



## **SUPPLEMENT:**

**Employer's Guide to Hiring and Retaining Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)**





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# Employer's Guide to Hiring and Retaining Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)

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Employers are becoming increasingly aware of the value of hiring adults with disabilities. Just as we instruct potential employees living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it is vital to educate employers on the benefits of hiring adults with disabilities. This supplement for businesses was written by an employer with extensive insight and experience recruiting, hiring, and supporting workers with ASD.

For further information, please see the Department of Labor's Office of Disability & Employment Policy document, "Business Strategies that Work: A Framework for Disability Inclusion" at <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/BusinessStrategiesThatWork.pdf>.



## Just the facts – A Business Case for Hiring Individuals with Autism

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### *According to MarketResearch.com*

- 54 million Americans with disabilities represent the third largest market segment in the United States, behind the Baby Boomers and the mature market.

### *According to a National Survey of Consumer Attitudes*

- 92% of Americans view companies hiring people with disabilities more favorably than those that do not.
- 87% would prefer to give their business to companies who hire disabled people.
- 5% would be willing to switch to a brand associated with a good cause if price and quality were relatively equal.



## One-in-five Americans has a Disability

- 26 million Americans with disabilities are of working age.
- Only 18% are born with a disability.
- People with disabilities are just as productive as their non-disabled peers with absenteeism rates lower than or equal to others.
- People with disabilities are creative, talented and innovative. Employers have seen a positive impact on morale, retention, and corporate culture.

## U.S. Census Reports That People with Disabilities and Their Network Represent

- \$1 trillion, including \$220 billion in discretionary income,
- Have the most buying power of any traditionally underrepresented group.
- Surveys of employers who use the Job Accommodation Network show  
*50% of all accommodations, if needed at all, cost less than \$50*  
*88% cost less than \$1,000.*





# Review Policies to Ensure Inclusion Strategies

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## *Electronic Applicant Processing Systems Barriers*

- Consider an associate's entire life cycle using a step-by-step method as opposed to recruiting and on-boarding
- Be aware of online applicant tracking systems or ATS which can screen out individuals with ASD or other cognitive challenges

*Some applicant tracking processes are disability-friendly; however an online assessment narrows the field of qualified applicants providing a challenging barrier to employment for those with ASD.*

## *Interview Structure Barriers*

- Behavior-based interview questions use past behavior to predict future performance. Statistics reveal that working-aged individuals with ASD have not held previous jobs.
- Interviews with individuals with ASD need to be more experiential in nature. Consider a realistic job preview giving the candidate the ability be in the work environment also allowing the hiring manager to assess their potential employee's capabilities and comfort.

# Effective Job Matching Strategies

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## *Call In the Experts*

- Consultants or community resources can help determine the right jobs for individuals with disabilities. Often times disability-friendly jobs exist within a company without their knowledge. An outsider may see the jobs from a different perspective.
- Look for the strengths of an individual to determine a suited position creating success rather than frustration and failure.

## *Management Training is Critical*

- Educate management teams on what a particular disability might "look like" in the workplace.
- Design a comprehensive approach to working alongside individuals with disabilities.
- Disability training has a positive effect on the workplace and the customer - especially within a customer-service oriented business





*Question: What should the expectations be for an individual with a disability in their job?*

*Answer: How is success defined for a neuro-typical, currently able bodied associate?*

- Performance expectations should be the same for an individual with a disability as it is with all other employees. Issues are avoided when a business is run with employees who are qualified for their positions.
- An employer should never hire an individual with a disability just because they feel sorry for the candidate.
- A business must hire an associate who can perform the functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation.





# Working With a Supported Employment Agency

*Evaluate the agency as you would with any other vendor and develop a relationship with the agency you believe satisfied the due diligence screening.*

## *Evaluate the Agency's Business Model*

- Are they interested in helping to provide qualified candidates to the business for now and later down the road?
- Is the agency taking the time to get to know your business?
- Who else have they done work with and can they provide references from other businesses?

## *Establish Performance Expectations*

- A business should be willing to provide the agency access to hiring managers and work area to ensure they are aware of who the candidates will be working for as well as where they will be working.
- Be honest with the agency. Inform them of conflicts as soon as possible, especially if a job coach is not assigned to the associate. Proactive communication is integral to a successful employment outcome.
- An agency's ability/ willingness to help the business employ individuals with disabilities will give you an insight into the agencies mindset of training or screening their candidates.
- Investigate what other benefits an agency can offer the business.

*Do they offer training to current associates or management?*

*Do they provide ongoing support or job coach assistance?*

*Can the agency service multiple jobs, locations, shifts, etc.?*





## Scheduling

- Stay on a regular. An associate with ASD is comfortable with a consistent routine. Altered schedules would affect transportation requirements, job coach scheduling, natural supports and other accommodations.

## Job Coach

- The role of the job coach should be viewed as a necessary accommodation for an associate.
- Rules of engagement and expectations of the job coach should be explained upfront and mutually agreed upon.
- Job coaches will support the associate to perform the necessary duties of the job and serves as an intermediary when needed to help the management team supervise the associate. The job coach is not
  - to do the work for the associate*
  - to answer for the associate when he/she is addressed for free labor.*
- A job coach is expected to “fade” when the associate is able to perform his/her work without the accommodation. They will visit the workplace to touch base and ensure the associate is engaged in their job.
- The job coach should be available to support the associate in the event of a significant change in the work area, duties, or need for disciplinary action.







Autism Speaks thanks QBE for their generous support of the organization's employment initiatives.



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Have more questions or need assistance?  
Please contact the Autism Response Team for  
Information, Resources and Tools.

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### *Our Mission*

*At Autism Speaks, our goal is to change the future for all who struggle with autism spectrum disorders.*

*We are dedicated to funding global biomedical research into the causes, prevention, treatments, and cure for autism; to raising public awareness about autism and its effects on individuals, families, and society; and to bringing hope to all who deal with the hardships of this disorder. We are committed to raising the funds necessary to support these goals.*

*Autism Speaks aims to bring the autism community together as one strong voice to urge the government and private sector to listen to our concerns and take action to address this urgent global health crisis. It is our firm belief that, working together, we will find the missing pieces of the puzzle.*



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