



Autism & Employment (The Challenges & Opportunities) in an Ever Changing World

Kerryn Burgoyne

Director/Founder–Ktalk, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of my abstract and presentation at the recent conference in Bali Indonesia was to highlight the difficulties and struggles that a person with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) has in finding & securing employment in an ever-changing world.

Sometimes when they do find successful work, they're placed in the company/organisation with their high level skills of say computer programming, engineering, or even data analysis. However, some companies, don't see past the "diffability" so therefore they're placed in positions where they're given the mundane boring tasks to do that other employees don't want to have anything to do with or touch.

The employee with ASD is quite often seen, as both highly valuable due to their skills/abilities & talents in a specific area, but also their excessive high attention to detail when completing tasks for their bosses or supervisor. But also autistic adults are quite often used to other's greatest advantage, putting them to work in a place that has creates highly stimulus brain input, but also multiple overload issues. The person with ASD ends up having a meltdown, but the strategies to assist the employee with ASD, are not in place because of the lack of education of this condition, in most cases, awareness & understanding of the disorder, as well as acceptance of them as individuals, because people look at the barriers or the "diffability first" not the person. Other employees are affected by these behaviours of the person with ASD, but also how to handle meltdowns should the person be in that position at the time also.

This is also boiled down to the individual person being taught independent living skills, so that they have strategies in place for them to cope with such circumstances and challenges that they face every day in an ever changing workplace environment.

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Introduction

I am introducing myself to the wider audience as an individual diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome and I am presenting my life's issues with seeking permanent employment for myself so that I may have a really good quality of life financially, but also to live a lot more comfortably than what I'm doing now on a Gov't pension each fortnight.

I then describe to the audience of a scenario of "stepping out of their shoes" and into mine and to see what it's like from my perspective when I was only working part time/casually as a school crossing supervisor (lollypop lady) for my local council, Then I gained a Government Position in 2020, which I was only given the boring menial task of transcribing Microsoft Teams meetings during the COVID-19 lockdown pandemic. I was treated as an "outsider" but not seen as a team member as such. I was also told that a carer's job would suit me better rather than the job that I was doing in the present time. However, I stuck to my contract till it ended in 2022. But during that year, I was given the choice of doing some online courses through a TAFE, or do the transcribing work. I opted for the course, which gave me back the self-esteem & confidence that I'd lacked when I was

working in that job, which was toxic, and very unhealthy. My mental health suffered greatly during this time, as I had also dealt with the death of a friend of mine, medical issues that had come my way that I required a very serious operation, and then other important matters that were on my plate that required my attention at the time.

Materials and Methods

This part of the presentation that I gave was more on my own lived experiences where I used online employment sites such as Seek or Indeed or Career one, and also looked through the APS (Australian Public Service Gazette) every day to seek employment for myself.

In June/July of 2023, I then decided to re-start up my very own business KTalk and started things moving with the business name, (I'd already had an ABN (Australian Business Number) to trade with, a domain name and then found another hosting company that provided more services to me than the previous one, which I then got my business website re-developed to assist me with selling my business products & services that I've got to serve the community with.

Contact: Kerryn Burgoyne Director/Founder–Ktalk, Melbourne, Australia. Email: info@ktalk.au

This is now a purpose in life that I've fulfilled for myself and I've got the plans in action for what needs to be done and how I want to operate my business. It's run from my gut intuition and I feel very confident that I'm doing the correct things to see that it's going to be profitable in the end but also successful.

My presentation goes on to ask the questions of "What are the challenges for workplaces hiring autistic employees"?

Results and Discussion

The results of this question/s outline the attitudes of employers, lack of understanding & awareness by employers as well as poor recruitment practices. As a result from this discussion, I then go into detail about how accommodations are needed for different individuals as No 2 people are the same with ASD (autism spectrum disorder), and then provide some strategies that employers can use and embrace for their employees but also their companies/workplaces to modify their workplaces for individuals on the spectrum.

My presentation then gives out some useful information and strategies that employers or people can take away to ensure that their organisations/companies/workplaces are more user-friendly as well as being a now "more neurodiverse" workspace for employees on the autism spectrum or for those with other impairments such as blindness/hearing loss or even for those with physical 'diffabilities'.

Conclusion

I then conclude that there needs to be more education/training on accessibility for those with "diffabilities" or disabilities to both equip & empower them to develop Individual work Plans for those with autism or any other disability within their workplace.

Declaration of Interest Statement

State if there is any competing interest of any sort. If there is no financial interest, use the following format: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.