



Develop a Diverse Team of Employees



The **Inclusive**
Workplace

Every employee – including employees who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability – is different. Each employee brings a unique set of skills and talents to the workplace.

Learn how to develop your employees and create inclusive performance management strategies to tap into the full potential of your team.

Consider the methods your organization typically uses to manage, motivate, and even evaluate employees. Are they accessible and inclusive?

Ask your company managers, autism and intellectual disability advocates, and employees for input and feedback. Read these tips for ways to make your performance management practices more inclusive.

Important: The material here is for general information purposes only. *It is not legal advice.*

Best Practices for Inclusive Talent Management

No two employees are identical. Employees on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability are as diverse as employees without a disability.

Here are some best practices that have worked well for both employers and employees.

During COVID-19, you might not be able to apply these best practices in person. But you can use video conferencing, email, and other technologies to apply them to support and manage employees who are working remotely.

Here are 10 inclusive performance management strategies to help you develop a diverse team that includes employees on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability.

1. Set clear expectations

- Be clear about what you expect. Use plain language written and visual guides for job tasks and written and unwritten rules of the workplace too.



2. Provide training and opportunities to practice

- Provide informal training by a manager, mentor, or colleagues on the job.
- Offer more formal training, and consult with job coaches or contacts at support organizations to see if funding is available.

3. Give concise and specific instructions

- Provide clear, start-to-finish instructions for each task.
- For example, instead of saying *“please bring me some samples of this material,”* say *“please bring me five samples of this material, in these three colours.”*

4. Provide a structured work environment

- Work with the employee to organize daily job tasks and set priorities.
- Offer to help them create schedules for daily, weekly, and monthly activities that include specific information about daily start and finish times.

5. Provide regular opportunities to discuss performance and provide feedback

- Schedule regular one-on-one meetings with the employee to understand how they are doing on the job and provide feedback. These meetings can be more frequent and shorter in length.

6. Give positive feedback

- Share positive feedback! Every employee benefits from knowing when they are doing a great job.
- Be specific so the employee knows exactly where they are excelling and contributing to the workplace.



7. Be sensitive but direct with feedback

- Give constructive feedback in a way that is honest and clear, but still sensitive.
- Be specific in constructive feedback so the employee knows exactly what to do differently. Engage the employee in a conversation and create opportunities for shared understanding.
- If an employee does a task incorrectly, explain what was incorrect. Then describe or model how to do the task correctly.

8. Provide reassurance in stressful situations

- Provide the employee with concrete solutions to unexpected mishaps so the employee knows “what to do if...” in common situations like equipment malfunctions.

9. Offer adjustments

- Ensure all employees, including employees on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability are aware of the process for requesting workplace adjustments or accommodations.
- Talk to the employee and their job coach (if the employee has one) to see what might be helpful.

10. Educate your employees on diversity and inclusion in the workplace

- Build a workplace culture that values diversity, inclusion and belonging.
- Incorporate workplace inclusion training into your HR processes as a general best practice.

Layoffs and Terminations

Letting go of an employee is one of the most difficult aspects of performance management, whether you are laying off someone or terminating their employment. These are hard conversations to have with anybody.



When you are laying off a person who is on the autism spectrum or who has an intellectual disability or ending their employment, treat them the same as other employees. Give them the same respect you would give any other employee.

Here are some general dos and don'ts for how to lay off or terminate an employee.

Do:

- Talk to the employee face to face, in person or over a video conference
- Be direct
- Show empathy for the departing employee
- Offer to help the employee with a reference letter or other resources
- Thank the employee for their service

Don't:

- Make small talk
- Blame others for the decision to let them go
- Make the layoff or termination decision up for discussion
- Promise they will get their job back in the future, if conditions change
- Talk negatively about the employee's performance if the layoff is due to downsizing
- Make sure you allow time during the conversation for the employee or job coach to ask questions and understand next steps.

