

Who would I hire and why?

Although I'm not hiring anyone right now, a few "events" in the past months lead my thoughts to wander about this topic.

One was a very interesting and eye-opening panel discussion with Natalie Phillips-Mason organized by Parents At Work around "creating neuroinclusive Workplaces", another one was as trivial as helping my ASD son doing his homework.

In the first instance, the highlight was that the neurodiversity and disability in general affect employees directly and indirectly: how many of our colleagues are also carers?

In the second, it was the realization that my son's brain was wired differently, to me it feels like he almost thinks backwards (for lack of better word) ...

And it got me to think, these are actually potential super-powers; or more prosaically an edge, an advantage. So, without further ado, here's the top profiles I would favourably consider hiring, all other things being equal of course (experience, track record, qualifications,).

Neurodiverse people:

I touched in a previous article (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/autism-from-denial-embrace-jean-capdevielle/?trackingId=ZiC4z%2FXERI%2BL2nQccx9UIA%3D%3D>) on the topic and we all now know that some companies target Neurodiverse candidate for specific tasks, simply because they excel at it. This is not what I want to talk about here, let's widen the frame a little and go back to basics.

Normality is a construct, a cursor put somewhere to cover the majority. It was (probably still is) necessary to establish a baseline and is core to how society works from education methods and curriculums to social cues and interactions. Now imagine an ASD kid for example, who has to live within that construct, where everything is feels literally unnatural to them, and yet they have to follow the "normality" path, because there is no other.

Coming back to my son's, it is my Neurotypical nature (although the jury's still out on this one 😊) that makes me say he thinks backwards, for him, it is his normality. Yet, he will have to navigate a system completely foreign overwhelming for him. And I believe, like many others before him, that he will prevail. This simply means a lifetime of frustrations (and how to manage them), a lifetime of adaptability, a life time of crisis management and so on and so forth.

That for me is an edge, a skill set developed by necessity, something that has to be experienced rather than taught, hence something rare, something precious. The kind of skills and resilience that would support success in pretty much any endeavour in any field, provided of course it is supported and managed properly.

People with disability:

Quite similar to the one above: society caters for the majority (infrastructure, rules, ...) and when you fall out of the normality brackets, well, you're in for a tough fight! And again, this fight will develop abilities that can hardly be found elsewhere.

Again, a lifetime of overcoming frustrations and obstacles (literally), a life time of adapting, a life time of focus and drive...

I would also argue it fosters creativity in ways we hardly imagine. When pretty much nothing in this world is made for you, you have to find workaround solutions, all time. This kind practical creativity can be priceless in a work environment.

Well, when put towards their work, imagine the wonders they can achieve. Resilience is imprinted, just like Neurodiverse people, it is a second nature. Who would not want highly creative and hyper-resilient collaborators?

Carers

Yes, here, I'll somewhat preach for my own choir, yet, it does not mean I'm wrong 😊

I'm not talking here about carers by trade but people who on top of their day work, are also carers such as parents of disabled or neurodivergent children, brothers, sisters, etc etc...

What most people do not realize is that being a carer comes with heavy loads:

- Emotional/mental load: probably the hardest one, a mix of worry, fear, anxiety, elation, impatience, hopelessness, hope, etc etc... a real rollercoaster of all sorts of emotions, coming and going that you need to manage somehow
- Administrative load: as a carer, you are a project manager, no more, no less. You need to manage therapies, medication, medical appointments, NDIS reviews, reports, paperwork, school specific meetings, ... and the list goes on and on... In our particular case, with 2 ASD children, I estimated this admin load between 10 and 15 hours a week (I did the maths).

What does it mean? simple, anyone in this situation while being a productive and efficient employee/collaborator probably has resilience and a capacity for adaptation and multitasking pretty high. That is an asset for any manager in my book.

Skateboarders

Yes, skateboarders indeed and by extension any activity that demands a high level of focus, resilience, dedication, and perseverance. I could have chosen Golf, Surfing or many other sports, however, what sets skateboarding apart is how much it hurts... Gravity laws are strict and punishing.

Anyone with this kind of focus, ability to move forward through pain and relentlessness is simply astonishing to me and such skills can be leveraged in the workplace.

Not only that, but it makes also for fantastic learners (skateboarding is a never-ending learning journey) and creative people (when it comes to tricks, your imagination is the only limit).

And for a sport with somewhat a bad reputation, you get some very successful businessmen who inspire people well beyond their sports area such as Tony Hawk or Rodney Mullen.

There you have it, some of the profiles that could be real assets in the workplace, provided of course all their skills are leveraged and supported. Like in situation, you get back only what you put in. In

such cases, you need to put in a little more initially (reasonable adjustments, support, flexibility, ...) but the yield should also be better, a no brainer then!

You may have notice that the word resilience comes back often, it is because I for one consider it a key skill and a necessary ingredient for success. Nothing great is ever achieved without it

“Resilience can go an awful long way.” **Eddie the Eagle**