AUTISM @ WORK
PLAYBOOK



Finding talent and creating meaningful employment opportunities for people with autism



EY

Information School
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Microsoft

SAP

About this guide

The Autism @ Work Playbook is the product of a collaborative research project, *Autism-Ready Workplace: Creating and Sustaining Autism Hiring Initiatives*, led by Dr. Hala Annabi, an associate professor at the University of Washington Information School. To create this guide, the ACCESS-IT Research Group at the Information School studied the Autism @ Work programs of four leading employers: Microsoft, SAP, JPMorgan Chase and EY.

In their research, Dr. Annabi and her team systematically examined how the firms established their programs and how they sustain them. The researchers analyzed key organizational strategies, employment and resourcing models, and hiring and onboarding practices. In their analysis, the researchers distilled best practices and developed this guide for other organizations to use to get their programs started.

This is the second edition of the Playbook, including a new chapter on remote recruiting and onboarding.

ACCESS-IT: A Context for Creating Employment Success in Information Technology

Dr. Hala Annabi, Director

ACCESS-IT is a research program at the University of Washington Information School that aims to improve the representation of women and individuals with autism in the information technology industry. The program strives to improve representation by creating workplaces ready to welcome and equitably include women and people with autism. Researchers achieve their goals by studying how to create practices that equitably prepare, recruit, retain, and advance people with autism and women in the IT industry.

For more information about ACCESS-IT, visit http://access-it.ischool.uw.edu.

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PLAYBOOK

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Introduction

At a time of overall uncertainty, a changing and, in some instances, shrinking labor pool, and a scarcity of qualified talent in STEM, manufacturing and other sectors, businesses of all sizes and across industries are challenged like never before. Shortages of skilled employees and professionals may be among the biggest constraints to growth and sustainability in the new economy across various industry sectors. The pandemic has introduced new workforce challenges and emphasized the importance of identifying, attracting, and retaining a diverse pool of candidates.

Many individuals on the autism spectrum have the capabilities businesses need, and with an under- or unemployment rate nearing 80%, they can become a key part of the solution. Microsoft, JPMorgan Chase & Co., EY and SAP are just four of many great companies that have started inclusive hiring efforts in the neurodiversity space.

In partnership with the University of Washington Information School, we are excited to bring together our collective learnings, approaches and insights around starting a similar hiring initiative at your own company, no matter the size or industry.

As a group of large employers that launched the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable, we are focused on not only finding great talent for our companies, but in sharing and helping others begin their own inclusive hiring journeys.

One of the most common questions is: How do I get started? There is no one-size-fits-all answer, so we wanted to pull together and share some common approaches and ideas for you to consider. Every company culture is different. So is its approach to recruiting, interviewing, onboarding and developing talent. However, we've found that many of the core questions and building blocks are similar.

We are focused on not only finding great talent for our companies, but in sharing and helping others begin their own inclusive hiring journeys.

Please use this Autism @ Work Playbook to help address your initial questions and build a framework for your program. In this second edition, we have included a chapter on virtual recruitment and onboarding in response to COVID-19. We are happy to continue the dialogue to support you in your journey at ***autismemployerroundtable@disabilityin.org***. Note that we use person-first language, but understand it is a personal choice and you can feel free to replace it with identity-first language if preferred.

Many companies recently have also started with Neurodiversity Hiring programs instead of Autism, but the principles and framework in the following chapters apply just the same. Neurodiversity encompasses a wide range of cognitive differences, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.

We hope you find this resource helpful and welcome your feedback or suggestions.

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The Planning Phase

Organizations interested in establishing Autism @ Work programs often don't know quite how or where to start. In this section, we provide a road map for organizations interested in developing autism hiring programs and neurodiversity centers of excellence. This chapter contains lessons learned and best practices related to the planning of such programs, identified by leading firms that have successfully designed and launched them in the U.S.

In the planning phase, consider the following ***five key questions*** to guide your efforts:

1. Why are we doing this?
- How does this fit our culture and values?
- How does this align with our strategy?

2. Who can help?
- Who will champion this effort on the executive level?
- Who will carry it out on the operational level?
- What existing internal and external entities can help us?

3. How do we make the business case?
- What is the program's value proposition?
- What are the costs of the program and the ROI?

4. Where do we start?
- How do we scope the program initially?
- What does a pilot look like?
- Where do we find/source talent?

5. What does success look like?
- What are the KPIs?
- How do we iterate and grow the program?
- How do we continue to support the development of candidates hired through the program and their managers?

PLANNING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Define your program's value proposition
- ✓ Align with your organization's strategy and values
- ✓ Secure executive sponsorship
- ✓ Get buy-in and headcount from business unit leaders
- ✓ Develop the right internal and external partnerships
- ✓ Identify the right roles and provide meaningful work
- ✓ Identify talent pipeline/sourcing partners
- ✓ Start with a small pilot
- ✓ Communicate your end game
- ✓ Allocate people and resources to run the program

1. Why are we doing this?

The first step in the planning phase is to be clear about why you are motivated to create an Autism @ Work program and whether it makes sense for your organization. Leading firms cite several reasons for developing their programs, including:

1. A desire to make a positive social impact

2. An organizational culture and values that support equal opportunity employment and accessibility

3. The need for talent and potential for innovation

Leading firms emphasize the importance of aligning the reasons for the program with your organization's strategy, culture and values.

> ***We learned very quickly that for the program to succeed, it had to meet our company needs and fit our culture and values.***

KEY QUESTIONS

- How does this initiative align with our organization's strategy?
- How does this initiative fit our culture and values?

2. Who can help?

Autism @ Work programs may be initiated from any level within an organization. However, a coalition of internal and external partners is needed for successful execution.

To develop and effectively launch a program, it is important to leverage resources and expertise internally. To establish the necessary ***internal partnerships***:

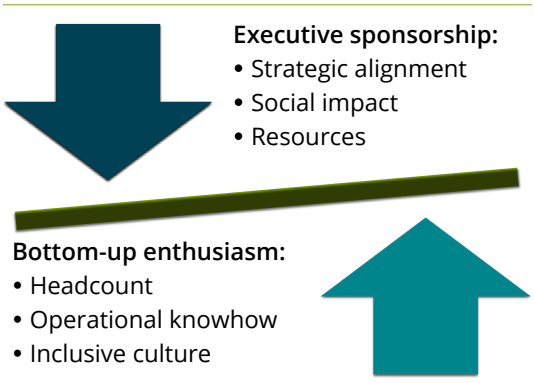
1. Secure executive sponsorship. This requires an explicit and well-articulated business case.

2. Identify a program leader or leaders who have the enthusiasm to make a difference and the social capital and knowhow to garner support from business unit leaders.

3. Secure support from business unit leaders who can provide job opportunities within their units.

4. Build partnerships with relevant internal units such as Diversity & Inclusion, Legal and Human Resources.

▶ ***Table 1.1*** *describes the specific role partners play in the planning phase.*



Leading Autism @ Work firms emphasize the importance of support and enthusiasm from various levels of the organization. Wide support creates the inclusive culture necessary for the success of the program.

INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Secure executive sponsorship
- ☐ Identify program leader
- ☐ Secure support from business unit leaders
- ☐ Build partnerships with HR, Legal and D&I

Leading firms rely on a variety of external partners to plan, launch and sustain their programs. External partners include community agencies, vendors, and schools and colleges and provide many resources and services. Perhaps most critical to the success of Autism @ Work programs is the ability to source talent. To build essential ***external partnerships***:

1. Tap into the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable to learn and share best practices.
2. Develop sourcing relationships with vendors, community agencies, universities and schools.
3. Identify community and federal resources to support your program and employees who can provide job coaches and other support services.
4. Select the right partners who understand your needs, values and culture and are willing to adapt to them.

▶ ***Table 1.1*** *describes the specific role partners play in the planning phase.*

> ***A key success factor in building external partnerships is identifying the right partners who understand and are willing to adapt to your organization's needs, values, and culture.***

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Tap into Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable
- ☐ Identify sourcing partners
- ☐ Identify community resources
- ☐ Select the right partners

LESSONS LEARNED

Who can help?

Executive buy-in is crucial.

- Identify the right executives who will be supportive and have the influence to get others to support the program as well.
- Be prepared with your business case tailored to your target executive.

Partnerships are crucial to success.

- Reach out for help. There's a community of resources available and people happy to assist.
- Take time to learn about the available resources and develop relationships.
- Work closely with HR and Legal to understand the broader context of employment.
- Reach out to diversity & inclusion officers and build a great partnership with them.
- Learn from other firms that have established Autism @ Work programs.
- Invest in an external partner to get things off the ground if you think it is necessary.
- Look for partners that are willing to work with you and adapt to your culture and needs for the best results.
- Building your talent pipeline is critical! Find the right sourcing partners.
- Own your recruiting function.
- Be thoughtful about what to own and what to outsource.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

3. How do we make the business case?

Making the business case for your proposed Autism @ Work program is critical to garnering support from executives and your organization at large. To develop the business case, leading organizations suggest the following:

1. Clearly articulate how your program's value proposition aligns with your organization's strategy and values.
2. Refer to success cases from the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable to support your case.
3. Determine program costs.
4. Test your business case on internal audiences of enthusiasts.
5. Refine your business case.

> ***When you develop your business case, speak to your organization's values and KPIs.***

▶ ***See Part 2 of the Playbook*** *for details on how to develop the business case.*

4. Where do we start?

Leading Autism @ Work employers identified four key considerations as you get started: **scope**, **program design**, **careful planning**, and **pilot execution**.

How do we scope the program?

Leading Autism @ Work firms emphasize the importance of scoping the program carefully and starting with a pilot program. Scoping the program involves:

1. Identifying the right roles for a pilot program in your organization.
2. Deciding on the size of the group to pilot the program.
3. Determining where (geographically and in which business units) to start.

Scoping your program is important as you design and refine your recruitment, interview, selection and onboarding practices. Limiting the number of roles and the size of your initial pilot group provides the flexibility to be responsive and adapt your practices when necessary.

Determine the specific location to start your program. Select a location where there is:

- ✓ Internal support from business unit leaders
- ✓ Potential for strong partnerships with community providers who will provide support and source candidates

Lastly, identify the right hiring managers who are supportive of the initiative and have the aptitude to learn quickly and champion the program.

DESIRED QUALITIES OF HIRING MANAGERS

- ✓ Aptitude to adapt and learn quickly
- ✓ Ability and willingness to collaborate with the program and provide feedback
- ✓ Ability to cultivate an inclusive culture in their team
- ✓ A demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion
- ✓ Being generally considered an exemplary manager
- ✓ A high level of credibility

SCOPING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Pick the right roles
- ☐ Determine the size of the pilot
- ☐ Find supportive business unit leaders
- ☐ Identify the right managers
- ☐ Identify the right external partners

Scope considerations

What roles are best to start? And how many?

- Provide meaningful work.
- Focus on roles where there is a need for talent to strengthen your business case. Start small with one or two roles.
- Focus on available roles in the business units where you have identified program enthusiasts.
- Consider your potential talent pool and its skill set.
- Learn about where other firms started and were successful.
- Consider how many variations in recruitment, interview, selection and onboarding activities you have the resources to offer.

Where do we start?

- Consider locations that have a network of internal and external partners that will provide the needed support.
- Consider locations that foster a welcoming culture.
- Consider locations that will tap into a local talent pool or that will be able to attract a talent pool.

How many hires do we include in our first group?

- Determine the size of the first group in relation to the potential talent pool.
- Determine the capacity of the program-dedicated staff. How many teams will you have the capacity to train and support?

Managers are critical partners in the design and execution of Autism @ Work programs. They must be willing to adopt best practices for leading individuals with autism and model collaborative skills to teams.

LESSONS LEARNED

Where to start?

Start small.

- Do a pilot first, get your feet wet, and iterate.
- Narrow down the scope of the program in terms of the roles you choose.

Start with the right managers.

- Determine the desired characteristics for managers.
- Have a vetting process to identify the right managers.
- Be kind and direct, and listen to managers who want to participate in the program.
- Seek feedback from managers and involve them in the design and iterations of the program.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

What design elements should we consider?

While it is critical to learn from established programs and others' experiences, no one size fits all when it comes to Autism @ Work programs. Your program must be consistent with your firm's strategy and values and must meet your organization's needs in order to be effective. This is especially important in the initiation phase as you are garnering organizational support and establishing the program's credibility.

Design your program to:

1. Leverage internal and external resources.
2. Own program functions that are key to the quality of hires and core to your organization's values and culture.
3. Pick partners that understand your goals and values and are willing to adapt.
4. Design your program selection, interview and training activities to ensure the quality of hires and advancement of your goals.
5. Include training for managers and team members to raise awareness about autism and provide effective collaboration practices for the team.
6. Provide dedicated FTE staff to champion the program and provide the needed support for workers with autism, managers and teammates.

PROGRAM DESIGN

- ✓ Roles
- ✓ Cohort size
- ✓ Hiring process activities
- ✓ Employee support & advancement
- ✓ Training for managers and teams
- ✓ Partnerships
- ✓ Program staff structure

LESSONS LEARNED

Design considerations

"Nothing about us without us"

- Spend time with internal and external partners from the autism community to guide your program design.
- Learn about your local autism community's resources, needs and preferences.

Be intentional about what to own and what to outsource.

- Use the right partners for the right aspects of the program.
- Be intentional about how to leverage your internal and external resources.
- Own your recruiting function.

Customize your program to fit your organization.

- Dedicate sufficient resources and focused attention to design a program that works for your organization.
- Be prepared to spend the time, effort and energy to elicit feedback from internal and external partners.

When designing your program, avoid assumptions.

- Avoid assumptions about the skills, interests and needs of individuals with autism. Ask questions!
- There is great diversity in needs, desires and talents.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

What should we consider when planning for the program?

Launching an autism hiring program requires thoughtful planning and considerable coordination. Aside from the usual logistical concerns when creating any hiring or training operation (e.g., vendor management, travel, supplies, space), the program requires coordination with and learning from multiple internal and external partners. Below are some planning considerations:

- Be explicit
- Be specific
- Plan for the unexpected

1. Be explicit about the role each partner will play

- Determine the role each partner will play in each program activity.
- Communicate your expectations to each partner.
- Be specific about time commitment, communication expectations, and desired outcomes.

2. Determine the needs of hiring teams and what you expect from them

- Get a commitment from business unit leaders regarding headcount.
- Clearly define the skill set needed for each role.
- Clearly communicate your expectations regarding how hiring teams and managers will be involved. (Refer to Part 6, "Interview and Selection Process.")

3. Plan logistics carefully, keeping in mind the diversity of needs of individuals with autism

- When job candidates travel, take into account the needs and preferences of the candidate.
- Be specific when planning and communicating building access and other logistics with candidates and external partners.
- Find physical space that is suitable for program activities, candidate needs, and accessibility to all internal and external partners.
- Provide specific instructions to candidates regarding all interview activities and logistics.

4. Develop an explicit communication plan

- Develop a communication plan.
- Share your communication plan with internal and external team members during pilot, launch activities, and ensuing press.

5. Plan for the unexpected

- Plan for best- and worst-case scenarios and develop specific response plans accordingly.
- Provide backup staff, slack in your resources, and planned downtime.
- Develop a clear communication plan to respond to candidates' questions and reactions to hiring decisions.
- Communicate your plan to your entire team and make sure your roles are explicitly defined.

Be proactive instead of reactive. Envision and plan for best-case and worst-case scenarios ahead of time in order to have the appropriate response and avoid being caught off-guard.

What does a pilot look like?

Most established firms began with a small pilot, including four to 10 members in a cohort. Each of the leading firms concentrated on one or two key roles in one geographic location. Pilots allow firms to improve program design; therefore, it is important to be flexible and adaptable during the pilot. All leading firms adapted and changed their models during the pilot phase.

- ✓ Be responsive to the needs of candidates and hiring team members in real time.
- ✓ Build in debrief time and mechanisms to quickly adapt during pilot activities.
- ✓ Do not compromise the quality of hires.
- ✓ When adaptations are made, make sure to communicate them to your team and partners.
- ✓ Involve hiring managers, partners and candidates and seek their feedback.
- ✓ It is also important that you document and communicate lessons learned and things to avoid.

Expect to iterate during your first few cohorts. Iterations will become more minor as you learn what is effective for your organization. Refinements will be more limited in scope and complexity as your program matures. However, recognize that you will modify program curriculum as you expand the scope of your program. Participate in the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable and the Autism @ Work Summit to learn from other firms.

LESSONS LEARNED

Planning your pilot

Be explicit and specific.

- Be explicit about what you expect from managers and teams.
- Be specific about the time commitment and all logistics. Do not take things for granted.
- Be explicit and clarify the type of role available and the skill set needed for each role and team. Success is contingent on the right person being placed in the right role.

Be flexible and expect to iterate.

- Understand that there is no “one size fits all.”
- To improve collaboration and commitment, involve hiring managers in iterating the program.
- Don’t be afraid to fail – there will be things you don’t get right initially. Be prepared for trial and error.

Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.

- Be proactive instead of reactive.
- Envision and plan for best-case and worst-case scenarios ahead of time in order to have the appropriate response and avoid being caught off-guard.
- Candidates and managers will have different needs and reactions to decisions. You are more likely to respond productively if you are prepared for multiple scenarios. Game plan scenarios, run fire drills, and make sure your team practices these.

Communicate successes along the way.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

5. What does success look like?

In general, leading Autism @ Work firms emphasize a long-term view of success. Factors include:

- ✓ Creating meaningful employment opportunities for the autism community.
- ✓ Finding talent.
- ✓ Building an organizational culture that is welcoming of differently-abled people more broadly.
- ✓ Providing value to their organization that is recognized by executives and the organization at large.
- ✓ Establishing sustainable programs that satisfy their organization's needs.
- ✓ Influencing mainstream processes.

What success of Autism @ Work programs may look like varies across organizations. Leading firms emphasize the importance of defining success based on your organization's strategy and values.

How do we communicate success?

During the planning phase, it is critical that you document and communicate successes regularly. Leading firms experienced increased support and demand for the program as a result of their communication strategy. Success can be tangible (e.g., improved performance, yield on offers) and intangible (e.g., improved inclusive culture, improved management effectiveness).

- ✓ Be intentional and systematic about measuring and documenting key performance indicators you first outline in your business case.
- ✓ Develop a regular communication plan to update members of your coalition and potential new partners throughout your organization.
- ✓ Use storytelling to communicate success. Success stories will increase support for the program and enable you to grow.

> ***Having leaders storytelling about the program is especially valuable.***



COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- Regular internal status reports distributed to the organization at large
- Executive sponsors communicate program success and impact that is relevant to organizational strategy and values
- Social media updates to communicate success stories and new-hire experiences
- Use of mass media to communicate program impact in order to raise awareness in the community at large
- When program champions from business units communicate their successes internally, it lends credibility to the program's impact

Table 1.1: Who can help in the planning phase?

Establishing an autism hiring program requires a wide range of resources and expertise. Much of the expertise needed may already be available either within your organization or from external agencies and vendors in your community. Therefore, it is important to tap into existing resources and build a coalition of internal and external partners who can provide the necessary expertise and resources.

The table below describes in more detail the specific role each coalition member plays in initiating an Autism @ Work program.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES	
Autism @ Work Summit & Autism @ Work Roundtable	• Share Autism @ Work best practices and lessons learned • Provide a space to exchange best practices and learn together to leverage opportunities and address challenges
Local agencies and providers	• Inform program design • Provide job coaches to support candidates during the interview process and first 90 days on the job • Provide training for managers and team members
Expert consultants	• Inform initial program design and execution • Source candidates • Provide training for managers and co-workers
Sourcing vendors	• Identify qualified candidates
Colleges and universities	• Identify qualified candidates • Advise organizations regarding program design and execution
INTERNAL RESOURCES	
Executive sponsors	• Champion the program internally • Provide resources • Promote the program internally and externally through regular, explicit communication
Business unit leaders & hiring managers	• Provide roles and headcount • Cultivate a culture of inclusion • Share successes and promote the program internally
Human resources	• Inform program design and execution • Support program activities • Support the program and candidate throughout the employee lifecycle through recruitment, selection, hiring, onboarding, retention, advancement and termination
Human resources recruitment team	• Identify and secure headcount for relevant roles across the firm • Recruit candidates • Support interview and selection process
Legal	• Advise program leadership regarding compliance and legal issues
Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)	• Autism-related ERGs support new hires and raise awareness of team members • Autism-related ERGs inform program design and provide support • Broader ERGs provide new hires with community for social support and pursuit of special interests

Table 1.2: Leading firms' Autism @ Work planning phase

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Initiated by	Executive: Worldwide Operations Corporate VP and Chief Accessibility Officer	Bottom-up: Individuals on the business side started a pilot, then the Chief Diversity Officer and a Managing Director advocated for the program to expand	Executive: Head of Diversity & Inclusion and firm's Accessibilities Leader	Executive: Senior leaders, including Global CIO
Program led by	Director-level champion – dedicated FTE; grown to dedicated FTE team	Business unit director-level champion – dedicated FTE; grown to dedicated FTE team	Associate director (no FTE at first); grown to dedicated FTE manager at each location	Global head of Autism at Work – dedicated FTE; grown to dedicated FTE team
Catalysts	• Focus on accessibility as core organizational value • Strategic value of untapped technical talent • Focus on making greater social impact for those who are neurodiverse	• Pilot program success • Leadership announced initiative as a global aspirational intention • Value of untapped talent • Potential for process quality improvements	• Opportunity to create more diversity and inclusion across the firm • Quickly became a business imperative to recruit talent to meet demand	• Pilot program success • Executive who had previous experience working with neurodiverse employees • Meeting talent demand
Timeline from idea to pilot launch	Idea in January 2015 Launch in May 2015	Pilot in India in 2013 Announced March 2013 Launch in May 2013	Idea in 2015 Launch in March 2016	Idea in 2013 Launch 2015-16



The Business Case

To develop a successful Autism @ Work program, you need to make the business case for how it will help your organization. This chapter provides a synthesis of how leading firms developed their business case and some best practices they identified along the way.

To develop the business case, you must address the following ***four key questions***:

1. What is the value proposition of our program?

- How does this fit and add to our culture and values?
- How does this align with our strategy?

2. What are the costs of the program and ROI?

- What resources are needed to establish the program?
- What is the ROI? Costs (direct and indirect) vs. impact.
- What existing functions can I draw on to reduce costs?

3. What evidence can we reference to support our case?

- What information can I reference to support our case?
- How do we frame our case to speak to different audiences?

4. How can we strengthen our business case?

- What is the best audience to provide feedback?
- How much do we expect to refine our case?

BUSINESS CASE CHECKLIST

- ✓ Define your program's value proposition
- ✓ Align with your organization's strategy and values
- ✓ Determine cost
- ✓ Refine the business case to appeal to different audiences
- ✓ Elicit feedback from enthusiasts
- ✓ Use examples from firms with established programs to support your case

> ***Make the business case about more than the hard numbers so that it isn't just checking a box and hiring just to hire.***

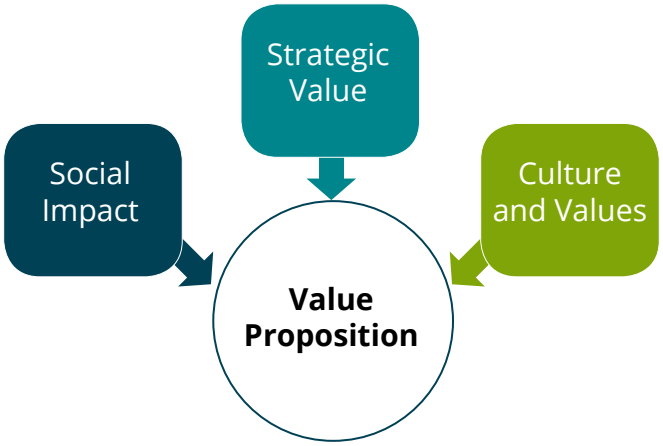
1. What is your program's value proposition?

Autism @ Work programs add great value to organizations that launch them effectively. Leading firms emphasize the importance of using the right measures of return on investment (ROI) that fit your organization's values and culture. They also suggest that you provide a complete and holistic picture of the potential tangible and intangible benefits of the program framed under the three types of value below:

1. Desire to make positive social impact

2. Benefits to the organization's culture and values

3. Strategic value



Desire to make a positive social impact

Leading Autism @ Work employers emphasize the desire to make a positive social impact as a key motivator for developing their programs. Therefore, a key component of the business case is to illustrate the need to create employment opportunities for individuals with autism.

If corporate social responsibility is important to your organization, demonstrate the importance of employment for the well-being of individuals with autism and share the low employment rates this underserved community experiences.

WHY FOCUS ON THE AUTISM COMMUNITY?

- ✓ Only 14% of adults with autism in the U.S. work for pay.
- ✓ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 1 in 59 children in the United States is diagnosed with autism.
- ✓ Over the next decade, an estimated 500,000 teens with autism (50,000 each year) will enter adulthood.
- ✓ Reports suggest that young adults with autism generally face many more barriers in securing and sustaining employment than all other groups of young adults with disabilities.
- ✓ The direct costs (e.g., care, services) and indirect costs (e.g., lost employment) of autism in the U.S. are estimated to exceed $236 billion annually.

WHY EMPLOYMENT?

Employment is core to a person's quality of life. Its benefits include:

- ✓ Providing a means to independent living.
- ✓ Offering an opportunity to pursue interests and improve cognitive performance.
- ✓ Offering a key way for individuals to contribute to society.
- ✓ Providing a way to meet the need for inclusion and belonging.

Employed individuals with autism experience financial as well as emotional and health benefits when compared to unemployed individuals with autism.

Benefits to the organization's culture and values

Leading Autism @ Work firms experience positive effects on their organizational culture as a result of their Autism @ Work programs. As you develop your business case, identify the potential cultural benefits and align them to your organization's culture, values and diversity and inclusion efforts. This segment of your business case is especially important to garner support from diversity and inclusion executives and personnel at your organization.

Potential benefits

Advance diversity and inclusion efforts

- Autism @ Work programs enhance diversity and inclusion efforts around disability and accessibility for employees, partners, customers and suppliers.
- The program provides an opportunity to leverage and complement existing diversity and inclusion efforts.

Create and strengthen inclusive culture

- Autism awareness training builds a culture of awareness and inclusion for those with autism, which often translates to improved awareness and inclusion of differences more broadly.

Improve managerial skills

- Managers who participate in Autism @ Work manager training become better managers overall (e.g., giving more explicit feedback, being more inclusive, setting clearer expectations).
- These managers also create more welcoming and inclusive teams.

Encourage existing employees with autism

- Awareness of Autism @ Work programs encourages current employees with autism to seek support and accommodations, become advocates for their programs, improve their engagement and advocacy of their firm, and improve their overall well-being.

Strategic value

Leading Autism @ Work firms recognize the untapped potential that individuals with autism offer. Individuals with autism contribute diversity of thought to the workforce and enhance the potential for innovation. Therefore, a key component of the business case is outlining the strategic value of Autism @ Work programs. These programs enable organizations to recruit talent that normally would be screened out due to mainstream recruitment and selection processes.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Scholars identified characteristics that, in general, individuals with autism demonstrate that make them desirable employees.

Trustworthiness	Reliability	Low absenteeism
Innovation	Attention to detail	Focus on work and results (productivity)
Accept repetitive tasks	Analytical thinking	Visualization

Systemizing

Strategic benefits

Leading organizations experienced the following due to their Autism @ Work programs:

Enhanced diversity

- Hiring employees with autism adds to the diversity of talents within an organization. Research is clear that diversity of employees enhances team creativity, problem solving, ability to meet customer needs, and accessibility of products.

Enhanced employer brand

- Organizations that are perceived to value diversity and inclusion establish a high-quality employment brand that helps them attract and retain top talent. Established Autism @ Work programs enhance employer brand, which is considered a key benefit of their program.

Meeting demand for IT talent

- There is a diversity of talents within the autism community. However, scholars from various fields recognize the leanings of some individuals on the spectrum toward technical interests. Some suggest that systemizing tendencies of individuals with autism make them more likely to succeed, and therefore pursue technology and other STEM-related fields. In fact, 16% of college students with autism who pursue postsecondary education choose computer science-related fields, which is significantly higher than any other major chosen by students with autism.

Desirable employee characteristics

- Scholars identified that, in general, individuals with autism demonstrate key characteristics that make them desirable employees. Leading firms stressed the importance of these characteristics and identified performance benefits in innovation and productivity as a result (please refer to firm documents for detailed examples).

Individuals with autism have a diversity of talents unique to each individual and not limited to IT expertise. It is important to acknowledge and respect individual differences as you design your program and engage with potential employees.

2. What evidence can we use to support our case?

As Autism @ Work programs continue to grow and evolve, new firms can leverage success cases to demonstrate the potential benefits of such programs.

- ✓ Tap into the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable and use their success as evidence for potential returns.
- ✓ Draw on their program models as proof of concept.
- ✓ Invoke the desire to be a thought leader along with the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable members.
- ✓ Stress the opportunity to champion a proven hiring initiative across dozens of companies to find talent.

Microsoft EY SAP JPMorgan Chase & Co.

3. What are the costs and ROI?

To effectively launch and sustain Autism @ Work programs, it is important to secure the necessary resources (see Part 3, "Program Resourcing Models," for details regarding resourcing models). Leading firms had dedicated FTE staff and leveraged existing functions to launch their programs initially. Some of the leading firms partnered with consulting firms to initiate their program, while others relied on existing community agencies. In the early stages of your program, costs may include the following:

Dedicated program staff

- Organizations dedicated partial FTE staff to launch their programs.
- Resources include operational and leadership staff.
- Commitment of FTE staff grew as programs were able to demonstrate their success and needs.

- ROI: Develop internal expertise to lead this program and reduce dependency on any initial third-party consultant costs.

Time and other internal resources for program activities

- Firms that choose to carry out activities internally incur added costs.
- Many programs are modified screening, interview and selection processes. Additional time invested in Autism @ Work programs from program staff, HR, job coaches, and hiring managers and teams incurs higher costs. These costs vary based on the length of program. Some programs have a 5-day interview process; others have a half-day process. See Part 6, "Interview and Selection Process," for details.
- Costs to internal resources are due to modifications needed to better serve candidates with autism.

- ROI: Identify and recruit talent normally excluded from mainstream processes; make recruitment processes more inclusive.

Manager and team training

- Training costs vary across organizations and can entail one or two hours of online or in-person team learning. See Part 7, "Training," for training models.
- Most firms use providers for training that incur costs.

- ROI: Firms experience improved engagement outcomes as well as improved collaboration and team effectiveness due to this type of training. Benefits are seen across the entire team.

Candidate sourcing

- Firms incur additional costs if they choose to use sourcing partners. Costs vary greatly depending on the scope of the program and the type of partner they choose.

- ROI: Identify and recruit needed talent.

Consulting services

- If the organization chooses to utilize consultants and launch the program, costs vary based on the scope of the program, consultant involvement, and type of consultant (e.g., local agency or for-profit firm).

- ROI: Consultants can be valuable for best practices and lessons learned.

LESSONS LEARNED

How do we make the business case?

- Think about what would work best as a measure of ROI for your company.
- Make sure you explicitly align your program objectives with your firm's strategy and values.
- Develop the business case with specific values and key metrics in mind.
- Demonstrate value by demonstrating specific work needed.
- Use your organization's mainstream criteria to assess need and value.
- Base your business case on talent demand and productivity.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

4. How do we strengthen our case?

Your business case will develop and evolve over time. As you build your initial business case, it is important to elicit feedback and refine your arguments to speak to different audiences. Leading firms suggest that you tap into your internal network of enthusiasts for feedback and support.

- ✓ Reach out to a supportive audience at first in order to get constructive feedback that will improve your business case and strengthen your determination. Chances are that enthusiasts will help you develop the business case, do necessary research, and expand your network of support.
- ✓ Encourage your network of enthusiasts to communicate your business case throughout your organization when appropriate.
- ✓ Tap into the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable for feedback and support cases.
- ✓ Learn about your audience's priorities, pain points and preferences for communication.
- ✓ Craft specific versions of your business case to cater to different audiences. Perhaps the business unit leaders need to hear more about the strategic value to their specific unit, while executive sponsors might be more interested in higher-level strategic value and organizational culture.
- ✓ Developing the business case that will resonate with a wide audience takes time. With every interaction and pitch you make, take time to seek feedback, reflect, and refine your business case.
- ✓ Expect that you will be refining and communicating the business case throughout the planning phase and beyond. At every stage of the program, document and communicate the business case.

Being intentional about developing, refining, and elaborating on your business case throughout the lifespan of the program will improve its sustainability.

BUSINESS CASE REFINEMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Seek feedback from enthusiasts
- ☐ Tap into the Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable
- ☐ Cater your message to speak to your audience's priorities
- ☐ Refine your message over time

LESSONS LEARNED

How do we improve our business case?

- Use pilot data or data from an existing Autism @ Work firm to demonstrate value in order to continue to make the business case.
- Have a way to measure your program's impact to make the case for it as a business driver. If there is no way to measure its impact, it can be seen as "nice to have."
- Don't limit the program to only one function; customize and match the talent to the need.
- Sustainability is key. As you develop your business case, lay out your plans for growing and sustaining your program.
- Make the business case about more than the hard numbers. The program isn't about checking a box and hiring just to hire.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

Table 2.1: How leading firms made their business case

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Key components of business case	• Culture of inclusion • Product accessibility • Untapped talent to meet demand for employees • Social impact • Success cases of other firms	• Untapped talent to meet demand for employees • Social impact • Business transformation	• Culture of inclusion • Untapped talent to meet demand for employees and specific type of work • Social impact	• Social impact • Productivity metrics • Untapped talent to meet demand for employees • Intangible soft-skills benefits
ROI	• Positive manager impact • Discovery of talent that otherwise wouldn't have been identified • About 50% of program hires had applied before through the traditional process and were not selected • More existing employees are starting to self disclose	• Positive employee engagement and retention metrics (company found that, in general, 1% improvement in employee engagement has $50 million annual impact) • Social responsibility benefits	• Proactive innovation and process improvements • Increased productivity, cost savings, reduction in hours	• First hires were 48% more productive after 6 months • Second group of hires was 90-140% more productive with zero errors after six months • Communication improving across the firm

Program Resourcing Models

Autism @ Work leading firms vary in their resource models. These decisions depend on the overall structure of the organization, executive support, and available resources. In this section, we discuss the resourcing and staffing models that the four leading Autism @ Work firms adopted to establish and sustain their programs.

As you explore ways to design and resource your program, consider the following ***three key practices*** common across leading firms. Refer to Table 3.1 for details of each leading firm:

1. Dedicate full-time staff

Leading Autism @ Work programs stress the importance of having full-time staff dedicated to their program. Most programs started with partial dedicated FTE of key staff and the FTE grew as the program scope and impact grew.

Dedicating staff to lead the program is important for two reasons:

1. Developing internal expertise enables you to continue to develop and evolve your program in ways that suit your goals, values and culture.

2. It reduces dependency on any initial third-party consultant costs.



2. Utilize internal resources and existing structures

Leading firms leverage internal resources such as HR for talent acquisition and onboarding support, Diversity & Inclusion for raising awareness and communicating successes, employee resource groups for support, and business unit champions for possible backing. Collaborating with internal business units is key for tapping into resources and broadening awareness of the program.

> ***Speak to lines of business to figure out how to tap into internal resources.***

3. Leverage knowledge and resources in their communities

Leading programs leverage resources in their communities for sourcing talent, knowledge regarding training, federally funded coaches, and other support services for existing and potential employees. In some cases, organizations started with outsourced functions. As their programs scaled and expertise matured, leading firms developed those functions in-house. Key to launching and sustaining your program is determining when it is more advantageous and cost effective to leverage external expertise. See External Resources on Page 64 for a list of organizations that can assist you in getting your Autism @ Work program started.

Table 3.1: Leading firms' key functions and costs

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Organization's structure (where the program sits)	• Corporate Affairs	• Diversity & Inclusion	• Innovation/Executive Management	• Diversity and Inclusion HR
Program staff	• 2 FTE – Director of Inclusive Hiring and Accessibility, Inclusive Hiring Program Manager	• 3 FTE – Global Lead, Regional Lead, Specialist • Local leads in each active country (dedicated employee volunteers)	• 4 FTE – Program and Operations Leader • 10 managers, one for each NCoE team globally	• 3 FTE – Vice President & Global Head of Autism at work; Training and Development Coordinator; program lead • 2 Interns
Internal partner support	• Global Talent Acquisition / HR • Legal • D&I • Executive sponsorship • Employee Resource Groups • Hiring business units	• Executive sponsorship • D&I • HR & Talent Acquisition • Business units • Employee Resource Groups	• Executive sponsorship • HR • Talent	• All LOBs • Business Resource Groups • HR • Management • Global Security • D&I • Executive sponsorship
Logistical support	• Event logistics – $	• Event logistics – $	• Event logistics – $	• Vendors – $
Sourcing	• Universities – free • Alumni networks – free • Internal / employee referrals / word of mouth – free • Vendors – $ • Social media – $ • Virtual career fairs – $	• Universities – free • Internal / employee referrals / word of mouth – free • Vendors – $ • Local NGOs – partly paid for by state • Career site – free	• Managers – free • Employee referrals – free • Virtual career fairs – free • Universities – free • Local NGOs – free	• Vendors – $ • Universities – free • Internal / employee referrals / word of mouth – free
Training	• Vendors – $	• Vendors – $ • Local NGOs – partly paid for by state (depends on locale) • In-house – free	• In-house, for each NCoE team globally – free	• Vendors – $ • In-house – free
Coaching	• NGOs – Paid for by Microsoft centralized accommodations	• NGOs – $ partly paid for by state • Vendors – $	• NGOs – $ partly paid for by state	• NGOs – $ partly paid for by state

$ = incurs additional costs

LESSONS LEARNED

Program resourcing models

- Leverage others who have gone there before — find out who has already done things in the external ecosystem and learn from them. Find out whether they had success or failure, or can recommend a vendor for training. Use those that are proven at what they do.
- Find partners that are flexible — having partners that can customize to your needs and your culture is critical.
- Own your recruiting — third-party recruiting sources will not solve your problems. It's not possible to grow a program by outsourcing recruiting, as they will not be able to provide a full pipeline of talent. Put in the work to undertake serious due diligence about how valuable sourcing partners will be for you (especially if they are small or are offering services for free).
- Utilize your partners for what they can do best. Don't try to do everything yourself when there's someone else who has the expertise.
- Make sure the ERGs understand your program and how it works, not just small bits and pieces.
- At universities, partner with the disability resource center on campus, not just career services. Those two offices don't often interface with one another, and individuals you're attempting to recruit on campus may not be going to the career services office.
- Have more than one external partner/vendor, instead of having all your eggs in one basket.
- Speak to lines of business to figure out how to tap into internal resources.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.



Program Scope & Employment Models

The scope of Autism @ Work programs varies by organization. Each employment model varies based on the organization's needs and the maturity of its program. This section addresses the following ***two questions*** related to program scope and employment models:

1. What do more mature program models look like?

- What kinds of models are feasible?
- What type of employment do we offer?

2. How do you integrate and socialize the model for sustainability?

- How do you integrate the Autism @ Work program into the organization's current structures?
- How do you garner support for long-term sustainability internally and externally?

PROGRAM SCOPE AND EMPLOYMENT MODEL CHECKLIST

- ✓ Determine talent needs
- ✓ Determine existing internal and external support in various locales
- ✓ Solicit input from self-advocates and managers
- ✓ Communicate success stories regularly and widely

1. What do more mature program models look like?

The organization's needs, values and culture drive the type of Autism @ Work employment model it develops. There is no "one size fits all." The support systems available in the organization's various locales also determine the scope of the program over time. Programs find it more challenging to grow to locations that do not have federal funding or support agencies. Each of the leading firms has developed and evolved its program to meet a need for talent and provide meaningful employment to individuals with autism.

Factors that drive employment model and scope are:

- ✓ The autism community's needs and support
- ✓ The organization's talent needs
- ✓ The organization's current structures (e.g., service model vs. product model)
- ✓ The local resources available to support the program
- ✓ Support in the business for growing the program

Which roles fit?

Firms may hire into a single role, or into a wide variety of roles across their organization. In most cases, Autism @ Work programs offer full-time employment and internships, with some contracting roles. SAP provides part-time work to some individuals to meet the organization's demand and the individual's preferences.

How Autism @ Work employees are organized relies on existing organizational structures. Most individuals hired through Autism @ Work programs are fully integrated into teams within the organization that work on products, serve functions, or deliver specific services depending on their roles. In some instances, clusters of full-time or contract hires may be located together in teams, or hires may be grouped into Neurodiversity Centers of Excellence that deliver specific services or supports to their organization or clients.



2. How do you integrate and socialize the model for sustainability?

Support for the program and its sustainability requires communicating the business case regularly and broadly across the organization. Demonstrating value to the organization and identifying potential needs that can be met through the program is essential. Leading Autism @ Work organizations were able to grow across business units, in different roles, and across geographic regions by demonstrating business value and social impact in tangible and intangible ways. Refer to the Business Case section for details.

Key to maintaining and increasing internal and external support is keeping a proactive approach to your design and redesign of program elements and model. Seek feedback from all stakeholders and partners, especially from your employees with autism and their managers. Employees with autism and their managers can provide great insight regarding unmet needs, opportunities and solutions.

EMPLOYMENT MODEL GOALS

- ✓ Add value to the organization by meeting talent needs
- ✓ Provide meaningful employment to individuals with autism
- ✓ Welcome and equitably include employees with autism
- ✓ Empower employees with autism to contribute their talent

HOW TO GARNER SUPPORT

- Demonstrate value
- Continue to improve the program
- Communicate success stories

Table 4.1: Program scope and employment models comparison

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Size of program	• Over 130 FTE in the U.S.	• About 200 colleagues across 16 countries	• 150 FTEs in 8 locations in the U.S., Canada and India; expanding to 3 global locations	• Over 225 in at least 9 countries
Roles hired into	• Focused on engineering roles: software engineers, data scientists, premier field engineers, service engineers • Also has hired individuals into other roles in retail sales, finance, marketing, etc.	• No limitations on types of roles • Hiring is based on business need and according to candidates' skills, abilities and interests • 28+ job families — a broad range, including engineering/development, human resources, finance operations, project management, etc.	• Focus on artificial intelligence, automation, blockchain, cybersecurity, cloud integration and data analysis • Associates provide support across all service lines	• 40+ roles — a broad range, including personal bankers, data scientists, fraud analysts, compliance analysts, etc.
Type of employment	• Full-time and internships • No part-time	• Full-time and internships • Part-time • Internships/student roles • Contractors	• Full-time • No part-time	• Full-time, internships, contractors (convert to full-time) • Part-time
Employment model	• Fully integrated into teams	• Fully integrated into teams	• Hires work together in Neuro-Diverse Centers of Excellence • Team members are fully integrated. They collaborate with engagement teams and clients based on employee interests, skills and needs.	• Fully integrated into teams

Recruiting & Sourcing Talent

Recruiting the right talent is a critical success factor for any organization and is especially critical for Autism @ Work programs. Many in the autism community are not aware of Autism @ Work employment opportunities and are often not engaged in traditional recruiting channels. Leading firms emphasize the importance of identifying the right channels to reach the desired talent. Leading firms advise organizations interested in Autism @ Work programs to own their sourcing function and leverage a wide range of channels. They achieve this through various external partnerships with sourcing firms, community agencies and colleges.

In this section, we provide information on how to find talent for your Autism @ Work program. The section addresses the following ***three questions*** related to Autism @ Work recruiting and sourcing:

1. Where do we find talent?

- What types of external partners can help us recruit the right talent for our organization?
- What should we consider as we engage and assess sourcing partners?

2. How do we tap into the local autism community?

- Whom should we engage locally?
- How can we engage our local community?

3. How do we engage universities and colleges?

- Whom do we reach out to in universities and colleges?
- In what ways can we best engage with universities and colleges?

RECRUITING AND SOURCING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Define the desired skill sets
- ✓ Identify external partners adaptable to your needs
- ✓ Forge partnerships with the right parties
- ✓ Educate yourself regarding community preferences
- ✓ Develop and execute an internal communication plan to raise awareness
- ✓ Develop a social media communication plan to raise awareness

1. Where do we find talent?

Firms have deployed numerous successful strategies to find talent. Many of the leading firms utilized outside partners to start finding talent, but it is not a requirement to do so. The source of their talent has varied depending on their location and their specific needs.

1. Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable

- Participate regularly in virtual career fairs and ability events.

2. Local NGOs

- Reach out to and collaborate with local agencies such as The Arc and vocational rehabilitation services. See Resources, Page 64.
- Social agencies are more likely to be a good sourcing partner if the community they support matches the type of role you are hiring for.

3. Vendors

- Use of a vendor often depends on location, as in some locations it may make more sense to use internal recruiters, or it may take a vendor with more specialized knowledge. See Resources, Page 64.
- Vendors may also be used if there is a time crunch to fill a position.

4. Social media & public presence

- Social media and press activity create awareness and generate leads to candidates.
- Social media activity and presence is cost-effective and must have a clear link or directions to program information and ways to apply.

5. Networks, relationships, word of mouth

- Leading firms identified internal employees as an especially effective source for talent referrals.
- Regularly communicate program activities and success stories internally to raise awareness and generate leads.

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TALENT

It is critical to identify quality candidates, especially in the launch phase of your program. Recognize that your pool may not always communicate their skill set clearly or completely in their resumes.

✓ Define the needed skill set explicitly

✓ Communicate your needs to your sourcing partners

✓ Consider more than the resume

✓ Communicate with potential candidates to more clearly identify their skill sets

2. How do we engage the community?

Your community may be your best source of talent. One way to identify potential employees with autism in your community is to partner with a local NGO. NGOs may already work with your target community and can refer qualified candidates. These agencies may also provide your organization with resources to support candidate transition into the workplace. Partnering with them on recruitment creates a seamless process for those candidates.

Engaging the community also consists of tapping into your organization's existing network. Leading Autism @ Work firms generate a significant portion of their candidate pools from employees and employees' networks. Therefore, it is important to communicate within your organization to make your employees aware of your Autism @ Work program and the opportunities it provides.

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

To be effective in recruiting, be strategic about job ad placement and respectful of community preferences.

- ✓ Do the work to identify effective outlets — those that people with autism in your community frequent or have access to.
- ✓ Understand the language that is used in the community. Educate yourself on language preferences and be mindful in framing program information.

3. How do we engage universities and colleges?

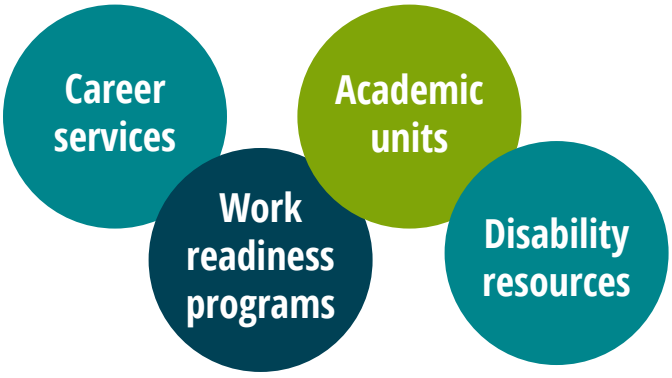
Universities and colleges can be a great source of talent. Leading Autism @ Work firms formed fruitful relationships with universities to source talent in multiple ways. Research your local and regional universities. Identify universities and colleges that have autism-related programs to source talent, and learn about the best ways to source and support those with autism.

To make the best of their university partnerships, leading firms engage with:

- ✓ University-wide career services offices to reach the university at large.
- ✓ Department-level career services advisers to reach specific specializations.
- ✓ Work readiness programs specific to autism.
- ✓ Disability resources offices.

Some leading firms developed deeper partnerships with educational institutions. For example, JPMC sponsored student scholarships at the University of Delaware, and Microsoft's partnership with UT Dallas includes career exploration programs and research.

HIGHER-EDUCATION UNITS TO ENGAGE



GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Reach out and explore the various types of colleges, universities, community colleges, and technical and vocational training institutes in your community. Your talent pool might not always pursue traditional educational career paths.

LESSONS LEARNED

How do we find the right talent?

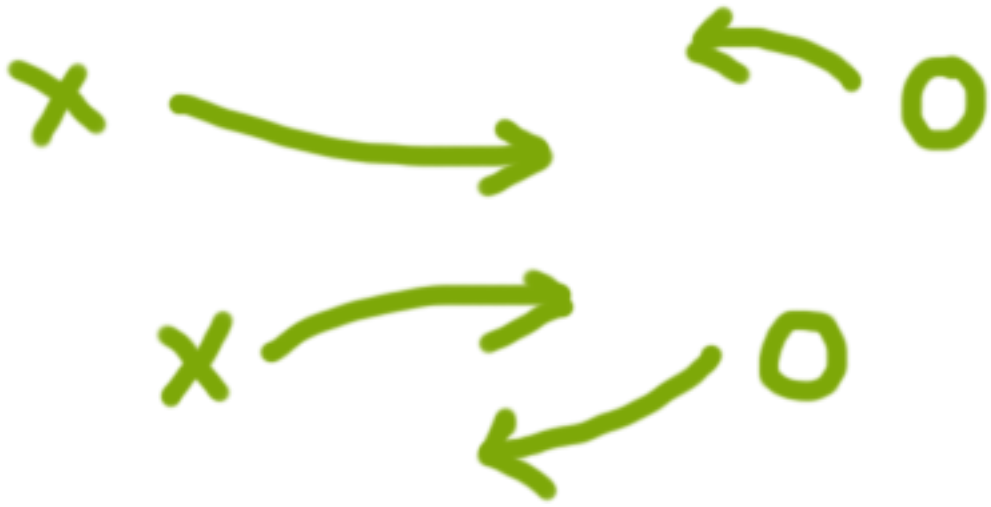
Select the right sourcing partner

- Build your own recruiting competency.
- Have a partner — don't go it alone. There are lots of resources outside your organization to help you mitigate risk.
- Select partners that understand your needs, values and culture and can help identify candidates accordingly.
- There is no single spot or bench of talent that companies can go to. How well the external partners work for you can also depend on what kinds of roles are being hired for.

Raise awareness of the program

- Have a dedicated landing page for your program on your website.
- Leverage your network to raise awareness and recruit candidates.
- Partner with self-advocates at your organization to raise awareness and recruit only if they are willing.
- Do not underestimate the power of social media such as Facebook.
- Promote. Once you have an established program, work to raise visibility and interest within your organization, and to get more people involved. Tout your successes.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.



Interview & Selection Process

Mainstream interview and selection processes often present barriers to job seekers with autism. People with autism may feel undue stress from assessment criteria that overemphasize social fit, include long interview days with multiple interviewers, involve white-boarding solutions, and include traveling. Furthermore, traditional interview techniques may not always uncover the relevant skills the interviewee has. This leads to missed opportunities for both the individual seeking employment and the organization in need of talent.

Autism @ Work programs introduce selection and interview processes more conducive to the needs and preferences of individuals with autism. As a result, they maximize the organization's ability to uncover the talents of applicants with autism.

In this section, we examine how to design an effective interview and selection process. This section addresses the following ***three questions*** related to the Autism @ Work interview and selection process:

1. How do we approach screening applicants?

- How do we assess applicants' materials?
- What screening interview techniques do we use?
- How can external partners help with screening?

2. How should we design our interview process?

- How do we create a process that helps us identify talent that meets the organization's standards and adds value to the candidates?
- What interview strategies are most effective for individuals with autism?
- How do we best engage hiring managers and teams?
- How do we continue to improve our interview process?

3. How do we manage the selection process?

- How do we inform candidates?
- How do we support candidates who were not made offers?
- How do we leverage / keep contact with candidates?

INTERVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS CHECKLIST

- ✓ Determine the skills you need
- ✓ Determine your capacity to screen candidates in-house vs. outsourcing that function
- ✓ Screen candidates using more than the resume
- ✓ Design an interview process suitable for candidates
- ✓ Prepare managers, interviewers and coaches
- ✓ Execute your interview process, but be prepared to adapt
- ✓ Plan and prepare for best- and worst-case scenarios
- ✓ Elicit feedback and iterate

1. How do we approach screening applicants?

Autism @ Work leading firms emphasize the importance of identifying candidates that meet the needs of the organization and have the potential to succeed. Firms apply the same standards to identify and select candidates and develop alternative ways to uncover the desired talents through Autism @ Work processes. Leading firms use various strategies to screen candidates.

Screening processes include:

- Technical skills assessment
- Standard background check
- Screening interviews

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Some leading firms emphasize the importance of not discounting candidates solely based on typical notions of what a resume should include. Many candidates with autism do not fully explain or include relevant skills on their resumes.

Leading firms suggest having short conversations with potential candidates to uncover the breadth and depth of their experiences. These practices have led to a much richer candidate pool.

Firms vary in their approaches to screening. On the one hand, some firms use a vendor to handle the entirety of the screening process up until the interview with the hiring manager. On the other hand, some organizations conduct all their screening-related activities in-house and have a longer screening process.

OUTSOURCING THE SCREENING PROCESS DEPENDS ON:

- Internal resources' capacity
- Maturity of the program
- Organization's values and culture
- Availability and suitability of external resources

2. How do we design an effective interview process?

Autism @ Work firms emphasize the importance of designing interview processes that enable candidates with autism to perform their best. They also emphasize adhering to firm-wide HR practices and standards. The goals of the Autism @ Work interview process are to:

- ✓ Create a process that plays to the strengths and accommodates the needs of individuals with autism.
- ✓ Maximize the firm's ability to identify qualified candidates who do not typically do well in standard interview activities.
- ✓ Provide a developmental experience for candidates where they can develop technical and soft skills.

Learn more about interview design

Read about the "30 Best Employers for People with Autism 2020" at https://tinyurl.com/4cxfamy.

How do we create a process that helps us identify talent and adds value to the candidates?

Leading firms that conduct their interviews in-house established holistic and developmental interview processes that involve hiring managers, team members, Autism @ Work staff, Autism @ Work program self-advocates, and job coaches. These types of processes allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that are conducive to them, often with a job coach available to encourage them and facilitate ways for the candidate to perform their best. Such processes allow for a more holistic assessment of candidates and provide a more meaningful developmental experience for them.

Refer to Table 6.1 for details of each of the leading firms' processes.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

An effective interview process will help your organization find the right candidates as well as add value to the candidates who attend. Leading firms provide mock interview training and coaching prior to interviews with hiring managers and teams to enhance the candidates' chances for success.

ASPECTS OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Interview processes in general include informational elements, activities and assessment. The topic of these items may relate to soft or technical skills, or to workplace knowledge.

Technical skills

- Task-related (e.g., coding, ledger activity)
- Problem solving
- Productivity tools

Soft skills

- Communication
- Team collaboration
- Mock interview skills

Workplace orientation

- Organization's strategy
- Organization's values
- Organization's products and services
- Nature of the work and team

Activities related to soft and technical skills allow candidates to develop and hone their skills. For example, most firms include mock interviews that help candidates improve in interviews and become more comfortable. The interview process also gives the candidates a clearer idea of what it would be like to work at the firm, the nature of work they will be doing, and the types of people they will work with. Lastly, candidates have the opportunity to engage with hiring managers and job coaches who provide actionable feedback to help candidates improve their skills, regardless of the outcome of the interview process.

INTERVIEW PROCESS DESIGN CHECKLIST

- ✓ Determine the skills needed for each role
- ✓ Design activities and assessments for desired skills
- ✓ Train hiring managers and all involved on interview techniques suited to those with autism
- ✓ Communicate expectations clearly with all involved
- ✓ Be specific about what you expect from each interviewer and the time commitment
- ✓ Design an interview process that enables candidates with autism to perform their best
- ✓ Select physical spaces that meet candidates' various needs
- ✓ Build in unstructured time in your interview process
- ✓ Build in time to debrief each day of the process
- ✓ Communicate to the candidates what to expect in the interview process and share the itinerary prior to the interview day/week

Finding the right talent

Key to the success of Autism @ Work programs is identifying talent that meets the needs of the organization. To do so, consider the following questions and action items:

1. Determine the skills needed for each role

- What is your baseline requirement for candidates to demonstrate?
- Do your candidates need to know a specific set of technical skills (e.g., accounting, SQL)?
- What skills will you provide training for upon hire?

ACTION ITEM

- Design your assessment and activities to focus on uncovering baseline skills and the aptitude to learn them.

2. Design activities and assessments for the desired skills

- What types of activities can uncover the skill sets desired?
- How can you assess social and technical skills separately?
- Should the skill be assessed in an individual activity or in a group context?
- What technology is needed?
- What elements of the activity may introduce stress for the individual? How can you change or eliminate those dimensions?

ACTION ITEMS

- Use structured interviews to keep interviewers focused on your specific objectives.
- Be specific in your purpose and instructions.
- Allow enough time.
- Provide alternative ways for the candidate to accomplish tasks (e.g., let them work on their laptop rather than the white board if they choose).
- Use debriefing time with candidates to see how they think and how they want to approach the task.
- Elicit advice from current Autism @ Work employees in similar roles. They will provide important insights.





2.2 What interview strategies are most effective for individuals with autism?

Autism @ Work programs must devise interview process activities that meet the styles and preferences of individuals with autism. There is great diversity in the types of activities and assessments that firms utilize that address the specific skill sets they are looking to uncover in ways that cater to the needs of their candidates. See Table 6.1 for more information.

As you design your interview process, consider the following questions and action items:

Key questions

- What types of activities allow candidates to demonstrate the skills needed in a way that is catered to their preferences and needs?
- What are the sensory needs of your candidates?
- What are the best ways to reduce stress and anxiety?

> ***Design an interview process that enables candidates with autism to perform their best and showcase their talents.***

Action items

1. Select physical spaces that meet your candidates' various needs.

- Be mindful of sensory sensitivity (hyper and hypo).
- Work with job coaches and candidates to identify candidate accommodation needs in advance and plan logistics for support accordingly.

2. Build in unstructured time in your interview process.

- Unstructured time in the interview process is important for candidates and your Autism @ Work staff.
  - ✓ For candidates, it is essential to provide unstructured time to manage the potential for sensory sensitivity and cognitive overload.
  - ✓ For your staff, it also avoids potential for cognitive overload and gives them an opportunity to adjust and be more responsive to the candidates and interviewers.

3. Communicate to the candidates about what to expect in the interview process and share itinerary prior to the interview day/week.

- Communicating expectations and the details of the interview process reduces stress and anxiety about the unknown. This helps candidates prepare mentally. It also allows job coaches to work with candidates to identify their needs as they relate to the itinerary and identify accommodations that will enable them to perform their best.
- Inform them who will attend the interview, what the process will be like, and the topics they will be asked to address.
- Develop specific instructions to all activities.
- Written instructions are often more effective.
- Seek feedback from self-advocates and Autism @ Work employees to improve instructions.

4. Design interviews tailored to the preferences of individuals with autism.

- Conduct interviews in 45-minute increments.
- Limit the number of interviewers.
- Use direct language in your questions.
- Ask one question at a time and avoid double-barreled questions.
- Confirm that the person understands your questions or instructions.
- Ask questions specific to the skill set you are assessing.
- Do not ask off-the-wall questions (e.g., "If you were a fruit what would you be and why?").

5. Build in debrief time for staff and interviewers to regroup.

- Build regular debrief time at the end or beginning of each day.
- Built-in debrief times allows you to regroup and address needed changes without falling behind.

6. Use job coaches to provide support for candidates during the interview process.

- Let the job coaches be present during the interview.
- Job coaches help candidates perform their best by helping them identify and advocate for their needs.
- Job coaches also help candidates identify and resolve conflict and manage candidate stress.
- Job coaches give candidates clear and explicit feedback about their performance and ways to improve.

7. Be flexible and prepared to adapt

- Expect the unexpected.
- Plan for multiple scenarios and be ready to change.
- As you change and adapt, let your interviewers know what is expected of them.

How do we best engage hiring managers and teams?

Leading Autism @ Work firms that carry out their selection process in-house train hiring managers and team members on the goals of the interview process and effective interview techniques for people with autism. The length and content of the training varies for each firm, but at the very least it is designed to give managers and colleagues a baseline level of autism awareness and will set expectations for how the interview process and specific activities will be carried out.

In addition to raising awareness of autism and effective strategies to interview potential candidates, Autism @ Work staff recommend the following strategies for preparing interviewers:

- ✓ Communicate expectations clearly with all involved.
- ✓ Be specific about what you expect from each interviewer and the time commitment.
- ✓ Be realistic in your asks and don't underestimate what you are asking them to commit to (e.g., in which parts of the 5-day interview process do you want them to participate and how?).

AUTISM AWARENESS TRAINING RELEVANT TO INTERVIEWS

- ✓ Online training
- ✓ In-person training
- ✓ Instructional materials prepared by Autism @ Work staff

When engaging interviewers:

- ▶ Communicate expectations
- ▶ Be specific
- ▶ Be realistic

How do we continue to improve our selection process?

Leading Autism @ Work programs continually refine and improve their selection process by seeking and incorporating feedback from candidates and interviewers. Autism @ Work programs make it a priority to learn from candidates and existing employees with autism to make improvements to their interview and selection processes.

Firms explained that they made many changes in the initial phases of the program. As the program matured, there were fewer iterations as best practices emerged and existing Autism @ Work employees provided feedback.

BENEFITS CARRY OVER

Hiring managers who participate in Autism @ Work interview processes transfer best practices to mainstream hiring and benefit a wider range of employees and candidates.

3. How do we manage the selection process?

Leading Autism @ Work employers emphasize the developmental focus of their interview programs. Therefore, they suggest paying special care and attention to how feedback and decisions regarding hiring are communicated to candidates. These firms suggest a few key practices to consider:

- ✓ Adhere to your firm's HR practices.
- ✓ Communicate feedback with the job coach present to provide the candidate support.
- ✓ Communicate feedback regarding performance in-person or through video conferencing to communicate the message more holistically.
- ✓ Communicate developmental feedback regarding areas for improvement regardless of decision to hire. Make the feedback clear and actionable.

EXPECT THE BEST; PLAN FOR THE WORST

Autism @ Work candidates will respond differently to hiring decisions. Firms must be ready with the proper support (e.g., job coach present) and an actionable communication strategy to respond to candidates who may be distressed regarding the hiring decisions. Firms also should prepare for any actions the candidates may take. Have a response plan for different scenarios and communicate it with relevant parties.



Keep the door open

Some firms encourage applicants who were not successful to apply in the future after they have developed their areas for improvement. They also maintain contact information of these candidates and reach out to them when they see possible opportunities that are suitable for their skills.

LESSONS LEARNED

How do we find the right candidates for us?

Engage the hiring team

- Involve members of the hiring team in the interview process.
- Don't underestimate what you're asking managers to commit to. Be specific and realistic in your asks.
- Communicate the role hiring team members will play and be specific about their time commitment.

Be flexible, elicit feedback, and iterate

- Be flexible and ready to adapt to the needs of the hiring team as well as the needs of your candidates
- Elicit feedback from candidates and current program employees to improve your interview design.
- There should absolutely be involvement from neurodiverse employees in the iteration process.
- Elicit feedback from hiring managers regarding interview activities as well as performance of employees hired through the program.
- Institute a formal feedback process for the candidates after the interviews are complete. Send a survey both electronically and in-person in the office.

Design the interview process carefully

- Providing structure to the interview makes the interviewee and interviewer more focused and more comfortable.
- Make sure the candidate knows who is coming to the interview, what the process will be like, broad topics of what questions they will be asked, and assure them that there will be no surprise questions.
- Be willing to customize the process for the candidate.
- Build in debrief time for interviewers, candidates and Autism @ Work Staff on a daily basis during interview week.
- Build in unstructured time.

Add value to the firm and the candidates.

- Ensure that all candidates receive feedback on their assessment, regardless of how well they do. This also applies to your response to candidates after the conclusion of an interview week, to give them actionable and clear feedback.
- Processes that have been created for neurodiverse candidates can often be applied to mainstream corporate practices.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

Table 6.1: Leading firms' interview processes

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Who is involved?	• Hiring managers • Hiring teams • Job coaches • A@W team • A@W current employees/self-advocates	• Hiring managers • Hiring teams • Job coaches • AaW team • AaW current employees/self-advocates	• A@W hiring managers • Job coaches • Business unit leaders • A@W current employees/self-advocates • HR	• Vendors • HR recruiters • Job coaches • Hiring managers • Hiring teams • Job coaches
How is screening conducted?	• Phone interview • Technical skills assessment	• Qualifying interview (phone, virtual or in-person)	• Qualifying interview (phone or video) • Technical skills assessment (assessed by current A@W self-advocates)	• Phone, in-person meet & greets • Intro to JPMC vendor and Autism @ Work process
What is the interview process like?	• Multi-day in-person or virtual • 3 interviews kept to 50 minutes	• Candidate session (varies by location) • Screening call • Interviews • Technical assessment/ demo (according to role)	• One week virtual technical exercise and information exchange • One week in-person training • 45-60-minute time chunks	• Length of training depends on job function, typically 1-7 weeks (largely done by vendors) • Day of interviews: each component broken into 20-30 minutes & built-in breaks
What types of activities take place during the interview process?	• Mock interviews • Interview preparation/ skill building • Technical assessments • Soft-skills exercises (especially collaboration activities) • Learning about MSFT	• Soft skills exercises • Networking opportunities • Resume, portfolio, interview tips • Learning about SAP	• Technical assessments and training (data analytics, economics, databases, Python, SQL) • Soft-skills exercises (team-building activities, communication exercises, team-based work simulations) • Learning about EY	• Technical component if necessary (may include a test) • Learning about JPMC
What types of activities take place during the interview process?	• Job coaches attend interview week to support candidates • Customized accommodations to meet candidate need • Built-in breaks and additional time between interviews • Catering to communication styles (option to communicate verbally or through text feature, written instructions and checklists provided in advance • Training on neurodiversity for interviewers	• Customized accommodations according to candidates' needs. **Accommodations may include:** • Sensory break during interview • Interviewer info provided to candidates in advance • Interview questions or topic lists provided in advance to candidates • Interview prep session • Interview facilitator **Interview best practices:** • No rapid-fire questions, no surprise questions • Direct, focused questions • Manager enablement • Recruiter enablement	• Job coaches attend interview week with candidates • Customized accommodations for candidate need • Building in unstructured time during week	• Customized accommodations for candidates • Building in unstructured time during week • Catering to communication styles • No open-ended questions • Focus on what candidates have accomplished, not what they want to do in the future

Training

Success of Autism @ Work programs is contingent on the readiness of organizations to welcome and equitably include individuals with autism, as well as the readiness of individuals with autism to transition into the workplace. Training is an essential component of creating an inclusive work environment and giving both individuals with autism and their potential managers and colleagues the awareness and tools to be effective collaborators.

This section addresses the training required to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace for employees with autism. It contains information about the type of training organizations provide to their new hires with autism to facilitate their transition into the workplace. When planning training for your program, consider the following ***three key questions*** to guide your efforts:

1. How should we prepare our candidates for the workplace?

- What type of training should we provide for people with autism entering the workplace?
- What training design considerations should we keep in mind for our new colleagues?

2. How should we prepare managers and colleagues?

- What type of training should we provide for our neurotypical managers and workers to welcome and include their new colleagues?
- What training design considerations should we keep in mind for our existing workforce?

3. How should we assess and improve our training?

- What impact will our training have?
- How do we elicit feedback and continue improvements?

TRAINING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Determine new hires' training needs
- ✓ Work closely with a job coach to provide new hires with needed transition skills and support
- ✓ Determine training needs for managers and teams
- ✓ Determine who should be trained and decide whether you will make training required or optional
- ✓ Decide on how you will design and deliver autism awareness training (in-house or using a vendor)
- ✓ Tap into internal and external resources to deliver training
- ✓ Utilize self-advocates as your program matures
- ✓ Decide what form the training will take (once or recurring, online or in-person, individual or team)
- ✓ Determine the availability and suitability of mainstream training that may meet broader technical and soft-skills needs
- ✓ Decide on how you will assess the training

1. How should we prepare our candidates with autism to transition into the workplace?

Autism @ Work leading firms provide a variety of training opportunities to their new hires that aim to enhance both technical and work-readiness skills. New hires may receive training through any or all of the following options:

- Program-specific training
- The organization's mainstream training requirements and opportunities
- Job coaches' training on transition and work readiness skills particular to their needs

The focus and delivery method of training depend on the types of roles individuals are being hired into; how candidates are being recruited; the availability and appropriateness of training through mainstream channels; and in some cases the geographic location of the program, which determines availability of providers.

FACTORS INFLUENCING TRAINING



Types of training

In general, training may be geared toward ***technical skills*** or ***orientation to the organization and soft skills***:

TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING

- ✓ Focuses on specific technical skills relevant to the role the candidate will assume
- ✓ Focuses on collaboration or productivity techniques and tools
- ✓ May be offered as part of mainstream onboarding as standard training required of all new hires
- ✓ May be offered as a development activity driven by the candidate and their manager or job coach
- ✓ May be offered during the interview process to equip candidates with technical skills needed for the roles they will assume
- ✓ May be offered as a unique training opportunity for Autism @ Work new hires only

ORIENTATION TO THE ORGANIZATION & SOFT SKILLS

- ✓ Provides an overview of the organization's mission, values, strategy and products
- ✓ Orients new hires to activities and resources available to support them
- ✓ Provides insight into a day in the life of an employee to minimize anxiety and prepare new hires for their jobs
- ✓ May be offered as part of mainstream onboarding as standard training required of all new hires
- ✓ May be offered during the interview process to equip candidates with soft skills needed for the roles they assume

Specialized or mainstream training?

When should you use mainstream training vs. Autism @ Work-specific training?

- ✓ It depends on the skills you are targeting and suitability of the training available in the organization.
- ✓ Consider whether a mainstream training format will be conducive to your new hires' needs.
- ✓ Develop Autism @ Work training in-house or use a partner for skills specific to the transition to the workplace and team collaboration or team-building techniques.
- ✓ As your program matures, use self-advocates to lead or co-lead some of your training.

2. How should we prepare our neurotypical managers and colleagues?

Developing Autism @ Work programs necessitates that we create a workplace that is welcoming and inclusive to individuals with autism. Inclusion requires that individuals with autism, their managers and colleagues learn to communicate, collaborate, and socialize effectively together. The onus of doing so must not be on the individual with autism. Rather, the onus must be distributed to the organization at large, and particularly to managers and team members.

Raising awareness of autism and autism culture, as well as learning effective collaboration strategies across differences, is important to the success of your program. Most leading Autism @ Work organizations require that managers and team members participate in training.

SPILLOVER EFFECT

Managers and employees at leading firms state that managers who participate in autism awareness training become better managers for all employees. All members of the team — managers and colleagues — should receive this training. Managers should also receive a separate training before they participate in the autism hiring program interview process.

Types of training

- Autism awareness
- Autism as culture
- Collaboration
- Interview preparation

Training should be provided to managers, team members, mentors, and others key to the recruitment and retention of individuals with autism. Ideally, training takes place prior to the new hire's start date. Training may take place online or in person, and may be developed in-house or outsourced to a vendor. (See External Resources on Page 64 for list of possible vendors).

Some firms stress that in-person team training is the most effective, but budget constraints may lead organizations to use online training. Firms found success both developing their own training and bringing in outside vendors.

Changes of managers and changes in teams may introduce undue stress to Autism @ Work employees. Program leaders must remain mindful of changes and provide appropriate training to new managers and team members. The employee's privacy preferences should always remain a priority as you inform new managers and team members.

3. How should we assess and improve our training?

As Autism @ Work programs remain relatively new, iterating during each phase is key to improving the program. Thus far, leading firms have not yet implemented direct formal feedback mechanisms for assessing their training. Informal feedback has been elicited from trainees and managers. Informal verbal feedback has indicated that participants found training extremely valuable and that it has had broader implications for their effectiveness as managers and colleagues.

Moving forward, established and new firms may consider gathering feedback and performing assessments using survey tools attached to online training and at the completion of in-person sessions. The feedback mechanism should be one that you determine to be most suitable for your organization. The training and feedback mechanism that works for your organization may also depend on scalability.

One aspect to consider as your program grows and matures is how to provide continuous improvement, training and development for all parties. Some suggested tactics:

- ✓ Host monthly seminars for Autism @ Work employees.
- ✓ Consider a community of practice for managers to provide a space for sharing knowledge and lessons learned, as well as providing additional training.
- ✓ Host an Autism @ Work intranet site where you can share relevant training and development articles, as well as success stories and program activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

What are the training considerations?

- Partner with a local NGO to provide the training; don't think that you need to create the training internally.
- It is critical to be very conscientious about privacy throughout the lifespan of the program (e.g., ask people if they want to be in the CC or the BCC of emails about Autism @ Work, and share their needs and not identities).
- Meet in the middle — accept individuals for who they are rather than asking them to pretend to be neurotypicals.
- Customize and adjust your approach and resources based on the locale. Some locales have more autism-related expertise and support systems.
- Customize training based on the types of roles required.
- In-person training for teams and managers is more effective, but it is also costlier.
- Have an Autism @Work intranet page. Continuously post articles and updates on what the team is doing to increase visibility throughout the company.
- Get public support from senior leadership to promote attendance at the required and optional training.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.



Onboarding & Support Circle

Effective employee onboarding leads to higher employee satisfaction, engagement and retention. Onboarding and long-term employee support are especially important for employees with autism, as they often face challenges transitioning into a new workplace. Socialization processes can be overwhelming, and neurotypical employees and managers may not always know how to be inclusive and welcoming of those with autism. Therefore, organizations wishing to initiate Autism @ Work programs must be deliberate in their design of onboarding processes.

In this section, we provide a road map for organizations interested in onboarding employees with autism and providing them with support structures necessary for their transition into the workplace. This section addresses the following ***three key questions*** related to onboarding Autism @ Work hires:

1. How should we onboard new hires?

- What does onboarding involve?
- What specific considerations and accommodations should we plan for?
- How do we support our new hires logistically?

2. How can we best support our new hires?

- What supports and services can we provide employees?
- What are employee support circles?
- What internal and external partners can help support our employees?
- What role could each partner play to support our employees?

3. How do we prepare our organization to welcome and include our new hires?

- How do we prepare managers to effectively lead and include our new hires?
- How do we prepare teams to welcome and work effectively with our new hires?
- What type of ongoing support will managers and teams need?

ONBOARDING AND SUPPORT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Work within but augment mainstream HR processes
- ✓ Develop a specific onboarding plan for new hires
- ✓ Communicate your onboarding plan with the new hire, their manager, and job coach
- ✓ Work closely with the job coach and HR to determine specific accommodations needed
- ✓ Train the manager and team
- ✓ Identify the support circle for the new hire

1. How should we onboard new hires?

Autism @ Work leading firms leverage existing mainstream processes and resources for standard required onboarding such as regulatory information, benefits and the introduction to the organization. Additional support and onboarding specifics, however, are necessary to ensure a welcoming and more effective onboarding of Autism @ Work employees. Leading firms develop specific onboarding plans and establish support circles to augment mainstream processes to meet the needs of new employees with autism.

In particular, onboarding logistics and navigating standard onboarding activities can be overwhelming. Leading Autism @ Work firms pay special care to logistical support. Some refer to their approach to onboarding as a "white glove" approach in which they, in collaboration with job coaches, provide specific and individualized attention to the needs of the new hire.

A key success factor we learned from leading firms is the development of specific and well-communicated onboarding plans for new hires. The onboarding plan must:

- ✓ Augment mainstream processes in order to provide necessary support.
- ✓ Be specific to employee needs.
- ✓ Provide specific expectations and details.
- ✓ Be communicated to members of the support circle and relevant personnel.

ONBOARDING PLAN CHECKLIST

Communicate logistics

- Determine a date that works for the individual and team
- Communicate date, time and place to report, and the name and contact information of assigned job coach
- Communicate start date to key parties

Be explicit about logistics & expectations

- Location (address, building, floor, specific location within office)
- Person to report to
- Dress code
- What to bring
- Itinerary for the first day/week

Identify the right circle of support

- Define what you expect from each support circle member explicitly
- Be specific about your expectations regarding time, boundaries, roles, etc.
- Communicate your expectations early

Prepare the team

- Provide teams and managers with training
- Focus on autism awareness and promote effective collaboration practices
- Put the onus of change and inclusion on the organization, not the new hire

COMMUNICATING YOUR ONBOARDING PLAN

Once the start date is determined, Autism @ Work program staff should communicate relevant onboarding plan details to key personnel in order to provide the necessary accommodations and logistical support. Communicate the plan to:

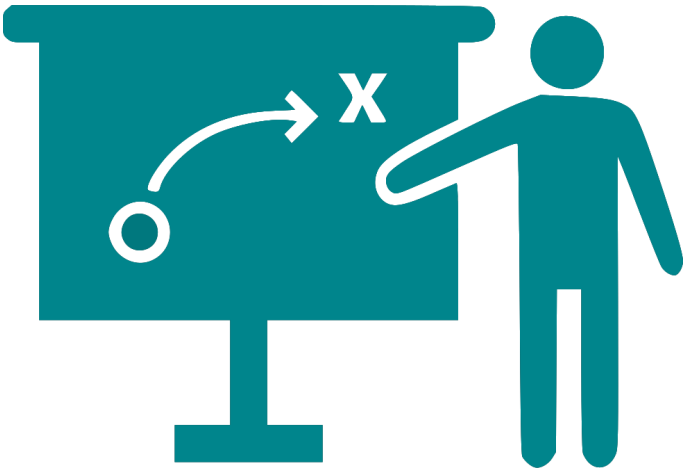
- ✓ Hiring manager
- ✓ Team members
- ✓ Job coach
- ✓ Team/floor/unit administrative assistant
- ✓ HR manager

> ***Respect the privacy of new hires as you raise awareness of their needs to key personnel within your organization. Communicate needs, not identity.***

The job coach

In most cases, Autism @ Work programs leverage local agencies and resources to provide job coaches (usually funded by local and federal sources) to new employees. In most cases, job coaches are available and funded for the first 90 days.

Job coaches play a key role in the employee support circle and collaborate closely with the Autism @ Work program staff. Job coaches assist the new hire in preparing for their transition to the workplace, completing their paperwork, and preparing for their first day, in collaboration with HR and the employee's personal support circle.



2. How can we best support our new hires?

Transitioning to a new workplace may be particularly challenging for new hires with autism. In addition to mainstream orientation and onboarding processes, leading Autism @ Work firms established a community approach to onboarding and supporting new employees with autism.

Upon joining Autism @ Work organizations, each new hire is assigned a "support circle." The support circle is designed to make explicit the various forms of support necessary to onboard and socialize new hires. Members of the support circle provide work-related information and social support to new hires as they transition into their new role and organization.

The employee support circle



Support circle roles and responsibilities

Leading firms emphasize the importance of defining the role of each member of the support circle. In some instances, these roles already exist in the organization's mainstream structures. Whether these roles are typical roles in the organization or specific to the Autism @ Work program, communicate your expectations for each role and provide support (e.g., training, list of resources) to the members involved. See Table 8.2 for details.

Manager

- Responsible for onboarding, support, retention, performance and development.
- Plays a key role in creating a welcoming environment.

Team / peer mentor

- Some firms have peer mentors as a common practice.
- The mentor is a peer within the new hire's team.
- The mentor helps orient and socialize the new hire to team practices and norms.

Community mentor

- A person within the organization but outside the new hire's immediate team.
- A volunteer recruited from ERGs or the organization at large.
- This person meets with the new hire regularly (e.g., biweekly) for at least the first 90 days and provides mentorship beyond the team context.
- The mentor introduces new hires to the organization's culture, norms, resources, etc.
- A source of social support and access to ERGs, activities and development programs available at the organization.

Job coach

- Provided by local agencies and available for 90 days (supported by Vocational Rehabilitation).
- Highly engaged with managers and the new hire to facilitate effective onboarding.
- The coach works with the new hire on work practices, time management, collaboration and communication, and facilitates discussions with the employee's personal-life circle.
- This person coaches new hires on financial responsibilities and other aspects of the transition in their personal life.

Career coach

- Consistent with some firms' mainstream processes.
- This person is senior to the employee and outside their direct reporting line.
- Provides mentoring regarding career advancement within the firm.

How involved does Autism @ Work staff remain with members of the support circle over time?

At leading firms, Autism @ Work program personnel continue to support members of the support circle and new hires beyond the first 90 days of employment. Their involvement changes as the program matures.

Initially, the Autism @ Work staff have more frequent meetings and involvement with managers and mentors. As programs mature, involvement of the staff changes from support to focus on continuous improvement, sustainability, growth, and new development initiatives for managers and employees.

3. How do we best prepare our organization to welcome and include our new hires?

Creating an inclusive culture that welcomes individuals with autism and provides them the opportunity to succeed and flourish is essential to the success of Autism @ Work programs. Key to creating this culture is preparing managers and team members to welcome and work effectively with their team members with autism. The onus of learning how to work effectively in diverse teams is the responsibility of all involved. For this reason, Autism @ Work leading firms require training for managers and teams.

Training aims to raise awareness of autism and autism culture, as well as to promote effective collaboration and management practices. Some firms rely on consulting firms and local agencies for this training, while others rely on self-advocates who specialize in delivering such training. As programs mature, some firms develop in-house training and leverage their internal self-advocates to deliver the training. Refer to Part 7, "Training," for details on training.

During the planning phase of the program, it is important that the autism hiring team engage more frequently with managers and team members in order to provide support and elicit feedback. Some firms met with managers on a weekly basis to provide needed support and to learn how to improve program features and support. As the program matures, knowledge grows among managers and colleagues, and less support is needed from the Autism @ Work staff.

TRAINING GOALS

To raise awareness of autism and autism culture and provide knowledge of effective collaboration practices.

> ***Mentorship does not mean holding someone's hand all the time. It means helping them be independent.***



LESSONS LEARNED

How can we best support our new hires?

- Establish built-in support such as an employee support circle to ease new hires' transition.
- It is key to help new hires understand what resources are available to them and how to navigate existing support structures within the organization. These must be made explicit through the support circle.
- Explicitly define the role each member of the support circle will play.
- Clarify how you will prepare and support members of the support circle and establish clear feedback channels for their input.
- Continue to be proactive regarding accommodations beyond the first 90 days. What the employee needs may shift after they have a job coach or once they've settled in. Needs may change over time.
- Establish a clear and consistent practice regarding communications with the employee's personal support circle. Communication with the employee's personal support circle should be the domain of the job coach.
- Respect the employee's privacy. Communicate needs, not identity.
- Suggest to new hires that they create (with assistance from their coach) a white paper of their preferences and styles that may be provided to their manager and anyone they will be working with, if the employee chooses.
- Create a safety net for the new hire, including the job coach or other external resources. The safety net can be supported by a variety of funding sources, including federal and local resources.
- Have a "white glove" service for the new hire, including a dedicated case manager who is available as a resource to them throughout the onboarding process (e.g., completing paperwork, learning about office and building logistics).
- Expect and respect individual differences. Accommodations and support should be driven by the employee. There is no "one size fits all."

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

Table 8.1: Who is involved in onboarding?

EXTERNAL RESOURCES	
Consulting firm, autism expert, or NGO	• Conducts in-person, mandatory training for the hiring team on autism in the workplace and autism as culture.
Local NGO	• Provides a job coach, who collaborates with the new hire's manager to explain the role they play and discuss expectations regarding communication. • Meets with the new hire regularly and assists them in all aspects of the job transition. Specifics vary depending on the new hire's needs and wants.
INTERNAL RESOURCES	
Autism @ Work hiring team	• Coordinates onboarding and support circle logistics: » Identifies community mentors. » Determines onboarding plan with manager. » Identifies job coach. » Coordinates training with the new hire's manager and team. » Plans ongoing programming for support and development of program hires. » Provides support for managers and teams as needed.
Manager	• In addition to typical manager responsibilities, A@W managers: » Identify the team/peer mentor. » Determine the onboarding plan with A@W personnel. » Collaborate with the job coach. » Collaborate with the HR manager regarding onboarding activities.
Team/peer mentor	• Part of the employee support circle (for at least the first 90 days). • Facilitates the new hire's acclimation to their new team. • Collaborates with the job coach and manager if needed.
Community mentor	• Part of the employee support circle. • Assists in the new hire's acclimation to organizational culture. • Introduces the new hire to organizational resources and activities. • Meets regularly with the new hire for at least 90 days.
Human Resources manager / personnel	• Provides explicit communication and support regarding necessary paperwork, benefits, resources and accommodations.

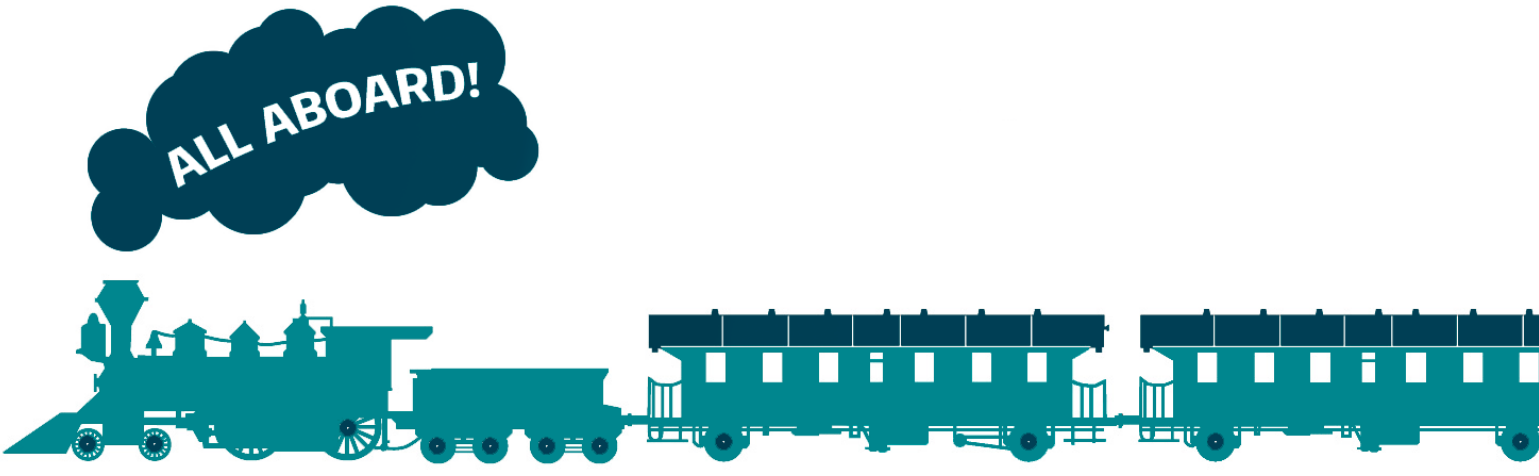
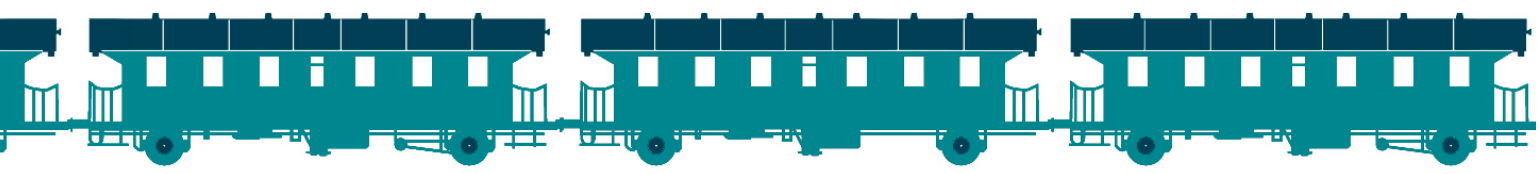


Table 8.2: Leading firms' onboarding models

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
How do they support onboarding?	• Supported onboarding process • Specific new hire steps • Coach support • Employee community in-person and virtual activities	• Supported onboarding process • New employee orientation • Coach support • Buddy on team • Autism at Work community	• Cohort community • Specific "Welcome to EY" onboarding process (5-7 days) • Coach support	• Supported onboarding process • Specific new hire steps • Coach support
How do they prepare the workplace?	• In-person team session • Online training	• Autism sensitivity training for manager and immediate colleagues	• In-person team group job training	• Instructor-led in-house training and e-learning for recruiters, managers and immediate colleagues
Who provides onboarding support?	• Support circle: peer mentor, community mentor, job coach • Employee Resource Groups	• Support circle: job coach, mentor and team buddy • Global onboarding team	• Support circle: peer mentor/buddy, career development counselor, job coach • Employee Resource Groups	• Support circle: job coach, mentor and team buddy



Remote Recruiting & Onboarding

When the pandemic started in 2020, many employers had to adapt and shift to a 100% online interviewing and onboarding process. The Autism @ Work program, which was designed as an in-person, multi-day/week event, also had to be reimagined for a virtual format. Consider the following ***four key questions*** to guide you in a remote setting:

1. How do we prepare for a remote hiring event?

- Have we thoroughly tested all the technology we'll be using?
- Are we communicating everything clearly to job candidates?

2. How do we ensure equitable access online?

- Are we anticipating the different types of disability?
- Are our shared documents accessible?
- Is our virtual meeting platform accessible?

3. What can we do to make people comfortable?

- Are we creating a welcoming environment for interaction?
- Are we giving participants different ways to interact?

4. What additional support do we need for onboarding?

- Are our job expectations clear enough?
- Do we need more training and job coaching sessions?
- Do our employees need assistance with remote accommodations?
- Is there a community in place to provide support?

REMOTE INTERVIEWING & ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Test the technology in advance
- ✓ Perform accessibility checks for all documents
- ✓ Solicit information related to accommodation needs due to the remote environment
- ✓ Assess video conferencing platform accessibility
- ✓ Make expectations and job descriptions explicit and clear



1. What adjustments do we need to make to our hiring events?

The pandemic presented all employers with the challenge of deciding how to assess for skills in a nontraditional interview setting. While many employers still had interviews built into their Autism @ Work hiring events, the activities and exercises that were designed for in-person events had to be redesigned.

Action items

1. Prepare and test technology to ensure hiring events go smoothly.

- Schedule a check-in session a day or two before the event.
- Use the prep session for technical checks and troubleshooting (cameras, video conferencing platforms, credentials, permission checks, etc.).
- Answer any last-minute questions and provide a thorough understanding of what to expect when the program starts.

2. Do plenty of advance communication with attendees.

- With the move online, more responsibility falls on attendees to set up their work stations and technology at home.
- Provide clear instructions with checklists and color coding.

3. Ensure your technology and documents are accessible.

- Think through the job-candidate experience for people with all disabilities.
- Run accessibility checks on your shared documents and presentations.
- Test your virtual meeting platform to ensure it meets accessibility standards.

> ***Being able to stay in the familiar and comfortable setting of my home has helped me relax and focus less on adapting to the surroundings and more on the tasks at hand during group activities and interviews.***
>
> ***— Job candidate***

4. Offer multiple ways to interact during your hiring events.

- Consider a variety of preferred communication styles and encourage participation in a way that candidates can be most effective.
- Offer the chat window, hand-raising features and voice as options for engaging in activities.
- Consider giving people the option to turn off their camera when they aren't speaking or engaging in designated activities. Not everyone is comfortable having their camera on at all times.

5. Adjust your job descriptions.

- Make role descriptions clearer and more concise.
- Avoid jargon where applicable.
- Very clearly identify "must have" and "nice to have" skills and experience.

2. What adjustments do we need to make to our onboarding practices?

Any employee beginning a new job in a remote environment faces some additional challenges. The same is true for those hired in an Autism @ Work program. They may need additional help getting started and extra efforts to help build community.

Action items

1. Consider additional support for onboarding.

- You may need to increase the frequency of job coaching sessions.
- Review training content and adjust as needed to provide virtual support
- Review possible accommodations with your candidates and new hires. Some may prefer different lighting, noise-canceling headphones or assistive technology.
- After onboarding, do quarterly check-ins with your employees to ensure they have accommodations in place to help them work successfully.

2. Build virtual support communities.

- Offer open facilitated discussion sessions on topics relevant to what new hires are experiencing.
- Create online communities for employees hired through your program. These could include regular game nights, trivia challenges or any kind of organized online social activity. Topics such as:
  - ✓ Transitioning to work from home
  - ✓ Creating community in a virtual environment

LESSONS LEARNED

How can we optimize for a remote environment?

- Prior to a hiring event, schedule a practice day for technical checks and troubleshooting. Hold an informal virtual call a day or two before your hiring event. Use the opportunity for troubleshooting and last-minute questions.
- Clear communication in advance is key. Provide clear instructions with checklists and color coding.
- Ensure your technology and documents are accessible. Check your documents, presentations and technology platforms for accessibility.
- Offer multiple ways to interact. Consider a variety of preferred communication styles and encourage participation in a way that allows candidates to be most effective. Remember that not everyone is comfortable having their camera on at all times.
- Adjust your job descriptions. Make them clear and concise. Avoid jargon.
- Consider additional support for onboarding. More job coaching and accommodations may be needed.
- Build online support communities. Offer facilitated discussions on topics relevant to new hires' experiences. Create online communities for employees hired through the program.

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

Retention & Career Development

Autism @ Work programs are still relatively new. There is much to learn regarding retention and career development for those who participate in the program. In this section, we focus on creating effective retention and career development processes. We will address the following ***three questions*** related to Autism @ Work retention and career development processes:

1. How do we manage performance and retention?

- What kinds of retention activities should we design for employees with autism?
- How do these retention activities align with mainstream retention functions?

2. How do we support employees' development and advancement?

- How can we be thoughtful and supportive of employees with autism?
- How do we respect employees' privacy when they change teams or get a new manager?
- What specific career development resources should we provide?

3. How do we support our employees to manage change?

- What happens when moves or reorganizations happen?
- What happens when a team has a new manager, or when an individual changes teams?
- What do we do when an employee wants to change teams?

1. How do we manage performance and retention of Autism @ Work employees?

Autism @ Work leading firms use standard organizational performance review metrics and processes for retention. Autism @ Work hires are expected to perform to the standards of the organization. Leading firms emphasize the talent and capabilities demonstrated by members of their programs and the value they add to their teams. When members are onboarded successfully (See Onboarding, Page 46) and teams and managers are trained to collaborate effectively, employees with autism generally thrive and achieve.

Autism @ Work leading firms provide continued support for program employees through ERGs and other activities such as regular lunches to enhance their experience and engagement in the firm. Autism @ Work staff may collaborate with managers and employees facing challenges if the employee or manager reaches out to them. As the employee's needs change, their accommodations and need for additional coaching may also change. Otherwise, Autism @ Work hires participate in mainstream performance review and retention activities and adhere to the same performance standards as everyone else in the organization.

Key strategies to enhance retention

Nothing about us without us!

Engagement and empowerment are key dimensions to improving retention of all employees, particularly traditionally underserved employees. Leading firms partner with their Autism @ Work employees to develop support structures and an organizational culture inclusive to them. They do so in four key ways:

- ✓ Giving feedback and direction to the Autism @ Work program regarding matters such as person-first language, activities, policies, and visuals for presentations. Some created an Autism Advisory Council to provide this feedback.
- ✓ Engaging Autism @ Work employees in recruiting and training activities.
- ✓ Creating an autism-specific ERG (being mindful of privacy).
- ✓ Making development and support activities voluntary to respect the diversity of workers' interests and needs.

Retention rates of Autism @ Work employees meet or exceed firm-wide retention rates.

RETENTION SUPPORT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Change accommodations as needed
- ✓ Seek support from ERGs and other D&I groups
- ✓ Provide or advise additional coaching if needed
- ✓ Provide support for employees and managers when needed
- ✓ Provide regular meetings for Autism @ Work employees (e.g., lunches)

2. How do we support the development and advancement of Autism @ Work employees?

Leading Autism @ Work firms leverage their organizations' existing development resources and advancement structures. Some leading firms have also curated and provided additional structures and development activities to support employees with autism. Below are a few ways leading firms address career development:

PREPARING THE ORGANIZATION

- ✓ Expand existing organization-wide mentoring programs by providing autism awareness training for mentors working with Autism @ Work employees.
- ✓ Provide training for managers on how to lead and guide colleagues with autism as they manage their careers.

PREPARING AUTISM @ WORK EMPLOYEES

- ✓ Create content for learning management systems and development programs specific to the needs and interests of employees with autism.
- ✓ Create development opportunities to address life skills to support employees' transition to independent living. Life skills include fiscal responsibility, etiquette, productivity, and health and wellness.

PREPARING MANAGERS

- ✓ One area most leading firms are working to improve is managers' preparation as it relates to retention and advancement. Some firms are considering new training and development opportunities for managers who work with Autism @ Work employees to better prepare them to effectively lead and guide their employees toward advancement.

3. How do we support employees to manage change?

In most organizations, change in team membership, leadership, and organizational structure is common. For many with autism, frequent change may introduce stress and anxiety. A change in leadership may also introduce challenges if new managers are not trained to effectively lead their neurodiverse teams.

Some questions to consider:

- ✓ What happens when there is a manager change?
- ✓ What happens when an Autism @ Work employee changes teams?
- ✓ What happens when an Autism @ Work employee wants to change teams?

Leading Autism @ Work firms suggest the following practices in relation to such changes:

- ✓ Be proactive about communicating what change is taking place and how it may affect the employee.

RESPECT EMPLOYEES' PRIVACY

The employee's privacy preferences should always be a priority when changes occur. In some instances, employees may want all members of their new team to be informed and receive training, or they may only want their manager to be informed.

- ✓ Work with the employee to create a plan to manage the change.
- ✓ Respect the preferences of the employee regarding disclosure to the new team or manager.
- ✓ Encourage employees and managers to reach out and work with the Autism @ Work team to manage the change.

What do we do when an employee wants to change teams?

When an Autism @ Work employee wants to change teams, they must follow the organization's standard procedures and work with Autism @ Work staff to manage the process. Additionally, there are opportunities for development that Autism @ Work programs can provide to facilitate this process.

Changing teams is often dependent on:

- ✓ The employee's current role and skill set.
- ✓ The organizational structure in relation to the employee's current and desired team.
- ✓ The organization's policies regarding mobility across teams and divisions.

Leading firms may facilitate team and role changes in the following ways:

- ✓ Providing an aptitude test to establish the employee's skill set and aptitude to learn the new position's required skills.
- ✓ Managers may work with the employee on a plan to acquire the needed skills while working in their current role.
- ✓ Providing job shadowing and fellowship experiences to explore new roles within the firm.
- ✓ Mentoring programs within the firm are also crucial resources for employees considering changes in their roles and careers.

Firms also noted that it is important to have clear conversations with employees that set expectations about possible pathways to promotion and about how career development structures within the organization work. This is critical to managing their expectations.

> ***Be proactive — have managers involve the Autism @ Work team when they know a change is likely to occur.***

LESSONS LEARNED

What are factors in retention & career development?

- Unit reorganization and change in managers may induce stress and anxiety for employees with autism. Be proactive about providing clear communication about upcoming change.
- The Autism @ Work team and managers should collaborate to support employees during this change.
- Utilize job coaches to help employees through change and reorganization.
- Protect employee privacy!

Note: Lessons learned are in the words of program staff.

Table 10.1: Leading firms' retention

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Who is involved?	• Managers • A@W team • Job coaches • ERGs	• Managers • AaW team • Job coaches	• Managers • A@W team • Job coaches	• Managers • A@W team • Job coaches
Specific activities	• Monthly 30-minute check-in with job coach • Virtual gaming nights • Employee-led social activities • Neurodiversity-specific ERGs	• Continuous career dialogue between managers and employees (generic to all SAP) • Advisory group of AaW employees • AaW community engagement activities • Autism-specific ERGs	• Counselor (generic for all employees) • 90-day check-ins	• Mentoring program (generic for all employees)
Assessment standards (organizational metrics)	• Retention rate	• Full-time: retention rate	• Retention rate	• Full-time: Retention rate • Contractors: contract completion, retained for FTE
Results		• High retention rate	• NCOE retention rate is 100%; 70-80% for the rest of the firm	

Table 10.2: Leading firms' career development

	Microsoft	SAP	EY	JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Firm-wide resources	• Access to career development resources	• Access to career development resources	• Access to career development resources	• Access to career development resources
Autism @ Work-specific activities		• Collaboration with career development teams to incorporate additional autism-inclusive considerations into mainstream offerings	• Giving challenging assignments to NCOE members	• Instituting a development program for expanding skill sets
Assessment of development activities	• What resources are being utilized and how well?	• Receive targeted qualitative feedback from the community about various resources/ offerings • Review the status related to the colleagues who are on board (total number, distribution across board areas/ functions, etc.)		
Challenges	• Determining how to make employees aware of opportunities • Supporting those who are more siloed • Determining why some individuals do not consider advancing in their career	• Scaling services to be increasingly sustainable and consistent globally	• Setting expectations about advancement, movement and trajectory	• Addressing when an employee wants to change positions • Setting expectations about movement and trajectory • Finding pathways that work



Remaining Questions

Autism @ Work programs are relatively new. Leading firms continue to grow, evolve, and examine new possibilities. As the programs and their employees mature, new opportunities, questions and challenges arise. Leading firms grapple with questions regarding growth, sustainability, and development of employees. Below are some of the main unanswered questions current Autism @ Work organizations grapple with.

IMPACT

- What is the long-term impact of our program on our community? How do we measure that impact?
- What is the impact on our organization (KPI)? How do we best measure KPI in the long term?
- What kind of impact does this program have on our customers?
- How do Autism @ Work programs fit within diversity and inclusion efforts?

RECRUITMENT

- How do we scale recruitment in numbers and type of jobs?
- How do we identify and use alternative mediums (e.g., social media, networks) to increase diversity of our candidate pool (e.g., ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status)?
- How do we increase the participation of managers in autism hiring programs?

SCALE

- How do we make this program scale up and scale down?
- How and when do we integrate best practices into mainstream processes?

PREPARATION

Preparing individuals

- How do we prepare individuals with autism for the workplace?
- How do we prepare individuals with autism with life skills?
- How do we provide support and learning opportunities to improve individuals' positive self-image?

Preparing the workplace

- What makes a good manager?
- How do we prepare managers?
- How do we continue to develop our managers to be exemplary inclusive leaders?
- What makes a good team?
- How do we prepare teams?
- What is the impact of training on the organization overall? How do we measure that?

ONBOARDING

- How and when should we encourage candidates to disclose to co-workers and acquaintances?
- How can we best onboard individuals over the first 6 to 12 months?
- How should managers facilitate the integration of Autism @ Work candidates with their teams?

RETENTION

- How do we address mental health issues in the workplace?
- How to use internal (e.g., EAPs, ERGs) and external (e.g., community service providers, families, job coaches) resources to support employees with autism?
- What are effective training techniques to improve the knowledge, attitudes and knowhow of co-workers and managers?

ADVANCEMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- How do individuals with autism measure and talk about their own success?
- How do we coach individuals with autism to navigate the career advancement process?
- What are the barriers and key facilitators to advancement for individuals with autism?

A@W PROGRAM DESIGN REFINEMENTS

- What functions do we want to live in our organization's mainstream process and what do we want to keep specialized?
- What functions and activities make sense to outsource permanently?
- Is it more feasible to offload the training permanently? Is it financially reasonable to have an internal trainer spend the amount of time it will take to work internally for the program?
- What are creative/non-traditional ways to facilitate the success of individuals with autism (e.g., free food, transportation, on-premises health care)?
- What happens when an employee with autism separates from the company? Is it the same process as everyone else? Do you create a new process to facilitate a productive separation?
- How can we provide a consistent level of job coaching?

External Resources

There is a vibrant community of agencies and firms with expertise and passion to support Autism @ Work programs. Below, we list some resources with which Autism @ Work leading firms have partnered over the years. This list is by no means exhaustive. It is meant to provide you with a starting point to make you aware of the types of agencies you may identify in your local community.

NOTE: Inclusion on this list is not an endorsement by any of the firms.

VENDORS & EXPERTS

RESOURCE	SOURCING	TRAINING	COACHING	CONSULTATION
Hala Annabi, University of Washington		✓		✓
Computer Aid Inc. (CAI)	✓	✓	✓	
EvoLibre			✓	
Inclusively	✓	✓		
Integrate Advisors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentra	✓			
Neurodiversity in the Workplace	✓	✓	✓	✓
Neurodiversity Pathways	✓	✓	✓	✓
Next for Autism	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Precisionists	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rethink		✓		
Sara Sanders Gardner, Autism Inclusive Hiring Trainer		✓		
Source Abled, Rangam Consultants	✓			
Specialisterne	✓	✓		✓
Uptimize		✓		

NGOs, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES & NONPROFITS

RESOURCE	SOURCING	TRAINING	COACHING	CONSULTATION
The Arc	✓		✓	✓
Autism @ Work Employer Roundtable	✓			✓
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation			✓	
Expandability	✓	✓	✓	
HMEA	✓			✓
Lifeworks			✓	✓
Lime Connect	✓			
Provail			✓	
Texas Workforce Commission			✓	