

SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

Strategies from
Autistic Employees

WEAVING INCLUSION INTO THE EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE

What is an employee life cycle?

It is a model used by many human resource professionals to track the pathway an employee takes with a company: from the time they first apply for a job until the time they leave the company. Many organizations are weaving inclusion throughout the entire employee life cycle in order to increase performance and productivity.

Six phases of the employee life cycle:



This section provides a high-level overview of how to incorporate autism inclusive practices throughout the employee life cycle. These concepts will be explored in detail in [Section 8.1 - Employee Life Cycle Tool](#).

Attraction

Inclusive workplaces attract qualified individuals that might otherwise be overlooked. By taking steps to **create a positive and fully inclusive workplace culture**, your organization will quickly develop a reputation as being an excellent place for autistics to work. This will result in more autistic job seekers applying for positions with your organization.



For background information refer to [Section 5 - Inclusive Workplaces](#).

For more details on attracting autistic employees, refer to [Section 9 - Attracting Autistic Employees](#).

Recruitment

There are some **simple ways to make your organization's recruitment process more autism inclusive**. Use concrete, not abstract language in your job descriptions, and focus only on the essential qualifications for the position being advertised. **Include an inclusive hiring statement in all job postings**. Be creative and flexible in the ways you interview possible candidates.

- provide interview questions ahead of time
- conduct performance-based interviews
- keep interview questions concrete and directly related to the position you're interviewing for



Look ahead to the **[Section 10 - Recruiting Autistic Talent](#)** section for more information.



The recruitment stage is an ideal time to start a conversation about any adjustments your new employee will require to be successful in your organization. Remember, many adjustments are small and easy to implement.

Onboarding

Attracting and recruiting autistic employees are only starting points. **Successfully onboarding an autistic employee is a critical stage in the employee life cycle.**



"the degree [to which] managers make new hires feel welcomed into the team and prepared for their new roles, the faster that they will be able to contribute to the organization's mission successfully."¹

- **As much as possible, have any agreed-upon adjustments ready for the new employee's first day.** This shows your new employee that you're committed to their success.
- Find an experienced employee who's willing to mentor the new employee, and empower the mentor, through training and education, to assist the employee throughout the onboarding process.
- Allow the new employee to have a job coach on-site if requested.
- Make sure the rest of the team is ready to welcome and support the new employee in any way they can.



Read more about how to onboard in **[Section 11 - Successfully Onboarding Autistic Employees](#)**.

Learning and development

Once you've onboarded your new autistic employee, there is both initial and ongoing learning and development.

- Give your new employee time to learn your organization's policies and procedures.
Autistics learn better when they understand the reasons behind things.
- **Take time to answer their questions** about why your organization does things the way they do; this will help you receive employee "buy-in," which will result in better performance from your autistic employee.
- **Be sure to provide advanced notice about any upcoming changes to policies and procedures,** as sudden changes are very stressful to most autistic individuals. Support them throughout the change process to reduce their anxiety and avoid performance issues.
- **Ensure your employee has equal access to professional development opportunities,** and provide adjustments as needed to support them in their personal and professional growth.



To learn more about learning and development, please look ahead to **Section 12 - Learning and Development**.

Retention

In the beginning, you implemented some workplace adjustments to help your employee thrive in their new job. Taking steps to ensure your employee's continued success is key to retaining autistic employees for the long term.

- **Review adjustments regularly** with the employee to make sure their needs are still being met, and modify the adjustments as needed.
- **Ask the employee how they like to receive feedback and how often.** The frequency of feedback can be adjusted as they feel more comfortable.
- **Provide feedback in a way that respects their individual needs.** Don't wait until a performance review to bring up concerns, as this will increase their stress, likely increasing performance issues.

Use strategies discussed throughout this toolkit to create and maintain a positive, fully inclusive and diverse workplace culture, encouraging autistic employees to stay longer. Make sure you show all your employees how well you appreciate them.



Read more in the **Section 13 - Retaining Autistic Employees**.

Separation

Separation is inevitable, whether it be through an employee's retirement because they've found opportunity elsewhere or because you've terminated the employee's position. Regardless of the reasons for separation, take the time to conduct an exit interview (if the employee is willing). This is an excellent opportunity to receive honest feedback from the employee regarding your efforts to support and include them. **Take the opportunity to learn from the employee's feedback about what worked and didn't work, and be prepared to make changes if needed, based on that feedback.**



Positive feedback from an outgoing autistic employee helps reinforce the great work you've been doing in being inclusive.

If you terminated the employee because they were not "a good fit," then it's time for an honest reflection of workplace culture. Learn from this experience, and revisit all your policies and procedures at every stage of the employee life cycle. Make changes as needed to provide a better experience for future employees and to avoid the costs associated with employee termination and turnover.



You can learn more [***Section 14 - Employee Separation.***](#)

Conclusion

This section provides a very high-level overview of the topic of weaving inclusion in the employee life cycle. We will delve into more detail on each phase of the life cycle in later sections of the toolkit, so be sure to read them for additional ideas on how you can be an autism inclusive employer.



REFERENCES

- 1 [**Six Stages to Success with the Employee Life Cycle**](#)
Miles Burke 6Q Blog, November 2020