IT careers for people with autism

Unlocking potential

People with autism are under-represented in the workforce

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, only 34% of people with autism are in employment.

The untapped potential of people with autism to work in the information and communication technology (ICT) area is now being recognised, with companies and departments recruiting for people with their particular skills to work in IT.

While each person’s experience of autism is different, many people with autism have an exceptional ability to retain information, think at a level of detail and depth, or excel in math or code.

Many may have strengths such as accuracy, a good eye for detail, and reliability, which can benefit many businesses, including the technology industry.

In Adelaide, the department is working with the private and not-for-profit sector to provide skilled employment opportunities for 11 people with autistic spectrum disorder through the 'Dandelion' program.

The department’s ICT hub is the perfect workplace to engage the trainees, whose precise attention to detail and ability to systematically process information make them well suited to working in an IT test environment.

The trainees work in testing teams to ensure the department’s IT products and services meet the needs of the millions of Australians the department assists.

Commonwealth traineeships offered

The Brisbane office of the Commonwealth Department of Human Services (which includes Medicare and Centrelink) recently hired 13 people with autism for three-year traineeships as software analysts.

Human Services Minister, Marise Payne, says, 'we are very impressed by the quality of work produced by our … trainees, as well as their personal and professional growth.'

Microsoft has adopted a similar trainee scheme in the United Kingdom, using the skills and aptitudes of people with autism.
Small adjustments to develop work skills

The three-year program provides trainees with the opportunity to gain valuable work skills in an environment that enables them to perform effectively, while being supported by people who understand their abilities.

Small adjustments can unlock the potential of a whole section of society. Such adjustments could include making job interviews easier for people with autism to demonstrate their abilities, and providing support for workers with autism so that they understand the unwritten rules of the workplace.

Takeaway Messages

- Develop an equal opportunity program and recruit trainees from a disadvantaged group to work in a specific area that suits their skill sets.
- Partner with the not-for-profit sector to recruit and support trainees in work.
- Make adjustments in the workplace, e.g. to assist with communication and social interactions.

What assistance can you get to employ a person with a disability in your workplace?

When employing a person with a disability, you may be eligible for financial assistance. Visit the Queensland Government ‘People with disability’ site for information: