

## **The value to Organisations of Technical Specialists with Level 1 Autism**

This submission aims to raise awareness of the impact of autism on organisations. This is a very positive impact when it comes to the technical expertise that people with Level 1 autism can bring to organisations. It is a more negative impact when those same technical experts have a need to communicate their insights with their neurotypical peers and leaders.

The Autism Strategy has a role to play in raising awareness of such challenges, and of the potential benefits that addressing such issues could bring.

Almost every sizeable organisation is dependent on people at the mild end of the autism spectrum for that group's unmatched specialist expertise in the technical aspects of many important business functions – finance, law, business design, technology, cyber security and many others.

The key issue is that by definition, people with autism, although experts in technical fields, have corresponding challenges in communication.

As a result, the people with the greatest technical expertise that organisations need are the same people least able to communicate that expertise with their neurotypical peers.

This communications gap often creates significant challenges for organisations. For example, it results in gaps the ability of technology specialists to understand what the organisation needs their technology to do, and to communicate the potential of that technology. In addition, the communications gap makes it difficult for technology specialists to communicate complex technology risks which may pose serious threats to the organisation.

Those who are most likely to understand complex technology risks are the same people who are less likely to be able to communicate those risks in a manner that is persuasive for a neurotypical audience.

There is a valuable role for the Autism Strategy to play in raising awareness of issues such as this, and the opportunities addressing these issues may present to all stakeholders involved.

Addressing this issue has the potential to benefit three main groups:

- \* Organisations that currently don't understand, appreciate, or utilise the insights of these particular specialists.
- \* The wider autism community that needs the positive stories it can hear, and can tell, about where autism is an unambiguously positive attribute.
- \* The professionals with mild autism currently employed in roles such as these.

It must be recognised that the central focus of this submission is a group of people who are gainfully employed, frequently in highly paid roles. This is not a group in need of support for basic social inclusion, but it is a group that can positively contribute to how autism is perceived in business communities, and in the wider community.

This submission aims to supplement important efforts to support disadvantaged groups by also highlighting the valuable contribution people with autism can provide – to organisations, and to the broader community.

The resolution of an issue such as this is in the interests of the organisations in question and, critically, many of these organisations have greater funds available than are available to the wider autism community.

However, awareness of the issue does not appear to be widespread in those organisations, and research in the area also appears to be lacking.

The Autism Strategy, it could be argued, has a supplementary role to highlight the valuable contribution that people with autism frequently make, and to highlight the potential return on investment for researching and addressing issues such as these.

The Autism Strategy has a role to stimulate greater awareness and investment in the autism community.

In this case, that greater investment has the potential to come from organisations researching ways to better understand and utilise their own staff, with the corresponding potentially positive impact on their own organisational outcomes, and on the wider autism community.