

Increasing neurodiversity within organisations can boost skill base

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At the start of Neurodiversity Celebration Week, new research from Cranfield University demonstrates the importance of organizations becoming more inclusive employers when it comes to neurodiversity.

It has been estimated that one in seven of the population of the UK is neurodiverse. However, according to research by the Institute of Leadership and Management, only half of managers would employ a neurodiverse person.

Last week, in an interview with *The Times*, The Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Nick Hine, revealed that ten years ago he was diagnosed with autism.

Speaking to *The Times*, the Vice Admiral, said: ""The world is made for neuro-typical people by neuro-typical people, and therefore it's not surprising that people who are not neuro-typical have a series of challenges or a series of difficulties both in interacting with that world, but also in the world interacting with them.

"If you want to transform, if you want a different way of doing business, you can't keep asking the same question of the same people and expect a different answer."

Although the original use of the term, neurodiversity, is rooted in research related to Asperger's syndrome, it has since been expanded to include dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Tourette syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Research published in the journal, *Employee Relations* by Cranfield University reveals that:

- Stereotype Threat comes before actual occurrence of a stereotype and that the discovery process starts before individuals join an organization—those who are neurodiverse fear joining an organization based on an assumption of what the organization will be like.

- The neurodiverse react to discrimination in similar ways to those with a visible difference-the neurodiverse can be put off from applying for jobs or revealing their difference when they are employed because of [potential threat](#) of stereotyping.

Dr. Robby Allen from Cranfield University, said: "Increasingly, enlightened companies including NASA, Willis Towers Watson, Microsoft and Ford have reviewed their recruitment processes to take on more neurodiverse people.

"In such a competitive global economy, it is surprising that more companies are not embracing the unique specialist skills that those who diverge from the 'norm' can bring to an organization.

"Internationally, the neurodiverse represent an untapped source of unique skills that can be of great advantage to organizations. However, this research reveals a potential paradox where an organization cannot identify those that would bring greater benefit to the workforce if the neurodiverse within that workforce is reluctant to reveal themselves because of the stigma of stereotyping."

As part of the research two studies were conducted. One study, employed three exercises consisting of brochures, learning sets and posters to test organizational cues, notions of intelligence and situational cues. It collected data from 53 participants to establish whether [stereotype threat](#) observed in visible difference such as race, gender and intelligence is equally relevant to neurodiversity. The second study consisted of interviews with 44 participants to establish stereotype threat source, reaction and effect on declaration of invisible difference.

More information: Tamsin Priscott et al, Human capital neurodiversity: an examination of stereotype threat anticipation, *Employee Relations: The International Journal* (2021). [DOI:](#)

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Provided by Cranfield University

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