



"Tapping The Hidden Talent Pool"

Seeing the “Big Picture”

The neurological makeup of individuals who are Neurodivergent results in ways of thinking that are fundamentally different from that of neuro-typicals, such as theory of mind – which is the ability to consider another person’s perspective. A person’s cognitive style reflects their preferred way of thinking, remembering, and solving problems, such as extracting the “big picture” from a mass of details. This is an effective way of processing information, as it allows us to spontaneously get the gist of something without needing all the specifics. We then work from the “top down”, filling in details when necessary to fit the larger mental picture.

In the business world, people who excel at big picture thinking and envisioning broad goals are referred to as “strategic thinkers” or “visionaries,” while “tactical thinkers” excel at implementing the details that make the plan work. Most of us, however, have aspects of each type of thinking and can switch between them as needed.

In the workplace, seeing the bigger picture provides an efficient way of organising our perceptions and experiences, so that we can then plan and prioritise. It allows us to integrate multiple sources of information from current data and prior knowledge, while factoring in relevant aspects of the situation.

To successfully plan and complete a project, we first need to get the big picture of the goal, and then keep it in mind while organising and prioritising all the relevant aspects of the tasks involved. Once the roadmap has been developed, we then focus on the details to get the job done.

Our Advice

Neurodivergent individuals tend to focus on the details and can have difficulty in seeing the “big picture.” Providing structure and context helps them integrate their work into the broader project:

- Provide the parameters of a project, such as a list of the goals, requirements, and restrictions to help shape the work requested along those lines.
- Give an explanation as to how a Neurodivergent employee work should coordinate with other colleagues working on the same project.
- Look for opportunities that will allow them to use their ability to focus on details and think tactically in favour of tasks that require a more strategic “big picture” perspective.
- Assign them aspects of a project or task which they will excel at.
- Ask them what their preferred working style is and integrate this in with the wider team as much as possible.