



Create a Welcoming Workplace



The **Inclusive**
Workplace

A welcoming workplace is essential to fostering employee productivity and retention. Employees who feel comfortable and valued at work are more likely to perform well and stay at your company.

Creating a welcoming workplace is a key part of becoming a diverse and inclusive business. After you've recruited and hired employees who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability, there are actions you can take to build a workplace culture that embraces inclusion.

As a business, you play an important role in creating a workplace culture where all your employees feel comfortable and valued. These actions might include changing the language and images you use to communicate or modifying your company work environment.

Remember that simply being "aware" of disability or being "diverse" are different from being "inclusive" and "welcoming." "Being welcoming" means actually making changes to your processes, environment, and more so that all employees are included and feel a sense of belonging.

How to Make Your Workplace (More) Welcoming

Here are five tips to make your workplace more inviting and productive for all employees, including those who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability.

1. Physical Spaces

- Make sure common and private onsite working spaces can be adjusted for people with sensory sensitivities.
- Consider replacing fluorescent bulbs with incandescent lighting, reducing background noises, and other ways to create more welcoming spaces.



2. Communications

- Develop a diversity and inclusion statement (if you don't already have one) and share it internally and externally.
- Show your commitment to these values by using plain language in written communications, using visuals to support understanding of policies, procedures and training, and using images of diverse employees working alongside each other in marketing and other external communications.

3. Training

- Provide workplace inclusion training to existing staff to help them better understand autism and intellectual disability.
- This type of training is especially helpful in organizations with no prior experience working alongside employees on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability.

4. Resources

- Employee resource groups (ERGs) are networks within a company where employees with common interests can support each other by meeting, networking and raising awareness of relevant issues.
- Consult with your ERGs about making your workplace more inclusive and welcoming for everyone.

5. Accommodations

- Facilitate the accommodation process.
- Invite employees to talk to you or ask you for accommodations, and repeat this offer in your written employee instructions or handbook. Work with a team that includes a diverse set of



employees, including people on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability to explore other ways to make your workplace more welcoming.

- Job coaches and employment agencies are also valuable resources for best practices and other ideas.

Help Remote Workers Feel Welcome

Helping employees who work from home feel welcome at your company can be challenging, especially during COVID-19, when many people are already feeling disconnected and alone.

Here are three tips for helping remote employees feel welcome.

1. Stay connected

- Provide email, video conferencing, and other tools so employees and managers can easily hold regular meetings and check ins.

2. Be empathic and supportive

- Make time to check regularly on employees' mental and physical health, and not just their productivity.

3. Promote your company's culture

- Find ways for employees to share common experiences and participate in your company's culture, even if they might not be able to be in the same place at the same time.

Ask employees for their feedback and ideas for ways that you can help them feel more welcome at your company. Job coaches and employment agencies might be able to provide some ideas too.

