

How to: Hire and Work with Neurodivergent Employees

Resource Type: Articles

Topic: HR Risk and Employment Practices

Neurodiversity is a concept that acknowledges and appreciates the diverse range of ways people's brains function, including neurological differences. Those differences can include dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), Tourette syndrome, and others. Some neurodiverse people identify as having a disability, while others do not. Research shows that organizations that create welcoming environments for neurodiverse people may see benefits like more team creativity and innovation. Here's a primer on practices for recruiting and working with people on the neurodiversity spectrum.

Share your commitment and demonstrate it. In job descriptions and on your website, share how your organization is making its hiring and culture more inclusive. State that your organization welcomes neurodiverse people.

Make accommodations in the application process. Provide an opportunity for applicants to share any support or accommodations they might need in order to complete your candidate vetting process, including interviews. Make sure the job description and application work with a text-to-speech reader. Ensure online applications can be completed in more than one session. Check that online forms and boxes do not move or lose their format when an applicant fills them out. Offer an option for telephone completion of the form.

Include essential information on job descriptions and forms, and word them clearly. Only include qualities on the job description that are essential to perform the role, and give detailed guidance about what information the applicant needs to provide on forms.

Offer interview options. If the candidate needs to prepare anything in advance, provide clear instructions, including a list of documents required for the interview. Share guidelines on what to wear for the interview with all candidates. Communicate how long the interview will take, including time estimates for each section. Provide detailed instructions on how to access the interview, including a map if in-person.

Consider the interview environment. Don't wear anything with a strong scent to an in-person interview. Offer an interview environment that's quiet, with minimal distractions like passersby. Turn your phone off. Don't hold the interview in a location with overly bright colors (like bright orange walls). Avoid asking open-ended questions. Ask one question at a time.

Make your onboarding inclusive. Provide comprehensive information in advance in a variety of formats. Spell out workplace norms and requirements—work hours, how employees communicate with each other and their bosses, and your dress code. Consider whether you need to break up or seek alternatives to common social aspects of onboarding, like happy hours. [Find out the employee's preferred method of communication \(written, spoken, images, etc.\)](#) and use it.

Manage individually. Always give clear, detailed, specific instructions. Spell out desired outcomes and deadlines, and don't make assumptions about what an employee knows. Offer detailed feedback on the

employee's work. Focus on behaviors you can measure. Consider multiple ways of presenting information. Make changes slowly and involve employees where you can.

Consider the timing and approach of performance feedback. Positive feedback usually has the biggest effect if it's given right after a task is performed. Corrective feedback, by contrast, ideally happens right before a task is performed again. Skillfully delivered corrective feedback helps employees learn new tasks and can decrease their anxiety about doing the task correctly.

Offer employees a full array of flexible work options. Opportunities to work from home and keep a flexible schedule can benefit workers across the board, but that's just the beginning of workplace flexibility. Neurodivergent employees will have a variety of needs and preferences in their work styles, like all employees. Some neurodivergent employees might thrive on routine and want to work the same schedule every day. Some might need noise-canceling headphones to tune out distractions, or "quiet rooms" in the office. Be open to customizing an individual work environment, schedule, and approach that works for everyone involved.

Pair neurodiverse employees with a mentor. A mentor can provide not only work advice, but also informal insight into an organization's culture and ways of working. Mentors can also help individuals form other connections in the workplace. Neurodivergent employees could also serve as future mentors or coaches.

Don't predetermine growth paths for employees. Some neurodiverse employees may want to climb the career ladder; others might focus on mastering a skill they love. Work with all employees, including neurodiverse employees, to create career paths responsive to their goals and skills.

Additional Resources

- [Landmark College Presents – Managing A Neurodiverse Workforce](#)
- [Hiring Managers' Toolkit for Diversity – Dublin City University](#)
- [Providing Performance Feedback to Support Neurodiverse Employees – MIT Sloan Management Review](#)
- [Neurodiversity in the Workplace – Deloitte](#)
- [Here's How to Make The Workplace Better for Neurodivergent Employees \(And Everyone, Really\) – Technical.ly](#)