

The rebellious potential of *neurodiversity*

Once we learn how much added value diverse minds can possess, we can then recognize diversity and more inclusively embrace genius in the workplace and society, drawing significant advantages.



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The critical topics that companies must focus on in the next few years include the company culture and leadership as it relates to the inclusion of diversity. Let's first explain what the difference is between the two.

Diversity is the representation of people with visible and invisible differences within an organization. Inclusion means guaranteeing that everyone, with all their unique characteristics, has an equal opportunity to contribute and influence every part and level of a workplace, in safe conditions.

A diversified workforce is just the first step for a forward-thinking and successful company. They must also adopt inclusion by implementing real skills and behaviours every day and creating a culture in which people of all backgrounds feel truly included. In a globalized world, people with new perspectives and ideas who come from different environments will be increasingly

important for companies in order to recognize and interpret emerging needs. Companies with a culture based on trust, collaboration and inclusion, whose employees feel comfortable participating and communicating, will have the best ideas, performance and resilience.

It's the companies that will improve and attract even more talents.

THE GENIUS OF REBELLIOUS MINDS

Let's look at a real case that shows how neurodiversity, like any other diversity, can be an added value for a company.

Today, the concept of diversity is often limited to fostering inclusion and equal representation of demographic groups that are considered a minority in corporate environments, ignoring however the enormous potential that other types of diversity hold, like neurodiversity.



"Without inclusion, diversity isn't used to its full potential and the value of it is lost at the start, in the hiring process, or worse, stays hidden in the company".

There are precious and disruptive skills hidden in neurodiversity, a valuable piece of the puzzle for the digital world and digital transformation.

Experience tells us that people with Autism Spectrum Disorders are highly creative. They possess exceptional levels of concentration, logic, imagination and visual thinking. Furthermore, they tend to be systematic and meticulous. They share an intuition and unique perspectives in resolving problems. In short, neurodiverse people possess talents that companies need.

However, let's not forget that we are talking about people who can struggle to build social relationships and tend to avoid eye contact or grasp the emotions of others. They often fixate on certain topics, becoming boring and sometimes too verbose for others. They have a hard time understanding jokes because they can't grasp a play on words or read between the lines, taking everything verbatim.

Today, in Italy, only one in 10 people with Autism has a job. Often, this category of talents can't find one because of aspects of their condition that appear during the hiring process. This leads to a loss in opportunities. These valuable potential employees are ignored based solely on how they perform in highly emotional situations like those of the hiring process, perhaps simply because they don't fit the preconceived notions of the hiring representative.

To recognize the ability and opportunity these special and rebellious minds possess, companies should adapt their recruitment, selection and career development policies to reflect a broader definition of talent and develop greater sensitivity to individual needs. A growing number of top companies has reformed their HR processes to accept neurodiverse talents,



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including SAP, Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) and Microsoft. But this is just the beginning. A quick Google search shows a surprisingly high number of talents who have inspired and enriched the reality we live in.

Instead of the classic DE&I strategy based on the opposition between majority and minority, we should assume a strategic approach that can grasp the differences of each individual and a culture of active listening and inclusion of all employees, to gain real advantages for the company and society.

"Did you know Tim Burton and Steve Jobs both have Asperger's Syndrome, a developmental disorder that falls under the Autism spectrum?"



Tim Burton: *Asperger's Syndrome helped inspire his creativity, which he always saw as a virtue rather than a defect.*



Steve Jobs: *Throughout his life, he reinvented himself several times, from distancing himself from his company (Apple) to the creation of Pixar and the technological revolution of the iPhone. His total absorption in his work, extraordinary memory and little interest in people are definitely characteristics of Asperger's.*