our initiative addresses a wider range of disabilities, and the integration of advanced AI technology into our services ensures

personalized, efficient support for disabled individuals, distinguishing our project with its adaptability and cutting-edge approach. Moreover, our project's flexibility allows for rapid adaptation to market changes and user needs, offering a significant advantage over less agile organizations. Our strategic networking efforts extend beyond local communities to potential national and international collaborations, amplifying our influence and resource-sharing capabilities, significantly enhancing our initiative's overall efficacy and reach.

5.2 International competitors

DisabledPerson:

- Strengths:

- Focus on disability inclusion: DisabledPerson is specifically designed to help people with disabilities find employment, which sets it apart from many other job boards. This can make it easier for job seekers with disabilities to find opportunities that are a good fit for their skills and needs.

- Accessible job postings: DisabledPerson works with employers to ensure that job postings are accessible and can be easily viewed by people with disabilities. This helps to remove barriers that might prevent job seekers with disabilities from applying for positions.

- Partnerships with disability-focused organizations: Proven partners with disability-focused organizations to promote their job postings and reach a wider audience of job seekers with disabilities.

- Weaknesses:

- Limited job opportunities.

- Limited information on employers: DisabledPerson does not provide detailed information on employers or their inclusion policies, which may make it harder for job seekers to evaluate whether a particular job is a good fit for their needs.

- Lack of customization: DisabledPerson's job search tools are fairly basic, and users are not

able to customize their search criteria beyond basic filters like job title or location. This may make it harder for job seekers to find jobs that meet their specific needs or interests.

Ability Jobs:

- Strengths:

- Focused on individuals with disabilities: Ability Jobs is dedicated to helping people with disabilities find meaningful employment opportunities. They provide a platform for employers to connect with a diverse talent pool and offer resources to help job seekers with disabilities navigate the job search process.
- Partnership with major companies: Ability Jobs has partnerships with major companies like Microsoft, Amazon, and Wells Fargo, which demonstrates that these companies are committed to diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices.
- User-friendly website: The website is easy to navigate and provides a user-friendly experience for job seekers and employers. Job seekers can create profiles, search for jobs, and receive job alerts, while employers can post jobs and search for candidates.

- Weaknesses:

- Limited job opportunities: While Ability Jobs provides a great platform for job seekers with disabilities, the number of job opportunities available is limited. The job board primarily focuses on the US market and only has a small number of international job listings.
- Limited industry coverage: The job board also has limited industry coverage, with most job opportunities in the IT and government sectors. This can be a disadvantage for job seekers who are looking for jobs in other industries.
- Inconsistent job descriptions: Some job descriptions on Ability Jobs lack detail, which can make it difficult for job seekers to determine if the job is a good fit for them. This can lead to wasted time and frustration for both job seekers and employers.

Our project distinguishes itself from competitors like DisabledPerson and Ability Jobs by embracing a holistic approach to the workforce integration of disabled individuals. Unlike the primarily job board-centric services offered by these entities, our initiative melds job matching with an array of comprehensive educational programs and personalized AI-driven tools. This strategy not only assists disabled job seekers in identifying suitable employment opportunities but also arms them with essential workplace skills and knowledge. Focused on providing in-depth insights into employers' inclusion practices and committed to expanding industry coverage, our project aims to facilitate a transparent and informed job search process.

By prioritizing personalized learning and support, it is also designed to significantly enhance the user experience. Initially tailored to meet the specific needs and regulations of the Italian market, with aspirations for global reach, our project stands poised to deliver a distinctive and impactful solution in the realm of disability employment.

6. Business Model

6.1 Value Proposition

Our project stands at the confluence of innovation, inclusivity, and corporate social responsibility, offering a robust solution to the dual challenges of unemployment among individuals with disabilities and the unmet diversity and inclusion goals within the corporate sector. At its core, the value proposition of this initiative intricately weaves together benefits for both participating companies and individuals with disabilities, crafting a narrative of mutual growth, opportunity, and societal advancement.

For companies, this project presents a compelling financial incentive by providing a cost-effective alternative to the substantial fines incurred from non-compliance with disability employment quotas. Beyond mere financial savings, it opens the doors to a new talent pool, enriched with individuals who bring unique perspectives and resilience to the workplace.

Participation in the program not only aids companies in meeting their legal obligations but also elevates their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) profile, showcasing a tangible commitment to diversity and inclusion. This, in turn, enhances public perception, cultivates customer loyalty, and boosts employee morale, contributing to a more inclusive, innovative, and engaging corporate culture. Furthermore, the long-term benefits of such an initiative include fostering a work environment that values diversity and inclusion, leading to increased innovation, employee engagement, and retention.

Conversely, for individuals with disabilities, this initiative represents a gateway to empowerment through skill development and education. By providing access to high-quality, personalized training tailored to the needs of the modern workforce, the project equips participants with the necessary tools to secure meaningful employment, thereby fostering independence and self-efficacy. The AI-powered software at the heart of our educational model offers a customized learning experience that adapts to the unique abilities and learning styles of each participant, enhancing the efficacy of the training provided. Moreover, this project is not just about employment; it's about creating a community. Participants will find themselves part of a supportive network, offering solidarity and encouragement as they navigate their educational and professional journeys.

In essence, our initiative seeks to redefine the narrative surrounding disability and employment, transforming perceived challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation. By bridging the gap between the untapped potential of individuals with disabilities and the evolving needs of the business world, we aim to catalyze societal change, promote inclusivity, and pave the way for a more diverse and dynamic workforce. This project embodies our commitment to creating a world where everyone, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to contribute, thrive, and succeed in their professional and personal lives.

6.2 Key Partners

Our venture's ambition is to cultivate an expansive network of key partnerships that are critical to the realization of our objectives and the optimization of our operations. These partnerships are carefully selected to encompass a diverse range of companies and associations, each contributing uniquely to our mission.

At the forefront of our partnership strategy are companies from across the business spectrum, not limited to but prominently featuring those in the technology sector. These are organizations that recognize the imperative of technological proficiency in today's economy and are keen to enhance their workforce with individuals who possess such skills. Our commitment extends beyond the tech industry, embracing companies from various sectors that are eager to meet their disability employment quotas and are resolutely interested in the inclusion of disabled individuals in their teams. This broad approach to corporate partnerships ensures that we are able to provide our students with an array of opportunities in various fields, enhancing their chances of finding meaningful employment in an industry that resonates with their interests and skills. These partner companies are not just partners but they are also our customers. Since our business model is based on sponsorships, to be considered as a partner, each company has to contribute for the courses. At the moment we have two major partners: Quence-TXT, a testing-software company, and BIP, a consulting company in the tech sector. We are also in talks for a potential partnership with Microsoft.

Our collaborative efforts with major associations for individuals with disabilities are instrumental in enlarging our outreach and student base. These associations are more than just conduits for student recruitment; they are partners in advocacy, raising awareness about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities and promoting a culture of inclusivity. Their involvement extends the impact of our venture, allowing us to attract a more substantial number of students and, importantly, to tailor our training programs to meet the specific needs and

ambitions of this diverse student body. AGPD, which is Cooldown's "branch" for people in between nine-teen and twenty-nine years of age, is the first partner association and they will help us not just in building the academy and offering us a consistent pool of talent, but they will be active also in monitoring the students with down syndrome during the courses.

In conclusion, the partnerships we forge are the lifeblood of our venture. They are the vehicles through which we drive change, bridging the gap between capable, ready-to-learn individuals and industries in need of their unique talents. Through these collaborations, we not only aim to fill quotas but also to challenge and transform the prevailing paradigms of employment, fostering environments where diversity is not just welcomed but is seen as an essential component of success and innovation.

6.3 Customer segments

Our business is committed to providing services to two different but related clientele: employers who hire handicapped workers and the workers themselves. Every group plays a crucial part in our effort to create a workforce that is more inclusive. Our project serves as a ray of hope and opportunity for handicapped workers. In order to guarantee that people with disabilities have fair access to job opportunities, we are dedicated to growing the number of handicapped workers in the business sector.

The second client category consists of a broad range of businesses that require handicapped people to meet their quota if they have more than 15 employees. Our services are highly valuable to any company looking to hire people with disabilities and who are prepared to meet their legal requirements for hiring such workers. These businesses are possible partner - customers for our business because we offer a two-fold solution: we help them meet their quotas and provide them with employees who have specialized in the requisite tech tools.

6.4 Customer relationship

Our startup's core value is building long-lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships with our partner firms and students. We adjust to meet the demands of our pupils, understanding that every person's path is distinct and calls for a customised approach. This dedication to change guarantees that our educational programmes continue to be highly successful and profoundly in line with our students' objectives.

It is critical to our operations that we stay in close communication with our partner firms and students. By being involved on a regular basis, we are able to anticipate the shifting needs of our broad clients and react quickly to feedback. By keeping lines of communication open and honest, we can build a relationship built on trust and make sure that our partners feel respected, heard, and understood.

Understanding the value of enduring partnership, we want to launch a loyalty program for businesses in our network. This program encourages continued participation and investment in the professional development of people with disabilities by recognising and rewarding our corporate partners' continuous contribution.

Simultaneously, our endorsement of association endeavors reflects our wider perspective on social impact and community integration. We are able to better manage and keep an eye on our kids thanks to our ongoing interactions with the associations' professionals.

6.5 How we reach our customers

Our main source of information is the extensive website, which acts as a hub for partner firms and potential students alike. This online platform has been carefully designed to be both easily navigable and educational. It offers a vast library of resources that explain our training courses, client success stories, joint venture possibilities, and the concrete advantages that our services provide. It serves as a tool for participation as well as evidence of our dedication to openness and accessibility for all parties involved.

Through social media channels, we actively connect with our community, offer insights, and celebrate the accomplishments of our students and linked companies, therefore amplifying our presence in the digital arena.. Social media expands our reach and creates a helpful online community by providing an active platform for advocacy, networking, and conversation.

And last, word-of-mouth referrals are still a timeless and vital resource for us. Positive feedback from happy participants and partners reverberates strongly throughout their networks, generating natural curiosity and confidence in our initiative. Our most effective marketing tool is the success and transformation stories that arise from our work since they represent the tangible results of our joint efforts.

6.6 Key activities

Among these activities is the extensive development and enhancement of our educational platform. We are dedicated to delivering an exemplary service that encompasses not only the breadth and depth of course content but also the usability and accessibility of the platform itself. This commitment to excellence ensures that every student, regardless of their starting point, receives the highest quality of education and support throughout their learning journey.

In tandem with platform development is our commitment to the continuous monitoring of our students' performance and well-being. This is not a passive process; it is an active and dynamic engagement with the aim of deeply understanding each student's unique circumstances, challenges, and needs. By employing a data-driven approach to track progress, we can provide timely interventions, personalized support, and adapt our teaching methods to maximize the efficacy of our programs. This attentiveness to student performance goes beyond academic achievements, encompassing the holistic situation of each learner to ensure they are supported in every aspect of their development.

Ensuring a high level of teaching is the third critical activity that underscores the importance of our relationship with our students. We recognize that the caliber of our teaching staff is

directly proportional to the success of our students. As such, we invest in recruiting and developing educators who are not just experts in their respective fields but are also compassionate, adaptive, and skilled in inclusive teaching practices. These educators are the pillars of the learning experience we offer, and they play a pivotal role in fostering a supportive and empowering atmosphere that is conducive to learning for all students. To find the best tutors for our students we rely on the experience of partner associations in this field.

Through the meticulous crafting of our platform, vigilant monitoring of student progress, and ensuring the highest standards of teaching, we create a concrete relationship with our students.

6.7 Key resources

Our network forms the bedrock of our initiative. This expansive web of connections, comprising both associations dedicated to the support and advocacy for individuals with disabilities, and companies across a multitude of industries, is vital for the creation of opportunities. The strength of this network is directly correlated to the diversity and magnitude of prospects we can offer to our students, making it an indispensable resource for our project's success.

Human capital represents the life force of our organization. Our investment in human resources extends across the realms of software research and development (R&D), pedagogy, and corporate management. The team we cultivate is a blend of technologists, educators, and business strategists, each bringing a unique set of skills and insights that drive our project forward. This human capital is instrumental not only in the creation of our innovative AI-powered learning software but also in the implementation of teaching methodologies and the strategic direction of the company. The collective expertise and passion of our team are essential for the realization of our project's goals.

The learning software powered by AI is a key resource that sets our initiative apart. This technology is the conduit through which we deliver customized and adaptive learning

experiences to our students. The AI component allows us to personalize the educational content, accommodating a wide spectrum of learning styles and needs, ensuring that each student has access to a tailored educational journey. This software is the manifestation of our commitment to utilizing cutting-edge technology to serve our students, reinforcing our project's standing at the vanguard of educational innovation for individuals with disabilities.

6.8 Costs structure

In terms of costs, the highest expenses are related to the software development phase, which encompasses the costs for hiring a skilled team including developers, designers, and project managers, alongside expenses for software licenses and necessary tools. These represent the main fixed costs of the project, considering the high expenses for developing an AI software. Parallel to software development, research and development (R&D) efforts are essential to align the platform with global accessibility standards and to adapt it to various disabilities. This phase is crucial for ensuring the platform's effectiveness and compliance with legal and social inclusivity norms.

The costs for the development of the platform powered by AI are not the only fixed costs we have to face. The cornerstone of this venture is the team we assemble, encompassing administrative staff, technical support personnel, educators, trainers, and partnership managers. These individuals form the backbone of our initiative, requiring a substantial investment in salaries, representing another type of fixed costs, to ensure we attract and retain talents who are not only skilled but also passionate about making a difference in the lives of disabled workers and the companies that employ them.

Simultaneously, we delve into the development or acquisition of training material, a critical component that dictates the effectiveness of our educational offerings. This material must be meticulously designed to be both accessible and comprehensive, catering to the varied needs of disabled workers. Ensuring that our content resonates with and empowers our users involves

a significant financial commitment representing the highest variable costs for our project and that's why we need to choose the correct materials and the best provider.

Moreover, the digital dimension of our project, the platform itself, necessitates ongoing attention and investment. Hosting and maintenance costs recur, reflecting the need to keep the platform not only operational but also secure and aligned with the latest technological advancements. This digital infrastructure is vital for delivering our services seamlessly to users across different locales, making it a critical area of financial planning.

Ultimately, marketing and outreach costs result from our attempts to establish and broaden our user base, which includes potential employers and handicapped workers. To increase the platform's awareness, it is imperative to take part in industry events, provide promotional materials, and engage in digital marketing. These expenses are difficult to predict as they change depending on a variety of factors. The events highlight our dedication to promoting an inclusive labour market in addition to increasing platform awareness. Our goal is to create a community around our platform by means of focused marketing and outreach, attracting people who can both profit from and add to our ecosystem.

6.9 Revenue streams

In the pursuit of establishing a robust and enduring venture dedicated to the integration of disabled workers into the workforce, our financial strategy hinges on the sponsorships of the companies. This approach not only ensures the project's viability but also its capacity to evolve and expand its impact over time. The cornerstone of our revenue model is predicated on forging partnerships with companies, a strategy that not only aligns with our mission but also secures essential funding. Each partner company sponsors a class of 15 participants, contributing €15,000, which forms the bedrock of our revenue structure. With an initial goal of engaging 15 companies during the first year in these partnerships, we anticipate generating €225,000 from this stream alone. This model not only facilitates the immediate operational needs but

also underscores the collaborative nature of our mission, binding the corporate sector to our social objectives.

From the third year onward, as we expect significant growth in our partner companies “portfolio”, we plan to adopt a subscription model based on the number of disabled workers a company needs to meet its disability quota. There are two main factors behind the choice of shifting to subscription model: pricing and convenience. With a fixed price paid monthly, it’s easier to maintain a constant service and in terms of convenience, it is easier to coordinate the sponsorship with the classes. We envision charging each company €1,000 per missing worker as a monthly subscription fee. For example, if Company X needs five more workers, it would pay €5,000 per month. This fee not only supports the operational aspects of our venture but also grants companies the right to hire from our pool of trained individuals.

To incentivize companies to become our partners, those who participate as partners by sponsoring a class in the first phase or paying the subscription fee in the second phase will not be charged any consulting fees. Conversely, companies that are not partners but wish to hire one of our trained students will be required to pay a €20,000 consulting fee for a year. This policy encourages companies to engage with us at a partnership level, benefiting from reduced costs while supporting our broader mission.

After one year of consulting with the companies, if these are satisfied with the student who has worked there, they will be required to pay us a transfer fee equivalent to one year of the worker's gross salary. This transfer fee is intended to facilitate a full-time employment offer, recognizing the value provided by our trained workers and the investment in their development.

This multifaceted approach not only ensures the operational feasibility of our venture but also empowers us to reinvest in our mission, driving forward innovations that promise to reshape the landscape of employment for disabled individuals. Through strategic financial planning

and a commitment to delivering exceptional value to our stakeholders, we are poised to sustain and amplify our impact, facilitating a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

7. Pilot

7.1 Academy's Pilot

In the nascent phase of our endeavor, we are introducing two targeted pilot programs, each designed to refine our distinct service offerings. The first of these, the academy, will commence with a class of 15 individuals, orchestrated in partnership with Querce - TXT. This collaboration is particularly meaningful as Querce - TXT is acutely aware of the challenges associated with meeting employment quotas for individuals with disabilities, given their current staff of over 130 employees.

This pilot class will be coordinated through AGPD. Our choice to focus on Down syndrome is a deliberate one, rooted in our comprehensive understanding of the disability and the supportive network available to aid in the fruition of this project. Through AGPD's involvement in CoorDown, Europe's largest consortium for Down syndrome advocacy, we gain access to an expansive pool of potential students. The pilot will be housed in AGPD's facilities, which will supply both the classroom space and the computing equipment, while Querce-TXT will lend their expertise through internal staff who are versed in training both interns and protected category individuals.

This program's design within such a supportive and resourceful ecosystem offers enumerable advantages. It enables us to leverage AGPD and CoorDown's specialized experience with Down syndrome, creating an educational experience tailored to the students' unique needs. Simultaneously, Querce-TXT's practical industry knowledge ensures the curriculum's relevance to the job market. Moreover, their vested interest in fulfilling the disability

employment quota and the CEO's personal commitment to diversity and inclusion add a layer of advocacy and passion to the initiative.

The aim of this pilot goes beyond the immediate educational benefits to the participants; it is an exhibit to employers and the broader corporate world of how targeted training and support can optimally prepare students for professional environments. Querce-TXT's involvement is particularly resonant in this regard — as a tech-company that understands firsthand the challenges of meeting diversity quotas, their investment and participation stand as a testament to the potential of these programs to resolve such issues effectively.

This pilot seeks to demonstrate the tangible outcomes of our courses and support systems — prepared, capable, and job-ready individuals who can fulfill roles within the workplace, elevating not only the individuals themselves but also the companies they join.

7.2 Software's Pilot

We are on the cusp of launching an innovative software pilot program, poised to transform the educational experience for students with disabilities. The goal is two-fold: to validate the software's functionality and to exhibit to investors the transformative power of personalized education through artificial intelligence. This pilot utilizes an API to enable our proprietary software, integrated with ChatGPT technology, to interact with and simplify the content of any academic course. Initially, users will manually input questions into the interface, prompting the AI to reprocess and clarify complex course themes. This interaction will showcase the AI's ability to tailor explanations to the learner's comprehension level, offering a more accessible approach to learning.

The future version of this software will exhibit advanced capabilities — recognizing the learner's profile and their specific challenges, and autonomously providing customized explanations to enhance understanding. This pivotal step towards independent learning is

crucial; it encourages students to engage with educational material directly, without reliance on external help, thereby promoting self-reliance and confidence.

In presenting this pilot, we aim to demonstrate to our investors the profound impact that such a personalized educational tool can have. This is a showcase of the software's potential scalability and its ability to meet a pressing need in the market for inclusive educational technologies. Investors will be able to witness how the software adapts to different learning styles, how it supports students in overcoming educational barriers, and how it fosters an empowering learning environment. We anticipate that this pilot will highlight the software's ability to deliver a custom-fit education, making learning more engaging and effective for students with disabilities.

8. How big is our Impact?

Example of Social Return on Investment using Quence-TXT data.

Thanks to our first partner Quence-TXT, we were able to calculate the Social Return on Investment based on their restrict data, which helped us in show the impact we will have to a corporate. Considering that Quence has 137 employees at the moment and they can't fullfill the disabled workers quota by 5 workers, we calculate the SROI, comnsidering the first revenue model, the one considering that each partner company has to pay for at least one class in a whole year (15 000 €). Here the steps:

Step 1: Identify the Investment

Quence TXT invests 15 000 € in a year

Step 2: Calculate the Savings and Additional Benefits

- Avoidance of Fines: By meeting their disability employment quota through hiring candidates trained by your project, Quence TXT avoids €50,000 in fines annually.

- Enhanced Brand Reputation: By actively participating in disability employment initiatives, Quence TXT enhances its brand reputation, which could lead to increased customer loyalty and potentially new business. Quantifying this can be challenging, but let's conservatively estimate a value of €10,000 in added brand value.
- Employee Productivity: Hiring well-trained disabled workers could lead to increased diversity and potentially higher productivity through unique perspectives or skills. This is hard to calculate but with Quence's team we estimated a value of 5.000 €

Step 3: Calculate total benefits

Total Annual Benefits = Savings from fines + Brand reputation value + Productivity increase

Total Annual Benefits = €50,000 + €10,000 + €5,000 = €65,000

Step 4: Calculate SROI

SROI is calculated by dividing the total value created by the investment cost.

$SROI = \text{Total Benefits} / \text{Investment}$

$SROI = €65,000 / €15,000 = 4.33$

An SROI of 4.33 indicates that for every €1 Quence TXT invests in our project, they get an approximate return of €4.33 in social and economic value.

9. Profitability Analysis.

The project anticipates incurring losses during the first two years, a common scenario for most startup ventures. These initial losses are primarily attributed to substantial investments in software development and staffing. However, by the end of the second year, the project is projected to achieve profitability, underscoring the robustness of our business model and the effectiveness of our market penetration strategy, supported by the comprehensive development of our services. An upward trend in the profit margin reflects operational efficiency and strategic financial planning. By the third year, the project demonstrates financial stability and is firmly

establishing itself in the market. Our objective is to achieve financial sustainability well before the sixth year, ensuring long-term viability and growth.

(To have a complete overview of the Profitability Analysis,, please refer to Appendix A)

10. Funding

Funding represents a crucial step for the success of a project like ours. Our goal is to cover the total costs for Year 0 and Year 1, with an OPEX of €180,000 and a CAPEX of €150,000, amounting to a total funding requirement of €330,000. Following discussions with two interested venture capital funds, we decided not to pursue this option at the moment because raising the required funds would involve giving up too much equity. Instead, we began collecting donations from family and friends in December and have successfully raised approximately €68,000. Through bootstrapping, we have also managed to gather around €24,000, bringing our current total to approximately €92,000.

For the remaining funds needed, we plan to apply for Intesa San Paolo's NeoImpresa project in November 2024 (*Intesa San Paolo, n.d.*). Intesa San Paolo is one of the most prominent banks in the northern Italian regions and has a long history of supporting innovative projects. The NeoImpresa financing can be used for any project-related expenses, with the option of a variable or fixed interest rate. We chose the NeoImpresa program because it covers up to 80% of the funding for innovative startups. In our case, this equates to about 73%, amounting to €238,000. Additionally, the maximum repayment term is 10 years, with a pre-amortization period of up to 24 months. Using this program allows us to avoid diluting our equity and rely on our performance to repay the financing.

From the third year onwards, to cover new expenses arising from significant anticipated growth, we plan to approach Oltre Impact, the first Italian impact venture capital, to secure the necessary funds.

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Appendix

A. Profitability Analysis

	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1.Total revenues (VAT excluded)	-	225.000 €	750.000 €	1.700.000 €
Sponsorships	-	225.000 €	450.000 €	-
Subscription	-	-	-	900.000 €
Transfer fees	-	-	300.000 €	800.000 €
2. Total costs	15.000 €	305.000 €	390.000 €	805.000 €
AI Platform	-	150.000 €	65.000 €	300.000 €
Marketing	5.000 €	30.000 €	75.000 €	125.000 €
Staff	-	70.000 €	170.000 €	250.000€
Operational Costs	10.000 €	30.000 €	45.000 €	70.000€
Other costs	-	35.000 €	35.000 €	60.000 €
Operating income	-15.000 €	-80.000 €	360.000 €	895.000 €
Taxes (28 %)	-	-	100.800 €	250.600 €
Net Profit	-15.000 €	-80.000 €	259.200 €	644.400 €
Net Profit Margin	-	-35.56 %	34.56 %	37.91 %

B. Sensitivity Analysis

Two scenario:

Year 1

	Operating Income	Total costs	Net profit margin
Basic Prediction (Year 1)	225.000 €	305.000 €	-35.56%
10% Increase in Costs	225.000 €	335.500 €	-49.11%
20% Increase in Costs	225.000 €	366.000 €	-62.67%
30% Increase in Costs	225.000 €	396.500 €	-76.22%
10% Decrease in Revenues	202,500 €	305.000 €	-50.62%
20% Decrease in Revenues	180,000 €	305.000 €	-69.44%
30% Decrease in Revenues	157,500 €	305.000 €	-93.65%

Year 2

	Operating Income	Total costs	Net profit margin
Basic Prediction (Year 2)	750.000 €	390,000 €	34.56%
10% Increase in Costs	750.000 €	429,000 €	30.82%
20% Increase in Costs	750.000 €	468,000 €	27.07%
30% Increase in Costs	750.000 €	507,000 €	23.33%
10% Decrease in Revenues	675.000 €	390,000 €	30.40%
20% Decrease in Revenues	600.000 €	390,000 €	25.20%
30% Decrease in Revenues	525.000 €	390,000 €	18.51%

C. Interview to Dotoressa Alessi

1. What are the main challenges that disabled youth encounter in learning, and how could artificial intelligence be used to overcome these barriers?

Disabled youth often face multiple challenges in traditional learning settings, which can include physical access to classrooms, the pace of curriculum delivery, and instructional methods that do not cater to their diverse needs. Cognitive and sensory impairments, for instance, require tailored educational approaches. Artificial intelligence offers significant potential here by enabling the creation of adaptive learning technologies that can respond in real-time to the needs of the learner.

2. How can educational software be personalized to adapt to the varying cognitive and behavioral needs of disabled youth?

Personalizing educational software involves several key components: firstly, it should have a flexible interface that users can customize according to their sensory preferences, such as adjustable text sizes, color contrasts, and audio feedback options. Secondly, incorporating AI can help the software learn from the user's interactions, enabling it to adapt its instruction methods based on the observed effectiveness. For example, if a student struggles with a

particular concept, the AI can introduce new examples or switch to different teaching modalities like visual learning or interactive activities that might make the concept clearer.

3. What are the ethical implications of developing AI-based assistive technologies for the disabled?

The development of AI-driven assistive technologies for disabled individuals raises several ethical considerations. Privacy is a major concern, particularly regarding how sensitive data about individuals' disabilities and learning habits are collected, stored, and used. There's also the risk of dependency, where reliance on AI tools might inhibit the development of certain skills or decrease human interaction, which is crucial for social development. Additionally, there must be safeguards against biases in AI algorithms that could lead to unfair treatment or exclusion of certain groups. Ensuring that these technologies enhance autonomy without compromising human dignity or privacy requires a carefully balanced approach, emphasizing the responsible use of AI.

D. Interview to Maria Grazia Brunetti, CEO of Quence – TXT.

1. What are the primary barriers to hiring disabled individuals in the tech sector, and how can these be overcome?

One major barrier is the accessibility of physical work environments and tech tools which are often not designed with accessibility in mind. This can be both a physical and psychological deterrent for disabled individuals. To overcome this, it's crucial to implement universal design principles, making sure that all tools and workspaces are accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities. Another barrier is the stereotypes and misconceptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities, which often result in biased hiring practices. We need to foster a culture of inclusivity and awareness, provide sensitivity training for our staff, and ensure that recruitment processes are unbiased, focusing on the abilities and potential of candidates rather than their disabilities.

2. How can technology, particularly artificial intelligence, contribute to creating a more inclusive work environment?

Artificial intelligence can play a pivotal role by personalizing learning and development programs to the needs of disabled employees, allowing them to train at their own pace and in the most effective ways. For instance, AI-powered applications can convert text to speech or

enhance visual clarity for visually impaired employees, thereby making technical workspaces more accessible. AI can also automate routine tasks, reducing the physical strain on disabled employees and enabling them to focus on more strategic and creative tasks. By automating accessibility, AI aids individuals and enhances the overall team efficiency.

3. What features should a training program have to effectively prepare disabled individuals for the tech sector?

Training programs aimed at preparing disabled individuals for the tech industry must be robust and holistic. They should incorporate the latest accessible technologies and offer flexible learning modules to cater to a variety of learning preferences and needs. These programs need to include practical tech projects, mentorship opportunities, and partnerships with tech companies to provide practical experience and networking opportunities. Such real-world exposure is crucial for building the skills and confidence necessary for success in the tech industry.

E. Interview to Giacomo Rota, Director and Coordinator of AGPD Milano

1. What skills are most important to develop in individuals with Down syndrome to facilitate their inclusion in the workforce?

The most critical skills to focus on include both social and practical abilities. Communication skills are paramount; being able to express oneself clearly and understand others is crucial in any job setting. Additionally, we emphasize the development of social skills, such as teamwork, understanding social cues, and handling interpersonal interactions, which are vital for workplace integration. Practical skills related to specific job tasks are also important, depending on the employment field. Moreover, fostering a sense of responsibility and independence, such as managing one's time and completing tasks with minimal supervision, is essential.

2. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the current educational tools available for individuals with Down syndrome, and what could be improved?

While there has been significant progress in educational tools designed for individuals with Down syndrome, there is always room for improvement. Many existing tools are beneficial but can be too generic. Personalized educational approaches that cater specifically to the learning pace and style of each individual are needed. We believe that incorporating more technology-driven solutions, such as interactive apps and software that adapt to individual

learning curves, could enhance learning effectiveness. Additionally, there is a need for more comprehensive training programs that integrate life skills and vocational training from an early age.

3. What are the major concerns of parents of children with Down syndrome regarding their children's education and future employment?

Parents are primarily concerned with the long-term independence and financial stability of their children. Many worry about the lack of sufficient vocational training and employment opportunities tailored to individuals with Down syndrome. There's also a concern about societal acceptance and whether their children will be treated fairly and with respect in both educational and professional environments. Parents often stress the importance of creating more inclusive opportunities that do not just accommodate their children but truly value their contributions. Addressing these concerns requires collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and policymakers to create a more inclusive society that actively supports the employment of people with Down syndrome.