



Unit 4: SUPPORTING THE STRENGTHS AND KEY COMPETENCES OF ASD EMPLOYEES

As individuals with autism transition to adulthood, it is important to find valuable and meaningful opportunities based on each individual's specific needs and interests. The range of skill levels and behavioural challenges associated with autism require a wide array of opportunities and supports. Ideally all aspects of their needs are met within these programs, including providing experiences that lead them to being gainfully employed. In the disability treatment community, there is a strong emphasis on securing employment for all individuals with intellectual disabilities, including those with ASD. A wide variety of employment arrangements can work for individuals with ASD. Great progress has been made in integrating preference into the selection of work tasks and environments. In addition, creative schedules, supports, and arrangements can increase the success of employment placements. Increasingly, employers are being educated about both the needs of individuals with ASD and their potential contributions to the workplace.

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPLOYEES WITH ASD

How to start:

- Clarity of goals,
- The goal of competence development should be challenging for the employee and its achievement should be a source of satisfaction,
- Realization of the goal is connected with achieving other benefits,
- Goals are divided into stages, the implementation of which is controlled, and the employee receives feedback on the effect of control.



ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUES

- testing of actions taken consisting of systematic collection and analysis of information on processes, diagnosing the performance of tasks and, on this basis, modifying subsequent actions,
- analysis by means of feedback, which is an extension of the study of actions taken by adjusting the current actions with the results of the diagnosis,
- organizational interventions that involve external experts studying and proposing changes to the organization,
- consultation of the process involving in-depth analysis and explanation of the current state of affairs and anticipating future developments,
- team building is an activity aimed at increasing the efficiency of various teams in an organization, both task-based and consisting of a manager and subordinates,
- resolving intra- and inter-group conflicts through guided meetings and discussions among organization members (e.g., techniques such as organizational development meetings, image exchange),
- sensitivity training focused on learning from interactions and evolution of group process dynamics

MANAGING EMPLOYEE COMPETENCIES

- Identifying the profile of competencies needed in the organization.
- Determining the competencies actually possessed by the employees.
- Identifying the missing and surplus competencies.



- Improving the "competence balance" through personnel allocation, training, selection or outsourcing.
- Releasing the employees with redundant competencies.

Quality circles/competency maps are one way of using employees' creative abilities. Within the framework of quality circles, the employees meet regularly in small (several people) groups. During these meetings, different aspects of the work are discussed and new ideas are developed.

Competency mapping is the process of identifying the specific skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviours required to operate effectively in a specific trade, profession, or job position. Competency maps are often referred to as competency profiles or skills profiles.

- Quality circles give the employees the opportunity to use and expand their knowledge, to present individual perceptions of problems and ideas, to motivate them to think about rationalizing ways and tools of performing work.
- Quality circles increase job satisfaction, contribute to the growth of self-confidence and self-esteem and make it possible to satisfy the need for self-fulfillment.

SUCCESS STRATEGY

The support, or lack thereof, of an immediate supervisor can make a person with ASD job easier or impossible. A helpful and clearly communicating manager can make a person with ASD a valuable team member on a permanent basis. Working with people with ASD can also mean benefits for supervisors. Managers who have come to understand the communication difficulties experienced by employees with ASD say Often that, as a result, they have learned to communicate more



effectively with the entire team.

Tips for effective communication

The following tips are designed to help managers communicate instructions to employees with ASD, giving them confidence that the information will be well understood and that it will have the best possible impact on the employee:

- Don't make assumptions

We tend to take certain things for granted for everyone. The manager should inform every step in the procedure without making any assumptions about the employee's knowledge. He should ask if he has any doubts.

- Ask directly

For people with ASD, the indirect way of communicating is not very helpful. They understand direct commands much better

Eg. Stay until you finish washing the dishes.

- Be precise

When we give instructions or give explanations, it is a good idea to do so precisely and be specific about our requirements.

Eg. It's better to say, "Can you print this document three times and bring copies to Natalie, Ted and Caroline?"

- Avoid figurative statements

Usually a person with ASD takes the statements of others very literally. If the manager says "I'll be back in a minute," the person with ASD may look at his watch and expect his return in exactly in a minute. It may not be at all obvious to her that the term "minute" is commonly used to refer to a short stretch of time.



- Provide lots of details

People with ASD need to explore a topic well before they can

able to make generalizations. Explaining a task or situation in detail will help them understand what is required of them. The more details the manager provides, the better the employee will understand the task at hand and the easier it will be for them to perform it. However, only provide information that is directly related to the task.

- Show respect

Most people with ASD have an average or above-average

level of intelligence. They should always be respected and treated as an independent and adult. For example, it is not polite to speak to them in a slow and loud manner with a condescending tone.

- Take notes

It's a good idea to support verbal instructions with written directions. Pictures or symbols can also be helpful, depending on a person's aptitude.

- Check that you have been understood

Managers can ask people with ASD to repeat what they have heard to check that all information has been well understood. It may be necessary to gradually clarify the instruction until the supervisor is satisfied that the employee has understood everything correctly. Once a person with ASD has learned a task, he or she will perform it consistently and flawlessly.

The most important rules for communication

In summary, communication should be:



- devoid of assumptions,
- direct,
- precise,
- simple - avoid figurative statements,
- detailed,
- expressing respect,
- reinforced by written communication,
- understood

The most important rules for assigning tasks

When assigning a task, the manager should:

- explain the purpose of the task,
 - explain all the stages of performing the task,
 - specify the expected result or final product,
 - inform about the expected quality,
 - specify the time interval for the completion of the task,
 - check that the instruction has been understood.
- be clear - sometimes it's useful not only to talk, but also to write some things down,



- remember that your colleague with ASD may not know when you're joking and being sarcastic, and when you're serious (which doesn't mean he doesn't have a sense of humor),
- be precise - for example, when asking your colleague to perform a task or gather some information, be sure to specify exactly what you expect,
- remember that things you say can be interpreted literally, and that vague and ambiguous information can cause embarrassment and misunderstanding,
- remember that elements of nonverbal communication, such as gestures and facial expressions, can go unnoticed or not fully understood,
- give clear feedback - for example, honestly inform your colleague if you think he or she has unnecessarily spent too much time verifying part of a sentence,
- remember to give positive feedback when a person with Asperger's Syndrome is performing well - this may not be obvious to him or her,
- remember that autism may prevent your colleague from understanding team dynamics or "unwritten" rules in the workplace. For example, small talks with colleagues during breaks costs him more energy than it does you. Nevertheless, remember that many people with Asperger's Syndrome want to have a social life and enjoy of interacting with others.

Key rules for managers

To ensure that employees with ASD can perform their duties effectively:

- clearly define the rules of behaviour in the workplace,
- introduce new tasks in a structured manner,
- use written or graphic instructions,



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- provide lists of the most important tasks and daily or weekly schedules,
- precede each change in the way of working with an explanation and adequate preparation,
- closely supervise the employee during the first period,
- give frequent and immediate feedback,
- be consistent in your dealings with the employee.



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