

Microsoft starts program to hire workers with autism

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"People with autism bring strengths that we need at Microsoft," Mary Ellen Smith, a corporate vice president wrote in a company blog last

week.

"Each individual is different, some have amazing ability to retain information, think at a level of detail and depth or excel in math or code. It's a talent pool that we want to continue to bring to Microsoft!"

Smith, who has a son with autism who is now 19, said the program builds on longstanding efforts at Microsoft to enlist people with disabilities.

Microsoft is working on the initiative with Specialisterne, a venture started by the Specialist People Foundation in Denmark. The organization's philosophy is to tap traits that autistic people have that can be useful to companies, for instance in software testing, programming and data entry,

"The traits that usually exclude people with autism from the labor market are the very traits that make them valuable employees a Specialisterne, such as attention to detail, zero tolerance for errors and a persistence to get the job done," according to the group's website.

"We don't see them as people with an [autism diagnosis](#); rather, we see them as true specialists."

Specialisterne previously assisted German technology company SAP on a venture hire workers with [autism](#).

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