

How to approach executive search for a neuroinclusive office

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Way more than a buzzword in today's world of work, you'll see the topic of neurodiversity covered lately among the likes of Forbes, Bloomberg, and the World Economic Forum. Here's a look at what the research is telling us when it comes to adding new skillsets to the modern workplace.



Image source: fauxels from [Pexels](#)

Neurodivergent is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions in which people's brains work in a different way from those who are considered to be neurotypical.

The umbrella covers conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and Tourette syndrome; and it is possible to have more than one of the above conditions at the same time.

Initially considered disorders, the research of today is rapidly uncovering the particular strengths – or skills – that such conditions may offer, over and above their apparent challenges.

Inclusive interview practices

When a senior neurodivergent individual has already proven their brilliance as a mentor to juniors, or as an astute contributor at board meetings, there are all kinds of changes we may be prepared to make to the executive search process we use to prepare them for a new position. Yet these same inclusive interview practices should ideally be extended to *all* new applicants – during which, according to [The Guardian](#), “body language and eye contact” should not have to count for so much.

Neurodiverse inclusivity = increased productivity

Fascinating [research](#) carried out by global consulting firm Deloitte, reveals that those companies that are kicking neurodiversity stigmas to the curb, are benefiting from as much as a 30% increase in productivity, and a third higher profit margins, than their competitors in the marketplace. This is because neurodivergent professionals often have such brilliant “visual thinking, attention to detail, pattern recognition, visual memory, and creative thinking”, that they can assist their neurotypical team mates in highlighting ideas or opportunities that may otherwise have been completely missed or skipped over.

“Over one billion people have a disability across the globe – and it is a strength. We are leveraging this – by hiring inclusively, contracting with disability-owned business enterprises, and creating accessible tools and technologies for all. We are doing this because it’s the right thing to do, and it makes good business sense,” revealed a group of 150 CEOs in a 2022 letter on Disability Inclusion.



World Autism Awareness Day: Ensuring your neurodiverse colleagues feel like they belong

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Yet more can be done to subvert traditional workplace processes so that neurodivergent individuals can thrive alongside their neurotypical colleagues. The World Economic Forum took the advice of the Harvard Medical School, and came up with these pointers:

- adjust workspaces to cater for sensory needs, or offer noise-cancelling headphones;
- use as clear a style of communication, both written and verbal, as possible;
- reinforce the expected standards of workplace etiquette, where necessary;
- do not change roles or tasks on a whim, rather give advance notice of such happenings;
- check in with employees as to their unique needs and goals; and
- above all, remember that kindness and patience go a very long way.

Once the executive search and other hiring processes have been opened to the entire population, and neurodiversity is being seen increasingly as a competitive advantage, so the benefits of doing so are able to shine through. [Harvard Business Review](#) lists the following:

- lower defect rates in products and services;
- the generation of significant innovations;
- improved overall communication among staff;
- enhanced loyalty and employee engagement; and
- the reputational benefits, even awards, that come with pioneering the way towards a more inclusive global workplace.

Employers taking part in the latest studies at the Birkbeck Research Centre for Neurodiversity at Work, describe the

remarkable abilities and work strengths of neurodivergent employees as follows: hyperfocus (80% of employers); creativity (78%); innovative thinking (75%); detail processing (71%); and being authentic at work (64%). Yet 85% of those with autism in the US, as just one typical example, remain unemployed.

Now is the time for companies big and small to break down barriers and implement programmes aimed at creating a more inclusive workplace. There's no way to miss the extensive range of benefits it will bring to society at large, and your very own workplace, once you've put the requisite accommodations and levels of support in place.

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