



The Interview Process for Autistic Candidates – Asking the right questions

For autistic candidates to be successful during the interview process, job interviews need to be conducted in a welcoming, inclusive environment. As a prospective employer it is your responsibility to ensure that your interview process is autism friendly. Have your hiring managers and recruiters had the right level of training to support those with autism through the employee lifecycle process. Think have they had sufficient reasonable adjustments training for the differing types of reasonable adjustments that an autistic candidate might need for an interview with your organisation. If there are any interview assessments for this role, have the necessary reasonable adjustments been provided for the autistic candidate? Are you ensuring that if there are any interview assessments that they are announced prior to interview? Remember that many people on the autistic spectrum struggle with change, particularly sudden change, so an unexpected interview assessment could precipitate an autistic meltdown. We strongly advise that any interview assessment for a job role should as much as possible accurately depict the role they will be doing with your organisation. It is no good giving the autistic candidate a verbal reasoning test if it doesn't relate to the role they will be doing for your organisation.

If the autistic candidate needs a mentor or a guardian to accompany them to the interview don't see this as an impediment to them being the right candidate for your organisation. Perhaps, you might want to think about a problem-solving interview which allows the autistic candidate the opportunity to best showcase their skills to your organisation. Additionally, with any interview questions that you intend to ask, ensure that they are direct, concise questions with little or no room for ambiguity in

the responses you might receive. See below some questions that we would typically recommend to ask an autistic candidate at interview:

1) So why would you like to work for our organisation?

This is a good direct question, which should elicit the type of response you are expecting. It is a good question to understand the autistic candidate's skill set, strengths and motivations for working for your organisation. If they are serious about working for your organisation the chances are that they may well have created a research plan on your organisation. Additionally, they may have worked for other organisations in your industry so will have the technical knowledge and expertise to transfer their knowledge to your organisation.

2) So, could you tell me about your previous employment experiences?

Again, this is a good question to ask because it gets right to the knowledge and skills that the autistic candidate has. Although with this type of question it is important to factor in that some of the autistic candidates employment experiences may not have been positive ones, so don't make judgements as a consequence of what they might say. Factor in that autistic people are often fundamentally too honest at interview and often struggle to sell themselves, so make allowances for this during the interview. They may also have had gaps in their employment history so don't jump to conclusions as to why this may be the case. Perhaps all their knowledge has been predominantly theory based and they haven't been employed before. Again, don't jump to conclusions.

3) I am going to ask about your strengths.

This question is a good concise, direct question which should allow an autistic candidate the opportunity to disclose their strengths in the workplace and their transferable skills. As an organisation this should give you a good idea whether they are a good fit for the role you are interviewing them for. You might want to encourage them to consider what their main strengths are and how they have utilised these strengths in other jobs they have had.

4) Could you give me a short introduction about yourself?

With this type of question, it is really important that as a hiring panel you factor in the autistic candidates strongest personal characteristics, educational qualifications, and employment history. With this type of question if the autistic candidate is unsure of the question or ends up producing a monologue not relevant to the question posed. You might want to consider breaking the question down into three individual components to elicit the responses you are looking for.

5) I am going to ask about your problem-solving skills.

This is the type of question that invariably should play to the strengths of most autistic candidates. As a hiring panel you might want to break down this question into different components to get the desired responses from the candidate. Firstly, ask the autistic candidate what the problem was? Secondly, how did they personally solve the problem? This will also give you an idea of whether the autistic candidate flourishes better as an autonomous worker or a team player. However, try to avoid making assumptions or erroneous conclusions. Finally, what was the outcome of the problem they helped solve.