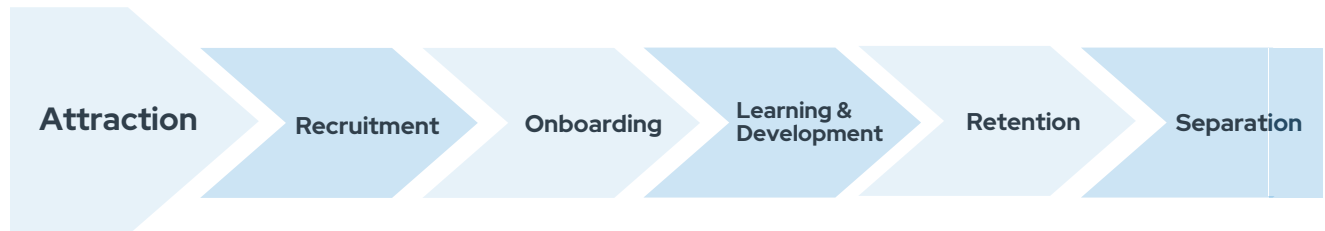


SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

Strategies from
Autistic Employees

ATTRACTING AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES



If companies want to hire good employees, the first step is getting them interested in working for your company. This is why “attract” is the first stage of any employee life cycle.



With Canada experiencing a labour shortage many employers are looking at ways to attract job seekers with disabilities to their company or organization. ¹

411,600 Canadians with disabilities are unemployed
Almost half are post-secondary graduates ²



See [Section 9.1 - Attracting Autistic Employees Tool](#) for a list of ideas to help attract autistic employees.

Demonstrating an organization is autism-friendly and inclusive will increase your organization’s attractiveness to talented autistic job seekers. This section provides specific strategies in five key areas that employers can use to make themselves more attractive to autistic job seekers.

Company website & social media

Consider how you portray your organization online, particularly on your company website and social media. **Do these platforms showcase you as an inclusive employer, and in particular, an autistic-inclusive employer?** Here are some strategies to better leverage these platforms:

- **Include an inclusive hiring statement on your website and social media** that clearly expresses your organization's commitment to hire employees with disabilities.
- **Clearly state your company supports applicants with disabilities** throughout the application process.
- Provide easy to understand, up to date information on your company's inclusive hiring and employment practices. **What sets your business or organization apart from other companies similar to yours?**
- **Reference any formal recognition your company has received for being a diverse and inclusive employer.** Whether this recognition is a national HR award or participation in a local initiative, it's worth including prominently on your company's online platforms. This will help you attract clients or customers as well, and in the case of non-profits, it can also appeal to potential donors and funders. You earned this recognition, so make sure you're leveraging it to convey your commitment.
- **Include stories from employees with different disabilities** about why they like working for you. Personal stories have an even more significant impact than any award your company could win.
- **Use images that reflect the diversity in Canada.** Including images of people with disabilities.



By highlighting your company as an inclusive employer online, you will find it easier to attract high-quality autistic job seekers to work for you.

Company storefront/office/worksite

Your storefront, office or worksite represents your company. Think about whether it currently presents the image you want it to. Here are two simple actions you can take to ensure your company's physical site represents you well.

➤ **Feature stickers or signs indicating you welcome people with disabilities.**

This may be more challenging to do for a manufacturing facility or in the field but would look good on the entrance to your front office or on the front window of your retail store. Presenting your company as a safe and welcoming place will attract more autistic job seekers and encourage them to pursue career opportunities with your organization.

➤ **Ensure your worksite is autism accessible.** Take steps to make as much of the worksite as possible sensory-friendly. You can find more information on that later in the toolkit, but some examples include:

- keeping background music low and quiet (this includes while callers are waiting on the telephone.)
- replacing flickering lights, with new lights etc.
- take a look at your signage: does it mean what it says, or could it be confusing to an autistic person who interprets signs literally?

If an autistic person visits your worksite as a customer, client, or vendor, make sure their first impressions are positive.



Taking these simple steps to make your physical worksite autism-friendly and fully inclusive, whether it be an office, a retail store or something else, will increase your organization's attractiveness to talented autistic job seekers.

How employees represent your company

Your employees are your company's ambassadors. In addition to your company's physical presence, your employees play an integral role in creating the first impressions a customer, client or vendor has when they interact with your company for the first time. If you want to make a positive impression on an autistic job seeker, the following page offers two strategies to reflect on.

- Think about how your employees represent your organization. Are they happy, and is it obvious that they enjoy their jobs? This is especially important for any autistic or otherwise disabled employees because they are the ones an autistic job seeker will focus on. **From an autistic job seeker's perspective, if your current employees don't look happy, chances are the job seeker won't be happy working there either.**
- Consider how well your employees communicate with autistic customers, clients or vendors in person, over the phone or by e-mail? **If an autistic person finds your employees' communication styles confusing, they may not consider your company to be autistic-inclusive** and will look elsewhere when they're considering their next career change.

Company's reputation in the community

Finally, think about your company's reputation in the community or communities that it serves. If your **company has a reputation for being the right place for autistics or otherwise disabled people to work**, you will be more successful in attracting interest from qualified autistic job seekers. Here are some suggestions to consider in building a positive reputation for your company.

- **Find out what your current and former customers, clients and/or vendors are saying about your company.** Pay attention to in-person feedback and online reviews, and promptly follow up with any concerns that could impair your organization's reputation as an inclusive and attractive employer to ensure the concerns are reasonably and fairly addressed.
- **Learn what your former employees are saying about your organization** as well. **Section 14 - Employee Separation** will provide specific recommendations for creating positive separation experiences for autistic employees.

Your company's reputation, if positive, can be your biggest asset. If your company is known as a great place for people with disabilities, including autistics, to work, you will find it easier to attract interest from other skilled autistic workers in the future.

Implement universal design principles

A final way to make your company more attractive to autistics and other disabled job seekers is to **implement universal design principles** both in your place of business and on your online platforms.



"Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." ²

An example of universal design that many people are familiar with is sloped curbs that make sidewalks and street crossings accessible to people in wheelchairs and help people push strollers or those using rollerblades. **Examples of universal design relevant to autistics include clear signage, speech to text, closed captioning, etc.**



By implementing universal design principles, you will make your organization more attractive to everybody, including autistic job seekers.

Conclusion

These strategies are simple, cost-effective solutions to the ongoing problem of attracting interest from the untapped labour pool. Making your company more attractive to autistic Canadians is an excellent way to access this hidden and underutilized talent, making your organization or business even stronger than it was before.



RESOURCES

7 Principles of Universal Design

National Disability Authority

Accessible Social Media Guide

City of New York



REFERENCES

1 **Hire for Talent**

Business Case

2 **Canadian Survey on Disability Reports**

A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017

3 **What is Universal Design**

National Disability Authority, 2019