**Inclusive Hiring: How to Revamp your Company’s Recruitment and Interviewing Processes**

**Interview for the skills the job requires to get that prized employee**

If you’ve been doing your homework about how to support neurodiversity in the workplace, I don’t have to say a lot to convince you of the hows and whys that’s a good idea. You’re on board by now, and that’s awesome.

At this point, it may feel a little confusing. You might find yourself asking, where do I go from here? What are the practical steps you can take to support inclusion and implement a neurodiversity initiative in your company?

Let me step in to help.

As a consultant who specializes in helping businesses develop customized strategies for inclusion and neurodiversity initiatives, my goal is to help each client support their neurodivergent workers. Neurodiversity initiatives are fundamental for bringing out the best in divergent thinkers and empowering them to their fullest potential. This results in greater productivity, employee satisfaction and retention (i.e., loyalty), and a sharpened edge in any competitive marketplace.

But neurodiversity initiatives need to go beyond supporting and empowering the staff you already have.

### **Recruiting, Hiring, and Interviewing Neurodivergent Job Candidates**

A neurodiverse workforce is born from the people you bring onto your team. If you want to tap into the talent and potential of divergent thinkers, decision makers need to make an intentional effort to hire more neurodivergent employees. To do this, it is essential to take a long hard look at your company’s recruitment, hiring and interviewing practices.

There are two ways to make recruiting and hiring procedures more neurodivergent-friendly.

#### #1. Create a dedicated inclusive hiring stream, focused specifically on recruiting neurodivergent workers.

Large corporations frequently set up a separate hiring stream dedicated to bringing in neurodivergent (ND) talent. Alternatively, they may pair up with a private company that provides this as an outside hiring service. Some consider this a form of “affirmative action” because it is a program set up and designated exclusively targeting ND workers.

This option does require individuals to disclose their neurodivergent condition to take part in the specialized hiring stream but allows them immediate access to accommodations throughout the entire inclusive hiring and onboarding process.

An excellent example of this type of dedicated recruitment and hiring program is the [Autism at Work](https://www.sap.com/about/careers/your-career/autism-at-work-program.html) Program, originally created by tech giant SAP and now partnering with more than 30 corporations.

Workers apply to the company through the program rather than the standard Human Resources (HR) department.

Instead of applying for a specific posted job, interested individuals describe the type of work they are seeking. When there is a match between their stated skills, desired type of work, and job availability, they are invited to continue through the interview process. If they are hired, their onboarding and training will be individually determined by their unique needs. Additional support is provided in the form of an on-the-job mentor or dedicated support person until the new employee is fully assimilated into their role.

The entire process, from start to finish, is fully adapted for inclusion. The needs of ND individuals are considered along every step of the way. HR professionals working these programs are highly trained and specialized in working with ND workers.

Aside from obligating the job applicant to disclose a neurodivergent condition, the only downside to implementing a dedicated recruitment and hiring program is that it requires a fair number of resources. You are creating an entirely new division within your HR department or hiring one as an outside contractor!

#### #2. Revamp existing recruitment, hiring, and interviewing processes to be more inclusive for neurodivergent workers.

Not every business can afford to create or contract an exclusive department dedicated to inclusive hiring.

Fortunately, having a program like Autism at Work is not a prerequisite to become an inclusive, neurodiverse workplace.

Many “accommodations” can easily be implemented to your entire existing recruitment, interviewing, and hiring processes. The changes I am going to suggest are simple, cost-effective, and highly impactful.

An added benefit is that neurodivergent individuals do not need to reveal a diagnosis to be considered for a job. Job postings are accessible, interview processes are non-discriminatory, and everyone has a fair chance to prove their capabilities for any given role.

### **Simple Steps to Create Neurodivergent-Inclusive Recruiting, Hiring, and Interviewing Processes.**

1. Revamp Job Postings. Standard job descriptions are usually typed out text documents. Consider creating an audio file or a short video that provides all the same information. Distribute these together, allowing interested job candidates the freedom to choose which format works best for them to receive the information they need about your open position.
2. Revamp Job Descriptions. Make sure the job requirements posted reflect the job you need done. Avoid personality or character descriptions. Are soft skills like, “good ability to work in a team” or “strong communication skills” important to the role, or do they exist just to maintain a status quo of workplace culture?
3. Ditch Artificial Intelligence (AI) Screening Tools. While AI can undeniably make our lives easier (I LOVE talk-to-type technology with predictive text), it can also serve to underscore the intrinsic bias in the data it is operating from. Eliminate AI screening tools that claim to measure a person’s soft skills or analyze facial expressions during screening processes. When it comes to inclusive hiring, there is nothing quite as effective as a highly trained, conscientious people professional.
4. Ditch Traditional Interviews. Arrange to meet potential job candidates outside the traditional interview. Consider adopting a “meet up” process, where potential employees are encouraged to interact and complete tasks, either in a group or individually (depending on the role you are hiring for). You could also organize a meeting to look over the candidate’s portfolio, put them to work on a test project, or have them complete a skills assessment. [Specialisterne,](https://www.us.specialisterne.com/) a European consultancy company with a significant percentage of its employees on the spectrum, has a groundbreaking approach to the interview-alternative, which it calls a “hangout.” Job candidates, in an informal environment, can discuss and demonstrate their skills with hiring managers in a low stress atmosphere. Candidates who make an impression move into the next round of training.
5. Partner with Advocacy Groups: Reach out to groups such as [Teaching the Autism Community Trades (TACT)](https://www.buildwithtact.org/) or [NeuroTalent Works](https://www.neurotalentworks.org/), among many others, to build relationships with the neurodivergent community. Publish your career opportunities in their job listings and ask them to recommend talent. Better yet, consider creating a cooperative relationship that could potentially result in collaborative projects between the ND community and your business, mutually benefiting both!

### **Supporting Neurodiversity in Recruiting and Hiring**

When you revamp your company’s recruitment, hiring, and interviewing processes to be more inclusive of neurodivergence, you are supporting the creation of a truly neurodiverse workforce. Whether it be through clearly stated hiring goals and quotas, or by simply creating more accessible job opportunities, bringing new neurodivergent employees onto your team will supercharge your crew’s creativity, problem-solving capacity, and productivity.

The steps I outlined above require little more than a change in mentality, and a little ingenuity to make them work for your organization. These simple adjustments will reflect your company’s culture of commitment to diversity and inclusion.

### Resources and Recommended Reading

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion: [Neurodiversity in the Workplace Toolkit.](https://askearn.org/page/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace)

Bernick, M. (2022) Is Your Company Inclusive of Neurodivergent Employees? Harvard Business Review. Feb. 16, 2022. Retrieved online from https://hbr.org/2022/02/is-your-company-inclusive-of-neurodivergent-employees

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