

Inclusive Hiring: Embracing Neurodivergent Talent

Leadership Council-Exclusive Resource



Neurodiversity refers to the natural variations in how people's brains process information, viewing these differences as strengths rather than deficits. While it encompasses conditions like Tourette Syndrome and Dyspraxia, the term is most associated with Autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities.

Recognizing neurodiversity as a natural variation in human experience, not a limitation, is key to building a truly inclusive workplace.

What Roles are Suitable for Neurodivergent Employees?

Neurodivergent individuals can thrive in virtually any field—especially when employers understand and leverage their distinct strengths. With a diverse set of skills and ways of thinking, the key to success lies in finding the right fit for each individual, just as it does for all candidates.

Neurodivergent individuals often possess certain strengths that can greatly benefit any organization:

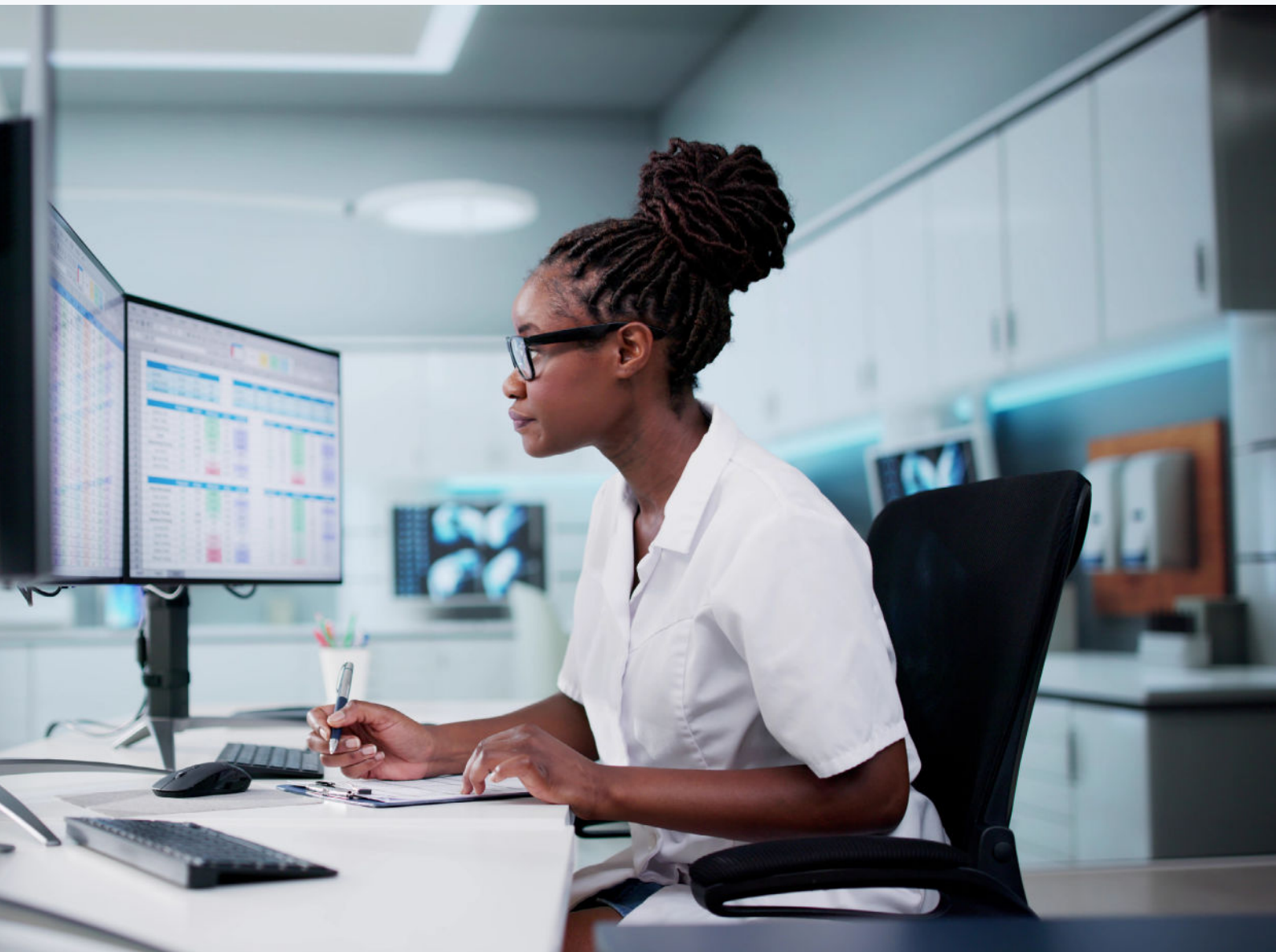
Systems Thinking: An exceptional ability to identify patterns and connections that others might miss, making them natural problem-solvers.

Creativity and Innovation: Their different ways of thinking often inspire creative solutions that others might overlook.

Attention to Detail: A keen eye for detail that makes neurodivergent individuals particularly suited for tasks requiring precision and focus.

While these strengths are often associated with routine or administrative roles, they can be applied to a variety of functions and levels. Skills like systems thinking and attention to detail are critical in fields like software development and engineering, while creativity and innovation can lead to success in roles like marketing or even CEO.

Each person's neurodivergence is unique, and their strengths may manifest in different ways. It's important to actively increase the number of neurodivergent applicants across all job functions and provide accommodations during the interview process when needed to ensure neurodivergent individuals have the opportunity to showcase their talents.



Should We Pilot a Neurodiversity Hiring Initiative?

Before launching a pilot program, the National Organization on Disability (NOD) recommends carefully reviewing your existing hiring processes to ensure they are aligned with the best practices outlined in this guide.

Neurodiversity hiring initiatives have gained momentum, with companies increasingly adopting this inclusive approach. Targeting talent with disabilities is key to fostering diverse and equitable workplaces, and we encourage organizations to invest in these efforts.

If your hiring practices are already inclusive, a pilot program can help further boost neurodivergent representation. However, **it's important to avoid the common pitfall of focusing these programs on routine or administrative roles, as highlighted earlier.**

To navigate these challenges and maximize the impact of your neurodiversity hiring efforts, please reach out to your NOD Disability Inclusion Specialist.



Recruiting Neurodivergent Talent

To hire more neurodivergent employees, you must first take intentional steps toward inclusive recruitment. Here are some strategies to attract neurodivergent talent:

Partner with Colleges and Universities

Many universities have dedicated neurodiversity or disability inclusion programs that support students with disabilities. By connecting with these programs, you can directly engage with talented candidates who may otherwise be overlooked.

The Rochester Institute of Technology's Neurodiverse Hiring Initiative is one example of university programs that help connect employers with neurodivergent students.

[Learn more >](#)

Connect with Community Organizations

Look to state vocational rehabilitation programs and nonprofits that specialize in supporting neurodivergent job seekers. These organizations can help you identify candidates who might be a great fit for your team.

The NET, National Employment Team of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, is the national network of 78 state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs across the U.S. These programs can assist in identifying qualified candidates and provide resources for a successful hiring process.

[Learn more >](#)

Integrate Advisors is one example of a nonprofit that helps companies recruit neurodivergent talent.

[Learn more >](#)

Evaluate How Your Company Communicates Its Initiatives

Has your company implemented any neurodiversity-focused initiatives in the past year, such as updating office spaces, hosting townhall discussions, or organizing conferences? The way you communicate these efforts externally can shape how potential candidates perceive your organization.

Review Your Landing Page

We recommend companies develop a career landing page tailored to job seekers with disabilities, following [NOD's guidelines](#). Whether you create a dedicated page or integrate some of these ideas into your standard career site, be sure to highlight neurodiversity.

Write Inclusive Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are often the first point of contact a candidate has with your company. To ensure inclusivity for individuals with disabilities, there are several best practices you can follow.

The ones listed below are particularly important when attracting neurodivergent candidates:

Use clear, direct language: Avoid jargon or overly complex wording that might be confusing.

Describe the work environment: Be transparent about the workplace setup, such as whether it's remote or in-office, whether there are single offices available, and noise levels.

Be transparent about the hiring process: Let candidates know what to expect from the application and interview process, including the timeline and what kinds of assessments (if any) will be involved.

Below is a sample job description that demonstrates how these practices are put into action.

Senior Marketing Manager, Digital Acquisition

Reports To:

Marketing Director

Location:

Financial District, Manhattan (Hybrid-eligible)

Schedule:

Monday – Friday, 8 AM – 6 PM | Fixed schedule.

Travel:

Two 5-day trips/year within continental US, expenses paid.

Application Process

The process includes three in-person meetings at our main office and an online test before the first interview. Please refer to our accommodation policy for assistance with accommodations.

Essential Functions

- **Campaign Management:** Plan, execute, and manage digital acquisition campaigns across multiple channels to drive customer acquisition and growth.
- **Performance Analysis:** Monitor, analyze, and report on campaign performance, making data-driven recommendations to optimize ROI and improve key metrics.
- **Budget Management:** Oversee and allocate the digital marketing budget, ensuring optimal spend across campaigns to achieve acquisition goals and maximize ROI.

Marginal Functions

- **Training:** Lead intern onboarding sessions for up to 50 attendees, ensuring effective knowledge transfer.

Work Environment

- **Fast-Paced:** The role requires managing multiple tasks with tight deadlines.
- **Private Workspace:** A designated private workspace is available in the office.
- **Remote Flexibility:** Up to two remote workdays per week.

Accommodations Policy

At Company A, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive workplace. We provide reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities to ensure equal access throughout the hiring process and in performing the job. Please complete the accommodation request form, and we will follow up within two business days.

Interviewing Neurodivergent Talent

Interviews can be a stressful process, and neurodivergent individuals may face additional challenges compared to neurotypical candidates. To avoid unintentionally overlooking neurodivergent individuals who could thrive in your workplace, consider the following:

1. Focus on Skills, Not “Cultural Fit”

Rather than assessing how well a candidate aligns with your company’s existing culture, focus on their skills and potential. The concept of “culture fit” can unintentionally exclude neurodivergent candidates.

2. Offer Alternative Formats

Not all candidates excel in a traditional interview format. Offer alternatives like work samples, written responses, or task-based assessments. For longer or more complex questions, provide them in writing to give candidates time to process and respond effectively, allowing them to showcase their abilities more clearly.

3. Give Extra Time for Responses

Neurodivergent individuals may need more time to process information or formulate their responses. Be patient and avoid rushing candidates during the interview.

4. Rethink Traditional Expectations

Not all candidates will make eye contact, offer a handshake, or communicate in the same way. Recognize that these traditional expectations may not align with how neurodivergent candidates express themselves.

5. Focus on Real-World Tasks

Instead of asking hypothetical questions (e.g., “How would you solve this problem in 10 years?”), try practical exercises that mirror the role they’re applying for. This gives you a clearer idea of their skills in action.

By implementing the strategies outlined, you'll create a more inclusive hiring process where neurodivergent candidates feel supported and valued. However, remember that it is equally important to foster an inclusive workplace culture that continues to support them.

For guidance throughout the employee lifecycle, reach out to your Disability Inclusion Specialist or contact us at council@nod.org.



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