



"Tapping The Hidden Talent Pool"

In this latest instalment of "Our Stories" our Founding Director Oliver Fenghour talks with Client Services Director Liam Groves at Verizon about what organisations need to do to effectively support Autistic people in the workplace.

OF: In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle to autistic people finding employment?

LG: Develop an understanding by business of Autism as a condition. The wide variation of how Autism manifests itself and the benefits that it can bring (Instead of the negatives) to the workplace.

My own company does a significant amount in terms of supporting people with Autism in the workplace; there are various events on this. April is Autism awareness month for example. Knowledge is Power in any circumstance.

OF: What must organisations do to identify autistic talent and support them effectively in the workplace?

LG: As per point 1 – develop the workforce's understanding of Autism, this can be done in various ways, Communications, Knowledge Sharing - people with Autism or people supporting people with Autism can share their experiences to grow knowledge throughout the workforce.

Pro-Actively recruit the skillset into the right roles within their business. I am not going to "Pigeon Hole" Autistic people in terms of role but; in my own personal experience, Engineering is a good base (Hardware/Software Engineers etc), Finance or Legal – All very analytical roles which can go hand in hand with how an Autistic person may think and/or engage in day to day life (Not just the workplace).

OF: In your opinion what can organisations in other sectors learn from the technology sector in harnessing the potential of autistic talent?

LG: I work for one of the top 15 companies in the world and we do massive amounts in terms of diversity knowledge sharing and management. You can of course always do more. We have the money to do it – It's unfortunate but that's way of the world, we need to do more in the small and medium enterprise world in any market or industry vertical to show the benefits autistic people can bring to the workplace. This is achieved through partnerships.

Smaller companies working on reduced HR budgets are more challenging but they should be putting diversity including Autism and other areas, in their day to day agendas.

OF: What must organisations, in your view do to hire more autistic people into their businesses'?

LG: Human Resources should partner, with organisations such as "Kent Autistic Trust" (Or Similar - As I live in Kent) or other regional/national autism bodies to develop recruitment strategies to recruit Autistic People.

Autistic people may find the whole job application, interview, recruitment processes extremely stressful (May well put people off applying in the first place) when they have a lot of value to add. People without the condition struggle and with the depression and social anxiety conditions which can go hand in hand with Autism – will make going through this process significantly more challenging.

OF: Why is it important that organizations have a good culture and ethos and in your view what does a good organizational culture look like?

LG: Diversity is extremely critical in any workforce, to gain different insights, thought tracks and views of the world. Autistic people are part of this. This is the foundation of any company its built on their people and how we interact with Suppliers, Clients etc helps business grow.