

Building Supportive, Inclusive Workplaces Where Neurodivergent Thinkers Thrive: Approaches in Managing Diversity, Inclusion, and Building Entrepreneurship in the Workplace

Jan Coplan, *Landmark College*
Lee Crocker, *Landmark College*
Jeanette Landin, *Landmark College*
Tamara Stenn, *Landmark College*

Introduction

Neurodiversity refers to variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense. The term was coined in 1998 by Australian sociologist Judy Singer and since has grown to reference the many different ways in which minds are wired and think (Singer, 2016). Although all workers are neurodiverse, the term will be used in this paper to indicate specific conditions associated with neurodiversity such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD), dyslexia, dysgraphia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The term neurodivergent refers to variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense (Armstrong, 2011). Developing neurodivergent staff through thinking awareness, coaching, and teambuilding opens new problem-solving and innovation building that benefits organizations. Neurodivergent teams do not function in the same manner as traditional workplace teams, and neurodivergent individuals are not easily found in the workplace. This paper introduces methods developed over 20 years of academic classroom

teaching and research at Landmark College in the workplace to support the development and functionality of self-guided, neurodiverse teams. Neurodivergent thinkers' different perspectives helped develop enterprises such as Apple Computers and Warby Parker eyewear (Grant, 2016). Companies with differently-abled employees outperform their competitors, averaging 28% higher revenue plus higher shareholder returns (Hyland & Connolly, 2018). A neurodiverse group of Australian software testers was 30% more productive than their neurotypical (i.e., people without Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADHD, or Dyslexia) peers (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) looks at the individual experience and life satisfaction based on the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in achieving optimal human functioning and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Neurodiverse people often struggle with the structures and requirements of scripted workplaces and their need for autonomy. The open design of project-based intrapreneurship best supports neurodiverse individuals' self-determination and leads to optimal functioning and competence. Learning programs and tech supports are needed to support the successful

development of neurodiverse intrapreneurs.

The beauty in investing in neurodiverse programs and support is that they benefit the entire company. Neurodivergent workplaces are prized, as there is an increase in the group's ability to find patterns in data and develop creative solutions to problems that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Diverse groups often have individuals who have a passion for a specific topic, can effectively multi-task, work better from home, and resist the conformity of "this is how it has always been done" thinking."

Intrapreneurs are dreamers who do; they are employees who receive incentives such as paid time and freedom to be innovative and creative using company resources and supports (Pinchot, 2017). With financial support and autonomy to create new products, services, and systems for the company's benefit, what appears are often unexpected successes. As entrepreneur Richard Branson, a person with ADHD and dyslexia, pointed out, "While it's true that every company needs an entrepreneur to get it underway, healthy growth requires a smattering of intrapreneurs who drive new projects and explore new and unexpected directions for business" (Dayklin, 2019). The leading question was "How can management and entrepreneurship be of service in advancing the collective well-being of individuals, communities, and societies, and in an inclusive manner (Poonamallee, Scillitoe, & Joy, 2020; Peredo & Chrisman, 2004)? How do we articulate these possibilities and teach them so that students and communities feel encouraged to take up such approaches?"

Neurodivergent employees, if given support, offer exceptional benefits to employers at minimal additional costs. This support could be as simple as establishing in situ or virtual mentors or modifying an employee's workspace. The best practices presented in this paper go beyond the quick office fix, bringing in new ways of using integrated thinking awareness, coaching, and teambuilding amongst neurotypical coworkers and management to improve the productivity, ethos, and well-being of the entire organization. The result is high functioning teams and departments which outperform their peers in new, unpredictable ways.

Neurodivergent Employees: A Misunderstood Talent

Fitting into traditional workplace environments and social structures is a challenge for some people. On

the surface, some employees may seem to be a poor fit for the workplace because of social and interpersonal communication differences. These communication differences are indicative of the unique ways that individual minds work. Mondaq Ltd. (2020) pointed out that employers need to be aware of all employees' needs and work duties to create a culture of acceptance and inclusion, which may seem daunting to develop but could lead to unforeseen opportunities. A challenge employers face is developing acceptance of what coworkers may perceive as socially unacceptable behaviors or interpersonal communication issues (European Union News, 2019). Negative attitudes in the workplace interfere with workers' rights to take part in fulfilling work and can lead to attrition (Scott, Falkmer, & Girdler, 2018).

A key element of integrating all employees into the workplace is addressing unique social and physical needs using methods such as Appreciative Intelligence. Appreciative Intelligence is the ability not just to identify positive potential, but to devise a course of action to take advantage of it (Thatchenkerry & Metzker, 2006). Used to improve creativity, resilience, success, and personal fulfillment, Appreciative Intelligence enables organizations to better accommodate all employees. Aspects of a workplace that is inclusive for workers who process information differently could include explicit directions about workplace behavior, procedures for conducting work, and a mentor to assist with challenging interpersonal situations. An accessible and inclusive workplace can also hone team building, goal setting, and self-assessment skills while providing regular performance feedback. Developing an inclusive and supportive workplace culture is key to harnessing the talents inherent to diverse workers.

Neurodiversity in Project-Based Environments

Neurodivergent people often thrive in open environments such as entrepreneurship or project-based work, where innovative thinking skills are needed. Austin and Pisano (2017) posited that neurodiversity could be a significant advantage among entrepreneurs. With their innate abilities to analyze situations and think of new solutions to problems, neurodivergent workers have the potential to create a workplace in which they could foster inclusion and thrive professionally. The same innovation that drove the creation of Warby Parker and Apple could

be harnessed to develop solutions that neurotypical workers may not be able to imagine. Entrepreneurship provides an opportunity for neurodiverse people to create supportive and productive work environments, which, when adequately supported, result in higher business start-up rates (Thatchenkerry & Metzker, 2006). However, this does not happen quickly. Challenges of neurodiversity include a potential lack of long-term focus, perseveration on a topic, and poor management or organizational skills. These interpersonal difficulties could lead to challenges in sustaining new enterprises resulting in high failure rates (Wiklund, Yu, Tucker & Marino, 2017). A neurodivergent entrepreneur could develop a successful business with proper support from mentors or partners to aid with organizational development and interpersonal communications.

Intrapreneurship takes place in organizations in the form of project-based teams. In this environment, employers present an innovation challenge to self-guided employee teams built from different departments. The intent is to create a diverse, integrated solution using the perspectives of multiple employees. Self-guided teams, in which a group of coworkers work without an external manager's direction, can mimic the entrepreneurial experience within the structure of a broader workplace, creating new places where projects and development can occur (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cohen, 2012). These teams can provide neurodivergent workers with the best of both worlds: A flexible workplace where they can take the risks of an entrepreneur and a space to define acceptable behaviors and create the structure they need. Richardson, McCoy, and McNaughton (2018) commented that self-guided teams could assist neurodivergent colleagues with task management and interpersonal communication, removing barriers limiting productivity and acceptance within a traditional workplace. An interdependent, self-guided team fosters a model for other workplaces by providing examples of self-chosen work and behavioral expectations.

Positive, constructive, and open communication among teams reduces communication breakdowns that diminish the effectiveness of self-managed teams (Falcone, 2016). The development and management of neurodivergent, self-guided teams can help support and nurture neurodivergent thinkers giving them the space to create their workflow, culture, and process with the support needed to sustain it. This support

can also signal to other people that this organization supports such teams, attracting more talent. Self-managed team practices support the growth of the entrepreneurship mindset. In the workplace, this creates long term stability and success for neurodivergent thinkers and can lead to improved processes, innovation, and organizational success.

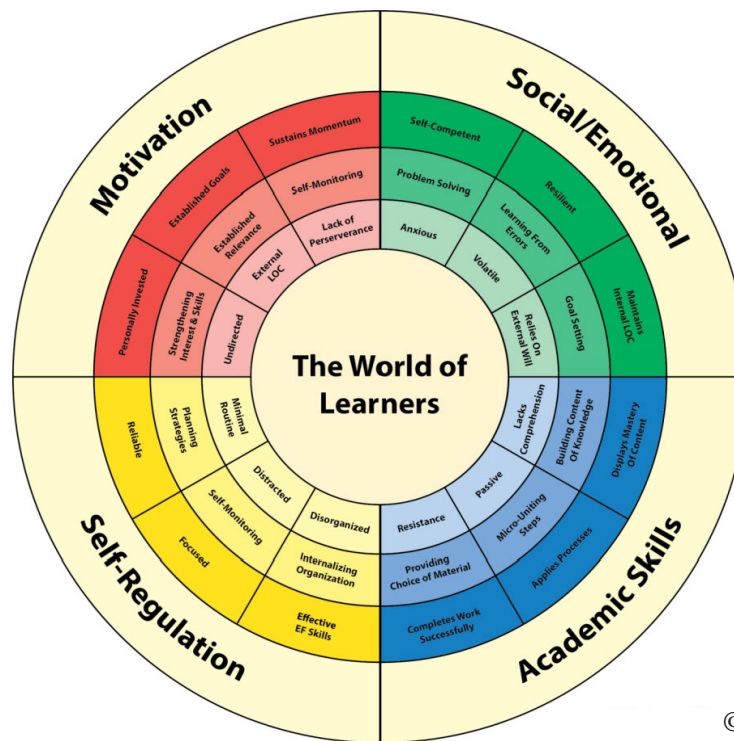
Project-based learning (PBL) is a student-centered pedagogy characterized by students' autonomy to conduct constructive, goal-oriented solutions to real-life problems, often collaborating with outside practitioners. Studies found that PBL gives students hands-on experiences, builds problem-solving and collaboration skills, increases the long-term retention of theoretical content, and improves students' attitudes towards learning (Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016). In the classroom, PBL replicates the intrapreneurship, team-based innovation, and problem-solving that takes place in today's workplace. The same thinking, coaching, and teambuilding skills that support neurodivergent self-guided workplace teams could apply in neurodiverse classrooms with PBL.

Three Assessment Tools for Neurodivergent Management

To self-manage a team, one needs first to be aware of managing themselves by building their thinking awareness. Thinking awareness is a combination of self-knowledge and Emotional Intelligence, knowing how to connect and empathize with others. Neurodivergent thinkers often have challenges with Executive Function (EF) and thinking awareness, which is vital for proper team management. EF skills include time management, self-motivation, organization, and planning. Often people with EF and thinking awareness challenges are not fully aware of themselves nor their impact on others.

Students in a college classroom observed that neurodivergent students displayed inflated self-esteem in how they ranked their communication and work completion abilities (Osterholt & Barratt, 2009). Students became 35% less comfortable developing a relationship with professors and 25% more uncomfortable expressing their needs as the semester progressed (ibid). As discomfort grew, so did one's thinking awareness. An increased thinking awareness resulted in a more honest recognition of cognitive needs and barriers to success. The link between thinking awareness and success led to the

Figure 1: World of Learner Wheel



©Osterholt & Dennis

World of Learners Wheel (Fig. 1). This model provides the necessary language and personal monitoring for learners to build autonomy as they verbalize and experience their growth from barriers to success.

The four domains: Motivation, Social/Emotional influences, Academic Skill Attainment, and Self-Regulation translate well to the workplace and highlight the skills needed for successful team development. Extensive use and testing of this tool within college classrooms resulted in an astonishing realization that many neurodiverse individuals think that they are strong communicators and learners when, in fact, they may still be developing these skills.

As presented in the 2014 article, *Assessing and Addressing Student Barriers; Implications for Today's College Classroom*, assessing begins with "Awareness" as participants notice and understand their behavior by naming and discussing development skills they manifested for the individual (Osterholt & Dennis, 2014). These skills very often reveal physical and emotional barriers the participant feels but may not have explicitly been aware of or named. The World of Learners Wheel provides participants with language for the obstacles they may be experiencing but are having trouble verbalizing. The framework also supplies a supportive environment in which to explore these further because students could investigate where their current strengths lie. The next step in the

model is "Addressing." The Four Domains of Learning framework supports actions through the users' analysis using the Wheel. Presented as a circular layout to show movement and inter-relationships, the World of Learners Wheel enables users to find and chart progress in their challenge area. This process helps users recognize the triggers that reinforce negative behaviors and develop strategies to move towards new positive ones. The Four Domains analysis is followed with personal goal setting using SMART techniques supported by coaching, revisiting goals, and noting progress. The Addressing step combined with goal setting creates a "reset button" for individuals to pause and reflect as they develop an internal locus of control and sustained momentum.

Another best practice Skill Building tool in neurodivergent management is Collaborative Intelligence (CQ) and Thinking Talent Maps. CQ enables participants to determine their mind patterns and discover their processing preference; auditory, visual, or kinesthetic (Markova and McArthur, 2015). A Thinking Talents Map helps individuals to place their top Thinking Talents chosen from a pool of 34 different options into one of four categories: Analytic, Innovative, Procedural, Relational. Individuals share their mind patterns and map their Thinking Talents. What emerges is developing a common language, a universal way of relating to each other, and a

communications gamecard. Assessment strategies such as CQ benefits the entire workplace, not just the neurodiverse individuals. One can determine if teams or departments have a balanced Thinking Talent map. This level of self-knowledge and planning is suitable for any group and incredibly helpful for neurodiverse teams. Often, participants often have “blind areas” of cognition that could negatively impact team function.

Tuckman’s team development is a third Skill Building tool that strengthens thinking awareness, coaching, and team building in neurodivergent management (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Teams analyze their travel through the four stages of team development; Form, Storm, Norm, and Perform. Employers coach teams in the behaviors and practices needed to move them through the development stages until solidly performing. Clearly stated and labeled team development stages help all team members to recognize where they are progressing both as individuals and as team members while teaching management skills that move teams forward.

Supporting neurodiverse learners with multiple scaffolding levels, breaking complex tasks into smaller manageable parts, naming and measuring these parts, bringing awareness to them, and the learner themselves are essential for successful, deliberate, and well-planned self-managed team experience. These tools work across neurodiverse, neurotypical, and mixed teams, creating best practices in the workplace that benefit the entire organization. The most crucial step in creating a cross-functioning workplace is a shared common language, method, and touchpoints. This integrated approach enables teams to support their need to embark on the chaotic, uncharted workplace problem-solving and innovation areas.

The Importance of Universal Design in Teams

To some people, the equation $1 \times 2 = 2$ or $1(2) = 2$ or “one times two equals two” is often understood as three different equations with no standard connector. Developing a standard method of communication and workflow in the workplace helps to eliminate misunderstandings and delays. Supporting diverse people to work in small groups and teams involve considering Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and explicit teaching methods (Archer, 2011). Lessaux and Miller (2018) found that giving individuals scaffolding to learn effective participation and collaboration increases groups’ success. Team members at any level

will benefit from assistance with a delegation of tasks, setting objectives, and documenting work. When group members understand and apply appropriate team forming steps, they increase their effectiveness (Jones, 2018). Measures include explicit instruction in information sharing, scheduling, and setting up team norms and expectations. Support for self-motivation and engagement within the team needs to be managed as well.

UDL is an educational model that supports instructors in designing and developing an accessible curriculum for diverse learners. It creates products, environments, and learning spaces that individuals can use with a suitable and least restrictive amount of adaptation or accommodations possible (Timmons, 2006). UDL concepts transfer well to workplace environments, providing a blueprint for individuals to follow that builds access and inclusion. Workplace UDL revolves around being simple, flexible, and efficient (Martyn, Pace & Gee, 2015). Simple refers to multiple means of representation. All are engaged in communications and messaging together, building a standard language, and dropping complicated jargon or inconsistent word usage (a reference to the earlier math example). Flexible refers to multiple means of expression and individual solutions. Neurodiverse thinkers need space and support for their different perspectives to come through, which needs to balance with team expectations and deadlines. Flexibility creates structure and support for both divergent and expected goals to co-exist. Efficient is about multiple means of engagement and universal policies and processes for all, including ones that break down barriers to accessing tools for team development and work completion such as technology or the use of mobile devices.

UDL is used for team communications and protocols developed and followed for the duration of a project. These UDL team protocols include determining how the team will contact each other, where, and when. In best practices, neurodiverse team members develop their UDL coordinated with organization members to create a universal language, communication, and work protocol. This task can be an essential first lesson in team formation and community building as it underlines the importance of organization and communication.

Preparing individuals to work together is an essential aspect of best practices in team success. Employees arrive with a spectrum of interpersonal

communication participation skills, so it is necessary to make sure everyone has the required foundational skills. Often people struggle with communication and need to get beyond past negative experiences from working in groups to have a successful team experience. Sorensen researched the phenomenon of protracted group failure coining the term “group hate” to describe the complexities of dread associated with group work (1981). Building community and fostering positive attitudes about working in a group helps individuals to overcome group hate. Experiential games or “ice breakers” aimed at assisting members in having fun together, learning each other’s names, and getting to know one another, help to build the needed trust and community to overcome group hate.

Mistrust is a strong emotion of group hate and is often related to team members not completing work on time or at all. Past experiences with difficult group members often are behind an individual’s feelings of group hate. Positive ways for team members to support less motivated or less skilled peers can be developed by keeping a UDL norm of everyone doing “their share of the work” with healthier individuals helping less able teammates. Using UDL, employers encourage and prompt team leaders to communicate offers of help and aid to a struggling peer. Management can also support emergent teams giving them appropriate support and accommodations to complete the task, thus improving organizational efficiency.

Rubrics that spell out expectations are also helpful in UDL environments by clarifying goals and individual responsibilities. Rubrics create mutual understanding. The rubric helps to build team communication. At the beginning of each project, participants are shown the rubric with project expectations and outcomes. The rubric supports teamwork and encourages collaboration. Several times during the ongoing work of the project, team-members provide formative assessments for each other. Upon project completion, participants complete a peer evaluation similar to the 360-evaluation method, in which they rate and comment on their own, their peers’, and their manager’s work on the team. Formative peer evaluation increases project success rates and lessen group hate, as each person gets the feedback they need to improve (Britton, Simper, Leger & Stephenson, 2017).

A Conversation: Neurodivergent Teams at Work

Global workplaces such as Microsoft, Ernst & Young (EY), SAP software, JPMorgan Chase & Co. (JPMC), and DXC Technology are already leading to harnessing the neurodiverse advantage for their workplaces. They recruit and build neurodivergent teams as a way of preparing and onboarding talent for the corporate workplace. Some of these teams have been operating successfully since 2018, and in Australia with the Australian Federal Government, they have a 90% retention rate amongst over 100 autistic employees (Eddy, 2020). This high retention rate explained Andrew Eddy of Untapped, offset the extra time it took to develop and coach the team.

While large organizations are more prominent in their use of neurodivergent workforces, the inclusion of neurodiversity helps any sized organization, if the organization is flexible. Organizational challenges posed by a neurodiverse workforce include having a scent, sound, and light-sensitive workplace. The organization also needs a robust human resource function or support, focusing on employee onboarding and coworkers’ workplace training. Also, having a workplace Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is useful when addressing mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. With proper supports in place and a positive commitment to building autonomy, competence, and relatedness, organizations overcame the initial challenges of building a neurodiverse workforce.

By enabling people to engage in group work before their workplace placement, organizations can better understand individuals’ unique work processes, communications, and behaviors. This engagement helps them to determine the best fit to build high-functioning teams and has led to high rates of retention, efficiencies, and a growing base of neurodiverse expertise. These global workplace teams use some of the management best practices techniques developed through decades of academic research at Landmark College and presented in this paper, as well as new methods. Landmark College, a leading education facility for neurodiverse students, regularly interacts with organizations seeking to build neurodiverse talent in their workplace.

The following is a summary of a series of interviews conducted between the Landmark College Career Connections office and diversity and inclusion specialists and subject matter resources from EY,

JPMC, and DXC Technology (via Untapped) in the winter of 2020 (J. Mitchell, A. Pacilio, & A. Eddy, personal conversations, January 2020). The topic was, “Building supportive, inclusive workplaces where neurodivergent thinkers thrive.” The purpose of the interviews was to collect experiences and practices to present in this paper.

What were your expectations when you created neurodiverse teams?

To answer this, we first had to diverge and understand how teams formed. The inclusion specialists’ goals at their organizations focused on hiring neurodivergent candidates who were either underemployed or unemployed. There was a lack of opportunities and jobs for the neurodiverse population, and though most candidates held four-year degrees, they had not received multiple job offers. This lack of work experience often excluded talented neurodiverse individuals from traditional candidate searches. To find the neurodivergent talent required that the inclusion specialists restructure their entire method of recruitment. Many neurodiverse people were apprehensive about entering into a corporate culture that felt overwhelming and alien to them. The inclusion specialists had to find hard-to-find talent and convince that talent that they would be welcomed with an environment that provided structured support for their various learning styles.

Frankly, the inclusion specialists’ goals were not very large, beyond finding talent and making work accommodations for them, enabling them to perform at least as well as neurotypical coworkers. They did not expect the incredible emotional and transformation experience this would become for both them and their organizations. They told of recruiting people from jobs at car washes, fast food restaurants, or from merely living in rooms in their parents’ homes that they had not left in years. The work to get these individuals ready for the corporate culture was daunting. The inclusion specialists were pioneers, reaching out for the first time to bring neurodiverse talent to organizations. They looked to Landmark College for guidance and support.

They learned the incredible transformation that they had on people’s lives as they witnessed many firsts from their neurodiverse employees; first friendships, first personal relationships, first paychecks, and first time living independently. They also experienced several firsts in the workplace, especially as the

neurodiverse employees began outperforming their neurotypical counterparts. Soon productivity began to rise in all areas.

Please briefly describe the structures you provided for team members

Though working independently, each company created similar support structures. All included a trained supervisor, the “coach” to help with everyday logistics, and a mentor, the “buddy” to support socialization and building friendships. Neurodiversity awareness training was required for employees involved in the program. And in one case, neurodiversity awareness training was required for the entire company. This training introduced the workforce to the world, needs, and experiences of neurodiverse people, including hypersensitivity to sounds and light, difficulties with eye contact and communications, vocalizations and other tics, and different expression and learning ways.

Untapped is a network of autism professionals, recruiters, researchers, and workplace consultants. Andrew Eddy of Untapped shared guidelines for a sustainment model by implementing a neurodiversity inclusion program within an organization. This model includes Readiness Training to prepare the organization for neurodiversity inclusion, a recruitment strategy that attracts neurodiverse people, plus onboarding and sustained support for the individual. Readiness Training teaches current employees how to welcome and support neurodiverse people into their workforce for mutual benefit. Recruitment strategies for neurodiverse talent work around traditional searches that seek past employment and experience as workplace hiring criteria. Onboarding is the process of helping the neurodiverse individual to “fit in” with the organizational structure, culture, and workplace expectations. Sustainment is the special care and attention given to each individual, supporting them in this transition to a new way of working and interacting, beyond the initial onboarding period.

How were the teams supervised?

Different organizations used different models of supervision. Most models included a manager assigned for day-to-day actions, plus an external job coach to help with the individual’s transition into the firm, workday, and corporate model. Besides, there was often a talent consultant from the human

resources department, peer advisors, group meetings to talk about daily incidences, and a “buddy” for team building, introductions, and assistance with navigating social settings.

Eddy explained how operationally, models could vary between implementations. However, all included the following common elements: implementing a ‘pod’ of trainees to create a supportive social and team environment, providing dedicated training and mentoring of the trainees, providing services of a dedicated social worker or occupational therapist to support the transition to the workplace, and the orientation and coaching of neuro-typical employees in the organization. Electronic tools such as Life Sherpa, an assistive technology platform that provides scaffolding to help neurodiverse individuals become more self-reliant, were beneficial in supporting the executive functioning of trainees and the training of managers, coworkers, and employees in the vicinity of the pod.

Name some of the notable outcomes or projects.

All companies cited increased productivity and efficiency. Eddy referenced a notable example that occurred at a well-known bank in Australia. “Cybersecurity analysts start at a level one and normally progress to level two after five years,” he explained. “In a new autistic team in the bank, some trainee analysts were writing level two reports after only five months.” Other companies found neurodiverse employees took the initiative to add automation and perform unrequested improvements. People had not even considered these actions in the organization. However, the neurodivergent mind saw something that needed fixing and fixed it.

Another example took place at an insurance company in Argentina, where a new hire noticed a coding error that had existed undetected for seven years. The same individual worked on a team that automated a signing process that ended multiple reading and review rounds, significantly improving efficiencies and accuracy at the organization. Neither task was recognized as a need nor assigned to the individual, but they helped the organization once completed. These examples emphasize the importance of building flexibility into the neurodiverse experience.

Anthony Pacilio of JPMC shared, “The first cohort we hired was 46% more productive after the first six months – we tested the results. We hired folks in another location, and they were 90-140% more

productive after six months.” Pacilio observed that workplace outcomes were also qualitative such as increased confidence and greater independence, as seen in many firsts for employees such as getting a driver’s license, getting an apartment, or getting married. “The new hires,” explained Pacilio, “found their tribe of people who were inclusive and supportive. All of this being unforeseen outcomes.”

Jamell Mitchell of EY agreed, “A sense of camaraderie is built among the employees. They say people get them, and that really makes a difference.” Mitchell advised that the employees should be “following a path of career mobility advancement and change, and move to different positions within the company or move on to other opportunities.”

Did anything surprise you about the team’s performance or approaches to the project?

There were many surprises. JPMC’s first neurodivergent cohort was 46% more productive than the neurotypical cohorts after the first six months. The neurodivergent cohort was 90-140% more productive in another location than the neurotypical cohorts after six months. Eventually, JPMC had to raise neurotypical teams’ goals because the neurodivergent groups raised the bar so high.

The inclusion specialists felt very optimistic as businesses embraced these individuals.

“We’re starting to see a mindset shift from ‘accommodate,’” explained Mitchell, “to ‘neurodiverse employees are going to have an impactful presence in the company because of their different ways of thinking.’ Collectively the specialists agreed that the neurodiverse individuals are an “untapped workforce” that, once employed, can make a tremendous organizational and societal impact.

Do you have any recommendations going forward for others interested in using neurodiverse teams in their workplaces?

Eddy said, “Include electronic tools that support selection, support the executive functioning of trainees and the training of managers, coworkers, and employees in the vicinity of the employees.” The electronic tools he recommends include the following apps:

- Pymetrics: used as part of the candidate selection process
- Uptimize: for purpose-developed e-learning awareness training that helps managers,

supervisors, and coworkers to understand the behavioral traits of autistic individuals and learn new ways of effectively working with them

- Life Sherpa: a smartphone app for the autistic trainees and their supervisors that assists with executive functioning

The inclusion specialists at both JP Morgan Chase and EY felt that often companies are looking to see if they should “do it.” They are on the fence about whether they should take the risk and reach out to build neurodiversity in their workplaces. Their advice to these organizations is to “just start it.” The specialists suggested looking to others who have already embraced neurodiversity in their workplaces such as JPMC, EY, Microsoft, SAP, and DXC to see the success and benefits the move has brought to them while also learning from their challenges. They offered help and assistance, recommending information about starting a sustainable model and scale a program. One resource they cited was a comprehensive 61-page “Playbook” created by Autism@Work companies to assist others in seeking to start a neurodiversity program in their workplace (Annabi, et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This paper introduced the techniques, theoretical frameworks, and management approaches to harness neurodivergent talent and improve organizational culture and output. It also provided a behind the scenes glimpse into what it is like to recruit and work with neurodiverse ability – often for the first time. The techniques presented here are grounded in over 20 years of research and development of the neurodiverse learner and provide practical skills and methods to build thinking awareness, coaching, and teambuilding. Self-Determination Theory is presented to link the relationship between a supported, guided intrapreneurship and well-being. Lastly this paper offered a glimpse into the personal experiences of individuals on the front lines who are building supportive and inclusive workplaces where neurodivergent thinkers, and organizations, thrive. This paper just scratched the surface of the much larger and deeper body of work around neurodiversity, self-determination, and the workplace. We recommend and encourage continued exploration into the neurodiversity field, self-determination, and inclusion in the workplace specifically in the area of self-determination and impact.

References

- Annabi, H., Crooks, E. W., Barnett, N., Guadagno, J., Mahoney, J. R., Michelle, J., ... Velasco, J. (2019). *Autism @ Work Playbook: Finding talent and creating meaningful employment opportunities for people with autism*. Seattle: ACCESS-IT.
- Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2010). *Explicit instruction: effective and efficient teaching*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Armstrong, T. (2010a). *The power of neurodiversity: Discovering the extraordinary gifts of autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other brain differences*. Cambridge: Da Capo Lifelong.
- Armstrong, T. (2010b). *The power of neurodiversity: Unleashing the advantages of your differently wired brain*. Cambridge: Da Capo Lifelong.
- Austin, R. D., & Pisano, G. P. (2017). Neurodiversity as a competitive advantage. *Harvard Business Review*, 2017(3), 96–103.
- Britton, E., Simper, N., Leger, A., & Stephenson, J. (2015). Assessing teamwork in undergraduate education: A measurement tool to evaluate individual teamwork skills. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(3), 378–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1116497>
- Daykin, J. (2019). Intrapreneurship. Retrieved from Forbes website: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jordandaykin/2019/01/08/intrapreneurship/#26622d734ea3>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “What” and “Why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1104_01
- European Union News. (2019). Organisations missing out on “pool of talent” by failing to support neurodivergent employees. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from European Union News website: <http://european-union-news.newslib.com/>
- Falcone, P. (2016). *75 ways for managers to hire, develop, and keep great employees*. New York: American Management Association.
- Grant, A. (2016). *Originals how non-conformists move the world*. New York: Penguin Publishing Group.
- Hyland, S., & Connolly, J. (2018). Companies leading in disability inclusion have outperformed peers, accenture research finds. Retrieved from Accenture website: <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/companies-leading-in-disability-inclusion-have-outperformed-peers-accenture-research-finds.htm>

- Jones, R. (2018). *Communication in the real world* (2nd ed.). Boston: Flatworld.
- Kokotsaki, D., Menzies, V., & Wiggins, A. (2016). Project-based learning: A review of the literature. *Improving Schools, 19*(3), 267–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480216659733>
- Lesaux, N., & Miller, M. (2018). Collaborative learning with structure: How one instructor intentionally models and fosters the key collaboration skills that students need, now and in their professional futures. Retrieved from Harvard Graduate School of Education website: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/01/collaborative-learning-structure>
- Martyn, K., Pace, K., & Gee, N. (2015). Application of UDL principles to practice environments: Getting it right? *Universal Design for Learning: A License to Learn*. Presented at the Universal Design for Learning: A License to Learn, Ireland.
- Mcarthur, A., & Markova, D. (2015). *Collaborative intelligence*. New York: Random House.
- Mondaq Ltd., & Lewis, L. (2020). Neurodiversity, Autism And The Workplace - Employment and HR - Worldwide. Retrieved from Mondaq website: <https://www.mondaq.com/discrimination-disability-sexual-harassment/893164/neurodiversity-autism-and-the-workplace>
- Osterholt, D. A., & Barratt, K. (2011). A case for a collaborative classroom. *About Campus, 16*(2), 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20057>
- Osterholt, D. A., & Dennis, S. L. (2014). Assessing and addressing student barriers: Implications for today's college classroom. *About Campus, 18*(6), 18–24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21140>
- Peredo, A. M., & Chrisman, J. J. (2006). Toward a theory of community-based enterprise. *Academy of Management Review, 31*(2), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.20208683>
- Pinchot, G. (2017). Four definitions for the intrapreneur. Retrieved from The Pinchot Perspective website: <https://www.pinchot.com/2017/10/four-definitions-for-the-intrapreneur.html>
- Poonamallee, L., Scillitoe, J., & Joy, S. (2020). *Socio-tech innovation: Harnessing technology for social good*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richardson, L., McCoy, A., & McNaughton, D. (2019). “He’s worth the extra work”: The employment experiences of adults with ASD who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) as reported by adults with ASD, family members, and employers. *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation, 62*(2), 205–219. <https://doi.org/10.3233/wor-192856>
- Scott, M., Falkmer, M., Falkmer, T., & Girdler, S. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of an autism-specific workplace tool for employers: A randomised controlled trial. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 48*(10), 3377–3392. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3611-0>
- Scott, M., Jacob, A., Hendrie, D., Parsons, R., Girdler, S., Falkmer, T., & Falkmer, M. (2017). Employers’ perception of the costs and the benefits of hiring individuals with autism spectrum disorder in open employment in Australia. *PLOS ONE, 12*(5). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177607>
- Shir, N., Nikolaev, B. N., & Wincent, J. (2019). Entrepreneurship and well-being: The role of psychological autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Journal of Business Venturing, 34*(5), 105875. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2018.05.002>
- Singer, J. (2016). *Neurodiversity: The birth of an idea*. Lexington: Singer.
- Tannenbaum, S. I., Mathieu, J. E., Salas, E., & Cohen, D. (2012). Teams are changing: Are research and practice evolving fast enough? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 5*(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01396.x>
- Thatchenkery, T., & Metzker, C. (2006). *Appreciative intelligence: Seeing the mighty oak in the acorn*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Timmons, S. (2006). Wittgenstein’s language games as a theory of learning disabilities. *Nursing Philosophy, 7*(1), 20–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1466-769x.2006.00245.x>
- Tuckman, B. W., & Jensen, M. A. C. (1977). Stages of small-group development revisited. *Group & Organization Studies, 2*(4), 419–427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105960117700200404>
- Wiklund, J., Yu, W., Tucker, R., & Marino, L. D. (2017). ADHD, impulsivity and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing, 32*(6), 627–656. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2017.07.002>

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.