The 5-Step Guide to Company-wide Neuroinclusion

To make anything work across a large organization, you need a solid framework. This guidebook is your companion on this transformative journey, offering insights, strategies, and research-backed approaches to help you embrace and leverage the power of neurodiversity within your workforce.

Where do you start: Hiring new talent or supporting existing employees?

This is often the first question we get from HR leaders. Based on how it often plays out across Enterprises (diagram on the right), the answer is: no matter whether you're building a program or scaling across the company, you can do **both** concurrently.

For neuroinclusion to endure through changes in leadership and macro-economic cycles, there needs to be tangible ROI in the first year. Hiring is the most effective way to clearly prove the business case early on. Then, you can layer in a circle of support to train leaders, managers, and HR to enable hiring to succeed.

PROGRAM · LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM · DEPARTMENT WIDE · COMPANY-WIDE

Building a Neuroinclusion Lighthouse Program

Neil Barnett, Director of Microsoft's Neurodiversity Hiring Program, emphasizes the importance of lighthouse programs in ensuring the longevity of these initiatives. To prevent programs from fading out and ensure they stand the test of time, a lighthouse program acts as a beacon for the rest of the organization, offering a continual reference point for replication across teams. In 2024, many companies including Microsoft have graduated to company-wide hiring by posting a wide range of roles from across their career site to foster long-term change.

Our Collaborators

Mentra has partnered with the Vanderbilt Frist Center to co-develop a rubric to measure neuroinclusive progress across an organization and share the following 5 steps. We provide you with the groundwork and key variables to consider when building an effective and scalable initiative. With this, you can fully tap into the power of your people.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY · THE FRIST CENTER FOR Autism AND INNOVATION

5 Steps to Neuroinclusion

1 **Find Executive Champions**

Get leadership buy-in and assess your organization's current progress to inclusion

2 **Identify Inclusive Managers**

Select managers that follow an inclusive leadership style

3 **Involve Recruiters**

Empower recruiters to eliminate bias and identify talent gaps

4 **Find Diverse Talent Pools**

Source & evaluate cognitive profiles based on talent gaps and find the best talent for the role

5 **Optimizing for Retention & Psychological Safety**

Build for the success of the employee with a culture of empathy, tailored processes and access to a circle of support

Whether it's a lighthouse program or department-wide hiring, figuring out the right players in your organization is key. Your recruiters are the gateway to your company, and your managers determine the success of your employees. Let's make sure they're all ready for this process and cultural shift towards neuroinclusion.

1 Find Executive Champions

Action Item:

☐ **Determine your Executive Sponsors** to get top-down buy-in from leaders who will advocate and invest in the long-term success of Neuroinclusion

☐ **Identify Organizational Gaps** by conducting an audit / taking Mentra's 15 question assessment to indicate progress across hiring and retaining diverse talent

The ROI is clear

Given 15-20% of your organization is neurodivergent, the cost is too high to not take these steps – 51% of neurodivergent workers want to quit their jobs or already have because they don't feel valued or supported by their employer. This strategy allows you to retain your most innovative employees (neurodivergent hiring programs show upwards of 90% retention), boost productivity and unleash the full cognitive potential of your existing workforce. [1] [2] [3] [4]

28% increase in revenue for companies that hire a neurodivergent talent [5]

30 % increase in productivity for companies that hire multiple Mentra candidates

Identifying Organizational Gaps

To attract top talent and achieve business goals, leaders must foster a culture that values diverse thinking and supports employees to fully utilize their cognitive strengths. Without this, employees find themselves compelled to "mask", leading to employee siloes, stifled creativity, silent quitting and a disengaged workforce. This decline in overall productivity and loss of talent negatively impacts the bottom line of the company.

Learn 🔍

How aware is your organization of the different ways our brains work?

- Neurodiversity 101
- Defining Key Terms
- Sensory Empathy Exercise
- Accommodations
- Why Hire ND Talent

Act 📄

Inclusive Hiring: Posting & Accessing Talent

- Job Descriptions
- Candidate Sourcing
- Candidate Interviews
- Talent Evaluation
- Communication

Build 👪

Building Psychological Safety across Workplaces

- Employee Onboarding
- Organizational Support & Mentorship
- On-the-Job Training
- Retention & Development
- Organizational Culture

1: "Neurodiversity in the Tech Sector" #ChangetheFace Alliance Dec 2023 Report
2: "Half of neurodivergent workers say they want to quit their jobs — or already have," HR Dive, 2023
3: "Five Benefits To Hiring A Neurodiverse Workforce You Might Not Know About", Forbes
4: "A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats: Creating a better work environment for all by embracing neurodiversity," Deloitte
5: "Employers now see neurodiversity as a strength in the workplace. Here's why", World Economic Forum

2 Identify Inclusive Managers

## The Importance of a Neuroinclusive Leadership Style

If 1 in every 7 humans is neurodivergent, it's likely that there is already at least one neurodivergent individual on each team. Your recruiters are the gateway to your company, and your managers determine the success of your employees. A neuroinclusive leadership style plays a pivotal role in shaping the work culture and leads to maximal organizational productivity. In the 'future of work' every manager understands how to tap into every teammates' fullest cognitive potential. Whether it's a lighthouse program or department-wide hiring, figuring out the right players in your organization is key.

"The speed at which you are able to build your company's success is closely tied to the quality of your managers." – Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft
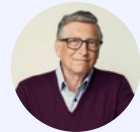
4 Core Components of Determining Ideal Hiring Manager

Coaching Ability

→ The ability to develop employees centers around resisting the impulse to reprimand, focusing instead on providing constructive feedback and clear action items for improvement. Managers adept in this area offer direct and active feedback that facilitates learning and fosters personal and professional growth.

Psychological Safety

→ Cultivating a culture of empathy through open communication, neutral language, and nurturing relationships builds trust and safety. In this environment, managers take the time to dig deeper, creating a forum for vulnerable conversations. This openness allows employees to unmask which in turn can maximize an employee's effectiveness.

Time Bandwidth

→ Effective management requires an investment of time. This involves clearly communicating goals, delegating action items, outlining tasks with written clarity, and providing feedback. Having the bandwidth to tailor approaches to individual team members is critical to ensuring that each person receives the direction and feedback necessary for the team's success.

Flexibility/Adaptability

→ Flexible managers are not wedded to one fixed approach, but are instead willing to employ creative strategies to meet the diverse needs of their team. This involves a willingness to embrace new perspectives, respond constructively to criticism, as well as adapt to the adjustments requested by employees (especially those that are conducive to productivity).

"The manager is the employee's first line to experiencing work and the organization," says Dr. Lauren Park, HR research scientist at SAP

3 Involve Recruiters

Addressing Bias at Every Step

In order to reduce bias in every step of the application process, recruiters need education on the assumptions to question when screening talent.

Knowledge Transfer
Ensure Hiring Managers have transparent conversations with Recruiters to share the tasks and competencies of the role. Mentra has built the framework to facilitate these conversations.

Building the JD
Job Descriptions are the first point of contact with a potential hire. Ensure you are inclusive in your language and format to prevent candidates from self-selecting out of the process. Re-evaluate what's really "MUST have".

Evaluating Fit
Avoid personal frames of reference that lead to unconscious discrimination (this promotes "sameness" rather than diversity of thought). Instead, focus on using objective measures like skills and mindset to grow into the role.

Interview
Ensure interview questions are standardized across candidates. Allow individuals the opportunity for multiple methods of showcasing skills (e.g. a case study to showcase problem solving abilities or a portfolio walkthrough)

Mentra's Core Hiring Values

No Candidate Left Behind - Being transparent is key to building trust. Ensure there is no "ghosting" and that everyone gets timely communication with answers to their questions and updates on their application process.

Consider Non-traditional Talent - Traditionally, companies hire based on requirements like a college degree for workplace success. It's important to consider non-linear paths (e.g. bootcamps, projects, certifications) with aligned skills and mindset to grow into the role.

Measuring Success

Hire and Measure - Mentra tracks key measurements over time, such as:

- **Retention**: Understand if recruiters are successful in optimizing candidates for the long-run
- **Job fulfillment:** Demonstrate impacts of hiring neurodiverse talent on team productivity
- **Manager style:** Help with iterations of hiring programs to ensure leaders are neuroinclusive
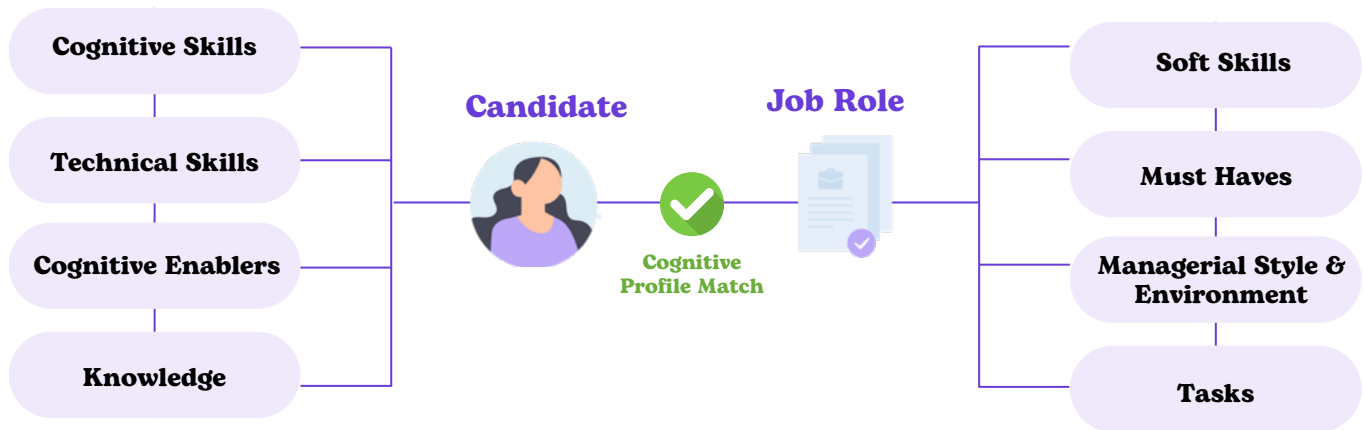
4 Find Diverse Talent Pools

Revolutionized Matching Beyond Traditional Qualifications

Cognitive profiles, a term coined by Mentra, ensures an ideal fit between employee and employer by looking beyond traditional characteristics to regard the candidate and the job role holistically.

Cognitive Skills

Technical Skills

Cognitive Enablers

Knowledge

Candidate

Cognitive Profile Match

Job Role

Soft Skills

Must Haves

Managerial Style & Environment

Tasks

Looking at the Whole Human

Traditional resumes do not accurately reflect applicants' abilities, leading to poor candidate hire quality and high turnover rate. The root of this inefficiency lies in the match-making process between the candidate and job dimensions. Teams can hire inclusively and confidently by considering cognitive profiles.

Optimizing for Retention and Productivity

By ensuring the right talent is in the right role, companies are able to unlock the cognitive potential of humanity.

94.5 %
retention rate
candidates matched by Mentra

Achieve Multiple Sourcing Objectives

Sourcing for the neurodiversity of the human population can lead to progress across all of your diversity hiring goals. Mentra's candidate pool is diverse beyond cognitive diversity.
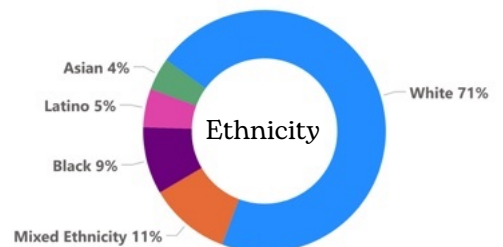
1 in 2
ADHD/ADD

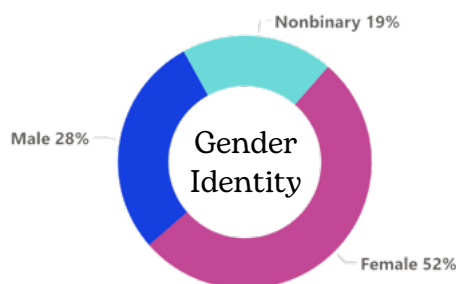**1 in 3**
Autism Spectrum Disorder

1 in 50
Anxiety

1 in 20
Dyslexia

1 in 100
Dyscalculia

1 in 100
OCD

Gender Identity
Nonbinary 19%
Male 28%
Female 52%

Ethnicity
Asian 4%
Latino 5%
Black 9%
Mixed Ethnicity 11%
White 71%

5 Optimizing for Retention & Psychological Safety

Action Items:

☐ **Create a Resource Guide on Accommodations** - Ensure your employees know the process to ask for accommodations and what the options are

☐ **Build a Career Plan Guide** - Ensure every employee on your direct team understands their performance goals, the available resources, and career growth plan

Setting up Routines for Success

Work Responsibilities: Establish clarity & transparency around the role, even as the job might evolve over time. Neurodivergents often enjoy routines to set them up for success; this includes clarifying work responsibilities upfront and throughout.

Performance Reviews: Neurodivergents often appreciate direct feedback, especially when delivered with kindness and a mutual desire for growth. Written feedback can be helpful for accountability and memory. This involves building a process to evaluate performance and track feedback over time.

Requesting Support

Identifying support needs upfront can be tremendously beneficial. Here are ways to do that:

📋 Templates for how to request support from your manager during 1:1s

✉️ "Working with Me" doc to share needs with team and avoid challenging team dynamics from misunderstandings

💬 Open forums for transparent feedback, fostering a supportive environment

Top 10 Requested Accommodations by Neurodivergent Job Seekers on Mentra

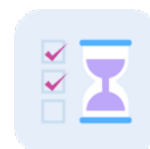|				
Job Coaching / Mentoring	Noise Canceling Headphones	Extra Time	Flexible Schedule	Uninterrupted Work Time
Allowance of Fidgeting Devices	Closed Captioning and Recorded Materials	Written, Concise Instructions	Interviewer Experienced with ND	Email/Calendar Organization

5 Optimizing for Retention & Psychological Safety

Action Items:

☐ **Send out a Mentoring Interest Survey** - Understand individual interest in being a mentor, mentee, job coach, and/or being a part of a buddy support system

☐ **Build a Disability or Neurodiversity ERG** - Ensure you are actively addressing lived experiences and challenges surrounding neurodivergence

> Can I continue to "mask" in front of my coworkers and family and live a life of intense fatigue and self-doubt? Or should I share my true identity and deal with the unknown repercussions of unmasking?
>
> *-Neurodivergent, "Unmasking in the Workplace" Mentra Publication*

What is Psychological Safety?

A psychologically safe workspace is an environment where an individual feels comfortable expressing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of judgment or reprisal. In such a setting, employees are encouraged to "unmask," revealing their authentic selves without fear; they can confidently ask for the support they need. This fosters a culture of openness and mutual support, ultimately enhancing employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. By avoiding expending energy towards "masking", employees are more productive and can invest more energy in their job tasks.

Google conducted a two year study determining team effectiveness. Psychological Safety was the most important factor for predicting team success. - Project Aristotle, Google

Building a Circle of Support

Training - build empathy by ensuring teammates are aware of invisible challenges employees face and the actions to support

ERGs - connect with a network of other community members that have an affinity for neurodiversity

Mentor / Job coach - someone who guides employees to execute successfully on the job and shares best practices

Our Partners

We partner with fantastic organizations like Potentia that provide educational resources to build this circle of support at scale. Contact **info@mentra.com** for support with hiring and/or training your teams.

Potentia
Think Differently

x Mentra

Neuroinclusive Transformation **Checklist**

1 Find Executive Champions

☐ **Determine your Executive Sponsors** to get top-down buy-in from leaders who will advocate and invest in the long-term success of Neuroinclusion

☐ **Identify Organizational Gaps** by conducting an audit / taking Mentra's 15 question assessment to indicate progress across hiring and retaining diverse talent

2 Identify Inclusive Managers

☐ **Send out** Manager Surveys - Identify which leaders employ a neuroinclusive leadership style

3 Involve Recruiters

☐ **Find the Right Recruiters** using our Identifying Inclusive Recruiters Guide

☐ **Train Recruiters** - Remove unconscious bias towards neurodivergents in the application screening and interview process

4 Find Diverse Talent Pools

☐ **Source Talent** - Tap into a neurodiverse talent pool on Mentra 👉 Talk to an Expert

5 Optimizing for Retention and Psychological Safety

☐ **Create a Resource Guide on Accommodations** - Ensure your employees know the process to ask for accommodations and what the options are

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About Mentra

Our Vision Statement

"Unleashing the Cognitive Potential of Humanity."

At Mentra, we see a world where the brilliance of neurodivergent individuals is embraced at all roles and levels in an organization. We believe in a landscape where "different thinking" is not an afterthought but an integral part of the tapestry of our workplaces.

What We Do

Mentra is a tech platform for companies to source and hire neurodivergent talent at scale. Mentra's employment network is built for the 1 billion neurodivergent professionals (with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, etc.) worldwide. Mentra's reimagined hiring process identifies the best talent and allows employers to make confident hiring decisions based on neurotype rather than traditional credentials.

Using Mentra leads to greater hiring fit, maximized retention and helps solve the current $1 trillion turnover problem. It's a win-win.

Empowering neurodivergent talent

Microsoft Unlocked

✉ info@mentra.com

➤ mentra.com

in Mentra's LinkedIn

> This drive towards neuroinclusion is more than just a movement; for many, including myself, it's an intimately-personal journey. My brother and millions like us stand as a living testament to the immense reservoir of untapped potential. Thank you for reading this guide and using your voice to lift those who have been overlooked for too long. Let's invite neurodivergents to have a seat at the table, and empower us to succeed.

We've seen time and time again that neurodivergents have revolutionized entire industries when given the opportunity.

Together, let's build the Future of Work.

Jhillika Kumar

CEO at Mentra
/in/jhillika
#FutureOfWork

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