LANDMARK COLLEGE PRESENTS

MANAGING A NEURODIVERSE WORKFORCE

UNDERSTANDING THE STRENGTHS IN OUR DIFFERENCES
LANDMARK COLLEGE
PREMIERE COLLEGE FOR STUDENTS THAT LEARN DIFFERENTLY

- Established in 1985 to serve students with dyslexia
- Small liberal arts college, 400 students
- Neurodiversity, capacity and growth of an educational model
- Methodology, research, and innovation on the state and national level
- Baccalaureate, associate, and professional credentialing
- Universal Design for Learning
- 33% of enrolled students have disclosed an Autism diagnosis
OVERVIEW

The neurodiversity movement, language, and benefits in the workplace

Examining your own management style and best practices

Hiring & Interviewing

Understanding accommodations

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After this workshop you will be able to:

• State the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce
• Describe best management and hiring practices for a neurodiverse workforce
• Define what accommodations are in the workplace
Definitions

Neurodiversity:
The concept that neurological differences are a natural part of the human genome and to be recognized and respected as normal variations in the population.

Although the term has typically been used in reference to individuals with autism, it broadly refers to learning differences (e.g. Dyslexia, ADHD).

Neurodivergent:
Having cognitive functioning that diverges significantly from the dominant social standards of 'normal.'

Neurotypical:
Having cognitive functioning that falls into the social standards of 'normal.' Seen as the opposite of neurodivergent.
Ahead of the wave

Neurodiversity

Gender Equality

Racial Equality
GO BIG OR GO HOME

Fortune 500 companies with hiring practices that include neurodiversity

"This is by no means a charity. This is about our bottom line."

-Jamell Mitchell
Neurodiversity Center of Excellence Operations Leader
EY

JPMorgan Chase & Co.
LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Dyslexia/Language-based
- Disparity between basic language skills and higher-level cognition: reasoning, analogy, problem-solving, creativity
- Challenges with reading, language, writing and spelling

ADD/ADHD
- Issues with time management and organization
- Inattention
- Impassivity & Hyperactivity
- Mental effort depletion
- Performance inconsistency
- Difficulty with Executive Functions

Autism
- Impairment in social communication, including difficulty interpreting nonverbal communication. This can look like: literal interpretation of language, being too honest or direct, difficulty with eye contact.
- Repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (routines can be very important).
- Hyper or Hypo-reactivity to environment—e.g. light and sound sensitivity, indifference to temperature, issues with textures/clothing

Neurotypicals orient towards people, individuals on the spectrum oriented towards facts and information.
**Cool Abilities**

**Dyslexia/Language-based**
- Spatial reasoning and global visual processing
- Seeing the 'bigger picture'
- Pattern recognition
- Strong visual thinking
- Highly creative
- Strong problem solving ability

**ADD/ADHD**
- Creative and highly inventive
- Ability to hyper-focus on areas of interest, and can have a high level of productivity
- Energetic & emotional expression
- Being perceptive and noticing changes

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**Abilities**

**Autism**
- Deep passions and interests, may be particularly skilled in one area
- Very honest and loyal
- Very detail-oriented
- Can engage in repetitive tasks
- Punctual and rarely miss work
- Strong visual thinking
- Logical
- Pattern recognition
What, if anything, might you need to change about your management practices if you were supervising an individual with a sight impairment?

What, if anything, might you need to change about your management practices if you were supervising an individual on the autism spectrum?
Stranger in a strange land...

What if you came to work one day and...

...you didn't understand the language
...the customs seemed foreign
...expectations were unclear and vague
...and you had no idea where to find the coffee maker
GET ON BOARD
ONBOARDING NEW EMPLOYEES IN NEURODIVERGNT-FRIENDLY WAYS

Onboarding can be overwhelming for some individuals. What can you do to minimize anxiety?

- Ideally, information should be comprehensive, provided in advance and offered in a variety of formats.

- Highlight aspects that may seem 'obvious'—e.g. work hours, breaks, communication channels, dress code.

- If a new hire struggles with social communication, the social aspects of onboarding can be too much. Break it up or seek other avenues.

- Discover preferred modes of communication (e.g. written, verbal, images, etc.).
NEURODIVERSITY SMART MANAGEMENT

PRACTICES THAT MAKE YOU A STRONGER SUPERVISOR

- Willingness to be highly person-centric in your management practices, trying to deeply understand each employee's strengths and challenges.

- Communicate effectively--be direct, be specific, and provide as much detail as possible.

- Provide clear expectations (especially about outcomes), deadlines, and try not to assume what your employee does and does not know.

- Provide detailed feedback and focus on behaviors that can be measured.
NEURODIVERSITY SMART MANAGEMENT

PRACTICES THAT MAKE YOU A STRONGER SUPERVISOR

"Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment?"

-Harvey Blume, Journalist and Autism Advocate

- Consider multiple learning approaches when presenting information.
- Be flexible and consider 'role adjustments' when needed and when possible.
- Introduce changes slowly when possible and try to include employees in the process.
Based on what you have learned today...

...in what areas do you feel like you’re excelling when it comes to your role as a manager?

...what are two aspects of your management approach that you would like to improvement upon? What are some specific changes you can implement in the coming weeks to move you in that direction?
HIRING PRACTICES

Do your practices bring out the strengths of ALL applicants?

“Behaviors in many neurodiverse people run counter to the common notion of what makes a good employee—solid communication skills, being a team player, emotional intelligence, persuasiveness, sales person type personalities, the ability to network, the ability to conform to standard practices without special accommodations. These criteria systematically screen out neurodiverse people”.

“Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage”
Austin and Pisano, 2017
The Harvard Business Review

• What are your current hiring practices? How do you screen applicants?

• Does the hiring process reflect the type of work they will be doing?

• Are their adjustments you could make to make your hiring practices even more inclusive?
**know your rights: accommodations**

Workplace accommodations are a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### What they are:
- For qualified individuals that meet the job requirements (e.g. edu, skills, experience)
- Reasonable accommodations allow an employee to complete the essential functions of the job
- Can range from simple seating and office arrangements to technology that will allow an individual to do their job more effectively
- Apply to all stages of an employee’s employment from interviewing to firing

### What they are NOT:
- 'Special' treatment
- Always costly
- Apply only after you have hired an individual
ASK JAN
If you have a question about workplace accommodations or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related legislation, we can help.

Free advice for employers, employees and job seekers

Examples of Accommodations for Individuals with Autism:
- Providing interview questions prior to interview
- Provide topics prior to meetings to help facilitate communication
- Noise canceling headphones
- Allow employee to use "fidgets" to provide sensory input
- Divide larger projects into smaller tasks and provide a checklist

LANDMARK COLLEGE
Case Studies