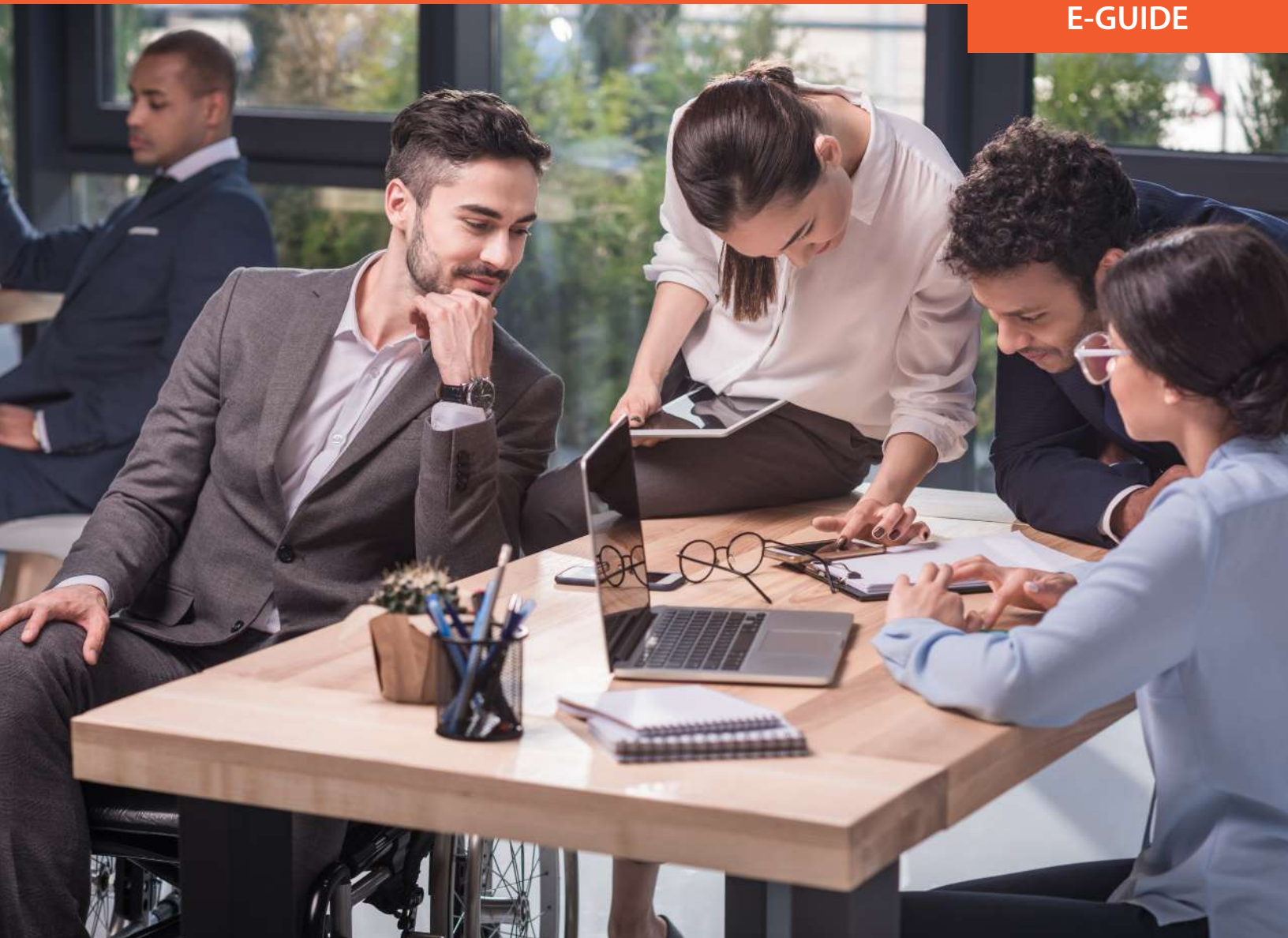




INCLUSIVE
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Neurodiversity in The Workplace

E-GUIDE



If you are interested in workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion, you've probably been hearing about neurodiversity lately. But what exactly is neurodiversity, and how can hiring neurodiverse employees benefit your organization. Read on to find out.

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Defining Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is defined by Dictionary.com as, “the variation and differences in neurological structure and function that exist among human beings, especially when viewed as being normal and natural rather than pathological.”

To take it a step further, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network states, “Neurodiversity refers to variation in neurocognitive functioning. It is an umbrella term that encompasses neurocognitive differences such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, Tourette’s syndrome, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, intellectual disability and schizophrenia, as well as ‘normal’ neurocognitive functioning, or neurotypicality. Neurodivergent individuals are those whose brain functions differ from those who are neurologically typical, or neurotypical.”



BENEFITS OF NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Neurodiversity is an aspect of diversity that enhances the workplace in numerous ways. People with neurocognitive disabilities have talents, perspectives and skills that can be distinctly beneficial in many work environments. More and more employers are beginning to understand these benefits and develop hiring initiatives that focus on recruiting neurodiverse workers.

While these efforts are more common in larger corporations, they have proven beneficial for businesses of all sizes in a variety of industries. Hiring neurodiverse employees can provide companies with a competitive edge that brings measurable benefits, both financially and in terms of workplace culture.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Employers who hire neurodiverse employees note their aptitude for roles that require attention to detail, ability to detect patterns and capacity for inferential reasoning, as well as strong skills in mathematics, coding and other data-driven processes. Neurodiverse employees are also often lauded for exhibiting loyalty and timeliness, and for offering innovative, creative perspectives to improve policies and procedures that can increase a company's bottom line. Employers consistently report that their neurodiverse teams prove more effective and productive than those without neurodiverse representation.

Employers who hire neurodiverse employees note their aptitude for specific roles within their organization.



Other capabilities that people with neurocognitive disabilities possess that benefit employers include:

- ▶ Keen accuracy and ability to detect errors
- ▶ High levels of concentration
- ▶ Strong recall and detailed factual knowledge
- ▶ Reliability and persistence
- ▶ Technical strengths
- ▶ Appreciation for routine/repetition.

While neurodiversity hiring programs are often known to seek out employees that prefer technological duties such as software engineering or tech operations, or repetitive tasks, such as data-entry or filing, there are a wide variety of jobs and responsibilities that neurodiverse employees can perform. These include (but are certainly not limited to) product management, human resources, banking and customer service.

In addition, research has shown that consumers prefer doing business with companies that employ people with disabilities. Given the high percentage of neurodivergence within the average customer base, having people on staff that represent the communities a company serves demonstrates thoughtfulness, good customer service, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion.



EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Neurodiverse hiring also offers benefits to other employees. Many people with neurocognitive disabilities, specifically those with autism, share experiences of discrimination and stigma, both in hiring processes and work settings, based on their perceived traits. However, many organizations find that having neurodiverse employees improves overall employee morale and positively affects organizational culture.

Often, neurotypical employees appreciate being educated about neurodiversity and say they tend to experience a greater sense of company pride when part of an inclusive workplace. Moreover, when neurodiverse employees are given job responsibilities that align with their skills and abilities, they—like most neurotypical employees—often report greater confidence and self-esteem.

Finally, neurodiverse employees frequently express greater comfort with interpersonal interactions when employers consider workplace environmental factors and make appropriate accommodations for their needs, such as providing social skills, teamwork and office behavior training.

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ACCOMMODATING NEURODIVERGENCE

Quite often, people with neurocognitive disabilities experience barriers to employment before they can even begin a job. The various aspects of the recruitment process, from job descriptions to interviewing, can pose concerns along the way that can deter neurodiverse candidates from pursuing a position.



NEURODIVERSITY HIRING INITIATIVES & PARTNERSHIPS

Many companies, from large corporations to small businesses, have developed successful neurodiversity hiring initiatives that are helping to improve their bottom lines and increase the employment rates of people with disabilities. Employers often form partnerships with nonprofit organizations; disability-focused groups; and/or state and local agencies to ensure their hiring initiatives are successful.



Capital One

As part of its focus on inclusion and diversity, Capital One in Richmond, VA set up an internship program aimed at bringing in young people on the autism spectrum to work at the company. The program, called Autism at Work, originated in 2009 as the brainchild of Capital One associates with children on the autism spectrum. In 2015, the program's first year, four of the seven interns who completed the program went on to work full-time at Capital One.



Ernst & Young EY

EY's neurodiversity initiative, now known as the Neurodiversity Centers of Excellence (NCoE), began in 2016 as a small pilot in its Philadelphia office. The company's goal is to leverage the strengths and sensitivities commonly associated with people with neurocognitive disabilities, including technological and analytical skills.

Neurodiverse EY professionals perform a variety of tasks and processes for clients. Employees in the program are often housed within a client's office alongside colleagues that focus on client relationships and other tasks, while other neurodiverse employees work out of EY's offices and handle tasks for multiple clients across various areas of the business.

As is the case for most successful neurodiverse hiring initiatives, EY's program does not require traditional recruitment and onboarding practices. Instead, they employ a project team and a host of external resources to source, select, onboard and support new hires.



Freddie Mac

Freddie Mac partnered with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) in 2012 to create an Autism Internship Program designed to match business needs with the unique capabilities of people with autism spectrum disorder. The program is geared to highly qualified individuals who have had a hard time finding or keeping work due to problems with social communication. Through the program, the company works with each individual to match abilities to jobs and help build "soft" skills. The program began with four interns and has since had 17 additional interns complete the program, nine of which were hired for full-time positions. Watch a video about Freddie Mac's neurodiversity hiring initiative.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WORKPLACE NEURODIVERSITY

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) is a free resource that helps employers tap the benefits of disability diversity by educating public- and private-sector organizations on ways to build inclusive workplace cultures. EARN offers information and resources to empower individuals and organizations to become leaders in the employment and advancement of people with disabilities.

EARN assists employers through online support and a range of education and outreach activities. Each year, EARN attracts more than 93,000 unique visitors to their website, which offers employer-focused resources on a range of disability inclusion topics including sourcing and hiring individuals with disabilities, disability etiquette, reasonable accommodations and encouraging self-identification.

Contact EARN Neurodiversity in the Workplace

<https://askearn.org/topics/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace/>



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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION CONSULTING SERVICES

The Inclusive Leaders Group team has extensive experience and deep expertise regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within all industries. We know that sometimes organizations don't always have the experienced talent resources internally to execute diversity and inclusion strategic planning. Those that do, often find their team busy managing current initiatives.

Let's Talk About Building Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at Your Organization.

Our experts are here to help. Get in touch with us about your organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and needs.

Contact Us. We'd love to partner with you!