



"Tapping The Hidden Talent Pool"

Dealing with change

Dealing with changes in structure, routine and certainty in the workplace can make some Neurodivergent employees extremely anxious. In the corporate world, changes in policies and processes are part of the daily norm and most employees typically understand and accept that these are just part of the day to day changes that businesses have to make. However, for some Neurodivergent people change can be challenging to process and understand as things do not always flow in a natural structured order as they will often do so outside of work.

For a Neurodivergent individual the world of employment can sometimes feel unpredictable and bewildering so the consistency of routines such as meal or travel routines can insert some stability and predictability into their daily lives. Yet, for some Neurodivergent employees this need for routine and predictability can result in a significant reaction towards a change of office, perhaps a change in where they are seated. Perhaps the organisation has removed a fixed desk policy and created a culture of hot desking for all employees. Perhaps the office space is all open plan and the Neurodivergent employee has always worked in a closed plan space to reduce challenges with noise and sensory overload. There might have been a change of manager or new colleagues have been brought into the team and the Neurodivergent employee is struggling to relate to these individuals.

Perhaps, there has been a sudden change of schedules and the meeting that they had been preparing for all week has been moved to a different day without much notice from their colleagues or line manager. Maybe, the meeting has been moved from a face-to-face meeting to an online meeting on Zoom and the Neurodivergent employee struggles with using video technology. All of these factors can present considerable challenges for Neurodivergent employees if not addressed appropriately by colleagues and managers in their organisation.

Our Advice

- Manage any schedule changes as far in advance as possible. If necessary provide additional guidance and support. Perhaps have some video technology training sessions if the meeting has been switched to a virtual meeting.
- If last minute changes need to be made, outline the options that are available for the Neurodivergent employee. Include allowing them a few minutes down time to process the changes.
- If you are considering moving them to a different part of the office. Explain why this is necessary. Try where possible to keep a fixed desk policy in place and preferably in a quiet part of your office if they require this.
- If there are personnel changes, make a point if necessary of introducing new colleagues or line managers to the Neurodivergent employee before other colleagues. Particularly, if the Neurodivergent employee struggles with meeting and interacting with new people.