

# WORKTOPIA EXCHANGE

Exchanging **knowledge**

Exchanging **learnings**

Exchanging **ideas**

## EMPLOYERS GETTING TO KNOW TOMORROW'S EMPLOYEES TODAY

### WHAT WE KNOW

Almost 1 in 5 Canadians have a disability.<sup>2</sup> Studies show that employers who have worked directly with individuals with developmental disabilities are more likely to hire again, and are more likely to identify advantages to hiring such as consistent attendance, workforce diversity, long term employment, and co-worker partnerships.<sup>3</sup> Despite the benefits of inclusive hiring, employers can be somewhat wary of tapping into this highly motivated talent pool.

EmploymentWorks<sup>1</sup> (EW) introduces organizations to teens and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), one of the most common developmental disorders that affects the way a person perceives and communicates with the world. Employers offer job sampling opportunities to the EW program that contribute to the growth and advancement of individuals with ASD by providing meaningful opportunities for them to learn, practice and improve their work skills necessary for future employment success.

Employers participating in EW have an opportunity to better understand the characteristics of ASD, embrace inclusion and preview how individuals with ASD, who are known to be reliable and dedicated employees with the potential to excel in the workplace, may potentially fill a job vacancy within their organization.

### WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

Employers engaged in EW represent a variety of industries:



Leisure & Hospitality



Construction



Retail



Manufacturing



Education & Health

#### What employers said after participating in EmploymentWorks

100%

Strongly agreed / agreed that the tasks completed by the participants met their standards and expectations (n=32)

Participation in the program enhanced their likelihood to hire individuals with ASD (n=28)

93%

During the program, employers also said they learned:

- ⇒ How to support participants with ASD
- ⇒ How to guide participants from casual to work related conversations
- ⇒ How to provide succinct instructions to help participants perform tasks

Employers describe their most significant learning as:

"How to work with individuals with autism."

"Increased awareness on ASD."

"Becoming more open-minded."

"Seeing the abilities of people with ASD."

### WHAT TO EXPECT:

While there is no typical employee with autism, there are a range of behaviors that employers might observe.

What it may look like in the workplace	Reframed as a strength
<b>SOCIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b>	
Differences in social communication and interactions with others	Less likely to gossip or get caught up in office politics
<b>BEHAVIORS</b>	
Restrictive, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities	May not get bored completing repetitive tasks; great attention to detail
<b>SENSORY SENSITIVITIES</b>	
May be overwhelmed by sensory information (e.g. textures, smells, lighting, and the taste or appearance of food)	Can notice slight differences in sensory related stimuli - may be strong at specific tasks (e.g. visual inspection of products, etc.)

### WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT

Inclusion through employment enhances quality of life, cognitive functioning and the overall wellbeing of persons with ASD by offering an opportunity for economic self-sufficiency, independent living, increased self-esteem and greater participation in the community.<sup>3</sup>

### IDEA EXCHANGE

- Explore opportunities to improve and enhance autism knowledge and awareness of employees in your organization. Your local EmploymentWorks program is happy to offer to you an ASD awareness training session.
- Establish partnerships with support agencies such as [Ready, Willing and Able](#) and/or [SenseAbility](#) that specialize in connecting employers with job seekers with ASD and other disabilities.
- Learn more on how to establish more **accessible and inclusive** workplaces from these additional resources.
  - ◊ [Understanding Autism: An Employer's Guide \(OAR\)](#)
  - ◊ [Hire for Talent Employer Toolkit](#)
  - ◊ [Canadian Association for Supported Employment](#)

<sup>2</sup> Return on Disability Group ([www.rod-group.com/Insights: Fifth Quadrant Analytics](http://www.rod-group.com/Insights: Fifth Quadrant Analytics)).

<sup>3</sup> Morgan and Alexander, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Lai, Dunn, Zwicker, 2017.



National Employment Network

[www.worktopia.ca](http://www.worktopia.ca)