

# Redefining inclusion: 5 steps to embrace and empower Neurodiverse talent at work

*Each year, companies miss out on some of the brightest, most inventive minds because they're just not set up to welcome neurodivergent talent. About 1 in 7 people are neurodivergent – from those with autism and ADHD to dyslexia and dyspraxia – each bringing fresh, often invaluable perspectives.*

Temps de lecture : minute

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Yet, a report from 2022 by the Institute of Leadership & Management found that “very few organisations are thinking about neurodiversity or neuroinclusion,” making it a missed opportunity for businesses looking to address talent shortages and make strides in equality, certainly in the modern talent arms race.

By changing your perspective on neurodiverse employees and providing support, you can benefit from creative problem-solvers and innovative thinkers while fostering inclusivity and tolerance. Here's how your company can start embracing neurodiverse talent.

## 1. Rethink the Hiring Process

If your hiring relies on “performing well” in interviews, it might miss out on some of the best candidates. Neurodiverse individuals can feel overwhelmed in standard interviews, as the focus on social expectations and quick queries may not showcase their abilities effectively.

Some companies, like Microsoft and SAP, are shifting their hiring process to be more inclusive by using multi-day, task-based assessments. This gives neurodiverse candidates the chance to showcase skills without pressure to think on the spot. Even providing candidates with interview questions in advance can help them perform at their best. Tailoring the hiring process ensures a fair look at a candidate's abilities, not just their ability to "sell" themselves in 30 minutes.

## 2. Offer Flexibility in the Workspace

The classic 9-to-5, open-plan office isn't for everyone, particularly for neurodiverse employees who may thrive best in tailored environments. For some, sensory overload from a noisy office can affect productivity; for others, rigid hours may clash with peak focus times.

Creating a more flexible workspace might mean offering quiet zones, flexible hours, or remote work options. Research has shown that such flexibility significantly boosts retention rates among neurodiverse employees. Plus, many of these changes benefit everyone, helping to create a happier, more productive workplace. Indeed, research by Harvard Business Review authors Ethan Bernstein and Ben Waber reveals that open office designs, while intended to encourage face-to-face interaction, often have the opposite effect. In a study of two Fortune 500 companies, face-to-face interactions dropped by 70% after moving to open-plan spaces, with digital communication increasing as a substitute.

## 3. Recognise and Leverage Unique Strengths

It's no surprise that tech giants like Google and HP actively recruit neurodiverse employees for innovation-focused roles. Neurodiverse individuals bring fresh perspectives that can lead to game-changing ideas. For instance, autistic individuals can often excel in detail-oriented tasks, those with ADHD can thrive in fast-paced, creative environments,

and people with dyslexia are frequently skilled problem-solvers, quick to notice patterns others may miss. While these aren't rules for neurodiverse individuals, they help illustrate how unique minds can approach problems from a new perspective.

Identifying and aligning these strengths with the right roles isn't just smart - it's transformative. When neurodiverse employees can work to their strengths, it benefits both the individual and the company as a whole.

## 4. Build a Culture of Support and Inclusivity

Hiring neurodiverse talent is a great start, but the actual work lies in building a company culture that genuinely supports it. Going beyond "ticking the box" to create a workplace where neurodiverse employees feel valued and empowered makes a real difference.

One effective approach is to provide targeted training to managers and colleagues on neurodiversity. A little awareness can make a big difference in creating a respectful, supportive work environment. Mentorship or buddy systems are also effective for helping neurodiverse employees navigate the workplace. The result? Happier employees who feel understood and are more likely to stick around.

## 5. Embrace Continuous Improvement

Inclusivity isn't a one-time effort; it's a process that requires ongoing attention. Listening to employee feedback, especially from neurodiverse team members, is crucial. Regularly assess how your policies and practices work. Are your neurodiverse employees thriving? Are there areas where they feel unsupported?

By staying open to change, you ensure that your neurodiverse employees

- and your company - continue to flourish. Embracing neurodiverse talent isn't just about doing the right thing; it's a strategic choice that drives innovation, improves morale, and strengthens your company's competitive edge.

Bruce Rose is Head of Strategy at *Envoku*.

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Article by Bruce Rose