

# Neurodiversity Inclusion: Checklist for Organizational Success

## Introduction

Finding and keeping top talent is an ongoing challenge for employers, especially in high-tech sectors. The Harvard Business Review [reported in 2017](#) that the European Union (EU) was facing an impending shortage of 800,000 information technology (IT) workers, many in strategically important and rapidly expanding areas. Increasing demand for candidates to fill jobs in specialized fields like information technology, banking and financial services, and healthcare is producing talent shortages. More and more, employers are turning to previously unexplored talent pools to help meet staffing needs. A growing number of companies have created programs specifically focused on recruiting and hiring neurodivergent people, including those on the autism spectrum.

This checklist summarizes some of the lessons learned from successful neurodiversity hiring programs. Employers can use these practices to design and implement a successful and scalable program to recruit, hire, retain, advance and provide long-term support for neurodivergent employees.

## Set the Course

- Assess the workplace culture to see if these kinds of initiatives would be a good fit (or if a global initiative, a good fit for the country)
- Obtain leadership support (e.g., an executive sponsor for the hiring initiative)
- Share an explicit statement (e.g., top line business case message) that the hiring initiative is a part of the overall business strategy
- Identify internal champions at the CEO or VP level to support implementation and help problem solve
- Solicit the support of your organization's disability-focused Employee/Business Resource Group (see EARN's [Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups](#))
- Engage employees who are family members of neurodivergent individuals in the initiative (may serve as buddies and mentors to neurodivergent employees and provide workforce support for the initiative)
- Develop a plan with a set of goals and targeted timelines for implementation of the initiative as well as measurements for assessing progress (see the [Autism@Work Playbook](#))

## Prepare the Workplace

Promote the hiring initiative to employees at all levels and engage supervisors

Design and implement supervisor training on the neurodiversity initiative

Prepare recruiters and interviewers to include neurodivergent candidates in the applicant review process

Assess how internal organizational resources can support the initiative

Review the accommodation process to ensure it includes accommodations for neurodivergent applicants and employees (e.g., workplace devices and other technologies which can support workplace communication, employability/soft skills, executive functioning and management of sensory processing needs)

Ensure job descriptions and job announcement postings are clear and include only truly essential tasks (see [Encouraging Applicants with Disabilities: Job Descriptions and Announcements](#))

## CREATE APPLICANT REFERRAL, INCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND SCREENING PROCESSES

Identify a local/regional service provider(s) who can assist with identifying applicants

Design a process to assess applicant skills to match these skills with required tasks

Train recruiters/hiring managers on inclusive interviewing approaches

Consider developing an alternative interview process for neurodivergent applicants

Read EARN's [Taking Disability Into Account: Proactive Recruiting and Hiring Practices](#) for general guidance on creating disability-focused hiring initiatives, including for neurodivergent employees

## BUILD AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CLIMATE TO FACILITATE RETENTION

Ensure that the onboarding/workplace orientation process is inclusive of neurodivergent employees (e.g., anticipates accommodation needs to address sensory sensitivities)

Prepare supervisors for conversations about career development and performance management (e.g., ways to nurture the unique characteristics of neurodivergent individuals, such as creativity and out-of-the box thinking, as well as lower anxiety, such as explaining the performance management process in advance and providing regular feedback on performance)

Identify internal resources that can provide support when needed (e.g., the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), mentors, etc.)

Identify community resources that can provide support when needed (e.g., job coaches, mental health supports, executive coaching and others)

Identify other resources for HR professionals, supervisors and others that can support access to accommodations for neurodivergent applicants and employees (e.g., the [Job Accommodation Network](#))

## Sustainability and Scaling

Design metrics to provide regular progress evaluation and identify areas for needed programmatic change

Engage other internal company partners (e.g., EAP, HR, communications team, training department, etc.) for support as needed to further internal communication campaigns, train staff, provide support to supervisors and neurodivergent employees, etc.

Regularly seek collaboration with and regular input, feedback and perspectives from neurodivergent employees as full partners in the success of these initiatives

Assess the culture fit for these kinds of initiatives (e.g., for country fit, if moving abroad)

Build longer-term talent pipelines (e.g., college partnerships, high school internships, etc.)

Collaborate with local apprenticeship programs to create apprenticeships that further employment opportunities targeted for neurodivergent candidates

## Resources

- EARN's [Neurodiversity in the Workplace](#) webpage
- EARN's [Toolkit for Establishing and Maintaining Successful Employee Resource Groups](#)
- Disability:IN and ACCESS-IT group's [Autism@Work Playbook](#)
- Harvard Business Review [Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage](#)
- [Job Accommodation Network](#)

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