

# The ROI Benefits of Hiring People Talented Autistic People in the Workplace

By,  
Dr. Kerry Magro

**I'm an autistic adult.**

**I cannot ride a bike and  
have trouble  
buttoning my shirts...**

**I am also a  
doctoral graduate  
and have a job as a  
public speaker.**

**The ability to button  
your shirts does not  
determine your success.**





## Dr. Kerry Magro Ed.D., CAS Professional Speaker & Author

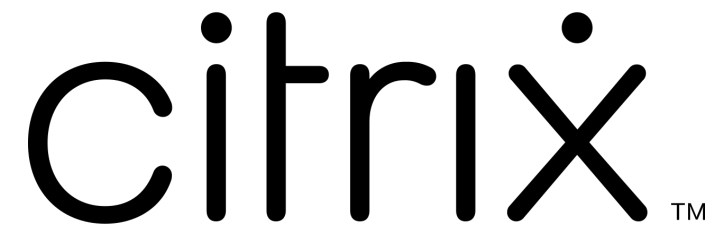
- From nonverbal to professional speaker: Spoken at over 1000 events in the past 11 years.
- Spoken at Google, American Express, PSE&G, Wyndham
- Books: Defining Autism From The Heart, Autism and Falling in Love
- Films: Joyful Noise, Jane Wants A Boyfriend
- TV: HBO Mrs. Fletcher
- Netflix's 'Love on the Spectrum'

# Talks I give (Both virtual and in-person)

- Professional Development Training as part of Lunch-And-Learns and other type of events on 'The ROI Benefits of Hiring Autistic People in the Workplace.'
- Moderating 'Neurodiversity in the Workforce Panels' comprising all autistic adults to educate employees and leadership on the benefits of tapping into neurodiverse individuals to change how we look at employment for those with autism and other related disabilities
- Hosting lectures with parent ran groups as part of companies who are looking for more resources to help their children who may have a disability.



MAPLE LEAF SPORTS + ENTERTAINMENT





# How autism is often seen in our society



Often seen as white males who are savants and great at math (Rainman/the good doctor)

This is what autism actually looks like

See the able, not the label



# Prevalence of Autism

- 1 in 44 (1% U.S. Population)
  - Over 7 million
  - 1 in 27 boys
  - 1 in 116 girls
  - Over 70 million people worldwide
  - Cost a family an average of \$60,000 a year across the child's lifespan
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- Over 700,000 children will reach adulthood within the next decade.
  - 35% of people with autism will not go to college
  - Majority unemployed or underemployed
  - 63% of children with autism are bullied
  - 81% of adults with autism still live with their families
  - 49% percent of people with autism wander and go missing as a result

Heather's Story: [Facebook.com/KerrysAutismJourney](https://www.facebook.com/KerrysAutismJourney)  
Support my nonprofit's video series at [Patreon.com/ASpecialCommunity](https://www.patreon.com/ASpecialCommunity)



**I WAS TOLD ALL KINDS OF THINGS I WAS**

# Prevalence of autism & disability

- 1 in 5 Americans currently have some form of disability
- Based on Centers for Disease Control bi-annual report that looks at evaluations of health and education records of 8-year-old children in the 11 states that CDC has official testing sites.
- 1 in 11 (fastest growing developmental disability)
- 4 times more prevalent in boys
- 2.2% percent of U.S Population adults with autism (5.4 million adults)
- World Autism Month started in 1970 by the Autism Society of America
- United Nations Proclaimed April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day



# People don't age out of having autism and some other diagnoses

## My challenges before...

- Nonverbal
- Sensory Integration Issues
- Motor Skill Issues

## Challenges now...

- Making friends/relationships
- Dysgraphia
- Some anxiety

# Consider hiring practices

- Disability Equality Index (DEI) – Free benchmarking tool that provides assessment on disability & inclusion practices: <http://usbIn.org/what-we-do/disability-equality-index/>
- Consider having online literature on your website that can discuss what the interview process may look like (one-day job training, group interview, etc.)
- Virtual reality job interview training programs are helping autistic adults prepare for the interview process: <https://www.jobinterviewtraining.net/>

# Onboarding Best Practices

- On your website include information on how to prepare for the interview process - <http://www.vitadmf.org/>
- Weekly check-ins with supervisor
- Peer mentoring or job coaching opportunities
- Give positive reinforcement for small improvements, provide feedback in private versus in public areas
- Make job tasks measurable when possible (You need to get a certain amount of outreach emails out in a specific amount of time)
- Consider instituting a quiet space/room in your workplace
- Put it in writing!

# Reach out to groups who focus primarily on the movement of hiring autistic adults

- US Business Leadership Network
- The Spectrum Careers Job Portal – TheSpectrumCareers.com
- Autism @ Work
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability - <http://www.askearn.org/> (free service via DOL)
- National Council on Disability
- What Can You Do Campaign – The Department of Labor – [whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org)



# Disability is a spectrum

## Employers need to know there's - No one-size-fits-all



# Hiring people with autism and other disabilities makes good business sense

- Customers with disabilities and their families, friends and associates represent a trillion dollar market segment
- They, like other market segments, purchase products and services from companies that best meet their needs
- A large number of Americans also say they prefer to patronize with businesses that hire people with disabilities
- Businesses across the United States have begun to realize that hiring talented candidates with disabilities is not only the right thing to do; it makes good business sense while demonstrating high ROI and aids in 503 compliance.

# STEM may not be the solution for everyone

- Autism is a spectrum
  - Myself – Professional Speaker
  - Mickey Rowe – Broadway performer
  - Grant Manier – Painter
  - Temple Grandin – College professor
  - Amy Gravino - Consultant

# Reasonable Accommodations

- Only accommodation I've ever received was having my job assignments written down for clarity
- Against the law to ask someone if they have a disability.
- Providing awareness events to show your company embraces diversity can help those conversations.
  - National Disability Employment Awareness Month
- Human resources should acknowledge the benefits of reasonable accommodations to all employees



TEDxJerseyCity: The will of opportunity – the path of autism to college



TEDxMorristown: What happens to children with autism when they become adults



# Areas I struggled with finding employment

- Vague job descriptions
- Challenges with group projects
- Eye contact
- Small talk
- Roleplaying and mock interviews helped shape my improvement in maintaining employment

# My background in Employment lead to entrepreneurship

- Self-employed, in addition to having a LLC I also have a 501©3
- Those on the autism spectrum are seeking these in our community with the focus on creating your own routine and one-on one projects

# Areas an autistic adult may have obstacles include

- Soft skills
- Sensory challenges
- Understanding language that's not concrete
- Collaboration/group projects
- Inflexibility
- Anxiety with transitions



# Possibility Thinkers – David's Story



# Things to consider: Sensory issues

- Light hyper-sensitivity
  - Consider dimmers or shades
  - Provide sunglasses or caps
  - Areas in your workplace that are less bright
- Smell hyper-sensitivity
  - Is their workplace near an on-site kitchen
  - COVID19 – avoid cleaning products with fragrances
  - Central air, air filters and workplaces near windows

## Things to consider: Reasonable accommodations (Sensory)

- Noise hyper-sensitivity
  - White noise machines
  - Ear buds
  - Allowing IT to allow neurodiverse workers to have a music service on their company computer
- Taste hyper-sensitivity – Consistent food schedule, gluten-free options,
- Touch hyper-sensitivity – What does your dress code look like?

# Things to consider: Reasonable accommodations other areas

- Social - Weekly check-ins with supervisors and mentoring
  - Make sure employees understand conduct policy and appropriate/inappropriate behaviors in the workplace
  - Consider training videos acting out everyday scenarios that may happen
- Environmental - Quiet Space/Sensory Room/Meditation Room
  - Can an individual take their breaks outside who may need it?

I'm autistic.

I prefer direct, literal and detailed communication

If I am:

not making eye contact,  
not greeting you back,

not understanding your social cues, etc

There is no malicious intent. It is the autism.

Thank you for understanding.

## Things to consider: Reasonable accommodations (Communication and assistive technology)

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- Recorders, speech to text devices to review assignments/meetings after (i.e. dragonfly naturally speaking)
- Communication supports for those who are non-speaking and minimally verbal (PECS, communication boards)
- Case Study: Yuri who is transmasculine and also autistic put this outside his cubicle. Having HR indicate employees, regardless of disability, can do this to educate others on their potential differences.

# My peer mentor helped me with these core soft skills

- Communication,
- Attitude and enthusiasm,
- Teamwork,
- Problem solving,
- Professionalism.
- These were all done ultimately my Freshman year of college before transitioning to my first internship at CBS Sports
- We'd do team building activities & icebreakers with other students
  - Ex: Marshmallow Spaghetti Challenge – Building the highest tower with only a few resources

# Strengths of autism

- Unique key interests
- Success stories include:
  - Dr. Temple Grandin
  - Dr. Stephen Shore
  - Comedian Dan Aykroyd
- Authenticity
- Loyal
- Honest
- Independent thinking
- Strong memory skills



# What employers need to focus on

"Autism doesn't  
come with an  
instruction guide.  
It comes with a  
family who will  
never give up!"  
- Kerry Magro

April is  
Autism  
Awareness  
Month  
Kerrymagro.com



- Clear job responsibilities
- Inclusion and diversity training that includes bringing in people with disabilities to weigh-in.
- Job coaches
- On-site mentoring
- Reasonable accommodations
- Read the Department of Labor's Office of Disability & Employment Policy, "Business Strategies that Work: A Framework for Disability Inclusion."
  - <http://bit.ly/BusinessDisability>
- Consider a 1-day job trial versus the typical interview process

# My experiences with disclosure

- Looking at companies websites to see if they had previous experience hiring people with disabilities
- Would read reviews from websites such as [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) before making that decision
- Fine for me, someone who has an invisible disability, but may not work for others.

# Encourage diversity events all year round

- World Autism Month - April
- Mental Health Awareness Month - May
- National Disability Employment Awareness Month – October
- Employee Appreciation Day – March 5

At the end of the day  
– Just be kind to everyone



Not all disabilities  
← look like this

Some  
→ look like this





**Autism  
can't  
define  
me.  
I define  
autism.**

**DR. KERRY MAGRO EDD, CAS  
PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER  
KERRYMAGRO.COM  
KERRYMAGRO@GMAIL.COM**

# Thank you!



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Powerpoint slide notes: <http://bit.ly/kerryslidenotes>

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