

Neurodiversity: A Workforce Assest

What does neurodiversity mean?

The word neurodiversity is about differences in peoples' brains. The word was created by a social scientist from Australia named Judy Singer. It means that everybody's brain is different. Some people think, learn, communicate, act, and move differently from other people.

For example, someone with dyslexia might process words and speech differently. Someone with dyspraxia might move differently. Someone with autism may communicate differently. And someone with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder might not pay attention or think things through in the same way as others would.

Some people who are neurodiverse may also act differently from others in social situations. They may also act differently in personal relations with other people. People who are neurodiverse do not all act the same. There is a big range in the way they may act in social situations or towards other people.

Neurodiversity and employment

Overall, people with disabilities are very unemployed or underemployed. This includes people who are neurodiverse. This is not good for those individuals or society. But it does mean that there is a hidden talent pool.

Neurodiverse people process information differently. This means they often find ways to do things that other people have not thought of or tried.

How to successfully hire and keep neurodiverse employees?

The first step is to recognize that neurodiversity is a part of disability. The second step is put neurodiversity with any workplace IDEA strategy. IDEA stands for Inclusion – Diversity – Equity – Accessibility. The last step is to provide the right supports and accommodations.

There are also other factors about a person that must be taken into account when looking at diversity. These can include things like a person's gender, sexual identity, race, age and other factors. This is called using an intersectional lens.

Do employers need to have a specific program for neurodiverse employees?

It is not necessary to have a specific program. But there are programs that can be used. There are many ways to hire and keep neurodiverse employees.

How can I learn more?

The following resources can help you learn more.

- *The Power of Disability* by Al Etmanski
- *Divergent Mind* by Jenara Neremberg
- Ryerson University's Diversity Institute and the Public Policy Forum
- Wanda Deschamps' lived experience story of undiagnosed autism in Broadview magazine
<https://broadview.org/autism-diagnosis-women/>
- The Valuable 500 at <https://www.thevaluable500.com>
- The #InclusionRevolution – a worldwide movement with new thinking about disability