

Team Building & Staffing

5 MIN READ

ARTICLE

Neurodiversity Hiring Will be a Competitive Advantage

Organizations that have embraced neurodiversity have seen enhanced overall employee morale and positive impacts on organizational culture.



Ajay Kaul

Managing Partner, AgreeYa Solutions

February 15, 2022



Credit: fresh ideas via Adobe Stock
PDF

Roxanne Hobbs, an author and coach who specializes in diversity, once said, “We have to welcome, accommodate and support a wider range of ‘normal,’ and only then will we benefit from the extraordinary difference the diverse minds can bring.”

This sentiment is applicable in the corporate world and can help organizations find a competitive advantage. According to experts, when organizations leverage neurodivergent talent pools, they can unravel new possibilities. Neurodiversity, which refers to the differences in neurological structure and function among human beings, is as essential as gender and cultural diversity in the workplace.

It’s essential to understand the spectrum to get the most benefit from neurodiversity in the workplace. People with autism, dyslexia, and attention deficit issues count for a significant portion of the neurodivergent population. Historically, organizations and their employees have shown prejudice to individuals on the spectrum out of concern for the adjustments necessary to accommodate their needs. However, these individuals can be highly successful in a suitable and welcoming environment. Workplaces need to shift their perspective from “fixing” the differences to learning how to work with them.

Organizations need to focus on the following four aspects to accommodate neurodiversity successfully:

- Gaining management and stakeholder buy-in
- Identifying people and budget to build and run the program
- Creating an optimal work environment
- Shifting to a long-term mindset

This concept is not new. There have been many successful examples in the real world. Take, for instance, Layne Kertamus, who is the founder of Asperian Nation and a famous TEDx speaker. He was unaware of his autism while successfully running his business, which also had other employees with autism that were able to perform all processes without any issues.

In one of his TED talks, he said “Autism at work, works best and I will show you why. The term neurodiversity is often associated though not exclusively with autism. But to be neurodiverse means to think differently or to process sensory information through a different channel and pathway in the brain.” This statement underscores how neurodiversity in the workplace brings innumerable ways of executing a process with varied manners.

Microsoft also embraced neurodiversity and changed their interview process to allow individuals time to showcase their abilities. They prioritized substance over the conventional fit that is defined for an organization. This shift has been very productive as a neurodiverse workforce is more inclined towards innovation, and an organization needs a perfect balance of both an effective and innovative workforce.

According to another [study by Microsoft](#), individuals with autism can bring untapped talent to the business. Their neurodiverse workforce is utilized across multiple domains:

- Autistic candidates are responsible for writing codes and developing services.
- They help other employees by providing training on managing a neurodiverse workforce.
- They have fostered a more inclusive environment motivating individuals outside of the program to feel comfortable self-identifying.

Implementing a successful and scalable program to recruit, hire, retain and advance neurodivergent employees requires deep research and expertise. Microsoft has set a benchmark globally with a path for other organizations to follow.

Benefits of Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Hiring neurodiverse employees provides organizations with a competitive edge, offering tangible benefits financially and in terms of workplace culture. Many employers are now beginning to understand the advantages of neurodiversity in the workplace and have started developing hiring initiatives focusing on recruiting neurodiverse workers.

Four top benefits of a neurodiverse program:

- Widen your talent pool: Employers can widen the organizational talent pool and recruit new talent by being neurodiverse inclusive.
- Increase rate of innovations: Neurodiverse minds work unconventionally, which opens the door for them to develop revolutionary ideas.
- More creative and dedicated employees: Neurodiverse minds are often less impacted by external distractions, enabling them to be very focused on the task at hand.
- Enhance management and leadership skillsets: As management works with neurodiverse minds, they strengthen their own leadership qualities and become more inclusive.

According to the National Autism Indicators reports by Drexel University, 51% of autistic people in work said their skills were higher than those their job required. It is important to identify the right roles to help these individuals shine. Those in the neurodivergent spectrum have the capacity to think beyond typical boundaries and can find creative solutions to complex problems. Another study conducted by [EY in 2019](#) found that individuals with dyslexia display the most in-demand skills for the workforce of the future. Their unique skillset can play a role in their leadership, creativity and benefit multiple diverse roles.

Organizations that have embraced neurodiversity have seen enhanced overall employee morale and positive impacts on organizational culture. Many organizations have pioneered the way by establishing a formalized and professional strategy for recruiting and hiring. To get started in your organization, look to your peers for tips or work with an experienced staffing partner to help your company realize the many benefits of a neurodiverse workforce.

Strategic CIO