

ADHD in the workplace: New search history research reveals harmful myths that employers must address

The nation's online search habits over the last year uncover harmful – and often incorrect – misconceptions about colleagues with ADHD. From uncertainty on whether people with ADHD can work at all, to questioning their professionalism, our research shows we still have a long way to go before workplace neurodiversity is fully supported by all businesses.

Temps de lecture : minute

22 October 2024

This ADHD Awareness Month, [new Bupa research](#) shows that the UK still has a lot to learn when it comes to understanding and embracing ADHD in the workplace.

How many of these damaging monthly searches feed into stereotypes that can limit your workers' – and business's – potential?

- 'ADHD and laziness': 320 average monthly Google searches
- 'Is ADHD real or an excuse?': 170 average monthly Google searches
- 'Can people with ADHD work?' 20 average monthly Google searches

Diana Podlewska Monteiro, Inclusion Partner at [Bupa Insurance](#), shares important advice for all employers to help dispel ADHD myths from the workplace, along with offering eight practical tips to support ADHD workers.

“ADHD is a form of neurodiversity, which unfortunately many employees choose not to disclose to their employers due to fear of stigma and discrimination. Companies need to take ADHD education and awareness seriously if they want to help normalise it. When employees feel supported, they’re more likely to openly share any adjustments they need to thrive. Without this support, it becomes considerably harder for employees to achieve their goals, which in turn affects the overall success of the organisation.” – Diana Podlewska Monterio



À lire aussi

[From Vogue to ADHD Champion - my startup story](#)

8 practical steps to support ADHD workers

1. Get to know your employee

Speak to your employee to find out the ways their ADHD affects their ability to work. This way, you’ll hear directly from them what does and doesn’t work, so no one is making assumptions or creating stereotypes.

Knowing your employee on an individual basis helps you understand how best to support their strengths and what they may struggle with in the workplace. Always ask their permission before introducing any new work measures.

2. Think about technology to help them

Some employees with ADHD may benefit from technology to help them work better. Again, you should discuss this with the employee to check what adjustments would help them, beforehand. For some, having a larger, dual computer monitors can make tasks more achievable. Having all information visible at once can help reduce your employee's reliance on memory.

Research any computer applications that may help workers with ADHD. Specially designed by experts, they may reduce any challenging aspects of their role and offer practical alternatives. Ask your employee whether technology to help with reminders, scheduling, reading, writing, noise and distractions can be helpful. *The ADHD Foundation* makes many useful suggestions that could be of aid to workloads.

3. Find a rhythm that works

All UK employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for their workers, where needed. For those with ADHD, agreeing a degree of flex to their working day can make a huge difference. Some employees with ADHD may have trouble with timekeeping. Rather than having a fixed start and finish work time, talk about having a window where they can begin and end work.

Some elements of your employee's work schedule may be more difficult for them to achieve because of their condition. Things that may not be critical like paperwork, or repetitive tasks could be particularly challenging.

Introduce your employee to specialised working techniques if they struggle with concentration and productivity. The Pomodoro technique (working in short, 25 minute burst with five minute breaks), and scheduling longer breaks after meetings can help manage workloads achievably.

4. Look at their workstation

Many offices are designed for neurotypical workers. If an employee has ADHD, their environment can be a barrier to working well. If they're expected to work on their own, or on repetitive, high concentration tasks, they're unlikely to thrive.

If your team uses a hot-desking system, consider the implications this may have for ADHD employees. Visual and physical prompts around workstations can be of great use if you have ADHD- from wall charts to laying out equipment and tools at the end of the workday, ready for the next.

Speak to your employee - they may benefit from their own workspace, in an area that isn't too bustling. That way, they can make their base with those visual and physical prompts to help them achieve their goals. They might also like a 'buddy' working system to help keep them accountable and focus levels high.

Introducing specific quiet zones in the office can offer a supportive outlet for all employees to use if they're feeling overwhelmed, without singling out any specific neurodivergent employees.

5. Communicate clearly and suitably

It can be helpful to break down tasks, especially if they're part of a bigger project. Having a clear, written plan, chunking tasks into bite sized steps may be a simple modification that makes the world of difference to

someone with ADHD.

Schedule regular catch-ups and supervision with their line manager so they're able to check in, make adaptations and deliver feedback.

6. Make yourself and your organisation approachable

The key to giving a worker with ADHD the confidence to ask for help is approachability. If staff feel pressured to open up when they don't want to, it may create a restrained atmosphere.

Make sure to regularly catch up with staff with ADHD to ascertain whether their working environment and workload remain manageable. Make the conversation two way, and remember to ask for the employee's permission before making any adjustments.

Think about establishing groups within your company that encourage neurodiverse employees to talk to other employees with similar experiences, and collectively give them the confidence to ask for adjustments they may need.

7. Knowledge share to tackle ADHD myths

We know from our research that there's still plenty of *misinformation circulating about ADHD*. Most people with ADHD don't actually tell their employer about it. They may be worried that they'll be seen as a distraction or less capable because of the stigmas that still surround the condition.

Educating your neurotypical employees about the condition can help your whole workforce to better understand, support and celebrate neurodiversity – both in and out the workplace. This may help any diagnosed staff to feel comfortable to talk about their ADHD and any challenges they face.

8. Signpost to support services

If you find that your employee is struggling, remember to treat them with the same patience and empathy you would any other employee. ADHD isn't a mental health condition, but working in a workplace set up for neurotypical people may take its toll and lead to mental health issues, like anxiety or depression.

Alongside listening to your employee and agreeing on any adjustments that they may need, don't forget to signpost them to any support services your company has access to, like neurodiversity benefits and employee assistance programmes. This may help them to manage their feelings and develop a deeper understanding of their condition and ways to cope with it. Find out more about managing neurodiverse employees.

Diana Podlewska Monteiro, Inclusion Partner at Bupa Insurance,



MADDYNEWS UK

The newsletter you need for all the latest from the startup ecosystem

JE M'INSCRIS
