

# Workplace culture:

Embracing neuroinclusion to create a sense of belonging for all

By Martin McKay, Executive Chair & Founder of Everway  
and Jill Houghton, CEO & President of Disability:IN

Everway

Disability:IN



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Every workplace should welcome and embrace the unique strengths of all employees.

By applying Universal Design, companies large and small can create environments that support diverse needs, and improve the employee experience for everyone.



Martin McKay  
Founder & Executive Chair  
Everway

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The greatest resource we have is our people, and our culture starts inside by cultivating a diverse range of perspectives.

We pull together around accessible belonging and work collectively to improve equal opportunities for all.



Jill Houghton  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Disability:IN

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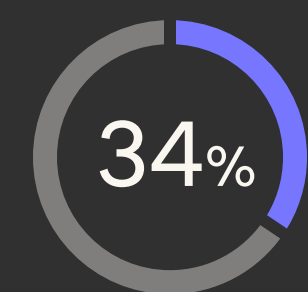
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# Executive Summary

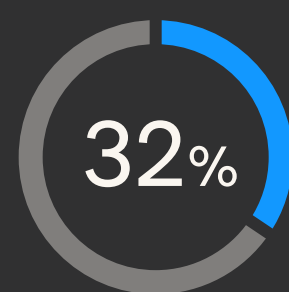
Neurodiversity is another form of human difference that must be considered in the design of fair and supportive work environments. It relates to differences in the way we think, process, learn and behave. As with our individual life experiences and personal preferences, neurodiversity also shapes how we like to work and get things done.

It's estimated that up to [20% of the global adult population is neurodivergent](#), meaning they have a neurotype such as dyslexia, autism or ADHD. These individuals think in ways that are truly unique. They bring many advantages to any workplace, such as out-of-the-box thinking, creative solutions and more. But hiring practices and working environments that don't consider neurodiversity create barriers to success of neurodivergent individuals.

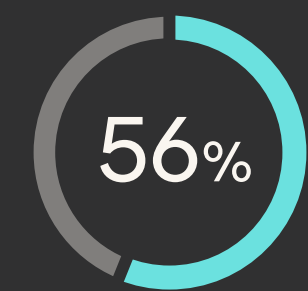
Everway conducted a [Neurodiversity Survey](#) with 500 neurodivergent workers to explore their experiences at work. The results showed that:



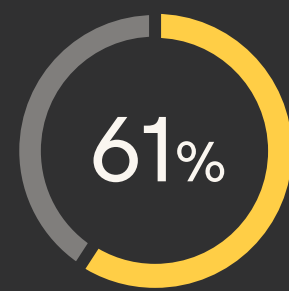
have experienced difficulty in recruitment & interview processes



have experienced a lack of career progression



have experienced communication barriers at work

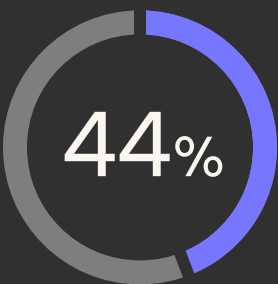


have experienced stigma in the workplace

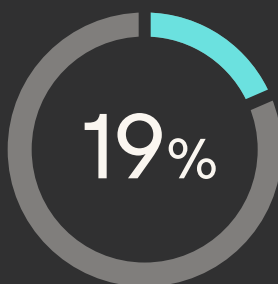


Misconceptions about neurodiversity, bias, and lack of awareness about neurodiversity all contribute. Schools and educators are trained to identify neurodivergent students and those with disabilities. They have resources in place to support them. This is not the case in the working world. **Most employers are not trained in neurodiversity awareness.** [In fact, research reveals that only 28% of HR professionals are 'very confident' in identifying different types of conditions that are considered as neurodivergent.](#) Almost 1 in 10 (9%) are not at all confident.

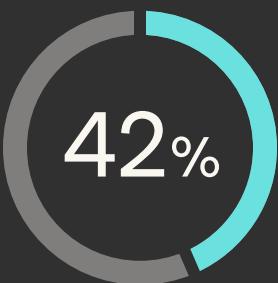
Neurodiversity often gets overlooked. This often means that neurodivergent individuals miss out on support and adjustments that allow them to work and achieve in their own way. Many people do not feel comfortable to approach their employer to ask for change. This is largely due to stigma and a fear of being treated differently. On why they chose not to talk about their neurodiversity at work, respondents to Everway's [Neurodiversity Survey](#) said



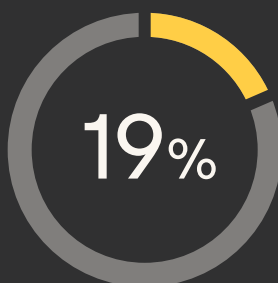
worried it would negatively impact their career



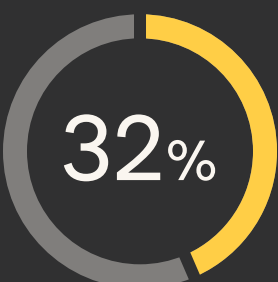
were unsure of how to raise the topic



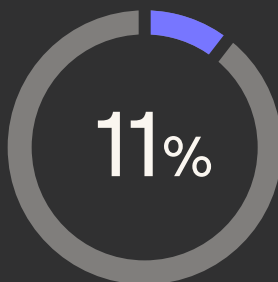
were concerned their managers and colleagues would view them differently



had a previous negative experience when sharing their neurodivergence at work



didn't want to share this private information with their employers



didn't know how to explain their condition

Whether you're already taking action for neuroinclusion, or just beginning, there's always improvement to be made.

In fact, Everway's [Neurodiversity Survey](#) revealed that while 75% of people say their organization offers support to neurodivergent people, **64% of neurodivergent workers believe they could be doing more.**

# What can employers do to attract and nurture a neurodiverse workforce?

Organizations must create a workplace that welcomes neurodiversity, and allows employees to understand and communicate in their own way. That means adjusting the workplace to suit the needs of diverse thinkers. It also means providing tools to support different ways of working. Neuroinclusive practices should start from recruitment and onboarding, and follow through the entire employee lifecycle.

Ensuring neurodivergent employees have what they need to thrive is the right thing to do. It also benefits the organization at large. Organizations who invest in the right tools for their staff create a more productive, inclusive, and happier environment for everyone.



# Hidden talent, unique perspectives

Neurodiversity describes natural variations in the human brain relating to how we all think, process information, learn, and behave. As many as [1 in 5 people](#) in your workforce could be neurodivergent with a neurotype such as autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, tourette’s syndrome, or ADHD. Globally, 10% of the adult population is dyslexic, 6% are dyspraxic, 5% have ADHD, and 1-2% are autistic.

Neurodivergent individuals bring many advantages to any workplace. They bring unique perspectives and strengthen the success of projects and tasks. They may also need some time to adjust their work environment to suit their needs. That’s because normally, working environments are set up for neurotypical ways of thinking and doing.

While every neurodivergent person is unique, some of the common barriers that these individuals may face in the workplace are identified in this table:

|           | Dyslexia   | Dyspraxia   | ADHD  | Autism   |
|-----------|--|---|---|--|
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneurialism</li> <li>• Creativity and cognitive control</li> <li>• Visual reasoning</li> <li>• Practical skills, visual-spatial skills and story-telling ability</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High verbal comprehension ability</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Empathy and people skills</li> <li>• Tenacity</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative thinking</li> <li>• Visual spatial reasoning ability</li> <li>• Hyper-focus, passion and courage</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory ability, and other ‘specialist individual skills’ including reading, drawing, music and computation</li> <li>• Innovative thinking and detail observation</li> </ul> |
| Barriers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory,organizational skills, time management, stress management, literacy</li> <li>• Workplace participation in terms of mental functions and social interactions</li> <li>• Cognitive functioning and social self-esteem</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties with driving, self-care, organization, communication and self-esteem</li> <li>• Processing speed and working memory</li> <li>• Persistence of motor difficulties</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Concentration, attention and self-regulation difficulties</li> <li>• Insomnia, depression, injury and absence</li> <li>• Maintaining employment</li> <li>• Difficulty with team work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Concentration and coping with more than one task</li> <li>• Social and communication difficulties</li> <li>• Need for routine</li> </ul>         |

Source: [The British Psychological Society, 2017](#)



Compounding these challenges, individuals may hide their disability from their employer. [In fact, according to research from Accenture, 76% of neurodivergent and disabled employees do not disclose their condition at work.](#)

This is largely out of fear of being made to feel different.

Neurodivergent individuals often fear that “coming out” will hurt their careers due to existing stigma. This can cause more stress and prevent them from receiving the support they need to thrive and feel empowered in their job.

In the past, many employers mistook neurological differences as a sign of low intelligence, carelessness, or lack of ability. Whilst we now understand that this isn't the case, we've a long way to go to reducing the impact of negative misconceptions in the world of work.

# The business case for neuroinclusion

There are many benefits of creating environments that are inclusive of neurodiversity.

## 1 Positive impact on business objectives

Companies who champion belonging for everyone outperform their competitors, [with many reporting 30% higher profit margins, 28% higher revenue, and double the net income](#). Further, neurodivergent people represent a significant portion of the consumer market. Many consumers will prioritize goods and services that are neuroinclusive.

## 2 A wider talent pool

Organizations that are inclusive of neurodiversity are more likely to attract neurodivergent talent. Everway's [Neurodiversity Survey](#) found that the majority of neurodivergent workers (93%) would be more likely to apply for a job at, or continue to work for, a company which they knew was supporting neurodivergent employees well. When employers need to fill skills gaps, many are still screening out neurodivergent individuals and the unique skills they possess.



### 3 Extraordinary skills

Organizations that welcome neurodivergent individuals benefit from a workforce of different thinkers. That brings benefits including creativity, innovation, productivity, and more. Different minds can approach a company's products, services, and business challenges with different solutions.

In some cases, neurodivergent people are sought after for specific strengths and abilities. [A report from Made By Dyslexia](#) revealed that Dyslexic Thinking skills are the most in-demand skills in every job, across all sectors, globally today (as identified by Randstad). These include visualization, creativity, cognitive flexibility, logical reasoning, complex problem solving, and more. Emphasizing how these extraordinary skills are sought-after by employers is the [Dyslexic Thinking movement](#). A movement which encourages dyslexic individuals to showcase their valuable skill set by adding Dyslexic Thinking as a skill on LinkedIn.

### 4 A loyal workforce

We thrive best in a place where we feel supported, valued and celebrated. We're more likely to remain in a workplace where we can bring our full selves to work, and feel that we belong. Organizations that nurture neurodivergent talent are more likely to create an environment where employees feel included and want to remain. Alike to neurodivergent workers, Everway's [Neurodiversity Survey](#) found that the majority of neurotypical workers (63%) are also more likely to be attracted to and loyal to companies that support neurodivergent employees well.

Despite the many benefits, 64% of neurodivergent employees feel their organization could be doing more to support them. Employers are missing out on some simple but effective adjustments they could make to recruit and retain neurodivergent individuals. A community of individuals who bring a wealth of talent to any organization.



# Creating a workplace that embraces different thinkers

A good first step is to educate yourself on different neurotypes, and raise awareness of neurodiversity across your teams. It's also vital to proactively create a neuroinclusive workplace culture. Employees should feel comfortable and confident to be themselves. They should also feel empowered to understand, communicate and work their own way.

For this to happen, employers must be flexible, and willing to adapt the workplace to suit individual needs. This is where the principles of Universal Design come in.

Universal Design is a strategy for making workplace environments welcoming and usable to the most diverse range of people possible. Without the need for adaptation or specialized design. While universal design is necessary for some, it is beneficial for all.

Applying the principles of Universal Design to the workplace can minimize challenges that neurodivergent individuals face. It can also maximize job success. Thoughtful, neuroinclusive design makes the world easier for everyone.

In addition, organizations should take steps to celebrate and amplify the voices of neurodivergent employees. When employees feel truly welcomed, heard, and understood, they're more likely to feel confident to open up and be who they are.

Starting from recruitment, employers must think about how to consider and include neurodivergent people throughout the whole lifecycle of the employment journey.





13

tips to improve the  
employee experience

# Recruit

## 1 Choose accessible platforms to advertise with

To make sure you choose vendors that are accessible, it can be helpful to have an [accessible procurement process](#) in place. Or if the application is online via your own website, consider adding [assistive technology](#) to the page. This could increase text size, provide visual alternatives to text and have the option for dual color highlighting.

## 2 Consider alternative interview approaches

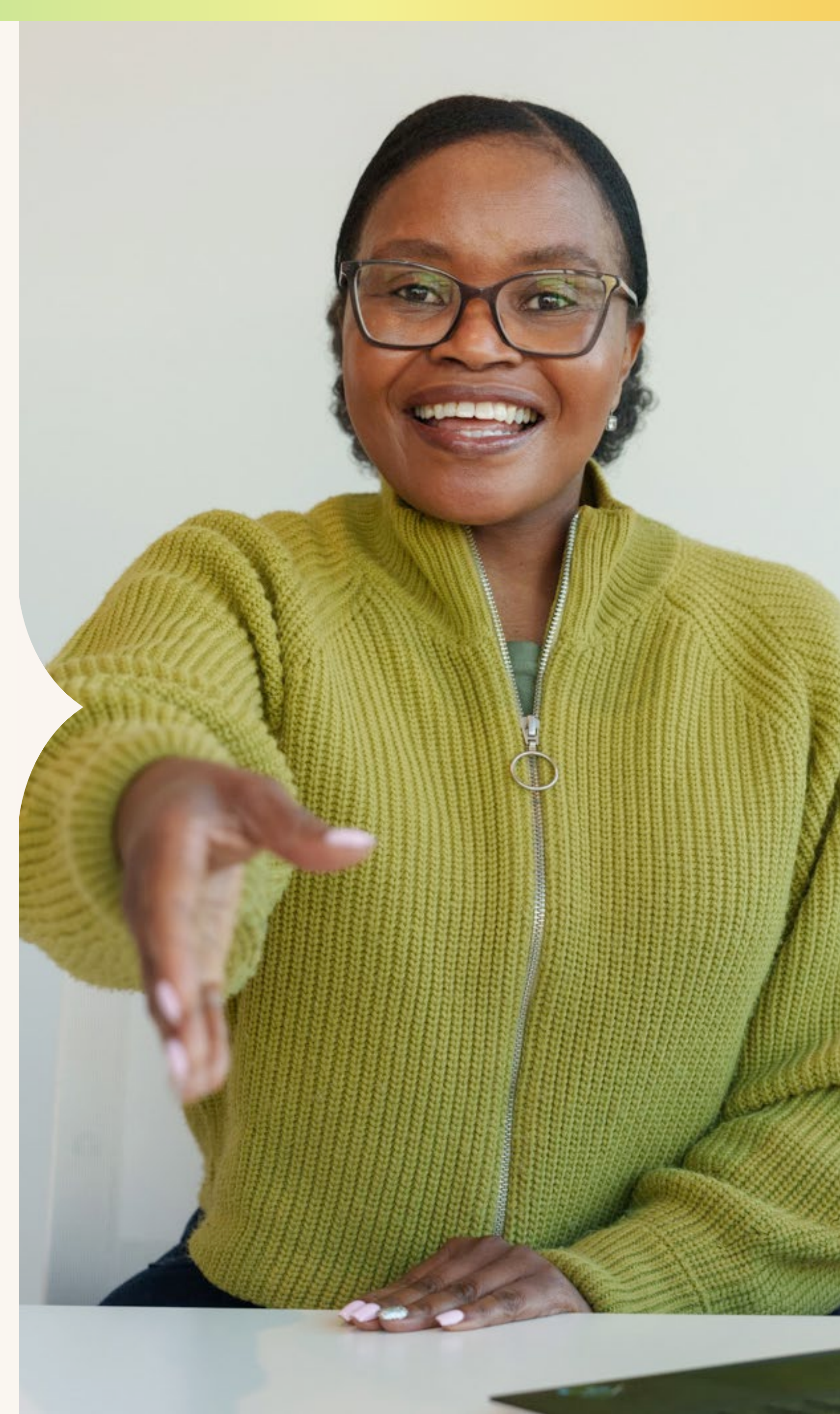
For example, assigning a real life task vs. a question and answer interview session. Where questions are asked, review how they are phrased. Remove complicated language and hypothetical questions.

## 3 Ask what you can do to improve the experience

Rather than asking for candidates to 'disclose' or 'declare' a disability, simply ask if there are any supports or adjustments they need to help make the process a more positive experience.

## 4 Showcase what you're doing to support neurodivergent employees

By sharing stories from your people, neurodivergent applicants will feel more comfortable to reveal their neurodivergent strengths. In Everway's [Neurodiversity Survey](#), 56% of neurodivergent employees revealed they opened up about their neurodivergence because their organization advertises as being an inclusive employer.



# Develop

## 5 Ensure that the HR department is educated on neurodiversity

A well informed HR team, helps them to act as advocates for neurodivergent employees. Take advantage of the many resources available to support employers in attracting and supporting diverse talent, such as [Disability:IN](#).

## 6 Ask each employee what you can do to support them

Find out what tools and support they need to work more efficiently.

## 7 Offer neuroinclusive technology software

Enable choice and equip all staff with [tools](#) that help them work and communicate how they do best - without them having to ask.

## 8 Keep language simple in workplace communications

[Use short, clear, succinct sentences](#). Clear communication and checking for understanding is important. This can be supported by using a mix of verbal, visual and written formats.

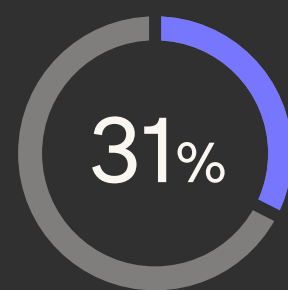
## 9 Be flexible

Allow flexibility with working hours and/or working virtually.

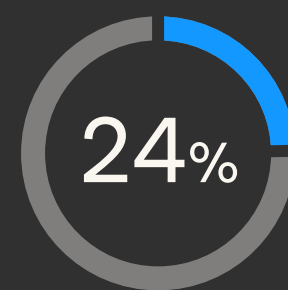
## 10 Consider varying needs

When designing office space consider creating spaces for quiet contemplation with fewer distractions.

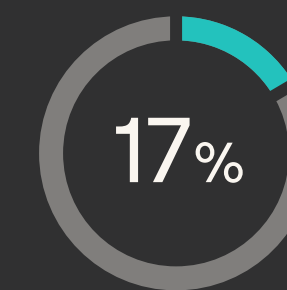
## What do neurodivergent employees want?



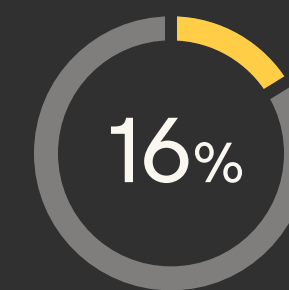
of neurodivergent workers say they would benefit from specialist software or more accessible communication.



suggest neurodiversity awareness training for colleagues, to improve understanding and reduce negative misconceptions



feel they'd benefit from a dedicated support network, for example a neurodiversity group or a buddy/mentor system



say dedicated quiet spaces would be helpful

# Retain

## 11 Conduct neurodiversity awareness training

with all employees. This can help to remove any preconceptions around neurodivergent individuals.

## 12 Amplify employee voices

with Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs create a community space for neurodivergent staff to share their stories and experiences. They help employees to feel heard and secure in the workplace. They also empower neurodivergent employees to influence positive change alongside your HR and People teams. Disability:IN has developed an [ERG Maturity Model Matrix](#) to help ERGs maximize success.

## 13 Celebrate neurodiversity with storytelling

Share real experiences of neurodivergent people and celebrate their talents.



# Empowering employees with neuroinclusive technology

Organizations who invest in the right tools for their staff see an increase in employee achievement, morale, and retention.

In a typical workplace environment, employees use multiple tools throughout their day — jumping between many platforms, browsers and devices. They are expected to access and read everything from emails to web pages and PDFs.

These documents are all in a written format, and employees are expected to respond with typed communication. This approach doesn't suit every worker. That's where [neuroinclusive technology](#) comes in.

Neuroinclusive technologies are designed with neurodivergent users in mind, and offer benefits for everyone. After all, people achieve more when they're able to work in the way that suits their needs and preferences.

**In the workplace, neuroinclusive technology examples include:**


- Assistive reading devices including [text to speech software](#), perfect for dyslexic minds who process best by listening
- Memory aids such as digital recorders and digital timers

- [Literacy support](#) including dyslexic spell checkers and word prediction
- Screen tint tools to help see text more easily; screen filters to help those sensitive to the intensity or frequency of light
- Features that minimize distraction such as reading panes and AI summary tools, empowering ADHD thinkers to focus easier
- Low vision assistive technology such as screen readers and speech recognition software

Neuroinclusive tools need to be able to work everywhere. This means across all of the platforms and applications that employees use throughout the day.

That means 24/7 access, and compatibility across every device.

It is vital that these kinds of tools are provided to everyone, not just those with identified neurodiversity. **Embedding the use of these tools into the culture of the workplace as part of your regular practice is key.** It demonstrates awareness of diverse working styles and needs, and empowers all employees to thrive. It also fosters a sense of belonging and values the contributions of everyone.

A group of five diverse professionals are gathered around a table in a meeting. A man in a light-colored jacket is seated at the table, looking at a document. A woman in a white blazer is standing behind him, pointing at the document. A woman with glasses is standing behind the man, looking at the document. A woman in a pink top is seated in the foreground, looking at the document. A man in a white shirt is standing on the right, looking at the document. The background is a plain wall.

Everway creates  
technology that makes  
workplace communication  
easier, digital content  
more accessible and  
work environments  
more supportive.

[Discover more](#)

# The path forward

There is growing recognition of the many benefits that neurodivergent employees bring to the workplace. Yet, the reality for many neurodivergent individuals is that the workplace can present many challenges.

Hiring neurodivergent talent will help companies innovate their products and services. Companies must do a better job at tapping into this talent pool. This will only help create richer and more diverse experiences for everyone.

There are many companies that are doing amazing work in the space of neuroinclusion. Companies including [EY](#), [KPMG](#) and [Lumen](#) have shone a spotlight on the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce. These companies are leading the way as examples of establishing a more neuroinclusive workplace culture. But there is still much work to be done.

**We must work together to make companies aware of the potential gains of hiring a neurodiverse talent pool and encourage them to make neuroinclusion a strategic priority. All employees should be supported with the tools and technologies they need to succeed as a matter of course.**

## Let's unlock the potential of every mind, together

For over 30 years Everway have been building environments where neurodivergent talent can thrive. They know that often, **small changes lead to big impact.**

[Gain their advice today.](#)

# Martin McKay

## Founder & Executive Chair of Everway

Everway creates technology that helps everyone to understand and be understood.

Martin founded Everway (formerly Texthelp) in 1996 with a mission to create technology that empowers everyone to communicate more effectively. What started as a company focused on supporting individuals with speech and dexterity challenges has evolved into a leader in neuroinclusive technology, helping people of all abilities read, write, and express their ideas more fluently.

Martin's vision is to unlock the potential of every brain by developing tools that address the unique needs of individuals. Under his leadership, Everway has impacted over 250 million people worldwide, with a goal of reaching one billion by 2030.

Everway now employs 600 people across North America, Europe, and Australia and is backed by Five Arrows, the private equity arm of the Rothschild family. Martin's dedication to improving literacy and communication has earned him recognition, including the Presidential Award from the International Dyslexia Association for his lifetime contribution to dyslexia and literacy.

In 2022, Martin was named EY Entrepreneur of the Year (Ireland), celebrating his vision and leadership in making neuroinclusive technology accessible to all.



# Jill Houghton

## President & CEO of Disability:IN

Disability:IN is the leading global nonprofit organization for advancing business disability inclusion and equality.

Jill has more than 25 years of diverse leadership experience driving disability inclusion. Jill's passion for disability inclusion was ignited by challenges she experienced having a learning disability. Jill leads a team of talented and diverse individuals, including people with disabilities, who are working to build an inclusive global economy that enables people with disabilities to participate fully and meaningfully.

