BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

FROM "CULTURE FIT" TO "CULTURE ADD"

The gold standard for modern talent acquisition is a culture add mindset — one that values different ways of thinking, working, and communicating.

When hiring with neurodivergent populations in mind, we move away from rigid, traditional interviewing habits that often test for social conformity rather than actual job performance. A neuro-inclusive talent acquisition strategy creates a fairer, more effective hiring process that benefits **all candidates** — not just those who are neurodivergent.

WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity recognizes and values the natural variations in how people think, learn, and experience the world. It includes individuals with, but is not limited to:

Autism
Different ways of processing information, social cues, and sensory input.

ADHD
Unique focus, energy, and creativity patterns.

Dyslexia
Different ways of reading, processing, and retaining information.

Dyspraxia
Differences in motor planning, coordination, and spatial awareness.

Tourette's
Involuntary movements or vocalizations (tics).

Different brains. Same potential.

1 JOB DESCRIPTION & POSTING DESIGN

Write for skills, not stereotypes.

Traditional job descriptions are often filled with corporate jargon and unnecessary requirements that inadvertently filter out qualified neurodivergent talent.

- **Separate Essential vs. Preferred Skills**
  Clearly distinguish between "must-have" technical skills and "nice-to-have" attributes.
- **Eliminate Generic "Soft Skill" Bloat**
  Avoid boilerplate phrases like "excellent communication skills" or "must be a team player" unless central to the role.
- **Use Direct, Literal Language**
  Write in clear, concise bullet points. Avoid metaphors, buzzwords, and ambiguous phrasing.
- **Explicitly State Inclusion Policies**
  Include a welcoming statement inviting candidates to request accommodations at any stage.

2 SOURCING AND ATTRACTION

Go beyond the job boards.

Relying solely on traditional job boards can limit your reach. Active partnership and targeted sourcing are key.

- **Partner with Specialized Organizations**
  Collaborate with neurodiversity-focused agencies, non-profits, and university programs (e.g., Specialisterne, Neurodiversity in the Workplace).
- **Showcase Authentic Workplace Culture**
  Provide realistic previews of the physical and cultural work environment through videos or virtual tours so candidates know what to expect.

3 THE INTERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT STAGE

Focus on skills, not social cues.

Traditional interviews heavily favor neurotypical social cues — such as sustained eye contact, firm handshakes, and rapid-fire witty banter — which rarely correlate with on-the-job performance.

- **Provide an Interview Roadmap**
  Send an agenda at least 48 hours in advance. Include names/roles, format, and discussion topics.
- **Offer Skills-Based Assessments**
  Replace ambiguous behavioral questions with practical, work-sample tests or work trials.
- **Reframe Questioning Techniques**
  Use clear, concrete questions instead of multi-part or abstract ones.
- **Evaluate Content, Not Delivery**
  Train interviewers to disregard non-traditional communication styles (atypical eye contact, fidgeting, pauses, flat affect, etc.).

4 THE ACCOMMODATION & DISCLOSURE PROCESS

Make it easy to speak up — and easy to succeed.

Fear of stigma often prevents candidates from disclosing their neurodivergence. The burden of initiating the accommodation conversation should be eased by the employer.

- **Normalize Accommodations for Everyone**
  Instead of "Do you have a disability that requires accommodation?", ask "What environment or tools help you perform at your best during an interview?"
- **Provide Options by Default**
  Offer choices for interview formats, such as a written assessment instead of a live coding challenge, or allowing a camera-off virtual interview.

5 ONBOARDING AND INTEGRATION

Set new hires up for long-term success.

The talent acquisition process does not end when the offer letter is signed. The transition into the workplace dictates long-term retention.

- **Provide Explicit Onboarding Material**
  Deliver written, step-by-step guides regarding workplace norms, unwritten rules, office layouts, and tech setups.
- **Assign a Workplace Buddy**
  Match the new hire with a peer mentor who can answer logistical and social questions without the pressure of manager evaluation.
- **Train the Hiring Team**
  Ensure the team welcoming the new hire has undergone neurodiversity awareness training to foster a genuinely supportive environment from day one.

NEURO-INCLUSIVE TALENT ACQUISITION BUILDS MORE INNOVATIVE, ADAPTABLE, AND HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS.

More perspectives. Better outcomes.

ISR INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

INCREASES TALENT POOL
Accesses skilled, diverse candidates.

BUILDS STRONGER TEAMS
Brings different perspectives and problem-solving styles.

IMPROVES PERFORMANCE
Leverages authentic strengths and reduces turnover.

CREATES A MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE
Where everyone can thrive and belong.